PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993–94

COMPRISING PERIOD
17 October – 3 November 1994

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16 November 1994

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 248**

SIXTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 17 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Madam Speaker: I regret to have to report to the House the death of Dr. John Graham Blackburn, Member for Dudley, West. I am sure that Members on all sides of the House will join me in mourning the loss of a colleague and in extending our sympathy to the hon. Member's family and friends.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Railways

1. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the performance of rail operations as part of the Welsh transport infrastructure; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): I welcome to the Dispatch Box my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), the Under-Secretary of State for Wales. I extend heartfelt thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts) for all his assistance in the past. He, of course, knows the real questions to ask, so I shall keep a particular eye on him during our proceedings.

The rail network in Wales is in excellent order and is extensive. We need to encourage more people and businesses to use it and therefore run more trains. This evening I shall make a longer speech on ways in which we might do that.

Mr. Carlile: In the light of the Government's own evidence of the damage caused to the environment by the increasing use of roads for freight, what specific proposals will the Secretary of State be able to present to the House in the next Session to ensure that more freight is carried by rail in Wales, and that some freight is carried by rail in central Wales?

Mr. Redwood: I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman's aims. I shall point out this evening that our breaking of the British Rail monopoly will open up a great opportunity. Where formerly only whole trainloads of freight were wanted, there are already businesses which are prepared to offer 50-tonne load haulage, and that is a major move forward. I shall add to that with freight grants and I hope that freight proposals will be included in strategic development schemes. I have asked the Welsh Development Agency to make sure that, where possible, a rail freight option is opened at industrial parks.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Secretary of State admit that the privatisation of railways has been the most unpopular of all privatisations so far and that rural, valley and off-peak services may be threatened by no fewer than seven competing train companies in Wales? Cannot he see that the money that is being squandered on that privatisation would have been much better spent on improving and expanding our railway network, which has been subject to years of neglect under his incompetent Government?

Mr. Redwood: Labour has made that claim for every one of our privatisations, and every one has increased investment, profits and business opportunities and has strengthened competition. The hon. Gentleman does not say that the monopoly business in the post-war period was not prepared to take the rail freight of most businesses in

Wales because it wanted trainload traffic. I notice that he did not refer to the fact that we have already broken through in that crucial respect, now that our new policies are being introduced. In terms of passenger traffic, I suspect that our subsidies will go much further and will mean more trains and more satisfied passengers than if we had continued the monopoly.

General Practitioners

2. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients in Wales have been removed from general practitioners' lists during 1993 and 1994.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Rod Richards): I understand that some 277,975 patients were removed from GPs' lists during 1993, according to family health services authority data. A further 165,944 patients were removed between 1 January and 31 August 1994. The most common reasons for the removal of 99 per cent. of those patients were moving home, emigration, adoption, death and the retirement of the GP. In 1993, only 1 per cent. or 2,769 patients were deregistered at the request of the GP. The corresponding figure for 1994 is not yet available.

Mr. Wardell: Can the Minister assist general practitioners who are facing increasing strains, especially as the scourge of drug addiction sweeps through the Principality? Can he advise GPs who are frequently threatened and harrassed in their surgeries by drug addict patients? How can they prevent such problems in future?

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government are absolutely determined to wipe out drugs—unlike the Liberal party, which is not. General practitioners should not distinguish between patients, but when a patient is behaving unreasonably and the professional relationship has broken down, a GP has the right to remove that patient from his list. However, I would expect a GP dealing with a drug user to make allowances for the fact that addiction may cause unusual patterns of behaviour. No general practitioner can be compelled to continue a relationship that has irretrievably broken down. Nor would doing so be necessarily in the patient's interests.

Mr. John Marshall: First, I congratulate my hon. Friend on his promotion. Does he agree that the important facts for patients and general practitioners in Wales are that, because of the Government's health reforms, a record number of patients are being treated and waiting lists are being cut? Should not Opposition Members welcome that, which is good news for everyone in Wales?

Mr. Richards: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. He was absolutely right in the facts that he gave to the House. In addition, since 1979 there has been an increase of 363 in the number of general practitioners in Wales.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister referred to general medical practitioners. Will he confirm that dozens of general dental practitioners in Wales have removed patients from their lists during the past year? Is he aware of a case in Bangor only last week, when a dentist notified his patients that because he could not maintain standards on the national health service, he had no choice but to move away from the NHS? Is not that a disgraceful reflection on the Government's failure to maintain NHS dental policy in Wales? Will the hon. Gentleman give a categorical commitment to the House that anyone needing NHS dental care anywhere in Wales will be able to get it?

Mr. Richards: There are more dental practitioners in Gwynedd now than there were in 1979. As the hon. Gentleman should know, the Government have allowed Gwynedd family health services authority to employ four additional dental practitioners. The hon. Gentleman should also know that my right hon. Friend has set aside £50,000 for Gwynedd FHSA to improve dental treatment.

Mr. Morgan: First, I shall summon up all the verbal powers at my command and congratulate the new junior Minister on his promotion to the bridge of a sinking ship.

How does the hon. Gentleman justify this year's blatant anti-Welsh discrimination against general practitioners, patients and hospitals in Wales? Unlike the position in England, the Secretary of State has decided not to fund the national pay awards to doctors and nurses in Welsh hospitals as they attempt to meet their contracts. Is that an example of the so-called English backlash against which the Secretary of State waxed so lyrical at last week's Tory party conference in Bournemouth?

Mr. Richards: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcoming remarks, which I know came from the very bottom of his heart.

The basis of pay awards in Wales is no different from that in England.

Defence Jobs

3. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase the proportion of defence and defence-related jobs in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): Decisions on military facilities are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I am, however, pleased that the Royal Welch Fusiliers and 14 Signals Regiment will now be permanently located in Wales.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: I join the Minister in welcoming the locating of the Royal Welch Fusiliers in Wales. I was with him at the celebrations on Saturday. However, that is only a very small way of redressing the enormous imbalance in defence-related expenditure in Wales compared with the remainder of the United Kingdom.

When the Secretary of State is making his pronouncements on cuts in Government expenditure in Wales, will he bear in mind the fact that only 1 per cent. of total Government expenditure on defence goes to Wales, despite the fact that Wales has 5 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for joining in my welcome to the two regiments that will now be based in Wales. However, the rest of his question was somewhat remiss, in view of the fact that his party is infiltrated by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament—with all that it has done to attack the important defences of the United Kingdom, including defence employment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity to contrast the thrust of the present questioning with the contents of the amendment to today's defence motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister? If so, he will have seen that members of the Labour party are as much at odds with each other on defence as they are on everything else.

Mr. Jones: I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's contribution. He shows that he will continue to speak with a substantial voice on behalf of all the people of Wales. How appropriate for my right hon. Friend to point out the amendment tabled by the official Opposition for debate today and tomorrow, stating that defence spending should be reduced and Trident cancelled. Despite the attempts of Labour's new leader to throw unfashionable policy overboard, the Labour party is still wedded to it.

Mr. Rowlands: To attract defence-related or any other jobs to south Wales requires selective financial assistance. Will the Secretary of State give a categorical assurance that he is not campaigning or arguing inside the Government or in Cabinet to scrap, amend or cut selective financial assistance to Wales?

Mr. Jones: I am sure that I speak for my right hon. Friend when I say that he will remain resolute in securing the best possible share for Wales in every activity of Government work.

Mr. Sweeney: While my hon. Friend temporarily widens his brief to cover defence, will he take the opportunity to join me in congratulating the Royal Air Force and civilian workers at RAF St. Athan on their excellent high-quality work and on their success in winning contracts in competitive tender with outside organisations?

Mr. Jones: Knowledge of the abilities of RAF St. Athan is common in south Wales and this shows what it can achieve in a competitive environment. I am glad to join my hon. Friend in congratulating the workers there.

Young People (Employment)

4. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policy for promoting the employment prospects of young people.

Mr. Redwood: I intend to promote young people's employment by urging higher school standards, continuing the system of new apprenticeships that we have launched, strengthening and increasing vocational qualifications, continuing our successful programme of youth training and promoting a better careers service—among other measures.

Mr. Jones: In addition to the unacceptably high number of young people who are unable to find permanent, well-paid work, I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that there is a particularly acute problem in respect of young graduates this year. Will he examine that problem, to ensure that the talents of a whole generation of young people in Wales are not wasted? Will he urgently introduce measures, such as bringing the careers services and training and enterprise councils together to identify job opportunities, and one-off grants to companies to recruit graduates in specialist areas? Will he also examine ways of encouraging students, particularly graduates, to enter management training, in view of the acute shortage of managers in many parts of rural Wales?

Mr. Redwood: I believe that graduates do have better job opportunities and I will certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. The House should note that in the United Kingdom there is 10 per cent. youth unemployment, compared with 35 per cent. in Spain and 23 per cent. in France. The fact that we do not have a minimum wage is extremely important in that respect. The Labour party has a lot to answer for, with the job-destruction policies for which it voted at its annual conference, against the advice of its leader.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the employment prospects of young people in Wales would evaporate as quickly as socialists seem to be evaporating from the new-look Labour party if we were ever to see the establishment of a separatist Welsh assembly in Wales, wedded to the job-destroying minimum wage policy supported by all those on the Opposition Benches, to which my right hon. Friend referred?

Mr. Redwood: I agree, and that is material to the prospects for youth employment, which is the subject of the question. When I watched the Labour party conference, I thought that it was an episode from "Gladiators", with Labour's gladiators making sure that every time their leader proposed a policy, he bit the dust.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Secretary of State agree that one method of improving youth employment prospects would be concerted action at European Union level—or does he agree with the former Chancellor of the Exchequer that there is not one economic benefit to be derived from Britain's membership of the European Union?

Mr. Redwood: Of course, the Government believe that there should be concerted action at the European level as well as at national level, which is why we put on the agenda, through my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others, many items that we think will make a great improvement in employment prospects throughout Europe. If only more people in Europe were prepared to listen to our points, we think that they, too, could have lower youth unemployment. But we are not satisfied with our level, which is why we are continuing the policies that I have identified.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one way to discourage prospects for youth employment would be to pay 16 to 18-year-olds unemployment benefit, and that it is far better to target those resources to ensure that young people get proper training, therefore increasing the prospect that they will seek employment after training?

Mr. Enright: On the big dipper.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That was a fatuous comment from a sedentary position, saying that it is a big dipper to offer young people training and better education. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think better of that silly remark.

Of course, the way to get more employment for young people is to have better training and better education opportunities. That is our policy. The Labour party does not seem to agree.

Mr. Ron Davies: The Secretary of State should not be so complacent. He should realise that the young people of Wales have been let down both by his Government and by the free market system. In Wales one in five of our 16 to 18-year-olds drops out of the system entirely. They have no employment, no training and no further education. In addition, some 40,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 25 are long-term unemployed. The economic and social consequences of that evil should be the highest priority of any Government. I urge the Government and the Secretary of State now to set up a special unit in the Welsh Office to co-ordinate all the instruments, all the agencies and all the departments that are at his disposal to start to tackle the problem.

Mr. Redwood: I am attacking the problem and I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman that we do not want anyone dropping out. We want to raise the sights and the ambitions of young people, because there are jobs available, there will be more jobs available and we have policies that can help those young people. I hope that the Labour party, which has such influence in local education authorities and in school governing bodies throughout Wales, will heed the advice of its leader, who said that if there are bad teachers they should be removed from office. He went further than I did, but I am just waiting to see action from the Labour-controlled education authorities in Wales. Of course it matters. We want better education and better results. The Labour party must answer.

Cheese Industry

5. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he is bringing forward to assist the Welsh cheese industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Grant aid and advice is available to the Welsh cheese industry from the Welsh Office and its agencies and from Welsh Food Promotion Ltd.

Mr. Llwyd: I am not encouraged by that answer. Is the Minister aware that there is a crisis in the dairy industry in Wales? Recently, the price of milk has gone up by 3p a litre, which means that at least one Welsh creamery will be in some difficulty during the next fortnight. Indeed, its continued existence is in the balance. I urge the Minister to consider intervening to prevent even more cheese imports from coming in and to ensure that that important Welsh industry is looked after and propped up.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman will have to appreciate that European competition law places severe restrictions on any interventions that my right hon. Friend or my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food might contemplate. I appreciate that an ending of the rigid marketing arrangements that were set up many years ago is bound to bring changes, but I am convinced that short-term difficulties will be greatly outweighed by longer-term advantages, both to the industry and to consumers.

International Eisteddfod

6. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to support the international Eisteddfod at Llangollen.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be receiving a report on the international Eisteddfod's financial position, prepared in conjunction with the Eisteddfod's organisers, and will consider any proposals for financial support in the light of that report.

Mr. Hughes: When that happens, I hope that the Welsh Office will recognise that the international Eisteddfod has the potential to be the leading international singing festival not only in the Celtic world but in Europe. It has huge potential in terms of revenue as well as culture for Wales and the United Kingdom. I ask seriously that the report be given as much support as possible and that Ministers take the lead in trying to build up the potential of Llangollen to be one of the leading arts events in the international calendar.

Mr. Richards: We recognise the excellence of the international Eisteddfod and, indeed, congratulate the organisers of the event, which annually attracts about 2,000 competitors from about 50 countries across the world. As I said, we will definitely look carefully at the proposals contained in the report.

Local Authority Boundaries

7. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ask the Local Government Boundary Commission to consider whether it would be more appropriate for the communities of Ewenny, Saint Bride's Major and Wick to be part of the Bridgend or Vale of Glamorgan unitary authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We intend to direct the Local Government Boundary Commission to consider aspects of the boundary between the new Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan authorities.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank the Minister for moving at least an inch. I wonder if he will now move a mile, and say that the boundaries of all three communities will be examined in relation to their position between Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan, rather than only one small aspect being considered. May we have the whole lot, please?

Mr. Jones: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I have not moved an inch. I am saying exactly what we have said before in a number of debates, both here and in another place. We appreciate that there is a possibility of anomalies in regard to the industrial area in the Ewenny community and I imagine that the Local Government Boundary Commission will need to examine that area in particular.

Secondary Education

8. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent per pupil in secondary schools in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the figure for 1978-79 at constant prices.

Mr. Redwood: In constant prices, in 1979-80 the amount per secondary pupil was £1,449, and in 1992-93 it had risen to £2,372. That is a real increase of 63 per cent. We do not have the figures for the previous year, 1978-79.

Sir David Knox: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that that impressive increase in expenditure has been reflected in an improvement in standards?

Mr. Redwood: Not enough. As I have often told the House and the Welsh Grand Committee, money on its own is not sufficient; we require a great deal of commitment from governors, teachers and all involved in schools, as well as help from parents. Let me repeat my plea for Labour authorities in Wales to take their duties in regard to quality and performance more seriously, and do what their leader is instructing them to do.

Mr. Hain: What proportion of the expenditure went on school sports, about which the Prime Minister made a great deal of noise last week? How does that compare with the attacks that his Government have mounted on the teaching profession, which have undermined the ability to provide school sports throughout the system, although they are—or should be—such a vital part of education?

Mr. Redwood: I do not have the exact breakdown by category or subject matter. I will let the hon. Gentleman know what my office knows after Question Time. He may wish to know, however, that there has been a 57 per cent. real increase in teachers' pay and that the increase per pupil has been even greater. That means that extra money has been available for books, materials and school sports. The hon. Gentleman is entirely right: competitive team games are very important and we intend to pursue that policy vigorously in Wales.

Mr. Ron Davies: The Secretary of State should spend a little less time attacking the Labour party and a little more time addressing his own responsibilities as Secretary of State. He should realise that the education system in Wales is still grossly underfunded. It is an absolute disgrace that he is wasting money that should be spent on our schools—on improving education—in forcing the re-running of ballots on opt-outs, just because he does not like the result of those ballots.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, when he ordered the re-running of the West Mon ballot last month, he did so because he thought that the ballot had been influenced by misleading information? Given that solemn pledges made at the last election have been broken daily by the Government, how long does the right hon. Gentleman think that he and his Government would have lasted had they applied to themselves the test that they are now applying to West Mon?

Mr. Redwood: Money is given in great quantities as a result of the Government's recommendations and the votes of the House. As I have explained, each secondary pupil is enjoying 63 per cent. more in real terms than when Labour left office. Does not that mean that when Labour was in office education was chronically underfunded? We have more than put that right and we have more than matched the substantial increase in teachers' pay, so I reject that part of the question implicitly. As for not liking the results of ballots, I like any fair ballot result, whether it is yes or no because I believe in local choice and local democracy, which Labour is always running away from in this case. Were the hon. Gentleman a little more fair-minded, he would agree that that particular ballot was not well conducted because of the information put round. May there now be a fair result, whether it is yes or no.

Male Unemployment

9. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the male unemployment rate in Newport and Gwent at the latest available date.

Mr. Redwood: The male unemployment figure in September 1994 for Newport travel-to-work area was 12.6 per cent. and for Gwent 13.2 per cent. That compares with 15 per cent. for Gwent a year earlier and 14.1 per cent. for Newport—a very good result.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that those figures are still very high, particularly for a town like Newport which has such favourable geographical advantages? Does he further realise that the whole area will be blighted if he gives the go-ahead for the proposed Browning Ferris waste disposal plant? Why does not he veto that application without delay and join Newport and Gwent in their quest for new jobs?

Mr. Redwood: I am happy to join in the quest for new jobs. Indeed, I do that every working day when I go about my business for Wales. I am pleased to see unemployment falling and I think that the hon. Gentleman was a little churlish in not recognising an extremely good fall when we see one, but of course I agree with him that there are still too many people out of work. I will take on board his representations on the issue, but he will understand that I cannot answer them across the Dispatch Box and that I have to take into account all the representations and issues in that particular case. He can rest assured, however, that we are working hard for Newport and for Gwent, as we are for the rest of Wales. He and other hon. Members might like to know that by 7 November we want proposals in to the Welsh Development Agency for a new freight terminal in south Wales which could help business throughout that area.

Dental Services

10. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has had concerning provision of NHS dental services in (a) Clwyd and (b) Wales.

Mr. Richards: During the two-year period between 1 October 1992 and 30 September 1994, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received 142 written representations about the provision of dental services in Wales, 13 concerning services in Clwyd.

Mr. Jones: I thank the Minister for that reply, but his predecessor may recall that I wrote at least three years ago to the effect that no dentists were accepting new national health service patients in Denbigh, a town of 10,000 people. The nearest dentist practices were at Ruthin, eight miles away. That position has not changed in three years. What will the Government do about that and is not it the case that the NHS is not safe in Tory hands?

Mr. Richards: I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman could make that remark at the end of his question having heard the Prime Minister's brilliant speech at Bournemouth last week committing his party to the national health service. Furthermore, more dentists now practise in Wales than ever before. There are 811 dental practitioners, representing an increase of more than 34 per cent. since 1979. There are 109 dentists in Clwyd, representing an increase of 56 per cent. since 1979. If any of the hon. Gentleman's constituents are having difficulty receiving dental treatment on the NHS, he should take the matter to the family health services authority. Having been a member of the FHSA until recently, he should have known that.

Democracy

11. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to improve the quality of democracy in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: We are taking many steps, but I should like to report to the House that democracy is alive and well in Wales. We are creating more powerful, all-purpose unitary authorities; I have recently transferred some economic development powers to local government; and we are creating true local participation through our policies on schools and hospitals. We are very keen on a vigorous debate; I only wish that its vigour was sometimes matched by its accuracy and the Opposition parties' helpfulness to Wales.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Secretary of State realise that, rather than being alive and well, democracy in Wales is in a deep coma because the Conservatives rule everywhere although they are a minority of a minority Opposition, having won only 32 of the 500 county council seats and only 14 per cent. of the votes in the European election? Why are the democratically elected representatives of the people of Wales overruled by a Conservative nomenklatura of unelected, sleazy quangocrats plus lords lieutenant, high sheriffs, the least democratic second Chamber in the world and a discredited and dying monarchy? Is not it time that democracy was given a chance in Wales?

Mr. Redwood: Many of us will wish to dissociate ourselves from the hon. Gentleman's very unpleasant remarks about the monarchy. Members of the Opposition may have been in a coma all summer, but I suspect that they will wake up soon, although it is a pity that the hon. Gentleman woke up to make that ridiculous intervention. He does not understand the first thing about politics in Wales. He said that the Conservatives ruled everywhere in Wales but went on to say that Labour controlled most of the councils. Labour does, indeed, have a strong hold on councils in Wales, and the councils spend a great deal of money and have a great deal of discretion. That, too, is an interesting matter for political debate.

Mr. Dafis: Is not the Secretary of State deeply embarrassed by the fact that he has no democratic mandate to occupy his present office? Is not he especially ashamed of his attack last week on European regional policy and its relevance to Wales? Is not it time that he accepted that the only way we can ensure that Wales takes its place as a nation in the European context is to have a Parliament of its own and to no longer be left to the tender mercies of people like him?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman should read my speech because it was a warning to him and his party. I pointed out that if he formed an alliance with centralisers in Brussels, far from getting a stronger Welsh language, a stronger Welsh nation or a stronger Welsh policy, he would find that powers and money were siphoned out of Wales to Brussels. That is what the centralisers want, and it is very odd that his party should be in alliance with them.

Tourism

12. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest statistics for tourism for Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There were 7.7 million domestic tourism trips in 1993 and 670,000 overseas visitors to Wales, spending £132 million in 1992.

Mr. Enright: More than in Dorset.

Mr. Bruce: May I thank my hon. Friend for his reply and the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) for mentioning the wonders of Dorset? Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great cards that Wales and Britain in general can play is our heritage and that people come for that and often because of our monarchy? They certainly come more for that than to see the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

Mr. Jones: I very much agree with the thrust of my hon. Friend's question. Indeed, I have acknowledged that some parts of Dorset, especially that which he represents, are as attractive as Wales. We shall continue to make the most of all our natural advantages, especially our heritage. The Welsh tourist board and Cadw are playing an important role in that.

Waiting Lists

14. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on waiting lists in Wales.

Mr. Richards: In the 12 months to March 1994, the percentage of people waiting more than three months for a first outpatient appointment fell to 39.6 per cent. and the proportion of patients waiting more than a year for treatment fell to 14 per cent., the lowest percentage ever recorded in Wales.

Mr. Ainger: The figures reveal a slight drop in waiting lists in Wales in general, certainly not in the Pembrokeshire area. The latest document produced by the East Dyfed and the Pembrokeshire health authorities, which contains details of their purchasing plans for 1995-96, makes it clear that, because of the need to spend a large additional sum on cutting waiting lists, they will have to make cuts elsewhere in their budget, especially in community hospitals, the community services in general and the ambulance service. Instead of preaching about waiting lists through their patients charter, when will the Government start providing health authorities with sufficient resources so that they can tackle the problems rather than having to cut vital services?

Mr. Richards: This Government are putting resources into the national health service—in fact, sufficient resources, I must remind the hon. Gentleman, so that in-patient and day cases in Wales since 1979 are up by 77 per cent. and new out-patients are up by 40 per cent. In the hon. Gentleman's own county of Pembrokeshire, in-patients and day cases are up by 95 per cent. and new out-patients are up by 32 per cent. There have, indeed, been problems meeting the guarantees of the patients charter in Pembrokeshire and we are aware that measures are in hand which we are, obviously, monitoring carefully to ensure that the guarantees are met. Those include extra theatre sessions, alternative venues for treatment and a new system to identify all patients approaching three months from the guarantee. The hon. Gentleman would be better spending his time congratulating the doctors, the nurses and all those involved in health care in Pembrokeshire who are doing their best for his constituents.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Breast Cancer

20. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to increase the resources of the Medical Research Council for research into the treatment of breast cancer.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert G. Hughes): It is for the Medical Research Council to allocate its spending according to its own priorities and the funding proposals it receives. Currently, it spends £3.1 million on breast cancer research.

Ms Lynne: Is the Minister aware that more than 300 women die each week from breast cancer and that it is the biggest killer of women between 35 and 54? Does not he realise that more money must be spent on medical research and that there is no point in the Government just washing their hands of that?

Mr. Hughes: I am also aware that the United Kingdom was the first country in the European Community and, indeed, one of the first in the world to introduce breast cancer screening for women between 50 and 64. As I am sure the hon. Lady is aware, the Forrest report showed that there was insufficient evidence to support mass screening for women under 50. To confirm that, the MRC is conducting research to assess the effects on breast cancer prevention of screening from age 40.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Speaking as co-chairman of Friends of Medical Research, a body in this House, may I welcome the comments that my hon. Friend has just made? Will he endorse the importance of the United Kingdom co-ordinating committee, of which the MRC is a member, in ensuring that there is no duplication of research within the cancer bodies? Such duplication is not only nonsense per se, but it creates confusion in the perception of generous donors to cancer bodies.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no doubt that the collaborative effort between the MRC and cancer charities, each playing its part, is absolutely vital. After all, £90 million, a third of the total budget, is currently spent by the MRC on areas relevant to cancer. It would be very easy to duplicate and to waste money, and none of us wants that.

Civil Service Reform

21. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on civil service reform.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. David Hunt): Several.

Mr. Cohen: Is not there a great deal of opposition to the Government's proposed reform of the civil service? Do not people talk of the quality of service being damaged by privatisation and huge job cuts? Why have the mandarins remained untouched? As they are now little more than highly paid political advisers, should not their immunity from radical reform be ended?

Mr. Hunt: My predecessor published a lengthy and detailed White Paper on civil service reform. Since then, we have had a number of representations. I cannot recall one expressed in the terms in which the hon. Gentleman has now put his views. No doubt he will communicate them in the usual way. I am a firm believer in a high-quality civil service of the highest integrity. That is what we have and I am determined that we should build on an already strong base.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the progress to date of next steps agencies? What plans does he have to introduce further such agencies?

Mr. Hunt: We have such plans. I am satisfied that we have already seen a sea change—a dramatic improvement—in the service being given while maintaining high-quality performance and improving it where possible but, above all, giving good value for money. That is why the programme will continue.

Mr. Mandelson: Does the Minister agree that there is an urgent need for a new code of ethics governing the work of civil servants and their relations with Ministers which would help to clear up the impression that standards of integrity and of independence within the civil service have fallen? Will the Minister give positive consideration to that proposal, as his predecessor undertook to do?

Mr. Hunt: We saw a number of accusations flying during the party conference season, particularly at the Liberal Democrat conference, made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). I felt very ashamed at the remarks which attacked the integrity of civil servants and those who give evidence to Select Committees. I am always looking for ways in which we can improve. I ask the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) to recognise that we already have an extremely good code. Obviously, we want to see it improve wherever possible. However, we have a public service of the highest standards, which is recognised right across the world.

Civil Service Reform

22. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce further civil service contractorisation or next steps agencies in Dorset.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Departments and agencies in Dorset, as in all parts of the country, keep all their activities under review to improve the quality and efficiency of the provision of public services.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he assure the House today, as the Minister responsible for the civil service, that he will ensure that the civil servants who are currently working for the atomic energy authority at Winfrith in my constituency, who were first told that the authority was to be privatised in one way and have now been told a second way, are properly consulted and that the best way comes forward for either privatisation or contractorisation, which will preserve their jobs for the future?

Mr. Hughes: What the people working in Winfrith can be sure of is that they will receive the normal, steadfast support of their Member of Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce). We know in Government that he will be absolutely rigorous in ensuring that we keep up to the standards that he expects. We are committed to frank and timely communication and consultation with the staff. I know that my hon. Friend will keep us up to the mark.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware that the Labour party now regards South Dorset as a marginal constituency? Is he aware of the deep concern being expressed by people throughout South Dorset, especially in the industrial part of that constituency, about the effects of contractorisation, privatisation and market testing on their home and family lives? Does he realise that many families are being destroyed by the insecurity that the Government are bringing to many people in South Dorset?

Mr. Hughes: I am aware of two things. After listening to the Labour party conference, I believe that the Labour party probably thinks that water can run uphill. Secondly, I am aware that the Labour party does not care at all about the quality of delivery of public service. It does not care what it costs, it does not care about the quality of it and it does not care whether people get the services that they want. My hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset does care. If Labour Members believe that they are going to win South Dorset, I look forward to seeing it.

Research Councils

23. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to take forward the National Week of Science Engineering and Technology.

Mr. David Hunt: I am delighted to announce that the National Week of Science Engineering and Technology 1995 will be from 17 to 26 March.

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this year's week was a staggering success, in the words of the *New Scientist*, that his announcement will be a huge boost for science in Britain and that organisations such as the Chemical Industries Association, which has been arguing for better promotion of science, will be very pleased and satisfied to hear of the Government's commitment to British science?

Mr. Hunt: Two points—first, I have authorised grants of £190,000 in total to the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science and I believe that the week will be a tremendous success. Secondly, I agree with my hon. Friend that Britain is a world leader in chemistry. In the current financial year, we have authorised a further £4·5 million, making a total of £22 million being spent on chemistry research.

Public Bodies

24. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress he has made in modifying the research councils, as outlined in the science White Paper.

Mr. David Hunt: The new system came into being on 1 April and is working well.

Mr. Bottomley: Will my right hon. Friend try to ensure that all the research councils and industry not only work competently together, but try to show the country that they are doing that, so that those of us who help fund the research councils realise that we are getting value for money and that it will help the prosperity of the country?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. First, it is important to establish a positive partnership between all the key players to promote scientific research. Secondly, we must get the message across in language that everyone can understand, so that people recognise the high quality of research being undertaken and the significant advances that are being made right across the spectrum. We want a much greater public understanding of science to develop.

Dr. Bray: Will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster ask the research councils jointly to undertake a review of the career structure and prospects of research scientists, particularly at the post-doctorate level, because they are continuing to deteriorate?

Mr. Hunt: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the career prospects of research scientists. I want the leading scientists who come out of our universities and other academic institutions to be given much greater recognition in industry, not only in terms of pay, but with regard to their place in it. If the hon. Gentleman has any particular ideas about how better we can promote that aspect, I would be extremely pleased to hear from him.

Mr. Batiste: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the fruits of "The Forward Look" programme will be incorporated into the priorities of research, especially that of the research councils?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, because one of the most fascinating aspects of our White Paper, "Realising our Potential" has been the establishment of 15 technology foresight panels that cover key areas right across the spectrum. Leading industrialists, leading scientists and leading users of science have sat down together to work out new programmes that look forward five, 10, 15 and 20 years. My hon. Friend is right; when we publish "The Forward Look" next year we will be able to incorporate in it the preliminary results from some of those technology foresight panels. The results of that process can only be very good because it will feed into the research councils the priorities that we need to maintain in the coming years.

25. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to promoting greater accountability and openness on the part of quangos, agencies and non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The setting of performance criteria, quality standards and targets and publication of more information are examples of how the Government are encouraging greater accountability and openness.

Mr. Raynsford: Does not the Minister accept that after 15 years of accepting a deterioration in and an undermining of democratic institutions, and substituting rule by 1,000 quangos, it is time for the Government to call a halt? Will the Minister now concede that there is a case for an open and public review of the work of all quangos and that subsequent decisions should be taken to replace wherever possible non-democratic bodies with those that are democratically accountable?

Mr. Hughes: Arising directly from the hon. Gentleman's question, now it is rule by nearly 1,000 fewer quangos than before. As well as the delivery of services, people believe that it is important that information is made available to them. The whole thrust of public sector reforms has been towards more transparency, clearer allocation of responsibility and greater responsiveness to the user than before. However, I would not expect the Labour party either to know or to care about that.

Mr. Hawkins: Will my hon. Friend confirm that since 1979 the number of non-departmental public bodies has fallen by 36 per cent? Will he also confirm that it was the last Labour Government and previous Labour Governments who were particularly keen to set up quangos, especially in Labour local authorities, such as Lancashire county council? Does he agree that it is Labour Governments who are particularly keen on putting Labour placemen in power wherever possible and Labour local government which believes in non-democratic institutions and the appointment of Labour placemen?

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We do not need to hear what the Labour party says it would do, we can see what Labour does when it runs councils—it puts its Labour placemen in power. Although Opposition Members may say one thing today, we heard the Labour party spokesman on Scotland tell the Labour party conference that the party plans to create more quangos.

Mr. Meacher: When will Ministers have the guts to stand up for the work of their own Departments? Is not it obvious that it is not Derek Lewis who should be taking the rap for high security prisoners escaping from Whitemoor gaol, but the Home Secretary? Is not it equally obvious that it is not Ros Hepplewhite who should be pilloried for the ill-judged procedures of the Child Support Agency, but the Secretary of State for Social Security? When are Ministers going to stop hiding behind the skirts of the quangocrats they appoint and instead take responsibility for their own dirty work?

Mr. Hughes: The Ministers responsible for any non-departmental public body or agency are accountable to Parliament and their degree of independence is useful in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. The National Audit Office is either auditor of, or has inspection rights to, non-departmental public bodies and, of course, it inspects what agencies do. It would be very useful if the Labour party stopped talking about mechanisms and for once mentioned the customer—whom the Labour party does not care about.

Information Superhighways

26. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what the Government have done to investigate the opportunities to improve services provided to the public presented by information superhighways.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: A consultative document on the information superhighways was published in June of this year. I can tell the House that my Department will co-ordinate a pilot Government information service using the Internet to gauge the interest in receiving information electronically.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Minister. What response has he had to the document since June? Which aspects of public life are likely to be affected? Will it be medical, retail or banking?

Mr. Hughes: A total of 2,700 paper copies of the report have been requested, but at the moment we do not have information available about how many have been requested—*[Interruption.]* Clearly, Opposition Members do not understand the Internet. We do not yet have information about how many copies were requested electronically. After all, I am sure that Opposition Members would not want to delay information being placed on the Internet simply to put that technology into place. Opposition Members are silent now. The Internet, and the availability of information over the Internet, can bring better and faster information to people in all the areas mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) to improve the delivery of public services.

Public Service Standards

27. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how the introduction of performance tables in public services are helping to improve service standards.

Mr. David Hunt: Considerably.

Mr. Brandreth: In warmly welcoming that concise reply, may I also welcome to the Dispatch Box my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary? What a magnificent team. May I also bring them best wishes from the Cheshire registration service which today was awarded a chartermark for the excellence of its service?

Does my right hon. Friend have plans to further extend the use of performance tables given the excellent results so far?

Mr. Hunt: First, may I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the Cheshire county council registration service? I had not realised until I met the officials involved—Roger Manley and his team—that Cheshire was the first registration service in the country to offer couples the opportunity of register office marriages on Saturday afternoons. The team responds very warmly to customers' suggestions and is a very good example of the 98 winners of chartermarks that we have been able to announce today from 120 commendations, more than 500 applications and 20,000 expressions of interest. I congratulate all those involved.

With regard to performance league tables, the first national tables on the performance of hospitals and ambulance authorities were published in June. The revised passengers charter will be published early next year with comparative information on the performance of railway routes. We will also be publishing next year the first national tables on the performance of local authorities, including the police. The programme does gather strength.

Mr. Garrett: Why does not the biggest spending agency—the social security Benefits Agency—have the take up of benefit as a performance indicator?

Mr. Hunt: From my time as Secretary of State for Employment, I recall that that is a target for those working in jobcentres administering unemployment benefit which is a social security benefit. It is a target. As I understand it, benefits agencies have as a target that they give people the right information on take up. With my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Social Security and for Employment I am happy to look at ways in which we, with the chief executives concerned, can give an even better service. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that the quality of service is better than ever before.

Charters

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has for further charters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Forty charters have already been published and more are planned.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend say what my constituent, Mrs. Joshi of Manor road, Ealing, who is severely disabled, can do? More than a year ago, she applied for a disabled parking space outside her home in order to have any mobility at all, but she has failed to receive an answer from the bone idle Labour Ealing council.

Mr. Hunt: I agree that it is common courtesy to respond. Whatever the answer might be, it is very important that all those who are involved in public service should respond to individual cases. I have no information about the case that my hon. Friend mentions, but I hope that his highlighting of the case here will lead to prompt action. However, my hon. Friend should not have to resort to doing that. I hope that he will be able successfully to urge his local authority to pay more attention to people.

Mr. Winnick: Is there to be a special chartermark for a former member of the Cabinet who joins a privatised company which was directly involved with the Department of which that former Cabinet Minister was the head? If we are really concerned about the integrity of public life and if we want to end the sleaze which dominates this country today, would not it be a good example if Cabinet Ministers made it clear that they would not join any such company for five years?

Mr. Hunt: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) produced an unofficial publication, but the present Prime Minister was the first Prime Minister to publish a guidance for Ministers. That is now in the public domain; the standards are available for all to see. I wish that Opposition Members would desist from throwing around unfounded allegations. Our standards of British public service and of our life of service as Ministers and as civil servants are the highest to be found anywhere in the world. One has to go abroad to recognise that. Why do not Opposition Members do so?

Train Crash (Kent)

3.32 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras) (*by private notice*): To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the rail crash in Kent.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): At about 8.50 am on Saturday, the 8 am train from Uckfield to Oxted and the 8.4 am train from Oxted to Uckfield collided head on near Cowden on a single track section of line. Five people were killed, including both train drivers and a guard. Eleven passengers were injured. I understand that none of the injured was detained in hospital.

I know that the House will want to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families of the bereaved and to the injured. I warmly thank the emergency services, railway staff and others involved in the rescue operation and pay tribute to their professionalism.

British Rail and Railtrack have accepted responsibility for the accident. They are carrying out their own full technical investigation and internal inquiry into the circumstances and cause of the accident. The results will be made available to Her Majesty's railway inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive. The inspectorate started its own separate investigations at once. Four inspecting officers were on site on Saturday, one with specialist knowledge of signalling electronics.

I have decided to set up an independent inquiry under the Regulation of Railways Act 1871. The inquiry will be headed by one of Her Majesty's railway inspectors who will hear evidence in public. His report will be published, and I have asked that the inspector should report to me as quickly as possible.

In the meantime, Railtrack and British Rail will act immediately should the various investigations currently proceeding indicate the need for urgent measures.

The House will understand that I do not propose to speculate on the cause of the accident. It is for the inquiry to establish exactly what happened. For my part, I will study the inspector's report with great care as soon as it is to hand.

Mr. Dobson: First, may I express the concern and sadness of the Opposition about the injury and loss of life and offer our condolences to the bereaved, our sympathy to those who were injured and our heartfelt thanks to the emergency services? Everyone understands that the Secretary of State cannot give a detailed explanation of the causes of the crash and we welcome his decision to set up an inquiry, but the House will want answers to the following questions either now or at a later date.

Can the Secretary of State confirm that there is a history of signal failures on this line since it was modernised? Why was the route reduced from double to single line working in 1989? Does the Secretary of State accept that single line working reduces the margin for error by making any equipment failure or human error that does happen more likely to result in a crash? How many other recent crashes have happened on lines reduced to single line working? Was the present limited automatic warning system installed on this line and in these trains, and was it in working order?

Is it true that the trains involved were 30 years old? Can the Secretary of State confirm that newer trains are stronger and less likely to crumple or come off the track if an accident happens? Can he confirm that five years ago, the official report into the Clapham disaster recommended the installation of advanced automatic train protection throughout the railway system, and that his predecessor Lord Parkinson accepted that proposal and said that lack of finance would not stand in the way?

Is it true that five years later no start has been made on installing automatic train protection, and that the railway inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive, which is to conduct the inquiry, has not yet even submitted its advice on automatic train protection?

Can the Secretary of State confirm that a technical report from British Rail on automatic train protection has been on his desk since May? Will he keep or break Lord Parkinson's five-year-old promise? If it is a matter of cost, does he agree that to install ATP throughout the railway system would cost less than the £700 million the Government are currently spending on railway privatisation? Does he agree that the safety of passengers and staff should take priority over that?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for endorsing my words of commiseration and of thanks. The hon. Gentleman asked a series of questions. I am grateful to him for acknowledging that some questions may be answerable now and others may need to be answered on a future occasion once we have the result of the inquiry.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the shift of this section of railway to single track. That occurred in 1991. As I understand it, the decision was taken then to introduce new signalling and advance warning systems and to go from two tracks to one because one of the tracks was at that time judged not to be in a fit state for the carrying of passengers.

On the hon. Gentleman's more general point, I am pleased to agree with the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) who said earlier today that there is nothing inherently unsafe about single line working. I am grateful to see that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) agrees with that. Clearly, in a single track operation, it is important that the signalling systems should be accurate and working appropriately. I have no comment to make on that at present. That is precisely part of the current investigation, and we will get answers to that question in due course.

There has been a continuous renewal of rolling stock. I suspect that this is not the occasion on which Opposition Front Benchers should start to get into politically motivated debate. We have spent about £4 billion on rolling stock since 1979. About a quarter of the rolling stock has been renewed since 1985. So a programme of upgrading is taking place.

The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that the Hidden report referred to the importance of ATP. It would have been helpful if he had also pointed out that the report recognised that, technically, ATP was a difficult system to put in place. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North also recognised, pilot studies have been conducted on both the Paddington to Bristol and Marylebone to Aylesbury lines. The hon. Member for

[Dr. Mawhinney]

Holborn and St. Pancras will be interested to know that the studies turned out to be much more complicated in feasibility terms than was originally expected.

Following those technical studies, the report to which the hon. Gentleman refers was submitted by British Rail to my predecessor at the end of March or beginning of April. He passed copies of it to the Health and Safety Commission and Railtrack, asking for their views. I expect to receive those views next month.

I confirm again to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and to the House that the safety record of the railways is very good, despite this tragic accident. We are determined to see that those safety records are maintained.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I join my right hon. Friend in expressing the deepest sympathy to those who were involved in this terrible accident and, of course, their families. I saw the effects of the collision for myself on Saturday. I hope that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras will understand why I do not make any personal comment on what I saw or on whether or not the carriages were strong enough. All those facts will come out, as they should, in a public inquiry.

I should like to join the hon. Gentleman in expressing my deep appreciation of the quickness and efficiency of response of the ambulance service, the police, the fire services, the voluntary services, including the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, and staff of British Rail and Railtrack. They all responded with extreme efficiency and alacrity and seemed to have worked out a good system of co-ordination.

I should also like to thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his prompt response—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I am waiting for him to put a question to the Minister. The Minister has made a statement which now needs to be questioned.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: May I thank my right hon. Friend for his prompt response in agreeing to hold a public inquiry? Will he look into the question of compensation for the victims of this tragic affair and the provision of an alternative service for those who live and work close to the site so that they can use the line without extra cost?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, particularly for his kind words about those who were involved. I join him in paying tribute not only to all those whom he mentioned but to members of the public who were also involved in a helpful way. I thank them, too.

My hon. Friend raised two points. First, British Rail and Railtrack have accepted responsibility, so compensation will follow in due course. I can tell the House that it will follow by application to a single agency, not to both bodies separately. Secondly, while the provision of alternative services is a matter for British Rail, I understand that it is already dealing with the need to run a bus service across that part until the track has been repaired.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the Minister accept that my right hon. and hon. Friends join in the expressions of sympathy and of support for the work of the emergency services? Does he accept that we think it right to wait for the outcome of the inquiry before commenting on the causes of the accident, but hope that in the meantime single-line working in the railway system will be the subject of particular care in the light of this experience?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he said. I assure him that single-line working is always a matter of care, despite the tragedy that occurred on Saturday.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his statement and for the action that he has proposed. Both are proper. The accident happened in my constituency. I hope that you will bear with me, Madam Speaker, if I add my sympathy to all those involved in the tragedy and my thanks to the rescue and recovery teams which I saw at work yesterday morning. At least seven organisations were involved. They did the excellent job that we always expect of them. I also pay tribute to the civilian back-up, as I describe it, of the villagers of Cowden, who provided tea, cake and comfort to that team.

This terrible accident raises vital issues, and I have two points additional to those that have been raised. First, what will the railways do to ensure that there is sufficient rolling stock on this line of the type required to get the line operating again as soon as the track has been repaired? Will the Secretary of State confirm my understanding from Network South Central that this tragic accident will not affect the future of the line, which is of great importance to travellers in my constituency and in neighbouring constituencies?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for joining in the expressions of condolence and appreciation, especially as the tragedy occurred in his constituency. I agree that we must await the outcome of the inquiry before drawing conclusions. I have no understanding that the crash is likely to call into question the use of the line. I think that I can offer my hon. Friend the assurance that when the line has been repaired the service will be restarted with adequate rolling stock.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I thank the Minister for his statement, but will he expand on the issue of the financial underpinning of safety on the railways? It is five years since the Clapham disaster and, despite the assurances of the now Lord Parkinson that money would be found for safety, the recent British Rail board review on ATP makes it quite clear that it constantly has to balance the financial requirements of safety against the financial requirements of modernisation.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have two things to say to the hon. Lady. First, if she goes back to the Hidden report she will see that it stated that as soon as the technical feasibility had been established ATP should be phased in over five years. We are still in the process of seeking to establish the technical feasibility, given the difficulties that the pilot schemes threw up. I hope that the hon. Lady will understand that there is no hesitancy on these issues: they need to be carried forward thoroughly.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): I visited the site of this tragic crash on Saturday morning and I hope that my right hon. Friend will join me in paying tribute to the emergency services and to all who brought speedy relief to a terrible situation. Does he find it a matter of considerable regret that Opposition Members—perhaps not so much in the House but in the press—have seized upon this as an opportunity to make cheap party-political jibes? Will he join me in sending condolences to the family of Mr. Brett-Andrews, one of my constituents, who died in the crash?

Dr. Mawhinney: I certainly associate myself and the Government with my hon. Friend's comments on the tragic death of his constituent. I judge that the mood of the House is that this is not the occasion for party-political exchanges, and I shall exhibit the restraint that has been exhibited thus far.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): It is always sad to ask questions at such a time. Does the Secretary of State remember that about 10 years ago in search of savings, his Administration pressed for the introduction of many more automatic open level crossings? To its shame, the railway inspectorate acquiesced, the crossings were introduced and deaths multiplied, culminating in the Lockington disaster and the Stott report, which resulted in the matter being put right. This is a similar situation, so will the Secretary of State learn the lesson that, whatever the other factors, if the line had been double track the disaster would not have happened? That lesson is obvious to every hon. Member and we all know what should be done.

Dr. Mawhinney: First, I do not see the similarities that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make. Secondly, I again agree with his Front-Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North that single-track working is not inherently unsafe. Thirdly, the new arrangements that were put in on this track in 1991 were fully approved by the railways inspectorate.

Kuwait

3.50 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the situation in the Gulf. I apologise for the absence of my right, hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary; he is accompanying Her Majesty the Queen on her state visit to Russia.

Over the past two weeks, we have again witnessed a serious threat by Saddam Hussein to the state of Kuwait and the stability of the Gulf. On 7 October, numerous Iraqi troops, including two divisions of the Republican Guards, began to move towards the Iraqi border with Kuwait. At the same time, the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council and a number of Iraqi Ministers made threatening statements against Kuwait and against the United Nations inspection teams.

In response to a request from the Kuwaitis made on 7 October under the terms of our bilateral defence co-operation arrangement, HMS Cornwall arrived in Kuwaiti waters on 9 October. HMS Cardiff has now joined her. Six Tornado aircraft have been deployed—they are in addition to the six already in the region patrolling the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. The Government have dispatched the spearhead battalion to Kuwait. United Kingdom troops on the ground in Kuwait now number more than 800, increasing to more than 1,000 by the end of this week. More than 2,000 personnel will be deployed to the Gulf area.

In the face of the vigorous action taken by Kuwait's friends, the Iraqis are withdrawing their troops. However, it is too soon to say that the threat has completely subsided. Iraqi troops must return to the positions they held before the start of this crisis.

As the House knows, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visited the region from 11 to 14 October. He and the United States Secretary of State met the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council in Kuwait. There was general condemnation of Iraq's latest actions, and agreement on the need to prevent a repetition. There was also widespread concern for the continued suffering of the Iraqi people at the hands of their government. We share that concern. The Iraqi Government have rejected the United Nations offer to allow limited oil exports in return for humanitarian aid. The immediate implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 706 and 712 would bring huge humanitarian benefit to the Iraqi people.

In order that all sanctions can be lifted, Iraq must comply with all relevant UN resolutions, including the unambiguous recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait and an end to the repression of its civilian population.

The Iraqis must not again pose a threat of that kind. We therefore welcome the unanimous adoption on 5 October of United Nations Security Council resolution 949 condemning Iraqi actions on the Kuwaiti border, demanding the immediate withdrawal of troops recently deployed near the border and further demanding that Iraq does not again use its forces to threaten neighbours or United Nations personnel. That is an important first step.

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

The Iraqi regime must understand that the international community has both the authority and the will to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): First, I thank the Minister for responding to our request for a statement. Of course, we understand why the Foreign Secretary cannot be here today.

I welcome the Minister's statement and I want to add our support to that of the Government for Security Council resolution 949, which was unanimously agreed on 15 October. We also support the rapid and effective deterrent action of the Gulf allies in opposing the threat from Saddam Hussein to the territorial integrity of Kuwait.

I make it clear that we endorse the view that there is no possibility of the United Nations or anyone else removing sanctions from Iraq if Saddam Hussein continues not only to threaten Kuwait but to persecute the Kurdish people in the north of Iraq and the Shia Muslim communities in the south.

The Iraqi regime must comply with all Security Council resolutions and, as the Minister rightly said, accept the boundaries and sovereignty of Kuwait. Only then, if all conditions are met, can we consider the lifting of sanctions.

Does the Minister accept, however, that pre-emptive military strikes should be avoided and certainly not undertaken unless specifically authorised by a new Security Council resolution? I welcome the Minister's confirmation that paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 661 on sanctions specifically excludes medical supplies and humanitarian aid, and that resolutions 706 and 712 presently allow Saddam Hussein to sell up to $1.6 billion worth of oil to finance medicines, food and humanitarian supplies.

Can the Minister advise the House in what ways the international community is seeking to reinforce those Security Council resolution provisions to alleviate the widely reported, undoubted suffering of the people of Iraq? Is he able to say how much progress, if any, has been made by Iraq on reparations and compensation through the United Nations compensation fund established following the Gulf war? Will Her Majesty's Government continue forceful diplomatic pressure to seek the objectives to which I just referred?

Does the Minister accept that there is some hope in the conclusion in the report of Mr. Rolf Ekeus, head of the United Nations special commission on Iraq, that at least the basic provisions of compliance are now being met by the Iraqi regime?

Is it not clear that we and our allies continue to pay a heavy price for participating in the build up of Saddam Hussein's war machine? Is it not the case that Britain's involvement in the illegal and covert supply of instruments of war against the United Nations embargo is a shame on our country?

Mr. Hogg: I agree with much that the right hon. Gentleman said, but I am bound to comment that he diminished himself by his last few sentences. I will respond to the right hon. Gentleman's substantive remarks.

I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman supports resolution 949 and I am grateful for that. I am glad, too, that he supports the rapid deployment of United Kingdom and other troops to the region, and I am grateful for that, too. I am glad also that the right hon. Gentleman supports the robust stand taken by the United Kingdom Government with regard to sanctions and acknowledges the importance of persuading Iraq that she must recognise the sovereignty of Kuwait and the international frontiers delineated by the United Nations. I also make the point that Iraq must provide full details of the Kuwaitis taken into captivity, whose fate is not now known.

As to future action, I agree that it is most important that any action taken against Iraq must accord with the principles of international law.

The right hon. Gentleman's point about humanitarian assistance is important. Under resolutions 706 and 712, Iraq could indeed sell oil to a value of $1.6 billion. It has chosen not to do so. Had it accepted that, the humanitarian disaster that we are seeing in Iraq would not have occurred. To that extent, it is the fault of Saddam Hussein. The right hon. Gentleman asked whether we are bringing it to the attention of Iraq that the facility exists. The answer is yes, and I have, of course, done so in the statement that I have just made. We also attach very high importance to the payment of compensation.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend and the Government on the very prompt action that they took in concert with our allies in deploying the spearhead battalion and six Tornado aircraft to Kuwait. But is it not clear that unless there is an early and favourable compliance with UN resolutions by Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Government, it is essential that there should be an effective cordon sanitaire between Iraq and Kuwait? Whether it be called a heavy weapons exclusion zone or whatever does not matter, but it must be effective; otherwise, at a few hours' notice, regularly in the coming months, it will be in Saddam Hussein's power to put into action the very costly procedures, which we have seen put in train by the Gulf war allies in the past few days, of making deployments and reinforcements. It is of the essence that we should get that. Why were the Government of France so reluctant to join the allies in such an arrangement?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. I think that when he comes to study the terms of resolution 949 he will find that it deals with a number of the points that he has just made to the House: it calls for the withdrawal of the recently deployed troops to the positions that they held before the crisis; prohibits the enhancement of the military capacity of Iraq in southern Iraq; and it makes the point that threats to the neighbouring states would be contrary to international law. It makes the point, too, that Iraq must not redeploy southwards those forces that are in the process of being withdrawn. I think that that makes the point that my hon. Friend would like the House to know about.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the Minister recall that the success of the Gulf war rested very substantially on the unanimity of purpose of the international community? In that circumstance, is he concerned that resolution 949 of 15 October seems to be subject to a number of rather widely different interpretations?

May I press the right hon. and learned Gentleman directly on a point? Is it the view of Her Majesty's Government that that resolution authorises military action, without further recourse to the Security Council? Further, is it the view of Her Majesty's Government that that resolution, without further recourse to the Security Council, authorises the creation of an exclusion zone or cordon sanitaire?

Mr. Hogg: I believe that I have already made the position plain to the hon. and learned Gentleman. I will repeat what I said. The Iraqi regime must understand that the international community has both the authority and the will to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait. There are a number of breaches of resolution 949—we could discuss them at some other time—which would clearly constitute a threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait, and they are covered, therefore, by what I have just said.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the problems in the previous conflict was lack of intelligence about the disposition of Iraqi troops before the land action to liberate Kuwait? As the world was apparently taken unawares by Saddam Hussein's recent manoeuvres, will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House whether he is satisfied with the quality of satellite surveillance of the area and, more importantly, the quality of the interpretation of the information gathered? Does he agree that, in the absence of such information, there is a danger of the threatening pattern being ever-repetitive and that there may not be an adequate opportunity to intervene diplomatically or, if necessary, militarily?

Mr. Hogg: I recognise that my hon. Friend has an unusual experience to bring to bear on the matter.

I hope that I do not sound complacent when I say that I think that the quality of our intelligence is good. The problem is not determining the whereabouts of any troop units at any one time, but determining the motives of those who are in command in Baghdad: that is much more difficult to determine.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Minister aware that the international community is not as united on the matter as he makes out, in that France, Russia and China take a somewhat different view? He should have drawn attention to that in his statement.

Bearing in mind the fact that three and a half years ago allied forces killed 200,000 Iraqis, that the Harvard medical team pointed out that 150,000 babies under five had died as a consequence of the bombing of water supplies, and the very widespread concern about the appalling hardship suffered by innocent people in Iraq, can the Minister explain why—now that Mr. Ekeus has reported compliance with the United Nations resolutions on weapons—the Government should follow the Americans in their insistence on continuing sanctions, which may have more to do with the re-election of President Clinton's party in the elections?

Mr. Hogg: I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would wish to point out that resolution 949 was unanimous. His criticisms of me would have had greater force had he done so.

Ambassador Ekeus has indeed reported encouraging signs with regard to the dismantlement of weapons of mass destruction; but—as the right hon. Gentleman will know full well from resolution 687—one of the questions that must be determined, which has not yet been determined, is whether the verification procedures that are now being put in place will be viable and adhered to. That test is necessary before further questions regarding the relaxation of sanctions can arise.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there was unfinished business at the end of the Gulf war, in the sense that Saddam Hussein was left in power, and that the Gulf will continue to be an unstable area and the Iraqi people will continue to suffer under sanctions until they rid themselves of this tyrant?

Mr. Hogg: There is no doubt that Iraq and the whole Gulf region will be a very much happier place when Saddam Hussein ceases to rule in Baghdad.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Given that Jordan and Israel were on different sides during the Gulf war, might this be a good time to welcome the agreement for peace entered into today by the two countries? Will the Minister give a clear and unequivocal guarantee that we shall play no part in the removal of sanctions unless and until the Iraqis not only release the names of the Kuwaiti prisoners, but release the prisoners themselves?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly very much welcome the agreement initialled today between His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister Rabin. I also welcome the robust support that King Hussein has given the action of the United States, the United Kingdom and the other friends of Kuwait in deploying to the Gulf.

As for the question of the Kuwaiti detainees, 600 persons taken to Kuwait are currently unaccounted for. That is a disgrace; we are doing all that we can to impress on Iraq the fundamental importance of telling the people of Kuwait what has happened to those people and, if they are alive, delivering them back to their families. This question will remain live, and will certainly colour the whole question of sanctions.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Air power—both the air transport force and offensive and defensive power—has proved the crucial determinant of crisis management vis-à-vis Iraq in recent years. Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure—in consultation with the Ministry of Defence, in the maintenance of obligations with regard to the defence treaty with Kuwait—that, instead of relying on sudden deployments, we pre-position and regularly exercise in the Gulf co-operation area, in order to stabilise the region and reassure local Governments, especially that of Kuwait?

Mr. Hogg: I know that my hon. Friend, from personal experience, has a great deal of knowledge on the matter. He will know that some six Tornados were already in place and that they were patrolling the no-fly zone over south Iraq. There are also assets responsible for patrolling the no-fly zone over north Iraq pursuant to Operation Provide Comfort. On the more technical question that he raised, may I duck the issue by saying that my right hon.

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and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will shortly address the House and that maybe he is the person to whom the more technical question should be put?

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Should not the UN Security Council be pressed to concede by way of resolution that there should be a softening of the compensation requirements on Kuwait if an Iraqi National Congress alternative Government were in place in Baghdad? Surely it is the responsibility of the UN Security Council to create an incentive for the Baghdad people to recognise the existence of the INC outside Iraq and its potential for government when sanity finally returns to that country?

Mr. Hogg: I think that I would take a different approach. It is very much in the interests of the Iraqi people that Saddam Hussein should be ousted from power. While he remains in control in Baghdad, he pursues policies that will make the relaxation of sanctions very difficult. It follows from that that his removal makes the relaxation of sanctions a great deal more likely.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Should the deployment have to be continued, repeated or expanded, and substantial cost borne by United Kingdom taxpayers for such necessary measures, what steps will we and the United States of America take to recover part of the cost from many wealthy countries, such as Japan and Germany, that are making no contribution to something that is so vital to their security?

Mr. Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised the question of burden sharing when he attended the Gulf Co-operation Council. There was an acceptance that it was right that the burden of the financial costs being shouldered by the United Kingdom and United States should be shared. Further work will be done on that. If the commitment becomes a long one, maybe burden sharing should be much wider than is presently being talked about.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Will the Minister comment on reports over the weekend that preparation for the new manufacture of chemical weaponry in Iraq has been spotted by satellite? What action would the United Nations be prepared to take if those sightings were confirmed?

Mr. Hogg: I did indeed see the reports in the newspapers. I do not know whether they have any substance. As far as I am aware, ambassador Ekeus has not reported in terms that support those reports. I have no doubt that he, too, will have those reports drawn to his attention and that he will investigate them. Our action and response will depend very much on what ambassador Ekeus reports to the Security Council.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the only way of avoiding a repetition of this terrible situation is by the rigorous enforcement of the sanctions? Has he any evidence that the sanctions are being breached, either in the letter or the spirit, by other countries?

Mr. Hogg: I am sure that it is right to hold to the policy of sanctions. I have no doubt that there is some breach of the sanctions regime. I know of no sanctions regime in any part of the world that has not been breached. I am certain that, measured by any standards that one cares to mention, the sanctions regime has had a grave impact on Iraq. I know that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is particularly concerned about the matter. We can take it as certain that sanctions are having a grave impact on Iraq and, I believe, weakening Saddam Hussein's control on that country.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I agree with the Minister's statement and that of my hon. right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). The Minister mentioned Iraq and the Iraqi people two or three times. May I press on him the fact that more needs to be done by the allies to ensure that the Iraqi people understand that it is Saddam Hussein's fault that humanitarian and medical aid is not going into Iraq—that is the only reason? As the Minister said, Saddam Hussein is able to sell the oil. More should be done to make that known to the Iraqi people and supporters outside Iraq, because lies are being peddled.

Would not there be far more support for Kuwait if, in the past three and a half years, that country had made far greater efforts to introduce something remotely akin to a modernised democratic state, which is what the war was supposed to be about in the first place?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is quite right to make that point about the impact of resolutions 706 and 712. Yes, Saddam Hussein is the author of his country's suffering because he has refused to accept the arrangement which would have made about $1 billion of oil revenue available for humanitarian purposes. We have, of course, said that many times. Our access to the people of Iraq is limited, for reasons that the hon. Gentleman will understand.

The hon. Gentleman has been critical of the political structures in Kuwait. They are not, of course, the same as those in this country, but earlier this summer I went to Kuwait and talked to many members of the Kuwaiti Assembly. I came away with the strong conviction that there is now in Kuwait an effective and much more representative and articulate parliamentary body than almost anywhere else in that region. Progress is being made in Kuwait.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if a troop exclusion zone as well as an air exclusion zone had been imposed in southern Iraq at the end of the Gulf war, this problem would probably not have occurred? Does he think that a troop exclusion zone, or a total exclusion zone, would benefit the marsh Arabs who have suffered dreadfully?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the situation of the marsh Arabs. He will know that, since August 1992, there has been an air exclusion zone in force in southern Iraq, which has gone some way to reducing air attacks on the Shia. However, that does not deal with my hon. Friend's principal point, which is whether there should have been or could have been a total land exclusion zone south of the 32nd parallel. I do not think that we would have secured support within the Security Council for that at the end of the Gulf war.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Has not one of the distinguished Arabists in the Foreign Office argued with the Minister that, far from undermining Saddam Hussein, sanctions help to solidify the regime? If, like me, one has seen babies expiring for want of medicine in the paediatric hospital in Baghdad or in the hospital of Umm Qasr, perhaps the questions about why this is happening are not asked too deeply by the Iraqi people. They know simply that it has happened and, like it or not, the west is blamed. Does the Minister take cognisance of the views of people as disparate as the Bishop of Leicester, Claude Cheysson, the former French Foreign Minister, and others who have been there, because the psychology is not as we see it from London or Washington?

Mr. Hogg: I do not in any way question the hon. Gentleman's good faith. He and I have debated this question before, and I have to say that I believe that he is wrong. One can of course argue that the imposition of sanctions solidifies support behind a ruler and I have no doubt that that has been so in various cases in the past. However, in answer to the hon. Gentleman's specific question, I do not believe that that is the case in Iraq now. We have a great number of intelligence and other reports which reveal that there is huge popular dissatisfaction with, and hatred of, Saddam Hussein. Were he not murdering every opponent who has the courage to express a slightly contrary opinion, he would have been out by now, so I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman.

I had the pleasure of writing to the Bishop of Leicester today and hope to see him shortly. I heard him on the "Today" programme a few days ago. One thing that surprised me was that he made no reference to resolutions 706 and 712. To refer again to the point made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), too many people do not bear in mind the fact that because Saddam Hussein has refused to accept resolutions 706 and 712, he is responsible for most of the misery in his country.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that events in recent months have confirmed that Saddam Hussein is indifferent to the sufferings of his own people and to human rights, and that this evil man is interested only in destabilising the region and in territorial expansion? Should not we, therefore, congratulate those who were responsible for deactivating the Basra reactor?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is entirely right when he characterises Saddam Hussein in those terms.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Minister has already referred to the issue of compensation to Kuwait. Would this be an appropriate time for him to mention whether compensation will be paid to the families of the young soldiers who were lost in the "Blue on Blue" incident immediately after the Gulf war? In a more general context, can the Minister tell us what and when the likelihood is of the Iraqi Government's accepting the UN resolutions on the protection of the Kurds and the Shia Muslims, which are critical guarantees for all of us?

Mr. Hogg: The "Blue on Blue" incident is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. The hon. Lady asked me when I thought that Iraq was likely to accept the obligations reflected in the resolutions with regard to the Kurds in north Iraq and to the Shia in the marshes in south Iraq. In honesty, I have to say it is unlikely that Iraq will accept them while Saddam Hussein is in control in Baghdad.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Although I whole-heartedly support UN resolution 949 and would be immensely pleased to see this tyrannical regime overthrown, I am concerned that President Clinton, a man who dodged the call-up himself, and some of his gung-ho generals appear to be wedded to the idea of pre-emptive military strikes. In the circumstances surrounding Iraq and Kuwait now and in relation to UN resolution 949, will the Minister give us the Government's definition of a pre-emptive military strike? We want no more turkey shoots of poor Iraqi infantry.

Mr. Hogg: I think that I have already made it clear, for example to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), that I believe that there is already sufficient authority and, most certainly, will on the part of the international community to defend the integrity, independence and sovereignty of Kuwait. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's criticism about pre-emptive action. May I make this point? The problem is one of proximity, as the hon. Gentleman may well know. At this very moment there are elements of the Republican Guard 90 miles away from the Kuwaiti frontier, or thereabouts. One cannot, it seems to me, wait to take pre-emptive action until they are crossing the border, if one believes and has cause to believe that they are about to attack a sovereign state. There is a problem here which we must approach in a careful and considered way.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not one of the most sickening aspects of this affair the fact that the Iraqi arms were sold to Iraq principally by Britain and by France? As the question has not been asked already and as Mark Thatcher was hovering in the background during the supergun affair, may we ask at this moment how much money he has made out of it? That is the question that the Minister should answer.

Mr. Hogg: I know that the hon. Gentleman has almost reached retirement age, but I think that he should behave in a slightly less juvenile fashion.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Although I support the international community's action in defence of Kuwait's territorial integrity, I ask whether there is not also, in view of the fact that British lives were at stake during the Gulf war, that British soldiers are in the Gulf now and that British lives may be put at stake in the future, another obligation on the Government, despite the Minister's previous reply? It is an obligation to ensure that the democratisation of Kuwait is carried on in a way that does not merely give representation to more of the elite in that country, but enshrines civil liberty, ensures that political prisoners who have been taken by the Kuwaiti regime are released and ensures that we have the same sort of obligation in Kuwait as we have seen with British assistance in Haiti.

Mr. Hogg: There are many arguments in favour of encouraging our friends and allies to introduce more accountable systems of government, but we should be very cautious before we conclude that our own model is

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the only model which one can properly urge on them. One must take account of the traditions and history and present policies of the countries to which we are referring.

In the case of Kuwait, there has, I think, been a substantial change and movement towards what the hon. Gentleman has been advocating.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): What advice would the Minister give to the Iraqi people, including the Kurds and the marsh Arabs, on what action should be taken to remove Saddam Hussein, so that the sanctions can be removed? Is it feasible that that could be done?

Mr. Hogg: I will not respond to that question because I do not wish to urge on people actions that could have very grave consequences on them and on which they must themselves be the judge. What I can say is that while Saddam Hussein remains in control in Baghdad, it is difficult to believe that policies will change to such an extent that sanctions can properly be relaxed.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Since the murderous nature of the Iraqi regime has been known for so long, why was the Minister so dismissive of the point made by right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about the way in which that regime was built up with arms from the west, right up to the invasion of Kuwait? Surely, the Government and other western Governments should learn that lesson. Saddam Hussein has not suddenly become a tyrant and a mass murderer; he was that from the very beginning. Despite that, and the oppression of the Iraqi people, the west was perfectly content to arm Iraq right up to its teeth.

Mr. Hogg: Anybody who has considered the evidence in a dispassionate manner would accept that the arms control regime operated at the present time by the British Government and operated throughout the past decade by the British Government was and is the tightest in the world.

Defence Estimates

[First Day]

[Relevant documents: The Defence Committee has reported on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994 in its Sixth Report of Session 1993-94, HC 68. The First Report from the Defence Committee on the Programme to Replace or Refurbish the Hercules Transport Aircraft, HC 118; the Third Special Report containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 511; the Second Report on the Progress of the Trident Programme, HC 297; the Third Report on the Progress of the Eurofighter 2000 Programme, HC 222; the Fourth Report on RAF Commitments and Resources, HC 252; the Fifth Report on the Implementation of Lessons Learned from Operation Granby, HC 43; the Fourth Special Report containing the Government's replies to the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Reports, HC 660; and the Eighth Report on the Defence Costs Study, HC 655.]

4.26 pm

Madam Speaker: Before we commence the debate on defence, which is a two-day debate, I want to tell the House that there is a great deal of interest over these two days and that hon. Members will be very fortunate if all those wishing to speak are called. I do not intend to impose any discipline on lengths of speeches—today, at any rate. I am looking to the House to impose its own discipline on itself. Therefore, I ask hon. Members to limit voluntarily their speeches to 10 minutes so that I shall be able to call all hon. Members who want to speak. I ask the Secretary of State to move the motion.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand from your just calling the Secretary of State that you are not selecting any amendments at this time. I seek your guidance on a point of order because I understand that Her Majesty's loyal Opposition has tabled—it is not yet on the Order Paper—a reasoned amendment to the motion. Could you give us any guidance on whether you will be selecting that amendment tomorrow? There is a series of—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have got the point. I am certainly not selecting an amendment today. Of course, I am quite at liberty to select an amendment tomorrow. When it is on the Order Paper for us all to see, I shall make my views known to the House.

Mr. Bruce: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No. I have made the matter clear.

4.28 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994 contained in Cm. 2550.

It may be of some comfort to my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) to know that the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) quite satisfactorily represents the views of the Labour party. I have no doubt that we shall, in due course, hear the official spokesman, as opposed to the unofficial spokesman for the Labour party, explain why he greets that amendment with total enthusiasm, representing as it does the views of his party conference.

We are today officially debating the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", which was published some six months ago. The events of the past six months explain and demonstrate clearly why it is crucial in the modern post cold war world to have armed forces that are flexible, mobile and able to respond to the very curious world in which we now live, with unexpected developments and quite historic changes.

In just the past six months, we have had not only the Iraqi crisis, which the House has just examined, but major developments in Bosnia, with the closure of the border by President Milosevic, the historic developments in Northern Ireland and the necessity to send certain forces to Rwanda. Each and every case either had significant military implications or had the potential at some future date to have significant military implications.

Three main themes emerged from the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" and I should like to comment briefly on each of them. The first major theme drew attention to perhaps the most important initiative that NATO has brought forward recently, the "Partnership for Peace" initiative. It is of historic significance and, since it was launched in January of this year, some 23 countries, including Russia, Ukraine and others, have joined the "Partnership for Peace".

I should like to comment briefly on that initiative because I am aware from various articles that I have read in the past few months that certain people, not so much hon. Members, but certain journalists, have made snide comments about the "Partnership for Peace". They have suggested that it is an inadequate response to the post cold war world and that the fact that it includes Russia and Ukraine as well as central European countries shows that it is purely a cosmetic exercise. They have also said that it is an inadequate substitute for enlarging NATO itself. Those serious accusations are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the needs of European security now that communism has collapsed and the Soviet Union no longer exists.

The first requirement that "Partnership for Peace" represents is a recognition that we must not either directly or indirectly allow a Europe that was divided by the iron curtain for 40 years to be replaced by a new Europe with some other division, however unintended, which could have profound consequences. The security of Europe is indivisible. We therefore need to develop a security framework that has relevance not just to the members of NATO or to the countries that might join NATO, but to Russia and other new democratic countries which have a significant contribution that they could make either for good or ill to the security of Europe.

One of the great strengths of "Partnership for Peace" is that it provides a framework that incorporates Russia as well as central European countries. It has an essential dynamic within it whereby the precise relationship between NATO and any individual country will evolve over the years to come. In certain cases, that will lead to membership of NATO—I have no doubt that NATO will enlarge in the years to come—but, equally, for some other countries that participate in "Partnership for Peace" it is difficult, if not impossible, to envisage membership of NATO, even in the long-term future. Therefore, it is necessary to have a framework, which is what "Partnership for Peace" represents, which enables NATO to develop a significant relationship with each and every one of those countries.

Some mocking has been made of the fact that we have joint exercises with Russia or joint training with Russia or Poland or other new countries. I believe that those who mock those developments do not begin to understand their significance. One of the great tragedies of the cold war period was the almost total lack of contact between the military of the Soviet bloc and NATO. I remember that when, two years ago, I first met General Grachev, the Russian Defence Minister, I asked him how many NATO officers he had met before the end of the cold war. He said that he had met none. If that was true of someone of his level it remains even more true of the many tens of thousands of middle-ranking officers. One of the great strengths of the joint exercises, exchanges and other similar activities is that they enable contact to be made between many tens of thousands of middle ranking junior Russian officers. That enables them to understand how the military operate in a democratic society and how western values should be relevant to their own situation. I believe that such exercises are an important initiative.

Last week, I visited the three Baltic states. The United Kingdom is making an important contribution towards the formation of a new Baltic battalion, which will be available to the United Nations. It has decided to conduct its operations in the English language. We are directly and indirectly playing a leading part in training the armed forces of those three new independent central European states. That is a matter of considerable pride.

One of the messages of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994" was the development of "Partnership for Peace". The second message was the fact that we are approaching the end of the transition to the new force line structure which began under "Options for Change". That has been a very difficult change, but it is one that is now approaching a period of stability.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Before the Secretary of State departs entirely from "Partnership for Peace", does he agree that nothing would have been worse for the integrity and strength of NATO than to open membership to countries to which politically it would have been very difficult indeed to extend the collective right of self-defence contained in article 5 of the NATO treaty?

Mr. Rifkind: Membership of NATO is not just membership of a political alliance; it is membership of an integrated military structure. We must ask not just what additional security new countries would receive, but what contribution they would be able to make to the collective security of the alliance as a whole. Only when an intended member could deal with both sides of that equation would potential membership be a reality.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): If this welcome European-wide development takes hold solidly and firmly, could it lead to a reduction in the British Army presence in Germany, especially the armoured units?

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that we have already indicated our policy in that respect. The British Army of the Rhine is already being reduced from more than 60,000 to about 23,000. We have no intention of bringing that down further. The most important reason for that—and this explains also why the United States is maintaining 100,000 troops in Europe—is the point that I made a few moments ago: NATO is an integrated military structure. That means that the troops must train together and be in the habit of working together if, in the event of a crisis, they are expected to fight together. That requires a

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physical co-location. We and the German Government believe that that is important to ensure that NATO remains a credible and coherent alliance based not just on good intent and good faith, but on collective military training.

I said that the second main theme of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994" was the work, which is now drawing to a conclusion, on reforming our force structure. A year ago, we said that we did not intend to make any further reductions to the fighting strength of our armed forces. In the "Front Line First" initiative earlier this year, we demonstrated that that was a policy which we could deliver. Indeed, we have been able to enhance fighting strength in a number of important ways.

I shall return to that point later, but I emphasise that one of the themes for the rest of this Parliament will be the fact that the Government now offer stability so far as the fighting strength of our armed forces is concerned. The Opposition, because of their commitment to a review which would be the first initiative of a Labour Government, are offering nothing other than at least three years of continuing uncertainty about the force structure that would arise under a Labour Government.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): Is the Secretary of State assuring the House that, after the next election and if there were by accident to be a Conservative Government, there would be no defence cuts in the lifetime of the next Conservative Government—if there were to be one?

Mr. Rifkind: We are now approaching the completion of a very important change in the armed forces consequent upon the end of the cold war. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said last week, we have now reached the end of the big upheavals. We are saying that we believe that we now have a force structure which deals with the situation that has arisen after the end of the cold war. I shall return to this point later, but I can tell the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) that we are not contemplating any further cuts in battalions, regiments, ships and aircraft. That is not subject to a review, as it would be under the Opposition who make all those matters indeterminate for the foreseeable future.

The third theme of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994" is the sheer quality of our armed forces and the contribution that they make around the world. I want to remind the House of what we said at the beginning of the document. These two sentences are perhaps the foundation of our approach to the armed forces:

> "The United Kingdom remains one of the world's most formidable military powers. Only the United States, Russia and France"—

as well as the United Kingdom—

> "can deploy as broad a range of capabilities as the armed forces of the United Kingdom who, in terms of their experience, training, leadership and esprit, are the match for any in the world."

That is a bold claim for a relatively small country to make, but if there is any doubt about the validity of the claim that I have just made, one has only to contemplate where else in Europe, Asia, Africa or Latin America one can find a country that has not only armed forces of the size of ours—many countries have larger armed forces—but our capabilities, our experience and our ability to deploy in various parts of the world in pursuit of a wide range of interests. That is something which the Government intend to maintain.

I refer now to certain specific parts of the world where our armed forces are operating. I shall comment only briefly on Iraq because the House has just heard a full presentation of the situation there. The House has been made aware of the quite significant assets that we have in Kuwait at present.

One of the points that I should like to draw to the attention of the House is that the spearhead battalion has responded to the circumstances there, and as a consequence we have asked the First Royal Anglian to become the new spearhead battalion which will be in reserve for any new crises that may arise in any part of the world, in order that the presence of 45 Commando in Kuwait should not have removed our ability to deploy quickly and effectively if any new problem needs to be dealt with.

I have noted also reference in certain newspapers to the fact that, as a result of the need to get our forces to Kuwait, the training of those who use Hercules aircraft or who use aircraft for other purposes might be affected. Of course, that is the case. The whole point about training is that it must not be allowed to take precedence over a real operational requirement. If we have a real operational requirement, as we have had in the recent past, inevitably it must have implications for training, but of course operational tasks are often the best training that the forces can receive, so that will be no loss to them.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Secretary of State will be aware that many of his colleagues on both sides of the House have been receiving representations on sickness allegedly contracted during the Gulf war. Indeed, there was a Channel 4 "Critical Eye" programme, "Quick War, Slow Death", which purported to show several cases that looked very genuine. Is the Ministry of Defence taking the issue seriously? If so, what developments can we expect?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course, we take those matters seriously. On several occasions, those who believe that they have suffered medical consequences as a result of participation in the Gulf war have been invited to identify themselves and to give such evidence as they have of their medical condition. As far as I am aware, all the inquiries that have been made so far have not substantiated those claims. A relatively small number have contacted us. Each case has been investigated and there has been no evidence to support the claims that have been made, but we continue to be willing to examine any such allegations to see whether they are supported by reasonable and acceptable medical evidence. It is a medical question, which can therefore be properly assessed.

I now refer to the situation in Bosnia and in former Yugoslavia. Since the publication of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", there have been a number of important developments: the contact group map and the attempts to persuade the Bosnian Serbs to accept it, the decision by President Milosevic to break with the Bosnian Serbs, and the decision of the United States Congress to say that it would propose the lifting of the embargo if the contact group map was not accepted by 15 October.

The United Kingdom has at no stage been in any doubt as to the proper approach to the arms embargo. The position that we have taken has also been taken by France and, as far as I am aware, by all the countries that contribute to UNPROFOR—indeed, it is the view that has been taken by most countries around the world. It is not possible to lift an arms embargo and, at the same time, continue to believe that UNPROFOR could carry out its task in a non-partisan role, seeking to bring peace in that country. That remains our view.

We were particularly pleased that the Bosnian Government, having given careful reflection and consideration to what might happen if the embargo was raised, came to the conclusion that, after all, they did not wish to recommend that the embargo should be raised at this time. I am sure that that was a wise judgment on their part. One must recognise that, if the embargo were raised, inevitably UNPROFOR would have to withdraw. That would expose Gorazde and the other enclaves to any attack that might then take place, and the effects of lifting the embargo, certainly in the short term and, in our view, also in the long term, would simply bring more warfare, suffering and hardship to the people of Bosnia and prolong the conflict rather than bring it to an end.

I am aware that there are some who argue that although we should not raise the embargo now, we should be prepared to give a commitment that we shall raise it in six months. The same arguments that I have just mentioned would be likely to apply in the same way at a future date. Obviously, events move on and one would have to look at the circumstances as they existed next April, but I find it difficult to believe that the basic argument would have changed fundamentally.

On British forces in Bosnia, the Royal Highland Fusiliers will complete their handover from the Second Royal Anglians in November. I pay great tribute not only to what they have achieved but to the excellent leadership that General Sir Michael Rose has given them and the United Nations as a whole during his period in Bosnia. He has demonstrated exceptional qualities in the best traditions of our armed forces, and that has enhanced the reputation of our armed forces, as one would expect, around the world.

It is also worth remembering the broad role of UNPROFOR in Bosnia. Events move on, and as events move on so the role has significantly changed. In addition to escorting humanitarian aid convoys, British forces have played an important role in implementing the Muslim-Croat ceasefire in central Bosnia by patrolling confrontation lines, manning weapons collection points and liaising between the parties. British engineers have continued to play an essential role in keeping open key supply routes, and last month succeeded in constructing a badly needed Bailey bridge over the River Neretva in Mostar, which has been widely acclaimed. In addition to the ground forces, our sea and air forces in the Adriatic have served with equal distinction.

That is a record of service of which we can be proud, but we can also properly pay tribute to the sacrifices that our armed forces have made. Sadly, we have had the tragic deaths of eight British troops through action by the warring parties. Last month, we also saw the sad loss of four more soldiers as a result of two separate road traffic accidents. I am sure that the whole House will wish to join me in offering our condolences to the families of those brave men and in the recognition of the sacrifice that they have made in pursuing a noble objective.

It would be right and proper to comment on developments in Northern Ireland. That matter is clearly of profound importance at present because we are all conscious that we are entering into an historic phase with regard to events in the Province. For more than 25 years, the armed forces' largest and most important peacetime commitment has been within the United Kingdom itself, in Northern Ireland. Their role has been to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary in countering violence by republican and loyalist terrorists and to assist the return of normality to Northern Ireland. They have carried out that role with considerable success.

The terrorists have not succeeded in achieving their aims through violence. Despite terrorist activities, most people in Northern Ireland have been able to lead relatively normal lives in recent years. That that is so is due in large measure to the resolute and professional way in which the security forces have carried out their duties over the years. The RUC and the armed forces supporting them have together seized vast quantities of weapons and explosives and made thousands of arrests of suspected terrorists, both republicans and loyalists. Their actions have prevented countless terrorist attacks and saved many members of both communities from murder or maiming. It is no exaggeration that the actions of the security forces have preserved the very fabric of society in Northern Ireland.

I regularly visit the armed forces in the Province, and every time I do so I am reminded afresh how easy it is to take for granted the extent of their daily contribution on behalf of the community there. For 25 years, young soldiers have had to face every day the possibility of terrorist attacks in a wide variety of forms. Young privates and junior NCOs have carried the greatest part of the burden. They have had to face daily the awesome responsibility of making split-second decisions on which their lives and the lives of others have depended. Those on roulement tours have been required to work a 16-hour day for six months on end, in spartan conditions, with only a nine-day break in that time. They have been expected to act with impartiality and politeness to all those whom they meet on the streets, regardless of the provocation that they may receive and the danger that they face. Some 300,000 service men have served in Northern Ireland over the past 25 years. It is an enormous credit to their training, discipline and character that the vast majority of them have carried out their duties—they are still carrying them out today—to the highest standards.

We do not pretend that there is a military solution to the problems in Northern Ireland. The problems are, essentially, political ones that require a combination of political, social, economic and security measures to resolve them. The Government have made strenuous efforts on all those fronts, and there are grounds for believing that we are making progress.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): May I join the Secretary of State wholeheartedly in his tribute to Her Majesty's forces, both the regular Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary? Does he agree that it is necessary to make it possible for the utmost vigilance to be maintained by the security forces to guard against any resumption of violence or surprise attack, given that it is always possible to do those things as long as any terrorists retain arms?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much agree with the right hon. Gentleman. I pay a sincere tribute to him for the statesmanlike way in which he has contributed towards

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the prospect of real peace in the Province—a contribution which I believe has been widely applauded by all sections of the community.

Clearly, the Government have been greatly encouraged by the Provisional IRA's announcement of a ceasefire. There have now been no terrorist attacks by the IRA for more than six weeks. We are also encouraged by the announcement last week of a ceasefire by the loyalist paramilitaries. We very much hope that all those groups intend a permanent end to violence, and we are assessing whether we can yet make a working assumption that that is so.

In any case, we cannot and we dare not assume that now or in the near future there will suddenly no longer be a need for military support for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. All the terrorist groupings still retain a substantial capability for carrying out further acts of violence without notice. It is a matter for the Chief Constable and for the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland, as the operational commanders, to judge how their forces should be deployed in the present circumstances. However, the Government must ensure that they have the necessary resources available to ensure the security of the people of Northern Ireland.

We shall continue to keep force levels under review to ensure that they are appropriate. I very much hope that in time the security situation will permit us to reduce force levels, but it would be irresponsible to do so prematurely. As we have made clear in the past—and I quote from the "Statement on the Defence Estimates":

> "As soon as the terrorists on both sides renounce violence, and fully demonstrate their commitment to doing so, the armed forces will progressively be withdrawn from the streets. They will then return to their peacetime role, so that normal policing can resume throughout Northern Ireland. But, in the meantime, the armed forces will continue steadfastly to support the RUC for as long as the terrorists make it necessary."

That was said six months ago; I can confirm that we stand by those commitments today.

However, that does not mean that there is no scope for flexibility. As the House will be aware, a number of measures have already been taken to reduce the profile of the armed forces in Northern Ireland but without reducing security or vigilance. The GOC Northern Ireland, with the full agreement of the Chief Constable, has taken steps to make the posture of the military patrols appear less aggressive to the public. For example, for some weeks now, soldiers have been patrolling in regimental headdress without camouflage cream, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has announced the reopening of a number of closed border crossing points. Those measures have been welcomed by many ordinary members of the public in Northern Ireland.

In the coming months, provided that the terrorist threat permits, the GOC, in consultation with the Chief Constable, intends to implement further measures to reduce the impact of the armed forces operations on the ordinary people of Northern Ireland. We all look forward to the restoration of normality in the Province. I can assure the House that the armed forces will continue to play a full part in the restoration of normality by whatever means are appropriate.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Bearing in mind the fact that there was a permanent garrison of British troops in Northern Ireland before the present trouble started in the 1960s, and there had been for many decades previously, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that provided and if a settlement is reached after the present negotiations, there is no possibility that British troops will not continue to be garrisoned in Northern Ireland after that settlement?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend can be reassured because, of course, there is the Royal Irish Regiment, whose home is in the Province. It is important that that regiment will continue to have that intimate role as part of our armed forces.

It can never be normal for soldiers to be deployed on streets of the United Kingdom. Our aim is to remove soldiers from the streets of Northern Ireland, but when it is safe to do so and not a moment sooner. I believe that that is what the public would expect of us.

Finally, I refer to the "Front Line First" study and the consequences, which we announced in July shortly before the House rose. I thank the Select Committee and its Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), for the work done and its report on the "Front Line First" study, which was published recently. I welcomed in particular the reference in paragraph 4 to

> "a package of measures . . . elegantly cobbled together".

We do not always expect such recognition of the elegance of our policy from the Select Committee.

Dr. David Clark: It was a compliment.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. Of course, nothing is perfect in this world. If it can be elegant only by being cobbled as well, that is something that I shall have to live with. I noticed that the Select Committee said:

> "As a one-off exercise, the Defence Costs Study has unquestionably been of some value in identifying savings: but the temptation to treat it as the beginning of an annual round of such exercises must be firmly resisted."

I tell my hon. Friend and other members of the Select Committee that I have no intention of responding to that temptation. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be reassured by that.

I acknowledge—and the Select Committee pointed out—that there are uncertainties, unpredictabilities and difficulties about a number of the recommendations in the "Front Line First" study. It is a massive study, which covers a vast range of issues. Of course, at this stage there must be a question mark over some of the conclusions and figures. We have deliberately gone out to consultation so that we can respond to some of those concerns.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House how much of the £750 million that has been identified in the "Front Line First" study as savings is being recycled into defence, rather than going back to the Treasury?

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend rightly says, we have identified the means of considerable enhancements. For example, we have announced the development of a joint rapid deployment force; we have indicated our interest in acquiring Tomahawk cruise missiles; we are responsible for a major expansion of training in both the Air Force and the Army; and we have also decided not to put into mothballs certain aircraft and ships that had been planned for that purpose. That is a whole series of enhancements in addition to the other changes that I have been able to announce.

Mr. Churchill: How much?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot give my hon. Friend a figure. However, we can give figures for each item, and they add up to a considerable sum. Of course, they are not one-off sums; they are recurring costs. Most of the things to which I have referred have an on-going cost but are affordable partly because of the savings identified in the "Front Line First" study. That study was not only of benefit to the taxpayer but has resulted in a transfer of resources to the fighting edge as it affects our armed forces.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall continue for a moment and then I might give way to the hon. Gentleman.

There were three main characteristics in the way in which we approached "Front Line First", which made it a significant initiative. The first was our determination not to cut the fighting strength of the armed forces. Indeed, we were determined to enhance it wherever possible, and we were very successful with that. I note that the Select Committee said that while it acknowledged that there were to be no direct effects on fighting and strength, it was concerned that there might be some indirect consequences. I assure my hon. Friend and other members of the Committee that we intend to be scrupulous in ensuring that neither directly nor indirectly will the fighting strength of our armed forces be weakened by any of the recommendations.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to look again at the proposal which one understands is before him to reduce by more than half the strength of the Royal Marine Reserve and by almost half the strength of the SAS Reserve?

Mr. Rifkind: I assure my hon. Friend that no proposal has come to Ministers on either of those matters. The Royal Marines expressed a desire to review their strength to see what they required. That was not part of the defence costs study. It did not arise out of the same initiative. It was something that the Commandant General of the Royal Marines said to Ministers that he wished to do. I await the recommendations of the Royal Marines. We shall respond when we hear what they believe to be desirable.

The second main characteristic of the "Front Line First" study was the involvement not only of the chiefs of staff, who were intimately involved throughout the process, but of middle-ranking officers responsible for many of the support activities. We invited them to give us the benefit of their ideas and experience. We were delighted that more than 3,000 proposals which we were able to take into account came to Ministers. There were no sacred cows on this occasion, but the consequence of that has been that we have had to recommend the closure of several establishments and a significant number of redundancies, which although not in front line activities were nevertheless painful to many hon. Members in respect of their constituencies. I have a constituency which is affected in that way because of the proximity of the Rosyth base, so I am conscious of the difficulties that the recommendations mean in terms of jobs and the future of certain support organisations.

We are now into the period of consultation. The three-month formal period of consultation ended on Friday of last week, but we have stated that we have every intention of showing maximum flexibility. Certain consultative documents have only recently been published. Two have been published today. Of course, proper time will be available for consultation on those documents.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My right hon. and learned Friend will know that I have a copy hot off the press of the consultation paper, for which I have been asking all summer, on the air station at Portland that is due to move to Yeovilton. I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend has given 45 working days or nine weeks for consultation. I thank him for that. Will he give an absolute assurance that the skimpy figures, which I am afraid are too small even to read in the document, will be expanded completely? I know that my constituents want to take an active and constructive part in consultation. I think that we have a strong case to put to my right hon. and learned Friend to suggest that he can make his savings elsewhere.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am delighted that he wishes to respond constructively. I look forward very much to hearing the particular points that he might wish to put to us so that we can consider them in due course.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for finally publishing today the consultation document on the Royal Marines school of music in Deal. However, not only are the financial figures just four skimpy pages at the back of the document, but the people of the communities of Deal and Kent have agreed through the local authorities that an independent firm of accountants should be retained to go through the figures. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Ministry of Defence is prepared to allow access to the figures that are not given on the four pages so that people in the community can see what the real figures are? It is not acceptable to keep the figures within the Ministry when the Ministry has made so many mistakes with the figures for Deal in the past.

Mr. Rifkind: I hear what my hon. Friend says. Obviously, I shall seek to respond in the way that he requests. He has not specified which particular figures he would like access to. Therefore, he will not expect me to give a blanket answer. When we hear what figures he would like to have access to and if they appear to be relevant to the real issues, I will try to be as helpful as possible.

Mr. Shaw: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I must move on.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way. I knew that he was not discriminating against me. He dealt earlier with aspects of procurement. The replacement of the Hercules is important to the British Aerospace plant at Prestwick and other British

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Aerospace plants. I hope that the Secretary of State will not be influenced by the knocking advertisements by Lockheed in the newspaper. There was one again today. I was worried when I received a reply from the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, which suggested that a decision would be rushed by the end of the year. That would not allow the future large aircraft to be properly considered. I hope that the Secretary of State will give an assurance that no decision will be rushed and that the FLA will be properly assessed and considered.

Mr. Rifkind: I assure the hon. Gentleman that Government policy is not determined by the contents of advertisements. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will comment in greater detail on the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman. I assure him that we shall not be rushed into any decisions. We will take decisions based on the operational requirements of the Royal Air Force and the armed forces.

I shall briefly refer to the joint rapid deployment force, which is one of the important initiatives that we announced as a consequence of the "Front Line First" study, and which we are able to take forward because of some of the savings that have been identified.

The reinforcement of Kuwait is just the latest in a series of examples of threats to security that have required the deployment at short notice of elements of our sea, land and air forces. Such operations play to the strength of our professional, experienced personnel and allow them to make a contribution greater than mere numbers might suggest. In July, I announced a number of measures that would further enhance all three services' capabilities for contingency operations. I should like to comment on the joint rapid deployment force.

As "rapid deployment" implies, the land elements of a rapid deployment force must be light while still able to protect themselves, and at high readiness, with a capability for strategic deployment by air or in dedicated specialist shipping. Hence the focus on the airborne and commando brigades, although in principle any element of our contingency forces could be drawn on to contribute to a JRDF operation. The rapid deployment force will rely heavily on the support provided by air and maritime forces, particularly for firepower and mobility. Operations in which it is involved will place emphasis on the need, if necessary, to apply force or to demonstrate the ability to use force quickly and with maximum effect, perhaps in order to save lives, as in service evacuation, or to forestall the escalation of a crisis, as in the reinforcement of a dependent territory. It may also be deployed in advance of heavier forces, to demonstrate intent or to secure an airhead or port.

Such tasks are demanding, and made all the more so by their diversity and the impossibility of predicting the exact combination of mission, environment, threat and allied involvement that will be encountered. The keys to success will lie in the co-ordination and confidence gained through extensive joint training and effective, interoperable communications and equipment.

Implementing the concept will not require fundamental changes to be made in the order of battle. The British armed forces already have more experience of joint warfare and are better prepared to meet the demands imposed by it than most of their counterparts. The JRDF will enable us to target resources for training and equipment to best joint effect. In that context, some £50 million to £60 million in total will be spent on the communications enhancements that I announced in July. The major element of that will start to arrive with units from 1996, and most will be in place by 1997.

The 3 (UK) Division and 3 Commando Brigade headquarters staff are already working closely together on joint planning of training and exercises and in future they will co-ordinate their training wherever possible. Those efforts, combined with the communications enhancements to Headquarters 3 Division and the RAF Tactical Communications Wing, which I announced in July, will be built upon in the years to come as an essential complement to the development of the new, permanent joint headquarters.

Before I conclude, it would be remiss of me not to mention briefly the Labour party policy on defence. I shall mention it only briefly because there is no policy, so it is unnecessary for me to detain the House terribly long. We have been conscious that in the past couple of years the Labour party, in a desperate attempt to appear respectable on the subject, has sought to avoid any commitments that would antagonise either its party supporters or the public. But those two objectives are irreconcilable, as we saw in Blackpool two weeks ago.

Not only the Government or the Conservative party hold in contempt the Labour party's position on defence. I shall draw to the Labour party's attention the remarks of people who might normally be thought to be sympathetic to or objective on its point of view and would like to put the best interpretation on whatever it might say. For example, on 22 July there was an editorial in *The New Statesman and Society* commenting on the "Front Line First" study, which had a mixed reaction in the press. That editorial praised the Government and condemned the Opposition. It stated that the Labour party

> "in Parliament opted for the path of least controversy. In effect, it decided not to have a defence policy. In place of a policy, Labour has taken on a set of attitudes and tactics. David Clark repeats his call for a defence review with such regularity that things are now beginning to fall off the walls from sheer ennui. What would be reviewed in such a review; what Clark himself thinks; what Britain's defence relations should be with the United States and the European Union—all these questions are left unasked and unanswered . . . It will have some difficulty convincing voters that it is indeed fit to govern. The problem now is not the policy, much less disagreements over it. The problem is that there isn't one."

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): The Minister said that he was coming to the end of his speech, but I should not like him to do so or to launch into flights of party political oratory without at least mentioning the issue of training. He will be conscious of the important recommendations in the defence costs study about the future location of the tri-service college. He will also be conscious of the real anxieties of people in Greenwich about the future of the Royal Naval college. The Minister probably shares those anxieties because he is a trustee of the Greenwich hospital estates. When will the study produce recommendations and what assurances can the Minister give the House that he looks forward to preserving not just the important naval college and its fine achievements, but its buildings for which he has a personal responsibility?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman has said and in due course, when we reach a conclusion, we shall respond to his points. However, he will not distract me from the issue with which I was dealing, although I know that he would like to do so.

I have shared with the House the views of *The New Statesman and Society* on Labour's lack of policy, and I shall now move to *The Guardian*, that other well-known reactionary newspaper which would normally be thought sympathetic to the hon. Gentleman. On 14 July 1994 after the Government's publication of their proposals, Mr. Hugo Young wrote:

> "There is no field in politics in which Labour is less convincing than defence. Its conferences vote for massive defence cuts, its spokesmen can barely admit that a single job should disappear. Although this may not be quite the economics of the madhouse it defines the statesmanship of the nursery."

The Independent on Sunday published a brief editorial that is relevant to the Opposition. It stated:

> "Labour has called . . . for a full scale review of Britain's defence commitments . . . But it is no use Labour pretending that it can be done without loss of jobs and much consequent pain. And it is no use pretending that it can avoid hard choices in this or any other area."

The editorial, written in July, went on:

> "If he does become Labour leader on Thursday, Tony Blair should act at once to stop the kind of wet and vapid thinking that did his party so little credit last week."

The Leader of the Opposition did become leader of his party in July, and since that time the total thinking vacuum has continued.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*—

Mr. Rifkind: I shall happily give way to the hon. Gentleman because I think that he more clearly represents the views of the Labour party than his Front-Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister spoke about unanswered questions. On 27 November 1992 I asked seven questions. The fifth one was:

> "will the Government confirm or deny that Mark Thatcher and a Saudi Arabian middle man involved in the deal, whose name was Wafic Said, paid income tax on money which they earned from the Al-Yamamah deal?"—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1992; Vol. 214 , c. 1104.]

If the Minister intends to indulge in such cross-party talk, perhaps he will explain the exact role of Mark Thatcher.

Mr. Rifkind: Mark Thatcher is neither a member of the Labour party nor, as far as I am aware, a member of the Conservative party, so I do not intend to be distracted by the hon. Gentleman.

It may just be that for the first time for two and a half years we are about to hear the makings of a Labour defence policy. I appeal to the Opposition spokesman not to give us nonsense about his calls for a defence review. Everyone knows perfectly well that Labour believes not in the defence review but in the necessity to avoid saying anything on this subject that will antagonise anyone either now or during the remainder of this Parliament.

If the hon. Member for South Shields does not believe my claim about that, he should simply state Labour's policy on whether we should spend more on defence, spend what we are spending now, or spend less. The Labour party does not need a review to determine that. Do we have the right number of battalions or should we have more or fewer, or does it depend on a review? *[Interruption.]* Do we have the right number of ships? Should we have more or fewer or does that also depend on a review? Have we the right number of aircraft or do we need more or fewer, or does it depend on a review? If the hon. Gentleman says that it depends on what commitments we should enter, perhaps he will give us Labour's view on those commitments. Perhaps we are not to be told about that for another three years until after a review.

The Labour party is a disgrace to the armed forces and to the national interests of this country. Unless the hon. Gentleman can rescue the reputation of his party in the next half hour, his party will rightly continue to be held in contempt.

5.16 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I shall begin by making a few observations which I hope will find consensus in the House. Over the years, I have come to respect the dedication and skills of all those who are involved in protecting the security of our country. The sheer professionalism of the men and women of our armed forces is second to none. I include in that our reserves and the oft forgotten men and women who serve in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Those who are involved in the necessary administration and planning are often ignored, but our defence effort would flounder without their contribution.

The sheer brilliance of those involved in defence research is renowned throughout the world, and workers in the defence industries also deserve our gratitude. Time and again, they have shown that in an emergency they can more than rise to the occasion. Collectively, they have played their part admirably in ensuring our security. In view of the novel difficulties that have been created by Tory mismanagement of defence requirements over the past few years, my admiration for them is even stronger.

My experiences in visiting Bosnia and Northern Ireland and bases in the United Kingdom and elsewhere over recent years have served to reinforce my impression. As the Secretary of State for Defence has said, the task of the forces in Northern Ireland is now, we hope, ending. One of my most unnerving experiences was to be on foot patrol with soldiers in west Belfast, and the contrast between that experience and the soldiers' good nature will remain with me for ever.

Those who take part in the valuable humanitarian missions that we are undertaking at sea, in no-fly zones and on the ground throughout the world deserve the gratitude of the whole House. I am sure that we are all well served by those people. On behalf of the House, I should like to express condolences to the families and friends of loved ones who have lost their lives in Bosnia. Twelve British service men have lost their lives there in tasks which have saved thousands of innocent civilians.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the decision two weeks ago at the Labour conference to scrap Trident would throw 4,000 people in Plymouth out of work overnight? What are we to make of the fact that the only Labour amendment on the Order Paper "supports the call" to scrap Trident? We

[Mr. Gary Streeter]

know that Opposition Members are weak on defence, but what do they have against the city of Plymouth which I represent? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I hope that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) will withdraw his sedentary remark.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Perhaps you would tell me what the sedentary remark was, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to have to say that I thought I heard the hon. Gentleman use the word "rat". Will he confirm that he did not use that word?

Mr. Home Robertson: If I used that word, I withdraw it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Did or did not the hon. Gentleman use that word?

Mr. Home Robertson: Not that I recall, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am most grateful.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) demeans himself and the House. I am trying to pay tribute to the men and women who have served us so well in the past—yet he interrupts in the middle of my speech to make a cheap party political point. It has been reported to us that he has also been telling his constituents that the amendment on the Order Paper in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is the Opposition's official amendment. That is not the case. We are debating the order under normal practice.

It is nice to see the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) joining us. Having failed to get healthy food when he was at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) to deny that the only amendment on the Order Paper is the official Labour party amendment? There is no other amendment. How can it not be an official Labour party amendment when the Members who tabled it are all official Labour party candidates elected to the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that that is a matter for the Chair.

Dr. Clark: Your knowledge of the procedure of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and our knowledge of history confirm that what has happened is the usual procedure. Indeed, this is what happened last year. When a debate is held on the first two days after our return from the summer recess, any amendment must have been tabled on the day that the House rose. Of course, various things happen during the course of a three-month break and we need to keep our options open to ensure that we can debate everything that is relevant and pertinent to the time. I wish that my admiration for those who serve in our forces and in the defence industry could be shared by the Conservative party. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) has just shown why it cannot be.

The truth is that the Government have mishandled our defence and cannot be trusted with our security. They are a Government without a coherent defence strategy and with a Secretary of State entirely in the hands of the Treasury. If there were need for proof of that, we had it just 12 months ago. It was the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech last November—not the Defence Secretary—who told the House about the proposed shape of our armed forces and the further cuts in defence spending.

If the Secretary of State still claims that he runs his Department, can he explain why he did not tell the House last year that cuts were to be made very quickly? It might be assumed by the more cynical and by those who follow these matters that, perhaps, he was not aware of any unrest on his Back Benches. Perhaps he was not aware of a letter signed by his Back-Bench colleagues, which was delivered to the Prime Minister on 26 October, saying that enough was enough, that there could be no further cuts and that if there were, they would not be supported. That resulted in a headline in the *Evening Standard*.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Is not it a fact that the £750 million savings asked for were widely exceeded by the then Ministers of State for Defence Procurement and for the Armed Forces? Is not the balance of that money being invested in front-line materials for front-line troops? Is not that what the armed forces require? Did not the suggested savings come from the armed forces? Would the hon. Gentleman have done otherwise?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman's question was also asked by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). Unfortunately, there was no answer— *[Interruption.]* At this moment—although this might change very soon—I am not the Secretary of State for Defence and unfortunately I am not running the budget for the defence of this country.

Will the Secretary of State now tell us about his future spending plans? Can we be sure that there will be no further cuts? It was reported that at the Conservative party conference he said that there would be no more defence cuts. However, if we look at the small print of his speech we see that he did not actually say that—he said that there would be no cuts in our fighting capacity. The two are not necessarily the same. Nor do we accept his definition of fighting capacity. We are worried that the former Defence Minister, the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) is now Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Perhaps it is a case of gamekeeper turned poacher or protector turned persecutor. We shall have to wait and see.

Last year, the Ministry of Defence was ordered to find further spending cuts, hence the defence costs study otherwise known as "Front Line First". Of course, that title was dropped when we asked the question, "When wasn't it front-line first?" Of course, the results of the study were announced under the protection of much delayed defence orders—most of which had been announced more times than the economic recovery.

The results of the cuts were not painless, as the Secretary of State has tried to tell us. They included the sacking of 11,600 uniformed men and women from the Army, Navy and Air Force. It was not an increase of

3,000, as the Prime Minister told the Tory party conference; it was a decrease of 11,600 service personnel. It meant an 11 per cent. fall in RAF manpower and the closure of two out of three service hospitals. We now hear of the possibility of buying into a private hospital in Glasgow to make up the shortfall.

Mr. Rifkind: I saw the press report about that, but the hon. Gentleman should not believe everything that he reads in the newspapers. We cannot prevent any hospital from showing an interest, but it has already been explained to the hospital in question that it is unlikely that it could meet the needs of the armed forces because of its geographical location. The idea came from the hospital, not the MOD.

Dr. Clark: In view of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks, I take it that he is guaranteeing that no MOD money will be used to buy places in private hospitals. I take that to be Government policy.

Other results of the study include the merging of both headquarters and helicopter training centres and the closure of depots and supply stores, based on a decision that spares could be ordered just in time. The Defence Secretary gave the impression that he had universal approval from the military chiefs. That is not quite the case. The First Sea Lord, Sir Ben Bathurst, said on the BBC "PM" programme on 14 July:

> "none of us are under any illusion that there is a certain amount of risk in this programme".

I feel that Sir Ben was flagging up his disclaimer if anything should go wrong.

On the same programme, the Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Michael Graydon, went even further, saying:

> "within my service, and indeed all the services, there are large numbers of civilians who are crucial to our front line who will also be made redundant."

I emphasise the words,

> "crucial to our front line".

They hardly accord with the Defence Secretary's bland and misleading assurances that the front line is not affected by the defence costs study.

Of course, I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not volunteer to do the study. During our debates last year, he did not explain that, because of the cuts made in the armed services there were surplus stores wasting taxpayers' money. Nor did he tell the House that there were thousands of unnecessary officials in the MOD, all just sitting there being paid for no good reason. Yet this year we are told that great savings can be made in the budget by closing stores and sacking staff. This year—and from now on, we are assured—we are told that the MOD will look for waste on a continuous basis. Why now? What has it been doing for the past 15 years if it can now find £750 million of genuine savings? The right hon. and learned Gentleman assures us that they are genuine. What have the MOD and the Government been doing for the past 15 years? Of course they know that much of those savings are not real.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Nineteen eighty nine was 15 years ago. The iron curtain was lifted in 1989 and new circumstances then arose. That is the base date for reform of our armed services.

Dr. Clark: Yes, but even 1989 was five years ago, and five times £750 million would have been a big saving. The Government have been cutting since 1985.

The Secretary of State claimed that his proposals do not reduce the fighting strength of our armed forces, but his premise is fundamentally flawed. Does the Secretary of State not realise that in modern warfare, close integration of the front line and logistical support is fundamental to military success? Was he not advised at the start of the Gulf war that 77 per cent. of Challenger tanks in the British Army of the Rhine were unavailable due to lack of maintenance and of spare parts?

We are now expected to believe that spare parts are not needed in any quantity and that depots can be closed. The reality is that logistics and front-line capability are inseparable. In Bosnia today, it is estimated that the ratio between combat and logistical support is one to one. I warn the Government that they may not have five months' notice, as they did in the Gulf conflict four years ago.

We are told that millions of pounds can be saved by not storing parts and that we can rely instead on just-in-time production. Just in whose time? In Saddam Hussein's time? The crisis in Kuwait that started two weeks ago threatened a new Iraqi invasion within hours. If that had occurred, when would the Government have ordered the necessary spares? When the invasion took place? A week later? A month later?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman wanted to comment on that aspect, he might at least have done the House the courtesy of reading the report, in which we made it explicit that we do not believe that just-in-time principles as they apply in industry can apply to the armed forces, precisely for the reasons just mentioned. Therefore, we make no such comparison.

Dr. Clark: The Secretary of State knows that and says it, but still he goes ahead, which is why we condemn the Government. The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that his policy does not make sense, yet he continues to pursue it.

The manner of the Government's cuts is frightening and irresponsible. We can be sure that it will not be MOD or Treasury Ministers who will face the consequences but service men and women at the front line. Government policy on spares may be appropriate for Tesco, the Co-op or Sainsbury, but it is not appropriate for front-line services. The Government should not only say so but act against implementing that policy.

Any progress in wiping out inefficiency must be welcomed, but it astonishes me that while 18,000 men and women will lose their jobs so that the Treasury can save £750 million, there is massive MOD waste. It is unbelievable. Would anyone have noticed that £250,000 was spent on refurbishing—not buying—one air chief marshal's house if that matter had not been raised in my parliamentary question in February? How can the MOD lose track of £6 billion worth of stores? Why is it that almost all the £2.8 billion saving on the Trident programme is a result of efficient American rather than United Kingdom work? As the Public Accounts Committee report showed, in the UK there is a real cost increase of £761 million just for facilities on the Clyde.

After all the MOD checks, why did the National Audit Office find telephone lines that were not only never used but were proclaimed not to exist—yet have cost the taxpayer £10,000 a year every year since 1985? I know that the Secretary of State has friends in BT, but that is pushing too far.

[Dr. Clark]

I predict that in the months ahead we shall find more waste and more fraud. I will not say much about fraud, but the Secretary of State knows that there have been very unfortunate incidents of fraud involving millions of pounds of MOD money and the loss of jobs. The whole approach is unacceptable.

Earlier, I said that defence workers deserve our gratitude and admiration for their skills and loyalty. Our defence workers have built aircraft for the RAF, tanks for our Army and ships for our Navy, and they have done us well. Their skills and expertise have also given the UK major export opportunities in countries as defensive as the United States of America. Much of the work on head-up displays for the F16 and on the stealth aircraft was a result of the skill of our research and defence workers.

Instead of rewarding those workers, the Government seem to do all they can to ensure that skills go to waste in the dole queues. Government policies have made 200,000 defence workers redundant. At times, one gets the strong feeling that the Government regard this country's defence workers as the new enemy. Swan Hunter fought hard to stay open. That company's work impressed its customer—the Royal Navy—in terms both of its timeliness and quality. A strongly motivated work force provided our forces with equipment that will provide British security well into the next century. After all the months of struggle, it is shameful that the Government have done nothing to help Swan Hunter's work force to continue their work and, even by quibbling over £700,000, have allowed that highly efficient work force to slip away from a deal. What happened to Swan Hunter is happening to other factories and workplaces throughout the country.

While most countries recognise the need for a defence industrial base, the British Government do not. The right hon. Member for Thanet, South admitted in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts):

> "Generally, we do not have a conception of a defence industrial base."

What an admission. The Tories are content to let our defence industry disappear as if it had no relevance to Britain. The Government ought to act. There ought to be a proper regional policy, to ease any downsizing in defence orders. A defence diversification agency should be established, which could retain our defence workers' skills and techniques and materials, to help revitalise Britain's shattered manufacturing base. Partnership between industry and such an agency would encourage business change and would help to utilise a work force who have done great things in Britain.

Does not the Secretary of State have any conscience about the effect of his ill thought-out cuts on communities as far apart as Exeter, Rosyth, Eaglescliffe, Pendine, Devonport and Kirkcudbright? A proper regional policy is needed.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Can Labour's defence spokesman explain to the House why his party should be considered the defender of defence-related jobs when it is still Labour policy to bring our defence expenditure down to the level of our west European allies and to abolish the Trident nuclear programme? Labour's policies would have a far more devastating effect on defence jobs.

Dr. Clark: Labour's annual conference unanimously passed a resolution that rejected the re-ordering of British defences according to any rigid financial formula. We said that whatever is required and whatever resources are needed for the effective defence of our country will be supplied. I hope that is clear. I have looked at the history, because I heard the Secretary of State for Defence, at the Conservative party conference, claim that the Labour party could never be trusted with defence. So I worked out the annual percentage of gross domestic product on average spent by Labour Governments since the war, as compared with Conservative Governments. I must advise the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) that, under a Labour Government, on average some 6.45 per cent. of GDP was spent on defence whereas the Conservative Government are spending 5.8 per cent. It is no wonder, then, that military men throughout the country tell us that they always do better under a Labour Government rather than a Conservative Government.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the Opposition spokesman tell the House how much as a percentage of GDP the Labour party will spend on defence if—unfortunately for the country—it wins the next election?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman made his point as though the Conservatives have made no cuts. It is interesting that if one looks at the cuts in British defence made under this Government, one sees that they will bring us down to the average of our European allies without any problem. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman knows, but, in real terms, on the Government's projections, defence spending will be reduced by 40 per cent. towards the end of the century. What we have said, and I will say it again, is that the only way forward is to have a proper defence review where we can assess the risks facing our country and then reshape our policies accordingly.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I am most interested in all these military men up and down the country who are telling the hon. Gentleman that the armed forces would be so much better off under a Labour Government, because I remember being in the armed forces under a Labour Government. I remember the pay rises that never quite seemed to happen, or which amounted to about half a packet of cigarettes. I remember, too, that, no sooner had all my friends, with whom I joined, got in, than they started to leave. Will the hon. Gentleman reassure us that—God forbid—should there be another Labour Government, we will not have the same situation that we had between 1974 and 1979?

Dr. Clark: I am interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman has said. If pay and morale are so good under the Tory Government, why are people leaving in such large numbers?

Mr. Robathan: Excellent redundancy terms.

Dr. Clark: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman's logic bears out experience in the armed forces, but let us move on.

In the next 12 months, the Government have the opportunity to secure British high-technology aerospace well into the next century and at the same time give the RAF a greater transport capability than it has ever had before. British Aerospace, as the Secretary of State for Defence knows, hopes to be involved with our European partners in the production of a future large aircraft; it would be virtually guaranteed the core work if the Government promised to buy a set number of aircraft with the accompanying spin-offs into the civilian field. The FLA offers airlift options for Britain that will give our armed forces more scope to react than ever before. With the FLA, the RAF could transport service personnel to Rwanda efficiently and cheaply rather than having to rely on the United States. Despite the many other advantages, including Airbus Industrie's promise to manage the programme, the Tories, yet again, are prevaricating.

The Tories claim that our Hercules transport planes are tired and cannot wait until 2002 to be replaced by the joint British and European alternative. Then they offer them for sale to the rest of the world. It makes no sense. Either the aircraft are exhausted or they are not. But if the Government are offering them for sale as going, flying planes, surely the time for their replacement is not now.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Gentleman will understand that the RAF Hercules fleet is the hardest-worked fleet of that type of aircraft anywhere in the world, and that there is a limit to how long one can work any aircraft at that level over a long period. If the costs for the development of the FLA are in the projected area, as I understand that they are, of around £6,000 million, of which the British component would be around £1,000 million, where would the money be found by a Labour Government?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. Of course, if the planes are exhausted, they need to be replaced. But if that is the case, why do we offer 10 of them for sale? It simply does not make sense. If they are exhausted, why, in its evidence to the Select Committee in March 1993, did the RAF indicate that, in terms of fatigue, only three aircraft would be life-expired by 2000 and only 11 by the year 2005.

Mr. Bill Walker: Fatigue.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman says, "fatigue". I repeat, and I shall say it very slowly so that he may understand. The RAF indicated that, in terms of fatigue, only three aircraft would be life-expired by 2000, and 11 by 2005. If the reason for replacement is fatigue, as the RAF tells us, there is no urgency to replace them until after 2000, unless, of course, one puts them up for sale, which is precisely what the RAF has done.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just so that the hon. Gentleman and I are not confusing each other and the House, an aircraft's fatigue life is not quite the same thing as its operational life, as required by the Royal Air Force. Ask any RAF engineer or pilot.

Dr. Clark: But the point is that the argument was that those planes had to be replaced as a matter of urgency. We all know why the RAF wants to replace them: it has the money in its budget. But that is not a good enough reason.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: No, because I promised to give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Does he agree that no decision should be taken on replacing the Hercules aircraft until the FLA feasibility study is completed? May I ask him also what conclusions he drew when he visited my constituency, where the wings for the airbus are made, and when he had discussions with management and leaders on the shop floor? I had the distinct impression that he thought that excellent work was done at Broughton, but he might like to share some of his thoughts with the House.

Dr. Clark: I thank my hon. Friend for giving up his time to accompany me when we visited British Aerospace at Broughton, which is in his constituency. What was impressive about BAe at Broughton, and indeed at Filton, was the way in which it had met the challenges on the shop floor and involved the work force in a constructive way—in a way in which modern management should operate—and the way in which it played its part in the airbus programme, which has been so successful. It is one of the great success stories of Europe in this decade. We have now obtained 30 per cent. of the market for that type of product. Bearing in mind the fact that, when just over a decade ago, it had no contribution at all, that is a marvellous contribution.

We do not want the Government to throw away that opportunity, because there is a carry over between the military and the civilian field. The skills, technique and processes which allow British Aerospace to build the wings of the airbus is the same technology that would be required for the FLA. We hope for the same success for the British workers and British companies. But I come back to the point that we believe that the Government should not rush into any decision. They should wait for the feasibility study to see whether the FLA is a viable concern and, if it is, we should back British industry and not just take the easy option and buy in American.

But when I talk about commitment to this country, perhaps I can move from the air to the sea, because the merchant fleet is one area that is neglected by the Government. Without sufficient numbers of ships, Britain will be unable to ensure that our forces can be moved cheaply, securely or quickly. The Government have crassly ignored the importance of a viable merchant fleet and allowed our shipbuilders to wither away as though they were irrelevant to our trade or society. They are wrong. In 1980, the Government inherited 13,000 British merchant ships. They have now reduced the number of ships available to the Ministry of Defence to a mere 139. Whereas in 1982, at the time of the Falklands, there were 49,000 merchant seamen, there are now 19,000. That is why we have had to resort to hiring expensive Danish or German ships. That is why there was fraud in the MOD. The Government have ignored the merchant navy. It is not only in terms of procurement, however, that the Government have let the country down; they have done the same in the international field of disarmament.

[Dr. Clark]

As the Secretary of State reminded us, over the past few years there has been a welcome end to both the cold war and the threat of nuclear war. Historic treaties to reduce nuclear weapons seemed to be the order of the day as the United States and Russia sought to outbid each other in a downward spiral of cuts. It is likely that, within just nine years, both Russia and the United States will have sliced their nuclear arsenals to a quarter of what they once were. That is admirable, but there is one anomaly: when Russia and the United States feel secure enough to cut their warhead numbers, why do we seek to increase ours? Why are we seeking to double the number of warheads on our nuclear submarines to 384? Why is that necessary?

The next Labour Government will deploy Trident, but we will not deploy it with more nuclear warheads than the Polaris boats have now. At a time when nuclear disarmament is the order of the day, it seems crazy to us for any Government to increase the number of nuclear warheads.

That leads me to another philosophical difference between us and the Government. It concerns the comprehensive test ban treaty. The United States, Russia and France are all pursuing testing moratoria, but what of Britain's position? When the United States first introduced legislation initiating a testing moratorium and seeking a comprehensive test ban treaty by 1996—a worthy objective—the British Government described it as "unfortunate", "misguided" and "unwise." They tried desperately to persuade the United States to resume testing, in order to allow Britain to conduct more tests in Nevada.

Fortunately, the policy failed: the United States has extended its moratorium, and the United Kingdom cannot test. We will watch the Government's negotiation position in Geneva closely, to ensure that they do not seek in any way to undermine or unnecessarily delay any progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Mans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: Time is moving on, and I want to make progress.

Labour shares the Government's goal of achieving an indefinite and unconditional extension of the non-proliferation treaty at the special conference next spring. We believe that that will provide the soundest basis on which to secure further disarmament measures, and to prevent further proliferation. Of course we all accept that the non-proliferation treaty is not perfect, but—as such—we should encourage other states to join it.

If we are to succeed in preventing proliferation, as well as securing all those controls we need to persuade countries that it is not in their best interests to seek to acquire nuclear weapons; we must also demonstrate to the non-nuclear weapon state signatories to the non-proliferation treaty how we, as nuclear weapon states, intend to negotiate nuclear disarmament. Unless the Government reverse their complacent attitude and end their double standards, we shall jeopardise international efforts to reach a consensus on this crucial issue.

Let me now move from the strategic to the more operative end, and say a word about anti-personnel mines. They have been recognised as a major global problem by all the development agencies in the world. There is a dire need for multilateral action in this respect, and again I must say that British leadership is sorely lacking. There are tens of thousands—millions—of such land mines in many very poor countries, causing an estimated 800 civilian deaths per month. But not only civilians suffer; occasionally, our own soldiers suffer as well. Two of our soldiers in Bosnia have tragically died because of land mines.

Some countries, given that evidence, have sought to change their export policies. The United States has extended a one-year moratorium on the export of all such mines; France has confirmed a ban on the sale of anti-personnel mines, as have Germany and other European countries. This Government, however, have again conspicuously failed to live up to international expectations.

The Government's excuse is the fact that some mines are equipped with self-destruct mechanisms. That is good, but I am afraid that those mines are not foolproof. Only the manufacturers believe their own claims that they are 99 per cent. effective. Military personnel estimate that the failure rate is 10 times that, while some charities that work in the third world disarming the mines believe that the true failure rate is between 15 and 20 per cent.

That means, for instance, that of the 9 million mines in Afghanistan, if all were self-neutralising and the failure rate was just 10 per cent., 900,000 would exist in that country alone for an indefinite period. That is completely unacceptable. The weapons are used in such countries in a deliberate attempt to terrorise the population, and consequently they should not be exported. A Labour Government will ban the export of all anti-personnel mines: that needs to be done in the name of humanity.

Mr. Robathan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I know that the hon. Gentleman is very knowledgeable, but I am anxious to make progress.

I was pleased that the Government signed the chemical weapons convention, but I was rather sad to note that they were hesitant about ratifying it. Why have they not done so? When I raised the matter with the Secretary of State for Defence, his response was far from satisfactory: he claimed that

"we hope to be among the first 65 states to ratify the Convention."

The Government should not merely "hope"; they must be among the first 65 states, because only after 65 countries have ratified the convention will it come into force. We plead with the Government to introduce legislation allowing them to ratify it. The Opposition will give such legislation a fair wind.

The Secretary of State mentioned the NATO summit and "Partnership for Peace". We went along with much of his thinking. We have a clear understanding of the fears and aspirations of the countries involved—both Russia and the former Warsaw pact satellite countries; we are aware of Russia's worry that NATO could isolate it, and perhaps surround parts of it. It is clear, however, that "Partnership for Peace" has been a success so far. As the Secretary of State said, 23 countries have signed it; it has given something to all parties, and that must be built on.

"Partnership for Peace" can be seen either as a measure to buy time, or as a first step. We believe that the latter is correct, and we look forward to the day when some of our former Warsaw pact enemies are full members of

NATO. It is right that they should be: after all, they are part of Europe—it is hard to imagine Poland, the Czech republic or Hungary not being part of Europe—and they are democratic. There is no reason why they should not be NATO members.

The space given to us by "Partnership for Peace" must be filled with proposals to make Russia feel more and not less secure. Ultimately, however, we cannot allow Russia to dictate our security. I urge the Government to take a lead, and not sit passively on the sidelines; this is a complicated issue, but it needs to be pursued.

The Opposition fully believe in the importance of NATO, and the need to ensure its continuity and survival in a changing world. It has new tasks and responsibilities, but the role that it set out in 1949—to ensure that the security of Britain and the free world was protected—is just as necessary now, even in these different conditions. What worries us is that the Government are not giving the necessary lead. We are ideally placed to act as a defence bridge between north America and Europe, but that necessitates effort and energy, both of which the Government sorely lack.

Defence is one area in which Britain is still respected in the world and so it should be. We should be taking the lead in Europe to ensure that the new architecture of defence in Europe is effective, thought out and well planned. Obviously, we must increase Europe's contribution to the alliance, but at the same time we must ensure that we do not lose the strength of the United States.

Another role of our troops has been in United Nations peacekeeping missions, which the Labour party heartily endorses. Our commitment to the UN is enshrined in the rather topical clause IV of the Labour party constitution, which I hope will not be re-written in this respect. We believe that more should be done to give the UN the leadership and the support that it deserves. There is a need for reform and, in the 50th year of the UN, I urge the Government, as a permanent member of the Security Council, to take the lead in pursuing some active reforms.

In the RAF debate at the start of last year, I called for the establishment of a situation room operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week so that defence work could be co-ordinated. I am glad to see that such an operation room has now been established, but that is only a start. The UN also needs to develop an early warning capability to analyse and interpret intelligence.

We need to increase our training for UN operations and, of course, we should be arguing for the working effectiveness of the military committee at the UN and for the establishment of the post of chief military adviser to the UN Secretary-General. If we are going to fill the vacuum left by the super-powers, and if that vacuum is to be filled not by terror, but by the UN, as we all hope it will, there must be major reforms of the UN. I hope that the Government will be in the van in arguing for that.

At the end of the day, however, this defence debate is about our security. When one asks, "What about the future of Britain's security?" it is clear that the Conservatives are not sure. Until they conduct a defence review—and they will come round to the view that that should happen—there is no answer. The only answer is the Treasury.

In a recent speech, the Defence Secretary made it clear that the Government do not want to face up to a defence review. The Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear last year that he, and not the Ministry of Defence, decides Britain's defence commitments. That is no way to conduct defence policy. I advise the Secretary of State that, as long as he lacks a proper defence strategy, he will be in the hands of the Treasury. As long as he is in that position, he will find that the Treasury, like any blackmailer, will come back for more and more and more.

The position is more worrying if one considers the Government's own figures. After 1997, which just happens to be the last year for a general election, the Government will run into a shortfall of money available. According to the most recent estimates, there will be a shortfall of just under £2 billion in 1997, rising to an estimated £4 billion in 1999. A shortfall equal to more than one penny of income tax will still exist. How do the Government intend to square the circle?

We have argued—and we have never pretended that this is an easy option—that the only true way to protect our security is to have a full defence review. Only by that means can we assess the threats to our security and reshape our defences accordingly. That is not an easy option, but it is the only proper way to provide for our defences in the years ahead.

6.3 pm

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said at the start of his speech that there has been a period of change since the publication of the defence estimates. The first change that I should like to welcome is the new team that sits beside him on the Front Bench—new members of my right hon. and learned Friend's Cabinet grooming squad, who are faced with major challenges.

The first challenge is the awfulness of the Labour party's defence policy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope) and I were just discussing the position of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who my right hon. Friend rightly said has an impossible job. I sympathise with that and with the fact that the Labour party wisely decided—although it was a pretty sublime discourtesy to the House—not to table an amendment to the motion. I understand that it is likely to be tabled tomorrow. The hon. Member for South Shields cited precedent—the Labour party did not table an amendment last year either. That was equally appalling. For two years running, hon. Members will have had to speak in these debates without the privilege of a Labour amendment before them.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I wish to try to keep to Madam Speaker's strictures.

The argument of the hon. Member for South Shields is no more convincing now than it was last year. Hugo Young got it right in the quotation that my right hon. and learned Friend read out. The hon. Member for South Shields wisely declined to challenge or respond to the

[Mr. King]

invitation, from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, to set out more clearly what Labour defence policy might be.

Dr. Reid: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I want to make progress.

The Defence White Paper and the subsequent "Front Line First" statement carry forward the work on which we have been engaged since the total change of circumstance brought about by the end of the cold war. We have had the "Options for Change" programme, the "Britain's Defence for the 90s" White Paper and successive White Papers.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the progress that has been made. He will know of my feelings on the matter over the years. The proposals that we put forward at the start of the process were continually criticised and carped at from the wings. I pay tribute to the senior officers and senior officials who worked on the original programmes, which have stood the test of time remarkably well. No informed comment seriously suggests any major change to the schemes that we laid out or to the outline for our defence in "Options for Change", which was confirmed in the "Britain's Defence for the 90s" White Paper. The logical consequence of that policy is carried through into "Front Line First". Having determined what our capability is, we should ensure that our overheads are not excessive in relation to front line commitments and that we have the capabilities and resources that we need.

In his speech to the Conservative party conference, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that "Front Line First" would bring an end to the upheaval. That was a little premature. It may bring an end to the argument about financing levels, but we are in a period of continuing change. Many of the changes still have to take place and, sadly—as the hon. Member for South Shields fairly said—some jobs will be lost and some bases and installations will close. That, however, is the inevitable consequence of restructuring, which is essential if we are to ensure that we have effective, cost-effective defences.

At the time of the "Front Line First" announcements, I asked my right hon. and learned Friend to give an assurance that, having made further changes, we would have a period of stability in which those who work in our armed forces, in our civilian establishments and in the MoD could clearly see the basis on which we embarked on our policy and the destination. I am pleased with the statement that he made in that respect. However, I say to those people that stability will not mean fossilisation. It will not mean that there will be an opportunity to sit back complacently and say, "Now we can settle back with the present and agreed establishments." It will mean a continuing search for efficiency.

The hon. Member for South Shields asked how situations that could lead to waste could arise. Someone has compared the problem with painting the Forth bridge. When dealing with an organisation that consisted of 500,000 people and had a budget of £24,000 million, we face the problem of continually ensuring that there is no waste, inefficiency and, as there sometimes sadly can be, fraud—the hon. Gentleman mentioned that—in certain aspects of the defence establishment. A continuing search for efficiency is the duty of everyone in responsible positions in the MoD.

Although I applaud the decision to introduce stability into the defence budget, some very difficult decisions have to be made. The lumpiness in the pattern of calls that will be made on the procurement budget will pose major challenges. We know that the largest call will be that made by the European fighter aircraft. My right hon. and learned Friend and I have had to fight very hard—not least with our German allies—to keep the project going. I am very worried by some of the stories that I have heard about cost overruns and the lack of progress being made with that scheme. I hope that everyone involved in it realises that many people fought very hard for the jobs created by the project and for the capability that it will bring. Management has a heavy responsibility to ensure that the project can proceed and be sustainable within the defence budget.

My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the added components of "Front Line First", such as investing in the future equipment programme. The hon. Member for South Shields referred to the number of stores that we need. He was quite right about the old Challenger 1 tanks and the problem of finding enough that could even roll out of the maintenance depots and reach the Gulf. I ordered the new Challenger 2 tanks and the Government have now placed a further, larger order for Challenger 2 tanks so as to ensure that our tanks work the first time and are not wholly dependent on maintenance depots.

I have already referred to the fact that our forces must be properly manned and properly trained, something that has caused a problem in periods of strain and stretch on the defence budget. We must maintain our capabilities. It is no good boasting of the number of our front-line troops if they are not of sufficient quality or do not have the training that they need.

I welcome what was said about the joint rapid deployment force. It, too, will be an important ingredient in dealing with the challenges facing us at the moment. I also welcome the comments on the approach to the Territorial Army in terms of our capability to reconstitute our forces.

The White Paper states:

> "After 40 years of stability . . . uncertainty and unpredictability are . . . the norm."

My right hon. and learned Friend wrote that before what was perhaps the welcome but most unpredictable event since the House last sat— the ceasefire in Northern Ireland. I am pleased that he gave the probable gross figure—300,000—for the number of personnel who have served in Northern Ireland—I had been wondering what it was. The ceasefire is greatly welcomed by everyone in Northern Ireland, including the civilian population, which has had to endure so much. It is, in itself, a tremendous tribute to those in the police and the armed forces who have served in Northern Ireland.

I shall not try to emulate my right hon. and learned Friend's admirable and eloquent tribute to the achievements of the service men and policemen involved. He gave details of what they endure—a 16-hour day on a six-month roulement tour, sleeping with their boots on, often in appalling conditions. The rules under which they had to operate mean that their achievement and commitment were remarkable indeed.

I endorse fully my right hon. and learned Friend's comment that, although there is a ceasefire, terrorist groups nevertheless retain all their military hardware and military capability. That means that there is a risk of a resurgence of violence, so there can be no question of our lowering our guard. However, in the short term, the ceasefire will help to reduce the pressure facing our service men and policemen.

The scale of our commitment and the burden placed on our armed forces and the Ministry of Defence mean that the possible changes could be substantial. It will be necessary to consider the consequences. We are now entering a period with an opportunity for less overstretch, but the risk is that our armed forces will face understretch. We have largely withdrawn from Germany and we are withdrawing from Hong Kong, and the question of opportunities for training arises.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Operational experience.

Mr. King: My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) correctly says that the best training in the world is operational experience. I saw our Royal Marines who came out of west Belfast and went to northern Iraq to clear the Iraqi snipers at the beginning of Operation Provide Comfort. On the basis of their experience in Northern Ireland, they had capabilities that the American soldiers and marines who went to Iraq at the same time simply did not have. Our commitment to Northern Ireland has been a strain and a stretch, but there is no question but that it has enhanced the capabilities and operational experience of private soldiers and young non-commissioned officers. It has been of considerable military benefit. We accept the importance of maintaining standards, and the challenge offered by the ceasefire is significant in terms of defence planning.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Given his experience of Northern Ireland, what is the right hon. Gentleman's solution to the problem of understretch?

Mr. King: My point was that operational experience is the best training. There is no doubt that the frequency of the roulement tour, the experience of carrying weapons and live ammunition and the pressure and challenges faced by service personnel are difficult to simulate in peacetime training.

I referred earlier to properly manned and properly trained forces. The challenge facing us now is how best to replicate the training experience gained in situations such as that in Northern Ireland. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that we are likely to become involved in more peacekeeping. The situations arising from that will be much more akin to the street scenes of Northern Ireland than to the circumstances of the Gulf war, which I experienced. Many people would now regard those circumstances as less likely to occur than smaller "brush fires" of one type or another, or civilian insurgencies and disaffection with which we may have to help, or the problem of areas such as Bosnia, which involve us in the provision of humanitarian relief in semi-military situations.

We must maintain standards for another reason. Some people may have thought that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was boasting when he described our armed forces as arguably the best in the world. Let us consider our defence capability not just in terms of its quality of equipment or training but of our position as a country in terms of our international posture and relations. The nations that can help in international situations are the United States, Russia, France and ourselves. One of those countries has to be the lead player. Other countries will join the team. In the Gulf war, in the end, 30 countries sent forces to play their part. However, other countries cannot operate in the United Nations unless they have leadership from one of the countries that I have named in any significant and challenging situation.

It is not just a matter of our national pride. There are those who are concerned about the situation in the world and who see that Britain needs to play a role. In that international role and in the ability to play our part internationally, it is important that we maintain our capability and our standards.

We have highly capable and well-led forces. Tribute was paid to General Sir Michael Rose. I saw General Sir Peter de la Billière in the Gulf war and General Rupert Smith, and now we have General Sir Michael Rose. The world is starting to see, in these rather more publicised situations, something of the calibre of leadership that we can offer and which exists in our armed forces. When the spotlight shines on such people, we see how well so many of them are able to perform and what a credit they are to our training and to the quality that we can bring to such situations.

I say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that, faced with the challenges and the pressures, the plans that we have laid and that he is carrying forward, that he has reinforced with his statement on "Front Line First" and that he has carried through in the defence estimates show that we are providing for our country and that we are providing in a wider sense, for the international community and for the United Nations, a defence capability of which we can be extremely proud and which does our country great service.

6.21 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I shall speak for a short time in view of the number of people who wish to contribute and I shall concentrate on a single subject—the future large aircraft. My plea is the same as that made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) in an excellent speech from the Front Bench.

The future of the British aerospace industry, especially into the next century, depends to a large degree on whether the FLA is ordered. When I talk about aerospace, I am talking about the last great manufacturing industry in this country. It provides 2 per cent. of British gross domestic product, 5 per cent. of manufactured goods and almost 10 per cent. of our exports.

The replacement for the Hercules must be an aircraft that can meet the needs of our armed forces. They are new needs following the end of the cold war. They must be able to provide a rapid response and to get our troops and equipment to where they are most needed as quickly as possible. The future large aircraft falls into that category. It is in itself a leap into the technology of the next century. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields said, it is important to remember that it is a new aircraft that incorporates the expertise and knowledge of the Airbus team, who have been exceedingly successful.

[Mr. Doug Hoyle]

The FLA is unlike the C130J, which, whatever one says about it, is an old aircraft. It was designed and its air frame was built in the 1950s. Whatever is added to it, the air frame remains the same.

I referred to the new needs of the armed forces. The FLA will give tremendous advantages in relation to the payload. It offers 100 per cent. greater cargo in volume, a 70 per cent. higher than average payload per sortie and a 25 per cent. higher maximum payload and it has a 20 per cent. higher cruising speed. All those points are important. I am pleased that my good friend the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who has moved to a new Ministry, is taking note of what we are saying in relation to this. I am sure that later we shall hear either from him or from the Minister of State for Defence Procurement in relation to the FLA.

Let us concentrate a little on the load that the FLA could carry. It could carry missile systems, artillery, logistic vehicles and, most importantly, armoured fighting vehicles, especially the Warrior and the Saxon. We all remember that in Bosnia, the Warrior could not be taken in by Hercules and it had to come by boat. The FLA would give that almost immediate response for which we are looking.

As I said earlier, jobs in aerospace are absolutely essential. When considering the alternative aircraft, we should look at the jobs that each would provide in this country. If we opted for the C130J—to take what has been said by Lockheed in the expensive advertisements in the press—the company claims that the project would engender 3,000 to 3,500 jobs. However, I suggest that, of those, only about 1,750 are direct jobs in aerospace. They are all very useful, but most are with the suppliers.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): As the 1,750 to which the hon. Gentleman refers is probably exactly the number of jobs that would be created by that project in my constituency and within Lucas Industries, I should be grateful if he would take what Lockheed has said in its publicity quite seriously. There are, obviously, positive arguments on both sides of the debate. It would not be fair for the hon. Gentleman—I am sure that he will not do this—to rubbish the claims of the rival to support his own theory.

Mr. Hoyle: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Of course, I am not here to rubbish anyone. I am here to put forward the claims for the FLA. I am analysing the two options. I accept the claim of 3,000 to 3,500 jobs. but I do not think that the hon. Gentleman will object when I say that about 1,750 of those are directly aerospace jobs. The rest—I have made the point—are extremely important because they involve suppliers to the industry.

Although Lucas Industries is in the C130J programme, it may get a double bonus if the FLA goes ahead—*[Interruption.]* I shall wait until the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) has finished talking to his colleagues. I am replying to the point that he raised with me. Lucas Industries may, of course, get a double bonus. I have no doubt that if the FLA goes ahead, Lucas will participate in it as well. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's constituency would suffer.

Again, I am being fair to Lockheed. Lockheed has said that the orders that it would place for about 120 sets would not be dependent on whether the British ordered the C130J or went for another aircraft. I think that the jobs of the constituents of the hon. Member for Hall Green are pretty well assured. I am not here to knock others. I am trying to conduct an analysis.

Up to 6,000 or 7,000 jobs directly in the aerospace industry may be created as a result of the FLA. They would be at the leading edge of technology. The jobs relate to the aircraft wings, which are very important. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has had to depart. The jobs are very important to the Broughton plant in his constituency. The development and production of the engine will be important to Rolls-Royce and it is estimated that it could provide 1,000 jobs in Bristol. It is a core engine which will be shared between Rolls-Royce and Germany.

The right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) talked about the position of our troops in Ireland. The FLA is important to Shorts in Northern Ireland. The company is very much in the forefront of aerospace technology and it would benefit greatly from a decision in favour of the FLA, as would 60 other companies.

Again, I hope that I am being fair to the Lockheed bid. The bid is firm for about 120 sets, as I understand it. Whether that would be extended to 400 sets or, indeed, to the 700 that Lockheed hope to sell, I am not too sure. If it sold 120 sets, it would provide about £360 million. But if the MOD then decided to order 30 C130J aircraft, once we had got in that £360 million, it would cost us £1 billion to pay for those aircraft. So, there would be a deficit of something like £640 million. If, as I say, the MOD ordered 50 aircraft, the deficit would be even greater. It would then cost us £1.7 billion and there would be a deficit of £1.34 billion. Therefore, those jobs would be provided at a cost.

If we had the 20 per cent. share promised to us in relation to the wings or the aero engine in the future large aircraft and if 300 aircraft were built, neglecting any exports, the deal would be worth about £5.5 billion to this country, which would be a positive contribution. If we were successful in exports as well and sold up to 700 FLAs overall, it would be worth £10 billion to the United Kingdom. So we are talking about very large sums.

There is another aspect to consider, to which my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields referred—our participation in the Airbus. I should not like to see us jeopardise that participation by not going ahead with the FLA. If we go ahead with the FLA, we will be partners in Europe with countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The alternative would mean that we would be absolutely dependent on the American sources, which would give the Americans a monopoly in the world market. The only alternative to American domination in that area is to go ahead with the European consortium.

I hope that, in reply, the Minister does not say that while we want to go ahead with the first tranche, the FLA will not be an available option to us. If we followed that line, it could mean that we would not be the major source in the consortium as would be expected. That would mean double sourcing of everything, whether it be spares, pilots, or training, which would put Lockheed in the driving seat for the second tranche.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: I do not want to give way, but I shall if the hon. Gentleman is very brief. I am conscious of time.

Mr. Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman address the point which the hon. Member for South Shields did not address? Would he expect the Ministry of Defence to pay the development costs of the FLA and, if so, what does he think is the likely figure?

Mr. Hoyle: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the cost to this country would be shared by the whole consortium. There would be no greater cost than the cost related to the Airbus, which has been an outstanding success. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that I was talking about the total deficit which would occur with the American bid. Whatever we paid in the first instance for the FLA, in the long term, if exports took off, we would be the beneficiaries to the tune of £10 billion. That is very important.

Mr. Mans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: No, I shall not give way to any other hon. Member because I know that many of my hon. Friends want to speak.

Mr. Mans: I shall be brief.

Mr. Hoyle: All right, if it is very quick.

Mr. Mans: In answer to the comment of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) about development costs, does the hon. Gentleman agree that one proposal that has been put forward by the FLA consortium is that, provided that the Royal Air Force comes up with a specific order at a specific time to a specific design criteria, it may be that, in a similar way to the way in which the Airbus 340 was developed, the costs of developing the FLA could be paid for outside the Ministry of Defence?

Mr. Hoyle: I could not agree more with what the hon. Gentleman has said. That would be extremely helpful. Of course, if it could be arranged in that way, it would be another plus factor for the FLA. What we are drawing on all the time—the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) was right to say it—is the expertise that has been developed while working on the Airbus. Costs would be cut because of the experience of the Airbus and we would draw on the knowledge that we gained from that civilian project. Not to go ahead, as I said to the hon. Member for Tayside, North, would not, I am sure, be amusing to all those in aerospace whose jobs may be lost. I am sure that that is not the intention of the hon. Member for Tayside, North and that that was not what was amusing him. Also, if we do not go ahead in the FLA project, our future role in Airbus will be put in jeopardy because the Germans are very keen to secure the wing design and they would be quite happy, having got the wing design of the FLA if we did not go ahead, to step into our shoes in future Airbus projects.

I say to the Minister that I hope that we will at least delay any decision until early 1995 when the feasibility study will have been completed. That is extremely important because a failure to delay the decision would be a body blow to the aerospace industry.

6.35 pm

Sir John Cope (Northavon): This is the first time that I have had the opportunity to address the House from the Back Benches in just over 15 years, and I am delighted to do so. One gets a better view from up here—perhaps a more all-round view. I am delighted to address the House because I am a strong supporter of our team at the Ministry of Defence. "Front Line First" was not only elegant, as the Select Committee on Defence said, but reflected the clear thinking of the Secretary of State.

I follow the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) in supporting the future large aircraft and in reflecting on that project. The Labour party spokesman, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who replied for the Opposition with a typically weak speech, if I may say so, said that the Government should not rush into a decision. Indeed, as far as I could see, he spent his whole speech telling the Government not to make any decision for ages and ages. He certainly advises the Labour party in that way.

But it is important to my constituency, as to others, what decision is made about the future transport aircraft for the Royal Air Force. We have a very large aerospace complex at Bristol, which is partly in my constituency and, centred on British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce, is the most complete aerospace complex in the country.

There are, of course, three sets of factors that affect the decision of which my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Ministry of Defence have to take account—the military, financial, and industrial factors. There are also three Departments of State involved which reflect those three factors: the MOD, the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry. All three should be involved in the decision. The factors have been canvassed at some length, but I shall comment on each of them briefly.

The RAF has started to argue relatively recently that its present C130s are worn out and that they must be replaced before the future large aircraft becomes available. Of course, the C130s were originally intended to last into the next century. It is now clear that they will not, at least not without refurbishment. However, it is also clear that they would last with refurbishment. If that is not clear, it has been made clear from the attitude of Lockheed. Lockheed has said, in its keenness to sell us some new C-130s, that it will take the old ones back, it will refurbish them—that is apparently its intention—and sell them on to other forces. That means that Lockheed does not believe that those aircraft have come to the end of their useful lives.

The RAF also apparently sees no reason to change the basic specification of the C130, in particular the size of the load carried. That is determined by the air frame, which was designed many years ago in the 1950s. Everyone who went to Farnborough knows that there is a vast difference between the load capability of the C130 and that of the FLA—that was obvious from the full-scale model of the FLA on show there. The Warrior and other similar vehicles, as well as guns and so on, would not fit into the C130, but would fit into the FLA.

[Sir John Cope]

Emergencies, such as that which arose in the Gulf last week, as well as events in Bosnia and Somalia, reveal that, in future, it will be important to have the ability to put forces on the ground with their proper equipment quickly. It is a grave disadvantage to have to send equipment by sea.

I happened to do my national service during the Suez emergency. I was in the artillery and my regiment was posted to Suez by air and our guns were sent by sea. Some of the vehicles got there, but we never did. In fact, for lack of air transport we had to leave some of our vehicles in Egypt when those personnel who did get that far came back. That is a wonderful example of why not to separate forces from their equipment. I am therefore extremely conscious of the difficulties caused by trying to put forces on the ground without their proper equipment.

It is difficult to assess the financial considerations behind any decision to go ahead with either the C130 or the FLA, partly because many negotiations and studies are yet to be undertaken, notably the feasibility study mentioned by the hon. Member for Warrington, North. Lockheed emphasises that the initial capital cost of the C130 is lower than that of the FLA, whereas British Aerospace argues that the lifetime costs of the FLA would be lower than those of the C130. Those lifetime costs are the ones that matter, because the Ministry of Defence and the Treasury should make their decision according to them. After all, the House will judge any decision on that basis. The experience of the lifetime costs of the existing C130s should be taken into account.

I will not believe that the RAF's revenue expenditure is under tremendous pressure as long as the university air squadrons exist in their present form. The overwhelming majority of people to whom those squadrons give flying training have no intention, let alone obligation, of entering the RAF. It would not want them if, later, they did decide to join. That flying training is very expensive as well as—to give away my interest in the matter—very noisy to some of my constituents. I am encouraged by paragraph 325 of "Front Line First" which speaks of civilian flying instruction at basic levels. I hope that that means that, in future, all the university air squadrons will confine their activities to organising civilian flying training for undergraduates who are expected to join the RAF. That could be done for a small fraction of the costs now incurred.

Another financial argument about the C130, which surfaced briefly during the proceedings of the Select Committee and earlier this afternoon, is that the timing of a decision on it would mean that its costs would take up some perceived slack in defence procurement expenditure before the coming of the Eurofighter and so help to smooth out the cash flow from the MOD. That argument should be dismissed at once. It is a giant version of the one advanced by departments that stock up with paper clips before the year end, based on the logic that that will preserve their expenditure base line. That argument should not appeal to the Treasury.

As a Treasury Minister, I was recently involved in the long-overdue overhaul of Government accounting. For too long, crude annual cash accounting, long since superseded in commerce, distorted Government financial decisions. This summer's Green Paper on resource accounting, which is now out for consultation, marks the beginning of the end of that process.

The hon. Member for Warrington, North dwelt on the industrial factors involved in any decision. I agree that major advantages could be gained for British industry from ordering the FLA rather than more C130s. One can argue about the detailed figures, as the hon. Gentleman did, but there can be no doubt that far more high-quality work in particular is likely to come to Britain from a project that we help to manage than from permitting an effective world monopoly in the manufacture of this type of aircraft, based in the United States.

It is worth pointing out to the hon. Member for Warrington, North why the United States has had a monopoly for 30 years. We have travelled this route before, because in 1965 the Labour Government cancelled the HS681. That decision has left us at the mercy of the United States for the manufacture of such large military transport aircraft for the past 30 years. The excellent success achieved by Airbus Industrie has given us the chance to break out of that monopoly on military transport manufacture, just as Airbus has recently challenged the Boeing domination of civilian airliner manufacture, which seemed so complete.

Allies are extremely important militarily. That has been said so many times in defence debates that it hardly needs to be repeated. We are all obviously in the debt, in so many ways, of the United States, through NATO and right back through history. We have industrial allies, too, and these days we need them just as much as we compete in the world. If we chose an American aircraft, our companies would be taken out of the front line of European aerospace co-operation which has been so successful recently, particularly through Airbus Industrie. Those who are concerned about the effective management of co-operative projects should be reassured by the fact that Airbus Industrie is involved with the FLA, because it has already been so effective in the Airbus project.

An apparently seductive option exists to postpone the difficult decision on this matter by ordering a few C130s now and leaving the decision about the FLA for a few years. Such a course would be in danger of leaving us with the worst of all worlds. In industrial terms, it would show a half-hearted commitment to the FLA and would mean that we ended up with a poor deal for our industry and had little involvement in the project. Militarily it would also mean that in about 10 years' time we would end up with some fairly newly built C130s, sized for the 1950s, with at the same time too few FLAs designed for the next century. Such a course would be an error militarily and industrially and I do not believe that it would save us any money. Therefore, Ministers should—and I am sure that they will—look very hard at that decision.

Lockheed naturally wants to push us into a quick decision if possible because it wants us as a launch customer with regard to its new C130. It does not have the American Government, so it would like us as a launch customer. That would be good for Lockheed, but it would have the important disadvantage, which has already been stressed, of meaning that a decision would have to be taken before the Euroflag study becomes available. It would be premature to take the decision at that point.

When all the factors are considered, it would be wrong to replace an aircraft that still has life in it with a more souped-up version of the same thing, and which is now so old, instead of waiting for the better plane to become available. It would also be a costly mistake in this case for us to buy American and to damage one of our own world-class industries.

6.50 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Like others, I was much taken by the Secretary of State's reference to Hugo Young's article of 14 July 1994. Showing characteristic modesty, the Secretary of State forbore to tell us about the parts of the article which referred to himself— *[Interruption.]* I see from the Secretary of State's response to that observation that he is aware that he featured to some extent in the article.

During a fairly iconoclastic look at these matters, Mr. Young said:

> "When this year's public spending was being hacked over last autumn, the Ministry of Defence thought it might have to lose £500 million from its next three-year programme. In fact it was told to find more than double that. Mr. Rifkind emerged shattered from EDX, the relevant Cabinet committee. The horse-trading between ministers showed he had no friends. Chancellor Clarke, a notorious envelope man, was quite content to pin him to a figure that was little more refined than the residual of every other spender's."

Mr. Young has the advantage of not having to make such decisions and not having to shadow those who have to make those decisions. It is therefore perhaps easier for him than for others to strike out in all directions.

What has emerged so far from this debate is a general recognition that there has been a substantial period of change for the armed services and for the defence industry and, in both sectors, there is now a considerable desire for a period of calm and stability. Accepting that, I do not believe that that precludes us from continuing to conduct the necessary exercise to match commitments with resources. I rather favour the view of those who argue that simply to call for a defence review in all circumstances is not an answer to some of the difficult questions that we are bound to face.

Indeed, if a defence review is to have any value, it will provide not the answers but the questions. The answers will have to be provided afterwards. Such questions will have a point only if we ask them against the background of clearly stated foreign policy objectives. A review would have a point only if we were willing to increase resources if, on a proper review, we determined that our commitments required that.

To call for a review is simply only part of the necessary analysis if commitments and resources are to be properly matched. Ministers frequently say, "Well, we do this on an on-going basis." Many people—not least Mr. Young, as those who read his article might discover—are anxious about the fact that many recent decisions have not been predicated upon substantial long-term strategic thinking.

To embark on a study of the costs of defence is entirely sensible. However, it is not sensible to say that the commitments for which that defence is provided should be excluded. What comparable organisation with a budget of £23 billion, anxious to ensure that it was obtaining value for money, would not consider the relevance of what it was spending money on as much as how that money was being spent?

In his announcement on 14 July, the Secretary of State proposed the joint rapid deployment force and the procurement of Tomahawk cruise missiles. They represent an enhancement of capability. They are clearly designed to meet a commitment other than that of home defence. We do not acquire additional capability without an analysis of the need for that capability. By parity of reasoning, it seems that one should not reduce expenditure or capability without analysis of need.

If, as the Defence Select Committee concluded—reference has already been made to this—the defence costs study proposals will result in reduced stocks and a reduction in manpower margins and will extend the service life of some vehicles, what guarantee can we have that capability will not be affected? I accept that the Secretary of State told the House a little while ago that the MoD would bring the upmost rigour to such matters. However, if he had been standing here in the summer of 1989 and not 1990 and the same point had been put to him about the state of our armoured divisions in Germany, I have no doubt that he would have responded in precisely the same way.

The truth is that one knows the extent to which capability may have been affected only when one creates the very operational circumstances, to which the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) referred, in the context of enhancing the ability of individual soldiers. As has already been said, we are all aware that the Gulf war showed up the very sorry state of the equipment in some of our armoured divisions. It showed that we had insufficient ammunition for the 155 mm howitzer, which gave rise to the rather undignified exchanges that we had to have with the Belgian Government on that matter.

As the Secretary of State properly recognised, the Defence Select Committee has expressed anxiety about the fact that the defence costs studies might become an annual exercise. The Secretary of State gave a round "no" to that. We accept his word. However, if another Secretary of State for Defence is subjected to something like an annual exercise, some hon. Members—I put it no more strongly than this—would be particularly disappointed.

There is an important test. Will all the identified savings be available to the Secretary of State for Defence to spend as he thinks fit? The Secretary of State was asked about that and I believe that I am correct to say that he was unable to give an unequivocal affirmative. He referred to the Tomahawk programme and the rapid deployment force as additional capability that could be found. However, he did not seem to be able to say that everything saved as a result of the defence costs studies would be ploughed back in some other form into the defence budget.

Like many hon. Members, I have received extensive representations about installations that are the subject of proposals in the defence costs studies. I do not want to deal with them from a constituency point of view because I am well aware that other hon. Members have a very keen interest in these matters with regard to their constituents. However, I want to refer to one or two installations because they raise larger questions.

Also like many hon. Members, I have received extensive representations about the Eaglescliffe royal naval stores depot. My question—this is a question which all hon. Members might want answered because it may be our constituencies next—is why did it apparently take approximately six weeks to issue the consultation

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document after the Secretary of State's announcement? Do not those whose jobs are affected deserve something better and more efficient?

Is not there a principle that, when decisions have such material consequences, it is essential that consultations should be seen to be more than simply ritualistic? As we know, the United States has an independent mechanism for determining such issues. It might be difficult to import such a mechanism into the United Kingdom, but any one of us may have to face a proposal with the same effect in his or her constituency. It is surely in the interests of all hon. Members and of our constituents that those matters are fairly and reasonably dealt with.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): The hon. and learned Gentleman raises an important point as to the period of consultation and how long it takes to produce the papers. First, it is plain that if the papers are to stand up to the rigour of close examination, they must be properly put together. Some of the information is difficult to come by and it takes time to put it together. Therefore, because of the weight of work, some have taken longer than others.

Secondly, we have been extremely flexible about consultation and we shall continue to be so. The whole point of that is that consultation should be an entirely genuine process. All views should be garnered so that Ministers may consider in full detail what they have seen.

Mr. Campbell: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not think me churlish when I say that I am much more heartened by the second part than by the first part of his answer. If, on one view of what he said, those decisions were taken when the necessary information had not all been assembled, it would give substance to the apprehension that many people have expressed about the way in which those decisions were arrived at.

An overwhelming case has been made against the closure of Rosyth naval base, from an economic standpoint—a case marshalled by Fife regional council, supported by the Fraser of Allander Institute. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire), in whose constituency that installation is to be found, will want to say rather more about those matters, but I approach them from the point of view of what I conceive to be the important strategic issues. I begin by ignoring the rather arid discussion in Scottish newspapers about whether a base without ships can properly be a base at all. What is important is the nature of the activities carried on in the installation.

It is clear that once the minor war vessels go from Rosyth, the remaining defence functions will not then depend on any particular locational characteristics that Rosyth possesses. That is to say that they could as easily be done elsewhere. If, as we know, the two dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth are to be privatised, those defence functions that remain at the base when the minor war vessels go could as easily be carried out in the neighbouring dockyard. If that were so, the case for the retention of the base, if it is entitled to that description, becomes severely weakened. There is no doubt that if the Rosyth naval base were to be closed, it would almost certainly never reopen.

That has operational implications for the Royal Navy because it would severely restrict its ability to fulfil its obligation to ensure the integrity of the United Kingdom's territorial waters, an obligation which is recognised in the defence estimates. I have in mind particularly the oil and gas installations of the North sea and, of course, the important fishing industry, of which part at least is located in my constituency.

Strategically, closure of the base would assume that never again would there be a need for substantial naval operations in northern waters. I do not feel qualified or, perhaps more important, sufficiently optimistic about the obligations that the Royal Navy might face to answer that question unequivocally in the affirmative. These are not matters dreamt up by those who are anxious to preserve the base at all costs; they are considerations which have been supported by Mr. David Greenwood, the director of the centre for defence studies at Aberdeen university, and they are also, of course, to some extent supported by the conclusions of the Defence Select Committee itself. The proposals for the base should be reassessed from both operational and strategic considerations.

There is another important point in this period of rapid and sometimes difficult change. In some cases, the long-term consequences for defence-based communities will clearly be extremely damaging. It is only natural that those consequences are causing considerable apprehension. There is a feeling that the Government have no strategy, no policy for managing that change and are content simply to leave it to the market. I choose another example—no doubt the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) will give a detailed account of it—a community such as Portland. How will the market cope with the economic and social consequences if the proposals for Portland are carried through? I find it difficult to conceive how that can be achieved.

Mr. Ian Bruce: The hon. and learned Gentleman has mentioned my constituency. Does he accept that it is much more sensible for the Government to use existing enterprise Departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Employment and so on? Although I shall always plead for more money and more help, since January our unemployment has been going down faster than that of almost any other area.

Mr. Campbell: If unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency has been going down, that is something to be thankful for. I wish that it was true in Fife, of which my constituency forms part. I do not think that what he is saying is antagonistic to the view that, when there is a substantial closure with substantial economic and social effects, there should be a strategy for managing that change. In the United States, where capitalism reigns supreme, one of the first acts of the Clinton Administration was to establish an office for that very purpose. A further issue is dockyard privatisation, to which I have already referred. What assessment has been made of the economic and social consequences of that?

Reference has been made to Bosnia. I do not wish to detain the House long on that theatre of operations for our forces. Like the Secretary of State for Defence and, indeed, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, I think that any removal or relaxation of the arms embargo would be dangerous and would risk not only the achievements of UNPROFOR and, in particular, the British forces who have serve in it, but the whole achievement of the United Nations in that difficult area.

Of course, the Government have a weapon that they can use if the matter is raised in the Security Council—the exercise of the veto. So far, the public statement on behalf of the Government is that, although they disapprove of any relaxation of the embargo, if the matter goes to the Security Council their intention is to abstain and not to exercise the veto. I cannot help thinking that, if the strength of their opposition to the embargo is as great as it appears, it would be more logical to use the veto than simply to abstain.

The performance of troops in Bosnia is conditioned to some extent at least by the fact that for 25 years our forces have kept a difficult and often dangerous peace in Northern Ireland. If there is a political settlement, which no doubt all hon. Members hope and pray for, it would obviously have the consequence of reducing the military obligation there, but I hope—I was encouraged to some extent by the Secretary of State's response to such matters—that it will not be regarded as an excuse for a raid on the defence budget. It would be an opportunity for us to make available to the United Nations the skills and techniques that we have learnt in Northern Ireland and about which the right hon. Member for Bridgwater was rightly eloquent.

Our troops have become, perforce, probably the best counter-insurgency troops in the world. Those skills and techniques are clearly much more likely to be sought by the United Nations than the full-scale armour-based confrontation that we saw in the Gulf. Therefore, as our effort in Bosnia has been so outstanding, it is legitimate to say that a relaxation of the commitment in Northern Ireland would permit us to contribute even more if necessary.

The United Nations cannot be allowed to go on as it is without reform—here I echo to some extent the remarks of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). The United Nations requires better intelligence gathering, better organisation to provide military advice for the Secretary-General, a United Nations staff college to train in the techniques of peacekeeping, mechanisms to guarantee the quality of peacekeeping forces, assigned peacekeeping contingents from member nations which are able to move at short notice and, most important of all, security of funding. There have been occasions since 1990 when it has sadly lacked all of those.

Like other hon. Members, I continue to believe that, for the foreseeable future, the United Kingdom will be required to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent but that it should truly be a minimum deterrent. In accordance with NATO's nuclear doctrine, such weapons should be weapons of last resort. Their justification lies in self-defence against the use, or the threat of use, of nuclear weapons by others. We should bind ourselves to use them only in response to a clear nuclear threat and against military targets. We should say transparently that there will be no more warheads on Trident than the Polaris system which it is to replace—and, indeed, there may be fewer.

Perhaps the more significant nuclear issue that we must face in the short term is that of proliferation. There is a clear connection between the non-proliferation treaty and a comprehensive test ban treaty. Lord Carrington recognised that in 1982, when he pointed out that a test ban would curb the development of new warheads and demonstrate the good faith of those powers possessing nuclear weapons to those who had, under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, surrendered the right to develop nuclear weapons. In that context, I do not think that one can pray in aid any more persuasive an authority than Lord Carrington, who was the Foreign Secretary at the time.

It will be for us to ensure that we fulfil our obligations under article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty, which binds us to negotiate to end the nuclear arms race. The comprehensive test ban treaty is an essential piece of the security architecture to help us towards that.

Different views on Europe were expressed in Bournemouth last week. It is worth reminding ourselves that, whatever those expressions of view may have been, the Maastricht treaty established a structure for a common foreign and security policy. Leaving aside political considerations, I am firmly of the view that economic considerations, as much as political ones, will drive this. The issues of interoperability, common procurement and force specialisation will be forced on to the agenda for financial reasons as much as political ones. They will not come about overnight; it will be a matter of evolution. If the Secretary of State for Defence was accurately reported in *The Daily Telegraph* on 10 May, the

> "evolution of an EC defence policy was an 'inevitable consequence' of the Maastricht Treaty".

We already see illustrations of it in the Anglo-Dutch amphibious force and in the Euro corps, to which units from France, Germany, Belgium and Spain are now assigned. Indeed, one might argue that the combined joint task forces agreed at the NATO summit in January are a further illustration of the development of that European defence identity.

I shall conclude by saying a word or two about procurement. The support helicopter and the Hercules replacement are important not only in themselves but because of the contribution that they make to mobility and flexibility. Indeed, one could argue that the fact that our troops are deployed in Kuwait at present is eloquent testimony to the fact that mobility and flexibility will continue to be important criteria against which we determine our defence expenditure and, indeed, our procurement decisions.

I do not want to get into the extended debate about the future large aircraft as compared to the C130J except to say that the Select Committee on Defence carefully considered those matters. Indeed, the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), may feel obliged to refer to some of them. I do not accept the view that we should simply cast aside the suggestion that we should procure some C130J aircraft now and wait until the future large aircraft comes on stream.

I hope that all hon. Members who have an interest in those matters will apply to the Royal Air Force for permission to fly in one of the existing Hercules fleet. I think that they will find that an extremely illuminating experience. The argument that the aircraft may have to be continued until the year 2002 or 2004, whether or not they are refurbished, will perhaps not be as strong at 5,000 ft as it is here in the Chamber.

The attack helicopter and the European fighter aircraft are important because they will maintain the quality of our capability. We have an obligation never to ask our

[Mr. Campbell]

forces to go to war without the best available equipment. The European fighter aircraft was supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Indeed, I was one of those who was dispatched to Bonn shortly after the last election—in high style, I might say—to lobby our political opposite numbers.

The European fighter aircraft is fundamentally important to the aerospace industry, but its importance for the Royal Air Force cannot be underestimated. Therefore, I hope that the Government will have taken to heart the robust observations of the right hon. Member for Bridgwater. Too many hon. Members have invested too much time and effort, and I suppose emotion, in the European fighter aircraft for us to allow it simply to slide off the scale because of some difficulties with cost overruns.

Since "Options for Change" in July 1990, the debate in defence has largely been a financial one. There has been little effort to look beyond the next public expenditure round. Perhaps that was inevitable in the light of the state of the economy. It could be argued that defence cannot be exempt from what is happening in the wider economy. However, we now need to look further ahead in the debate. United Kingdom expenditure in real terms should not be cut further, and we should recognise that Europe might have to increase its defence expenditure if its security is at risk. Much of the optimism of the immediate post-cold war euphoria has gone. That now needs to be replaced with realism and some long-term strategic thinking.

7.17 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I am delighted to speak in this debate. I am particularly delighted that, for the first time in the two years or so that I have been Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, I will not have to lambast my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench for their current policy.

I was pleased to hear that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence had read the Committee's report on the defence costs study, and I welcome what he said about it. I was less enthusiastic to learn that most hon. Members who have spoken so far, apart from the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who is a member of the Defence Committee, appear not to have read the report on the Hercules replacement because the conclusions that they seem to have drawn are wholly incompatible with the argument put forward in the paper we have published and the conclusions we have drawn. I shall return to that matter briefly in a few moments.

The Select Committee has published seven papers that are relevant to the debate. I hope that hon. Members will take the opportunity to glance at them because they contribute in a way that I do not have time to do today. We have published the defence costs study report, the Hercules replacement report, a report on the defence estimates, and reports on Trident, the Eurofighter, the RAF and Operation Granby. All those things are relevant to what we are now discussing.

Before I examine the highlights of three of those reports, I shall take up one or two of the points made by my right hon. and learned Friend. First, I shall refer to the NATO initiatives and in particular the partnership for peace. The Defence Committee has spent most of this year researching a NATO report which we hope to make available to the House by the end of the year. Our research has taken us to Moscow and Kiev, and we have met representatives from virtually all the states in the old CIS and their neighbouring countries. We have seen people from the Baltic states, Georgia, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. I almost said Slovenia, but that is one country that we have not yet got round to meeting. I had the pleasure of skiing there last year, but that is not strictly relevant to the debate.

When we publish our report, we will certainly emphasise the importance of the partnership for peace on two fronts. First, it is a route into NATO for those countries that will eventually qualify for membership but have not yet reached that stage and, secondly, and at least as importantly, it will act in its own right as a link between NATO and Western European Union countries and those further to our east which are unlikely, for a variety of reasons, to be able to or wish to join NATO.

It is important that we do not extend the NATO cover in such a way as it threatens the feeling of security within Russia. We should not rush but move gently in the direction of extending NATO, while establishing a close rapport with Russia at least so long as it maintains the benevolent leadership that it currently enjoys. On that front, I welcome the joint military exercises that we are now carrying out with Russia and some other countries from that part of the world. I hope that we shall be able to extend that programme and increase it in the years to come.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made some comments about "Options for Change". Of course I welcome, as does the Defence Select Committee, the stability that has been announced and the fact that there will be no more major upheavals in the next—

Mr. Martlew: Wait and see.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I believe what my right hon. and learned Friend says. I have no doubt that we will now enter a period of stability in our armed forces for which we have called for a long time but which has not been available since "Options for Change" was first implemented. The forces have gone through traumatic change. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in congratulating them on the way in which they have handled those traumas and responded to the enormous demands that have been put upon them.

I do not believe—this is a personal view, not one that is necessarily unanimous within the Defence Committee—that the Opposition's proposal of a review would be remotely helpful at this time, for all the reasons that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave. It would be extremely disruptive to launch on yet another review just when a period of stability can be offered.

There is a good paper on defence reviews in the Library which I warmly recommend. All the history of reviews of that nature shows that they have been disastrous. On every occasion, the basic facts on which the review was based changed, if not by the time the review was published, shortly afterwards. In the present situation, a review carried out a year ago would not have taken into account a likely renewal of violence in Iraq. A review carried out three or four years ago certainly would not have anticipated the events in Bosnia. I should not like to say today what the position will be, where new conflicts might arise or what new demands might be made in three years' time when we have a similar debate in the House. I do not believe that a review of the type recommended by Opposition Members would be to the advantage of the country as a whole or the armed services in particular.

I now turn to the reports that the Defence Select Committee has published. First, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, in our report on the defence costs study we expressed reservations about the possible consequences of some of the proposals on front-line capability, even though the proposals were aimed at the logistic follow-up. For example, we are worried about the potential risk of running down our stores too far and of lengthening the in-service life of vehicles. The life of vehicles might be taken to a point at which the vehicles ceased to be reliable. Although most of the vehicles in question are not front-line vehicles, some are and others are needed to supply the front line. It would not be safe to extend the life of those vehicles beyond a certain point. That will have to be watched closely. Likewise, the reduction in manpower margins could give cause for concern if it is not sensitively handled.

I bring to the attention of the House three other anxieties about SDE 94. The first is the emergency tour interval. It is clear to me—the conclusion drawn by the Committee as a whole concurred with my view—that originally the 24-month average, as it is now described, was intended by all those involved in drawing it up to be a 24-month minimum gap between emergency tours of service. Indeed, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave evidence to the Defence Committee, he initially said that himself. Only when I received a letter a few days later was that corrected as an inaccurate reflection of the facts. I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend was right in the first place and that when his bureaucrats corrected him they were putting a slant on the proposal which the chiefs of staff had not intended when they agreed the policy. I should like to see 24 months introduced as a minimum as soon as possible. I hope that that will become possible in the next couple of years. Whether it becomes possible in that time depends entirely on whether we can run down our numbers of troops in Northern Ireland. That is impossible to predict at this time.

Secondly, the Committee was worried about the failure to reduce civilian numbers in parallel with military numbers. Although in senior ranks that is occurring, the vast bulk of the civil servants are either executive officer or higher executive officer grade and in those grades no cuts whatever have been managed. Indeed, the numbers have increased. The explanation given to the Committee was that the extra personnel were needed to manage the cuts elsewhere, but I was not entirely convinced by that argument. There is a real worry that the move forward into agencies and devolution and delegation of responsibility across the nation could lead to a plethora of new jobs in local staff and administration. We could end up, as happened years ago when we reorganised local government, with precisely the opposite effect to that intended and find ourselves with far more civilian personnel in management roles and executive back-up than we intended or need. We shall have to watch closely the tendency in any bureaucracy to spawn new jobs within itself. We shall have to make sure that they are reduced as currently planned.

My third complaint about SDE 94 is minor, provided that it does not reflect what is happening in other areas. For many years the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" included 2.5 per cent. of the defence costs for the security and intelligence services. However, there was absolutely no way of discerning that fact by reading the SDE reports. I hope that one of my ministerial colleagues will assure the House that no similar generic figures are tucked away in the current defence estimates which might be treated in the same way as those for the intelligence services. Apart from those matters, we welcome what is stated in SDE 94 and the defence costs study.

I wish to say a few words about Hercules, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) suggested that I probably would. Those who have called for a delayed decision on the Hercules replacement so that the FLA can be fully evaluated are wrong. They are wrong particularly because that would not allow us to replace Hercules until 2002 or 2005 in reality. There is no doubt that the current Hercules fleet cannot be merely run on and continue to provide the fleet that the RAF requires without a massive mid-line update.

It is an unfortunate fact that in 1993 at least half the Hercules in service were not in service at all because they were not airworthy or in active service. That position will deteriorate by 1998 and would deteriorate further if we were to take no action then. By 2002, the position would be intolerable. Until the aircraft have been stripped down, it is impossible to say what will be the maintenance costs of merely keeping the aircraft going in their present state. All our experience shows that it is much more expensive to do so than originally anticipated. It would almost certainly be more expensive to do so than to replace half the fleet in 1998 with Hercules, leaving the option of buying FLA when they are available six or seven years later. I endorse that recommendation by the Select Committee because it is the only way in which we can satisfy the need for flexibility and mobility in our armed forces over the next decade.

I am conscious of the time so I shall resist the temptation to cover the other reports or to add to the debate by speaking to the other issues that have been covered. I shall end by summarising what I believe to be the needs for the defence of the realm over the coming 10 years. As I have said, I welcome the fact that we are no longer on the downslip of cuts and that we can look forward to a period of stability. The armed services need that, and it is the most that we can ask of the Government at this time in view of the limitations on the amount of money that can reasonably be made available for our armed services.

However, the Committee has concluded—and I believe the conclusion to be correct—that the nation does not have the long-term defences that we are likely to require. At Bournemouth, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made two statements with which, sadly, I disagree. First, he said categorically that there will not be a third world war. That was a bold statement. I recall reading that the last time somebody made such a statement was in 1919 after the "war to end all wars". There is no real reason for us to feel confident that within our lifetimes this country will not be embroiled once again

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

in a major war, and our defence policy should reflect that assumption. The Foreign Secretary was mistaken in his base for our foreign policy.

To secure our long-term future we need about 10,000 more soldiers. As General Sir Martin Farndale rightly said, if we had that increased number we should be able to flesh out units without having to denude other units to reinforce active ones. We had to do that recently and will probably have to do it for the foreseeable future. Secondly, such an increase would enable us to give our troops the brigade, divisional and specific role training in which they have been sadly lacking over the past two or three years.

As the House knows, we had to use Royal Artillery personnel in Northern Ireland, and they and other specialist arms were taken from their specialist role and trained for an infantry and peacekeeping role in Northern Ireland, after which they had to be debriefed and retrained for Royal Artillery roles. As a result, there have been virtually no divisional infantry, artillery and cavalry exercises over that period. I understand that none is planned for the immediate future, certainly not involving all three services. We need more soldiers so that that can be done and so that we do not need to cadreise, as we have had to do, some of our units. A regiment that should consist of two battalions should have two battalions and the current habit of cadreising down is not adequate for our long-term defence needs.

The Royal Navy has 35 frigates and I congratulate the Ministry of Defence on fixing on that figure—even if it is far too low. As the House will recall, until now the complement has been "about 50" or "about" 45, 40 or 38. But the trouble with 35 is that only 24 ships are seaworthy at any given time. That is not enough, even for our peacetime needs, and it certainly does not allow the Royal Navy to carry out the role that it should fulfil of waving the flag around the globe. The value of the White Ensign to our trade and to the way in which our people are greeted in countries to which they go to sell our products cannot be overestimated.

We tend badly to underestimate the importance that people, and especially those in the far east where our trade will now grow rapidly, place on face, and a military unit from this country gives Britain face. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary once described it as punching well above our weight. On that occasion he was right: that is what we can demonstrably do, and we must make sure that we broadcast it where we wish to be seen.

Last, but by no means least, I shall deal with the Royal Air Force. There is much high-tech kit that the RAF should have, for example in avionics, to enable it to defend itself against ground-to-air missiles. We cannot afford to fit our squadrons with such equipment at the moment, and they need to be given the extra resources to enable that to be done.

Most important, within the next 10 to 15 years we will face a serious ballistic missile threat. I am not necessarily suggesting that a missile will be fired at us, but I certainly suggest that people who are perfectly capable of firing one at us and who might be stupid enough to do so will be equipped with such missiles. At the moment, they are not so equipped. I am obviously thinking of Libya and some other unstable middle east countries as well as other possibilities. We must embark upon the installation of a ballistic missile defence system, and it must be done in conjunction with the Americans and with our European allies. We must ensure that, within the next decade, we are armed with such a system. We would grossly betray our duty to defend this kingdom if we felt, for whatever reason, that we had to make savings in that area.

There is still a great deal to be done before I can tell the House that I am confident that we have the defences that we need. However, I warmly congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on the way in which he has set about defence costs studies and on the way in which he has limited the damage that Treasury demands have caused to our defences. I assure him of my personal support and, I am sure, of the support of almost every hon. Member in his endeavours to ensure that we have a stable future during which we can rebuild to the levels that are necessary to secure our freedoms.

7.37 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): At the recent Labour party conference it was agreed that a future Labour Government should scrap Trident and link our defence expenditure to the average of other western European countries. That resolution is especially relevant to a debate on defence estimates of approximately £23,000 million. I shall give some estimates of my own. If we linked our defence expenditure to the average of other western European countries, we would make savings of about £8,200 million. As the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament shows, with those savings we could build 11,375 council houses; run 910 secondary schools for a year; maintain 8,736 home dialysis machines; provide water supplies for 1,820 villages in Africa; pay 54,000 nurses for a year; pay 36,000 teachers for a year; pay 1,822 hospital consultants for a year; support 305,760 hip or similar operations; and support a health and literacy programme for more than 17 million people in India. That could be done with just one year's defence savings.

Putting aside those savings, which would result from linking our defence expenditure in the way that I described, what of the savings from the so-called peace dividend since the mid-1980s? For example, military expenditure in 1984-85 was 5.5 per cent. of our GDP. Some 10 years later, in 1994-95, that has been reduced to 3.5 per cent. If we had maintained spending at the 1984-85 level, we should now be debating defence estimates of about £28,000 million. Therefore, the peace dividend is worth £5,400 million in the current year and £27,700 million over the past decade. What has happened to the peace dividend? It has gone the way of North sea oil—funding the unemployment programme.

Whether we are discussing our failure to link our defence expenditure to the average of that of other western European countries or our failure to benefit from the peace dividend, we have lost not only the opportunity to benefit from investment in the great services and projects that I have already mentioned, but all the skills, talents and creativity that have been used in preparing for war when they could have been used for peaceful purposes.

For me, that was best summed up by General Eisenhower 40 years ago, when he said:

> "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who are old and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone, it is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists and the hopes of its children."

The new Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), seems to find that funny, but I hope that he will respond to my point. Will he tell us: what is the use of Trident and who are the missiles aimed at? Who is the enemy? At one time, we were told that the enemy was the Soviet Union, but the Government have now admitted that our missiles are not directed at Russia and Russia has admitted that its missiles are not targeted at Britain or the United States.

In chapter 2 of the 1994 defence estimates, the Government recognise that

> "our defence policy must accommodate the continuing change in the strategic setting."

The Government are right and it should, but unfortunately they have not responded to that continuing change. For many years, they told us that the Soviet Union was the enemy and that it was planning a nuclear confrontation with the west. I never believed that—indeed, I never even regarded it as a possibility. It was simply an excuse to justify our nuclear build-up. But at least we knew then who the Government believed the enemy to be. Will they tell us who the enemy is today and who the nuclear missiles are aimed at?

While the world has changed, the Government continue with the madness of nuclear weapons. Their defence policy has not accommodated the change in the global position. Does any hon. Member honestly believe that any country at this present time is planning a nuclear confrontation with the west? I have to say that even if that were to be the case, I could never accept the use of nuclear weapons because they are no defence, for they would destroy not only the so-called enemy, but the people and the environment that we were purportedly defending. Even if they were never used in anger, they have destroyed people's lives where uranium has been mined, by the fall-out from nuclear testing and from the cancers caused by the production and processing of nuclear explosives, such as at Sellafield and Aldermaston.

As far back as 1955, Robert Oppenheimer recognised the danger. When he was asked on American television whether it was true that humans had already discovered a method of destroying humanity, he replied:

> "Not quite. You can certainly destroy enough of humanity so that only the greatest act of faith can persuade you that what is left will be human."

What was true in 1955 is even more true today, with the tens of thousands, rather than hundreds, of nuclear warheads in existence.

If anyone doubts the dangers of nuclear weapons or the devastation that would result from, for example, nuclear fall-out, he need only consider the problems of the Welsh farms that are still affected by the disaster that hit Chernobyl eight years ago and from some 2,000 miles away. However, tragic as that disaster was, it would be nothing compared with a nuclear war. For example, Chernobyl's effects were like the Doomsday neutron bomb. Now abandoned, it was designed to kill people, plants and animals, but to leave buildings standing. The detonation of even the smallest nuclear weapon in the world's vast arsenals would destroy all life around it, pulverise buildings and leave a haunted devastation. Let us not forget the psychological traumas still suffered by the survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Even the grandchildren of the survivors are suffering trauma today.

The development of Trident also threatens the non-proliferation treaty. The all-party Defence Committee said in its latest report on what it called progress with Trident:

> "Trident's accuracy and sophistication does—and was always intended to—represent a significant enhancement of the UK's nuclear capability. We have invested a great deal of money to make it possible to attack more targets with greater effectiveness using nominally equivalent explosive power."

That makes a nonsense of the Government's claim that Trident is a minimum nuclear deterrent.

How can the increase in nuclear firepower that will be available with Trident be reconciled with the commitment in article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty

> "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament."?

In reality, Trident is a clear example of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and a violation of the non-proliferation treaty.

Why should the 160 non-nuclear power states that have signed the NPT give the nuclear weapons states unlimited carte blanche to keep their nuclear weapons for ever, without being able to use any leverage to ensure that article 6 is implemented? Why do the British Government recognise in their defence estimates some of the emergent security challenges as a result of—and I quote from paragraph 204—the

> "spread of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction and large-scale environmental threats"

yet still involve themselves in the obscenity of the arms trade, promoting those very same weapons of mass destruction and threatening that very same environment?

The Government are violating not only article 6 of the NPT, but article 1. I want to quote that short article, which states:

> "Each nuclear weapons state, party to the treaty, undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever"—

and I repeat, "any recipient whatsoever"—

> "nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly."

Yet Greenpeace rightly points out that about 30 per cent. of the Trident initial procurement costs are being spent in the USA and it lists five key areas where the USA has given direct assistance in the production of the Trident nuclear weapons system.

That is not the only violation of article 1 of the NPT. The Sandia nuclear weapons research laboratory in the United States has designed aiming-fusing-firing mechanisms for all UK nuclear weapons—according to an admission by the vice-president of the laboratory, who was quoted in the American publication "Inside Energy" on 9 May. The Government policy on non-proliferation and the NPT is riddled with hypocrisy. It is a policy which demands of others, "Do as we say, not as we do."

[Mr. Llew Smith]

The Government still see their role as wanting to rule the waves; they still see leadership in terms of military power. That is highlighted in their defence estimates when they proclaim:

> "The United Kingdom remains one of the world's most formidable military powers. Only the United States, Russia and France can deploy as broad a range of capabilities as the armed forces of the United Kingdom."

Surely there are other ways of being world leaders, as Norway's leadership showed in acting as honest brokers between the Israelis and the Palestinians. That is my estimate of the leadership that we should seek to emulate. That is the world role that we should play, not one based on nuclear weapons and a defence expenditure of £23,000 million. It is role and a defence expenditure which I shall vote against.

7.48 pm

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): It is good to hear the unreconstructed voice of the Labour party all over again. I look forward to hearing the Opposition Front Bench responding to that. I am only sorry that the new Leader of the Opposition could not be here to give his response. Together with my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), I am delighted, unusually, to welcome the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I am delighted also that, in his words, no further defence cuts will be contemplated. I cannot speak for my friends in the armed forces, but I believe that they will be reassured by the comments of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last week and of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State today.

Stability is desperately needed. The successful defence costs study made by the former Minister of State for Defence Procurement, my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), largely identified sensible savings. My right hon. Friend deserves credit for his sympathetic handling and for the support and confidence of the armed forces that he gained during that study. It created great apprehension, but was generally accepted as worth while, and it produced a sensible and pragmatic result.

I welcome the new Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). I should be grateful if he clarified one outstanding point from the defence costs study. What exactly will be the size of the Army after implementation and the current restructuring? I have read media reports of a British Army of 116,000, but I thought that it was to number 120,000. If the figure is 116,000, a further major reduction in manpower has slipped through and the troops reduced have not been reallocated to the front line as promised.

Although I welcome the comments of my right hon. and learned Friend, restructuring of the armed forces is continuing, although nearly complete. New conditions, new units, new regiments and new commanders must be got used to, and we must allow the new structure to settle down to allow new members to believe in the value of a career in the armed forces, and to allow morale and new regimental identities to be established.

For that reason, I want to ask my hon. Friend the Minister two questions about stability. In the current public expenditure round, will any further reduction in allocated defence spending be entailed? As my hon. Friend knows, defence spending has reduced from 5 per cent. of gross domestic product about six years ago to some 3 per cent. in the next financial year. That unique reduction is occurring in a declining security situation—as we have seen in the Gulf, Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia, northern Iraq and so on.

My second question concerns the Bett review, which is causing great concern. According to an excellent document published by the Library last Friday, information about that review is hard to come by. Lord Carver, a former Chief of the Defence Staff, recently said of the review:

> "The effect on the morale of the services in every rank is potentially even greater and certainly more widespread than that of either 'Options for Change' or 'Front Line First'."

The Bett review's terms of reference certainly give me no cause for comfort.

There are rumours of buying in yet further services from the private sector, which is a dangerous route to follow. There is to be further examination of private sector practice, but the armed forces are not a smarter uniformed and more disciplined version of Tesco or of BT, of which Mr. Bett is a former deputy chairman.

If the armed forces were driven solely by considerations of remuneration, nobody would join. It is one of the few professions from which one increases one's pay on becoming a Member of Parliament. My hon. Friend the Minister knows that from personal experience.

There is talk also of scrapping the boarding school allowance. Last month, I spoke to a friend whose son has attended nine different schools in 11 years because of my friend's moves and his wish not to send his son to boarding school. To say that life in the armed forces is the same as civilian life is ludicrous. The strains of service life will continue, as will the strains that it places on marriages and families. I know of excellent officers and soldiers who left the Army because of the strain on their marriages. The House must recognise the difference and the unique conditions under which members of our armed forces serve the country and the House.

Above all, I draw to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister a point that I have made before. Of all our institutions—the monarchy, Parliament and the police—only the armed forces have retained the respect and affection of the British public. They deserve that respect. Recently, the police themselves issued a report noting that they enjoyed a 69 per cent. approval rating from the public but that the armed forces enjoyed 85 per cent.

Mr. Martlew: Will the hon. Gentleman expand on his comment about the monarchy?

Mr. Robathan: That is not really worthy of the hon. Gentleman. As he knows, we are discussing the defence estimates. I am sure that he is capable, as I am, of reading the newspapers.

Mr. Bett's review may be full of radical, clever and commercial ideas, but it has the potential to destroy the standards, traditions and structures of the armed forces that are the reason for the regard in which the armed forces are held at home and abroad. It is precisely old-fashioned ideas of loyalty and service in disloyal and selfish times, and of discipline in our ill-disciplined society, which are behind the high reputation enjoyed by the armed forces. We tinker with that at our peril. We should put at risk the very institution that the whole House—possibly with the exception of those seated on the back row of the Opposition Benches—wishes to preserve.

There is even talk of a one-rank structure. We are told that there is only one management structure in industry. If we do not offer decent careers to intelligent officers such as Sir Michael Rose—about whom my right hon. and learned Friend has spoken—we shall not attract intelligent officers such as him. Sir Michael is illustrative, but not unique. There are many highly intelligent, capable, well-educated and well-qualified people in the armed forces who serve willingly in present conditions for not great remuneration. I doubt whether they will be attracted by performance-related pay, single management structures or any other slick phrase better suited to a commercial organisation. I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will comment.

Earlier, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State spoke about the level of troops in Northern Ireland. If—as we all wish, and God willing—the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister succeeds and the present ceasefire leads to permanent peace, troop levels inevitably will be reduced. I urge the Government to reduce the extra troops taken out of the 11th and 12th Infantry battalions early in 1992. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to return those two battalions as soon as possible, so that current overstretch may be reduced this year, not next year. While the ceasefire lasts, I do not believe that we need to keep those troops in Northern Ireland, and we can always reinforce if necessary.

Can my hon. Friend the Minister reassure the House that if Operation Banner ends altogether, the Government will not take the opportunity to reduce the Army still further? We have a tiny Army. I can imagine some bright civil servant—perhaps one sitting in the Box on my left—suggesting that those troops are no longer needed. That would be to miss the point. The situation has been overstretched 25 years. Northern Ireland was talked of in terms of emergency tours, extra to normal duties. I trust that peace will not be used as an opportunity to reduce the infantry or the Army yet further.

I refer briefly to the future of RAF medium-support helicopters. My sole concern is to see the best helicopter available flying for British armed forces. A medium-support helicopter is exactly that—one that provides support, usually to the Army. I am keen to support British industry, but when I attended the Farnborough air show last month, the EH101 appeared small and limited by comparison with the Chinook. I have flown many miles in Chinooks, and I know it to be an exceptional aircraft. I understand that the EH101 is designed for naval use and may be converted for use by the RAF. Recently, I saw the updated Chinook in Philadelphia as a guest of Boeing, and it remains an exceptional aircraft. I understand that Boeing has offered a minimum of a 100 per cent. offset for British industry on an order of six helicopters. My pilot friends tell me that they favour the Chinook. All I ask is that I hope that the Government will listen carefully to the users of those aircraft before they make their decision.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend raised a point about Mr. Bett. I did not wish to interrupt him when he was in full flow, but I can give him an absolute assurance that the work that Mr. Michael Bett is doing at the moment is nothing like the work that my hon. Friend seems to believe that it would be. My hon. Friend must—I am sure that he will—give us the credit for not allowing any of the awful things that he surmises might happen to happen.

It is a serious and fundamental review, which needs to take place to ensure the continuation of the very circumstances that my hon. Friend and I want and know that we must have, to ensure that we can get the quality of people to continue to enter the services. I assure my hon. Friend that I am fully confident that Mr. Bett will come forward with sensible and clear proposals, which are not a cost-cutting exercise, but a clear framework for the future.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reassurance. I should say that most of the detail that I know about Mr. Bett comes from the Library document, which was issued last Friday, so I am afraid that my ignorance is based purely on research done here.

I cannot resist turning to the Opposition parties' views. It is hardly worth considering the cuckoo ideas of the Liberal Democrats, particularly since none of them is here at the moment, but I can well remember my Liberal opponent in the previous election—the only election in which I fought—saying that she thought that there were far too few soldiers in the Army at the moment and that there needed to be more soldiers, to the bemusement and amusement of her audience.

I refer now to Her Majesty's Opposition. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not currently in his place, but I have told him that I would mention this. He earlier spoke on the subject of Kuwait. He made some pretty dramatic comments about the fact that Britain had armed Iraq and that it was all Britain's fault that there was a problem in Iraq in the first place. I do not consider that the UK is guilty of causing all wars, as he appeared to. He certainly blamed the UK, and perhaps Mark Thatcher, for Saddam Hussein's military might. His chippy hatred of the UK's industrial success and military determination is matched only by his gross ignorance. I served in the Gulf and saw the weapons that were used against us. Iraq certainly had some French aircraft. It probably had German chemical weapons. I did not see them, but I suspect that it did have some UK weapons. But the vast bulk of Iraq's weapons were, and remain, of Soviet origin. The tanks were T54s, T62s and T72s. The small arms were AK47s and every other variant. The missiles, as even the most ignorant member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament would know, were Scuds—not manufactured in the UK.

I should like to hear the hon. Member for Bolsover—and I hope that he will later speak on the matter—condemn Russia and the former Soviet Union for selling all those arms to Iraq, because that is what fuelled the war, not any actions by the UK. Indeed, by his comments earlier, I suggest that he damned not only his own country but the industrial work force, whom I so often hear Opposition Members say that they wish to keep in work.

Mr. Dalyell *rose—*

Mr. Robathan: I am always willing to give way to the hon. Gentleman's erudite comments.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the hon. Gentleman makes such statements, should he not read Timmerman's "How the West Armed Iraq" and, particularly, about how the French

[Mr. Dalyell]

Prime Minister Chirac took Saddam Hussein 70 miles out of his way to show him, boastfully, the latest nuclear development of weapons in Provence? So I do not think that countries other than Russia can escape responsibility.

Mr. Robathan: I am very interested in the hon. Gentleman's comments, but I hope that he noted and did not completely miss the point that the hon. Member for Bolsover condemned the United Kingdom for arming Iraq. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman will find us particularly blameworthy or culpable in the matter.

I welcome the position of the Government and look forward to reassurance on the points that I have made. I believe that the Government's statement today underlines the fact that the Conservative party is in deed and, as we always hoped, in reputation, the party of defence. I personally am very grateful for that.

8.4 pm

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): When I spoke about Rosyth naval base in the debate on the Royal Navy in February this year, I told hon. Members that the base felt that it was in the front line, that it was targeted for closure and that the Treasury guns were poised in its direction. Unfortunately, that prediction has proved true. But before hon. Members switch off and feel that they have heard it all before, I urge them to consider the lessons that I think can be learnt from Rosyth's experience, to consider the deficiencies of the Government's defence policy and their implications for the security of the country as a whole. I wish to highlight the way in which Rosyth naval base has been dealt with and the fact that that has created not strength, but weakness; not stability, but instability; and not security, but insecurity.

The first example of weakness is that concerning strategy, because there is a growing feeling among service personnel and the civilian work force that strategic and operational issues are secondary to Treasury demands. Where cuts fall can all too often be decided by personal bias and political interest.

I see that the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) is in his place. Certainly, when I visited Portland naval base, I got the clear impression that it felt that it was a victim of that approach. Having had the opportunity to go out on a Thursday war exercise at Portland, I seriously question why the Government decided to move operational sea training from what appeared to be such an excellent location. I know of other places that feel similarly aggrieved—for example, the stores at Exeter, the gunnery range at Kirkcudbright and, of course, Rosyth naval base.

I quote now from the minutes of the Defence Select Committee of 19 May 1994, in which the Secretary of State for Defence commented on "Front Line First" and told the Committee:

> "I am very conscious of the fact that of course the whole purpose of support is to provide the necessary support for the front line and you cannot simply ignore one and pursue the other."

Yet it seems that strategic and operational advantages of operating minehunters, mine-sweepers and operational offshore patrol vessels from an eastern naval base are being ignored and that they have both direct and indirect implications, as has already been mentioned, for oil, gas, fishery protection and the unpredictability of the world climate that we now live in.

I also highlight the fact that the base has been considered an ideal location for mine-sweeping training and that it is used for the joint maritime courses that have already been mentioned. Indeed, there was one in June, when the then commodore of minor war vessels at Rosyth said, in a local newspaper:

> "Today's Royal Navy has to be ready to respond anytime, anywhere, more often than not at the drop of a hat.
>
> "We still live in a world where turmoils can erupt quickly . . .
>
> "We should never necessarily regard ourselves as being any safer this year than we were last year, emphasising the need for courses such as this to be taking place on a regular basis."

He is now serving as the command officer of HMS Cornwall, off the coast of Kuwait. His words were indeed prophetic.

It is believed that the cuts that are proposed for Rosyth and elsewhere could weaken this country's extended readiness. It seems that there is a lack of substantial analysis of the strategic reasons for those cuts. Again, I quote from the sixth report of the Defence Select Committee, which says:

> "The sort of blind cut imposed by the Treasury axe on expenditure in 1996/97 and beyond does not inspire confidence in the Forces and elsewhere in the process of public expenditure control."

My second example of weakness in the Government's defence policy relates to the whole costings and consultation exercise. There has been a lack of sound financial information, investigation and analysis in the defence costs study. I echo some of the points made by other hon. Members, and welcome the news from the Secretary of State that the consultation period will be flexible and that more information will be available; but—here again, I am picking up points made previously—the fact that information was not available, and proper consultation could not take place, during the summer recess is unacceptable.

Let me again use Rosyth as an example. The consultation document concluded, apparently out of the blue,

> "major savings are only achievable through complete closure of centres of operation".

But there was no reasoning or evidence to support such a statement; there was no acknowledgment of the substantial savings—40 per cent.—made by the naval base over the past two years, and no mention of the strong possibility that extra funds would be needed to implement the Government's recommendations and to deal with the fear already expressed by the naval base commanders for both Clyde and Portsmouth that they would not be ready for the transfer of resources and facilities to them by 1996.

I feel that I should also mention the proposals for Pitreavie—which, as hon. Members will know, is currently the maritime headquarters for Scotland, Northern Ireland and the north of England and, indeed, the rescue co-ordination centre for the same areas. Only last year, Pitreavie was told that it would become a centre of rescue co-ordination for the whole United Kingdom; only in the last couple of years, £4 million has been spent on improving facilities there. We are now told, however, that it will effectively be closed, and that we in west Fife will be left with yet another unsightly hole in the ground—this time a reinforced concrete bunker, dealing with which could cost up to £2 million.

Nowhere does the defence costs study go into the real costs of transferring resources and dealing with redundancy, unemployment and the loss to the economy. That leads me to my third point about the weakness of policy, which concerns the treatment of people. A naval base, a gunnery range or a stores depot is not just some bit of land or stretch of water; it is an integral part of the local community. Yet it seems that the Government are ignoring a vital part of our country's defence—the people. They ignore the people's expertise, experience, commitment and loyalty. Increasingly, both service and civilian personnel are feeling undervalued, and their morale is low. That is certainly true of Rosyth, where people feel that five years of assurances and promises were simply broken by the Government.

The Government maintain that they have no responsibility to assist communities or individuals harmed by their decisions to close bases and reduce expenditure. I contest that. Hon. Members have already pointed out that other Governments see the matter differently: indeed, the prime example of a market-led economy—the United States—takes a very different view in its treatment of communities affected by defence reductions and closures.

As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) has said, we in Fife have seen an independent report by the Fraser of Allander institute suggesting that the closure of the naval base would lead to a loss of £71.8 million to the local economy and a total job loss of 7,010 over a five-year period ending in 1996. Yet the Government's response—particularly that of the Secretary of State for Scotland—has been to play down the economic impact that closure of the base would have on the local economy. The right hon. Gentleman has been equally unwilling to acknowledge the impact that the closure of the Kirkcudbright gunnery range, in his own constituency, would have: it is the largest employer in the area. Let me tell the Minister that the burden of the peace dividend should not be borne so heavily by those who have given most to the country's defence over the years.

A fourth weak point is the Government's treatment of the defence industry. In paragraph 96 of its fifth report, the Select Committee states:

> "The United Kingdom industrial base is a strategic asset and must be safeguarded accordingly. We believe that it would be unwise to rely entirely on even our closest allies to provide surge capacity as they have their own priorities and their industry may wish to supply their own national forces first."

Against that, however, we have the tragic loss of a valuable national asset like Swan Hunter; we face the full privatisation of the dockyards, and we hear detailed debate about the replacement of the Hercules.

I assure the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) that I have read the Select Committee report on the replacement of the Hercules, and have taken a considerable interest in the arguments—admittedly, because I was given a particular personal interest by my valuable placement with British Aerospace as part of the Industry and Parliament Trust scheme. I have endeavoured to consider all the arguments for and against the replacement of the Hercules.

It has been said that it is not possible to wait even for the results of the feasibility study on the future large aircraft. If the position is that desperate, it demonstrates the Government's failure to place orders for replacement military aircraft in sufficient time, and the weakness of their support for a key part of our defence base.

Mr. Mans: Given her remarks about her party's support for defence industries in the past, perhaps the hon. Lady would like to explain why we are in our present position in regard to the replacement of the Hercules. A former Labour Government virtually destroyed the aviation industry overnight when they came to power in 1964 by cancelling all three of the major aviation projects that were in progress at the time.

Ms Squire: I was not a Member of Parliament then, but I have certainly taken an interest in the lessons that can be learnt throughout the House about the timing and nature of key decisions on the defence industry and the need for equipment.

I hope that I have illustrated what I consider to be some of the weaknesses in the Government's current defence policy, and my concern about their continued refusal to carry out a strategic defence review rather than a succession of defence cuts. There has been widespread comment on that. Like the hon. Member for Upminster, I have read the House of Commons Library's review of previous defence reviews and their shortcomings. There is a widespread view, not just across the House, but in military and academic circles, that a full review of our defence objectives for the 21st century is needed.

I recommend to hon. Members a very good book that I read over the summer recess containing a series of articles by Lord Carver, among others. It considered what the options for Britain's defence policy in the 21st century should be. It is not only Opposition Members who are saying that now is the right time for a full review. I would not pretend that that would be an easy task or that it would not raise difficult and complex issues such as Britain's future role in world affairs and the future development of NATO, a common security and foreign policy and "Partnership for Peace". The Government must accept, however, that there is a real need for such a strategic review and that it is all too easy to try to eliminate the unnecessary and instead start eliminating the essential. I hope, therefore, that hon. Members who are serious about a strong defence will argue for a delay in the implementation of the decisions or recommendations of the defence costs study until such a review has been conducted and until the Government have accepted a greater responsibility for managing change, as that affects both communities and industries.

8.22 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I understand the reasons for many of the views of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) on her region and on Rosyth in particular. Hon. Members will find that many of them will be reflected in my remarks.

With the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Berlin wall, 40 years of relative stability, particularly in Europe, have been replaced, ironically, by uncertainty and unpredictability. Undoubtedly, the removal of east-west tensions has been beneficial for the international community. There are, however, adverse consequences. Many of those have been referred to this afternoon. For a variety of reasons, they have manifested themselves in the

[Mr. Robert Hicks]

break-up of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and the resultant upsets and decisions, all of which have led to uncertainty and destabilisation.

I believe, therefore, that it was right that the Government, as a global power, should address themselves to the new circumstances. No one ever thought that that would be an easy task. Balancing our potential national and international commitments with our capabilities and the financial resources available has never been straightforward, as any hon. Member who has had any experience of Government will know. However, given the combination of greater uncertainty about our potential responsibilities and the financial restraints, it is probably more difficult to secure those objectives today than before.

It has meant in practice that both our armed forces and the essential back-up facilities and requirements have been subjected to considerable change. Here, I, too, pay tribute to all those men, women and their families who have been involved or affected in some way by the major changes in recent years. It has not been an easy period for any of them.

I wish to concentrate my remarks on the impact of the changes—both already implemented and proposed—on the Royal Navy and the Plymouth travel-to-work area. As hon. Members will know, Plymouth is a major garrison city. It has an Army presence, the Royal Marines, a royal naval base and the associated Devonport dockyard. The south-west is the most dependent of all United Kingdom regions on defence and defence-related economic activities. Since the mid-1980s, the region has lost thousands of jobs as a result of defence and defence-related cuts. The level of job loss is equivalent to about one third of the number of people currently unemployed in Devon and Cornwall.

Equally frightening is the fact that those stark job losses have meant a loss of spending power in our regional economy. The accumulated loss of income to our economy in the far south-west since the 1980s through defence changes is estimated to be in excess of £500 million. If that in itself is not enough for our fragile south-west economy to take, we now have the unwelcome prospect of a further loss of 800 jobs in royal naval stores and supplies—mainly at Devonport, but also in Exeter and Wrangaton—the proposed relocation of the Royal Marines from Plymouth, and continuing anxieties created by uncertainty over the work load level at Devonport dockyard in the next five years before the Trident refit programme takes effect.

It worries me that uncertainty still exists, despite the review and the various papers that have already been produced. Only this morning, I was informed that the Royal Navy's south-west communications nerve centre in Plymouth was likely to close within the next three or four years. That would have an adverse affect on the naval base and would mean a further loss of 100 service and civilian jobs.

I do not claim to be a defence expert. All I can do is evaluate the adverse effects that all those changes have had and will have on the Plymouth travel-to-work area, of which my constituency forms part. Hon. Members will agree that all this change has been both extensive and detrimental to our sub-regional economy. The local population can be forgiven for taking the view that the changes that have been implemented by the Ministry of Defence, and which are probably Treasury driven, will inevitably be introduced in an isolated fashion, without regard to the net economic cost to the sub-region or their overall economic and social impact.

We all know that one of the problems facing this country is that our structure of government is very much vertically orientated. Every year, Departments apply to the Treasury for their budget for the following year. It is all done in a vertical manner and in isolation. It is only when various effects are manifest at the local level—or horizontally—that we recognise the full impact of any changes.

The Ministry of Defence's changes worry me. Plymouth is a major garrison town and will be affected significantly, but the full social and economic implications of the changes will not be recognised or taken into consideration until their adverse impact is felt, when it is, in effect, too late for any of us on the ground to rectify it.

It is even more galling to Devon and Cornwall to know that our cost-of-living index is some 8 per cent. above the United Kingdom average and that our gross domestic product is just 83 per cent. of that for the United Kingdom as a whole but that the Government's response to our structural economic difficulties, as manifested by the changes in our defence expenditure and requirements, is such that the budgeted expenditure of key Government agencies for Devon and Cornwall is just £51 million in the current financial year, whereas Scotland and Wales, which have similar structural economic difficulties, are allocated £530 million and £187 million respectively.

I conclude by emphasising to the Ministry of Defence team that the economy of the south-west is undoubtedly becoming increasingly fragile because of the rundown of defence and defence-related activities. It will be difficult for my region to absorb the proposed reductions that I have highlighted unless the Government make available appropriate financial support to offset the adverse effects. Unless I receive assurances from Ministers either that the further reductions in defence expenditure and facilities in the region are to be halted or that appropriate financial measures are to be introduced to offset the proposed reductions, my support for the Government tomorrow evening cannot be taken for granted. I do not say that lightly, but, having represented my constituency for the past 24 years, I am not prepared to tolerate this further blow to our regional economy as a direct consequence of decisions taken by my Government.

8.34 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) made a powerful and brave speech on behalf of his constituents. He has drawn the House's attention to the difficulties caused for communities that rely on defence-related employment when that employment is taken away. I shall take up that theme on behalf of my constituents, the people of Tyneside who rely—or relied—on Swan Hunter as the main pillar of our community's employment base.

When Swan Hunter was privatised by the Government in the mid-1980s, it was as a warship building yard. It was asked not to undertake merchant work and although it did do so—three small merchant orders, I believe—it was effectively wholly reliant on warship building. As only Governments purchase warships, it was overwhelmingly reliant on the Ministry of Defence as its main customer.

Swan Hunter went into receivership in May 1993. It has staggered by for more than a year in the receivership of Price Waterhouse, completing three type 23 frigates for the Royal Navy. That work was completed to price and on time and was of excellent quality, despite the appalling circumstances.

I remind the House of the significance of Swan Hunter to the community that I represent. Prior to the yard going into receivership, its direct wages bill was more than £1 million a week and that money went into the local economy. More than 3,000 people could look to Swan Hunter for direct employment and a similar number could expect to be employed regularly working for sub-contractors—I dare say that a further two thirds of a million pounds a week poured into Tyneside's shipbuilding and ship repairing community through the weekly wage bills of those sub-contractors. In other words, Swan Hunter was an enormously important pillar of various local economies, especially those of east Newcastle, Wallsend, Jarrow and South Shields. All that has gone.

Theoretically, it would be possible to save the yard even at this very late hour, but that is unlikely to happen. At the end of the month, the very last type 23 frigate will leave for its sea trials and will not return to Tyneside. The remaining work force who are ensuring that the last ship is a credit to our community and to more than 100 years of shipbuilding tradition on Tyneside know that their contracts of employment will come to an end. Only security men will be left on the site, although a large part of it has already been sold to much smaller ship repair companies.

What has happened to Swan Hunter is a disaster for the community that I represent. It is a disaster not only for the people who work there but for those who relied on Swan Hunter's wages coming into the local economy. Swan Hunter's very existence maintained the economy of the community that I represent. To take it all away—and to do so this quickly—is not just a misfortune but a disaster.

There are things that the Government could do. The first and most obvious thing that they could have done was to enable us to carry out the helicopter carrier order rather than to place it elsewhere in Barrow and Govan. The argument has moved on and there is no going back, but there were other things that the Government could have done. They could have allowed the yard to reduce the number of employees but to survive; they could have placed the Sir Bedivere contract—a much smaller order—with Swan Hunter. The placing of that order with Swan Hunter would have triggered a bid for the yard by CMN, a foreign company. It believed that it could obtain work from overseas. In other words, it would not have taken work from other domestic shipyards, but would have still brought work to the Tyne. That would have provided a private-sector solution to Swan Hunter's problem, but the Government chose not to facilitate such a solution. When the Sir Bedivere was not placed at Swan Hunter, I thought in my heart that the battle for Swans was over.

CMN, however, came back with a further prospect of saving the yard. I was surprised that it did so, but all credit to it for trying and also all credit to the receivers, Price Waterhouse, for doing everything that could be done to try to sell the yard as a going concern. I am not critical of CMN and I am not critical of the receivers.

I am, however, critical of the British Government. I think that the Government could have saved Swan Hunter if they had wanted to do so. They could have saved it by placing the Sir Bedivere in the yard. Even after that, they could have saved it by meeting CMN's request to undertake the frigate contract. The negotiations broke down because of a disagreement over price. The sum involved is about one third of a million pounds—that is the size of the money that was being haggled over on a contract of about £54 million. In the circumstances, I thought that the Government could have done something for the people of Tyneside. It would be the cheapest possible way in which to underpin the remaining employment at the yard, which involved about 1,000 people earlier this summer. Of course, the figure will go down to nothing by Christmas.

The Government were unwilling to do something and one is left to conclude that the Government wanted the yard to be closed. Certainly, the rest of the British warship building industry wanted to see Swan Hunter closed, partly because it regarded it as competition and partly because it believed that there was overcapacity in the industry and that this was an opportunity to get rid of some of that capacity permanently. This is a very hard way to do it.

The misery that will be inflicted on the community that I represent and on the communities of neighbouring constituencies will take an enormous effort to pull round. We are talking about male unemployment levels in communities such as Walker and Wallsend of more than 40 per cent. once the redundancy rounds are finally driven home. There is no alternative work. What about the rest of the employment base to which skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual labour might have looked on Tyneside? NEI Parsons, a large engineering works just down the road, is the second largest private sector employer. It has just made a third of its manual work force redundant. The announcement came only three or four weeks ago. A further 600 people were made redundant in a community who had looked to the shipbuilding industry for employment.

The offshore oil industry is, as we all understand, cyclical and it is in a trough rather than at a peak at the moment, so employment levels at AMEC are very low. People who might have hoped to be taken on in neighbouring shipyards and who were even prepared to travel to Sunderland to work in the Sunderland shipyards cannot do so because the Government and their urban development corporation have already ensured that every single shipyard on the River Wear is closed. Perhaps one could look to the other great traditional employer in the north-east of England, the mining industry. Employment in the mines of Durham and Northumberland is there no more. This is an enormous, cumulative amount of unemployment for our community to have to absorb all at once, or at least in a very short time. We cannot do it.

We are now in a desperate strait. Things are so bad that there is no private sector solution that would help us through the problem. The only short-term solutions are public sector solutions or at least public sector-led solutions, so we have to ask the Government for help. We know that we shall not get it. The enterprise zone that was promised in May 1993 is still under discussion. It has not

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

appeared and its failure to appear is not only preventing new inward investment, but balking inward investment that might come to Tyneside anyway, because anyone who is thinking of locating on Tyneside will wait to see where the economically privileged area is before coming.

I was pleased to hear the announcement today about the new jobs for Cleveland and I was pleased for the people of Teesside. But that will not alleviate poverty and unemployment on Tyneside. The people of Teesside have their own difficulties and good luck to them with today's announcement. However, it will not help us and no one should pretend that it will. We need Government assistance. We need public sector investment, perhaps a local public project, as a matter of urgency and we need a competent economic development body for our area which can actually spend what little money there is wisely.

We do not need the uselessness of the urban development corporation on Tyneside. Throughout the whole Swan Hunter saga, it has at every episode made the wrong decision at the wrong time. It backed the wrong bids and refused to support the right ones. It failed to make the representations to Government that it should have made and it has made separate representations to Government that, frankly, no one else supports.

I say to the Minister on behalf of the community whom I represent that the people of Tyneside think that his Department has treated us scabrously. We feel that we have been let down and betrayed. People were willing to work their hearts out at the time of the Falklands war. Shipyard workers even went to sea as civilians with the task force as it sailed south to do their bit for what they took to be their country's cause. They were not made redundant, of course, until they came back. We have had more than 100 years' tradition of supplying the Royal Navy with first-class vessels. The people of Tyneside have not let their country down, but now their country is letting them down.

At the Conservative party conference, Conservative speakers said that the Conservative party was the party of the Union and the party of the whole country. I tell Ministers that that is not how it is seen on Tyneside. On Tyneside, people believe that the Conservative party is the party of special interests and special privileges and, increasingly, the party of the south of England, and of the suburban home counties of the south of England at that. If the Minister wants to disprove some of that, he can make an effective statement tomorrow night doing something useful for the people of Tyneside.

8.46 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I have a great deal of sympathy for the heart-felt speech, with its plea, by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). It is heartrending, of course, to think of all the communities who are affected by the big changes. Just the other day, my own newspaper had the headline:

> "South Dorset to lose 4,500 jobs."

That is the number of jobs that the University of Portsmouth estimates will be lost through defence closures in my community over the next nine years. That seems like a reasonable number of people until one considers the total labour force in the area, which is only about 20,000. The figure of 4,500 people out of 20,000 puts into context the real concern that communities clearly have.

If we get too despondent and avoid realising that positive things are happening, we may start to take the wrong decisions. I may give a few points to the Government before, probably, kicking them somewhere painful a little later in my speech. In South Dorset, there has certainly been a strategy for change. Since January, our unemployment has come down month by month. That is a result of the Government's decision to give Konver money, to give intermediate assisted-area status and to give rural development status. Indeed, the Government bid in Europe for money for roads and other things. Unfortunately, the Commissioner in Brussels, whose name escapes me at the moment—I think that he used to be a Labour Member of Parliament—decided to turn us down and to turn the Government down. We have the strategy there.

We hear so much from the Labour party about a defence conversion agency. I notice a colleague who was on the Employment Select Committee with me when we looked, on an all-party basis, at how communities should deal with the conversion from high-technology industries, such as defence, and how they should re-create the jobs. What was clear, and was common ground, was that the Government had a role in that, but that the role was in providing finance, as I have just described, to a local defence conversion agency. We have that in South Dorset. It is called the South Dorset economic partnership. As soon as I knew those problems were coming up, I had a meeting with the chairman of the local training and enterprise council. He immediately went into action and talked to all the local authorities and got the full backing of all the political parties to set up that partnership. So we have a group of people out there, demonstrating that South Dorset is the place to come to establish new jobs and to build. Certainly in the south-west, I know that every area that has such problems has set up some sort of defence conversion agency.

If the Labour party does not think that those agencies are doing the job right, please tell us. However, Labour councillors are, in the main, very much pushing the agencies forward, supporting them 100 per cent. and certainly not criticising them and the way in which they work. It would be helpful if the Front-Bench spokesmen of the Labour party told people what they mean by a defence conversion agency, because I believe that it is exactly the sort of body that we have set up.

I thought that I would have to berate the Minister for my not having received the consultation paper and, indeed, for not being given any time for consultation of the proposed closure of the air station. In fact, as I rushed into the House today, I found precisely that paper in my pigeonhole. Unfortunately, one of the pages was missing. I felt a little like the Front-Bench spokesman for the Labour party, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) must have felt when he was making his speech. We all know that he left the page behind on which there were any policies on what the Labour party would do for the defence of this nation. In fact, I now have the full copy and I have done something with the figures which I was given on a single sheet of A4 paper. The Minister will see that I have blown them up to four times the size so one can just about read the figures. But I have to tell the Minister that, unfortunately, the detail in the report is not sufficient for us in South Dorset to make any positive contribution to that particular consultation exercise. I shall be talking to him in the very near future about greater detail so that we can see what is happening.

I know that the Minister will be told by all his staff that any time he makes a cut in anybody's back yard, the hon. Member concerned will come down on him and say that he cannot cut here, he cannot cut there; it is all Treasury driven. I am a rather strange guy. I believe, being an old works study guy, that one makes savings only when one goes to the guy at the top of the organisation and says "Look, here is a financial target. I will cut your figure, because the country cannot afford it. You now have to come back with the best deal possible for the taxpayer and get the best bang for our buck".

We are really disappointed in South Dorset, despite our trying to save the MOD money, about the way in which the MOD constantly comes forwards with schemes that are in the next four or five years to cost a vast amount of money, to be paid for by the very same taxpayer whom we are trying to assist. The latest proposals for the air station mean a capital expenditure of something like £38 million. Of course, that is nothing to the £600 million that is currently being spent on building a new sea systems control and procurement executive headquarters north of Bristol; nor is it when compared to the £100 or £200 million that the Defence Research Agency is getting for remodelling itself. Indeed, it is nothing to the £40 million currently being spent in Plymouth to re-create facilities.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) who mentioned how excellent the flag officer sea training facilities were at Portland. I congratulate her doubly, because my constituents have constantly tried to bat on behalf of her constituents and it is the first time that I have heard somebody in the Labour party come forward and make such a positive statement. I have invited the Front-Bench spokesmen on many occasions to do that, only to hear that they would reinstate the facilities or stop the closure. I am afraid that they are very good at rhetoric, but not good at putting their hands in their pockets for the defence budget.

I shall briefly touch on the case that has been put forward for the air station. The 4,500 jobs that are likely to be lost from our economy have just been mentioned. That figure is really a loss of roughly 3,000 direct jobs and a 1,500 knock-on effect. My hon. Friend the Minister could, in a stroke, halve the problems of South Dorset by looking carefully at what is being suggested. I find difficulty in following the logic of the argument because I have known for a very long time that the air station would probably close in 2007, unless we could find another aircraft to base there. The document outlining the case is strange because it talks of keeping the Lynx helicopter going for another 25 years. I am not quite sure when the Lynx helicopter was first built, but from design stage, we are talking of a design and use life of around 50 years on the basis of the document. My understanding is that with its useful life and with the replacement of the Merlin helicopter coming forward and being designed on to our ships that the Lynx would be knocked out by 2007. Therefore, it is strange to see costings of 10 years and 25 years for that helicopter.

When I blew up the figures, another interesting factor was to find that the annual cost of maintenance of the air station would be £4·5 million. I do not know where that figure has come from. It has been spirited out of the air as far as I can see. Certainly it was never mentioned when we previously considered the detailed figures involved in moving all the facilities on the air station when we closed the naval base.

In the staff costs, figures have appeared like magic. It costs £33 million to staff and run all the helicopters. The idea is not to reduce the number of helicopters, but, by magic, to move them from Portland, which is a purpose-built, single-type air station and shove them into Yeovilton. The staffing costs would then go down, it is said, from £33 million to £20 million. That is magic, it is wonderful. If we can do it, why not do it at Portland? It does not seem to be sensible. I certainly know that if we put everybody inside one fence, we may well save on a lot of guarding costs. But let us hope that in the not-too-distant future, guarding of bases can be reduced a great deal because of the peace which seems to be breaking out in Northern Ireland. Certainly, in the next five years, we should take that into account.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in the past, when attempts have been made to shoe-box units into larger units, whereas the actual costs of the move can be worked out in comparison to what would happen if they remained where they were, the estimated costs of what would happen when they were moved to the new base are normally under-estimated and, indeed, in the long run, there is not a saving at all?

Mr. Bruce: That is partially true, but my hon. Friend is being rather too kind to the Government, or perhaps I am being unfair to the Government. Perhaps I should say that we are too kind to the MOD about the estimates that it gives to Ministers, because invariably rebuilding costs are roughly double those in any estimates. The financial overrun on the rebuilding of the MOD's main building is equivalent to all the money that will be saved within the next 20 years by moving facilities out of my constituency. We must look carefully at what is happening.

All too often, we have been told that a stand-alone air station at Portland would be too small. It was not always a stand-alone station because it used to have a naval base next to it, but such is the logic that the MOD applies. We may be told that the tiny air station at Portland cannot stand alone, but that "tiny" air station employs 1,600 people. If those 1,600 people cannot cope as a stand-alone unit, there is no hope for any air station or air base.

If one uses the MOD's logic, one would end up putting all the MOD office blocks and all the facilities for air stations somewhere in the middle of the country—no doubt we would have to dig a canal as well to fit in all the ships—behind the same perimeter fence in order to save money. If one can save money by reducing staffing costs from £33 million to £20 million, the same savings should be made on everything.

A lot of time should be spent studying the proposal to close the air station. After all, we have five years before the plan is supposed to be put into operation, so I hope that the Minister can assure me that the proposal will be considered in great detail. We have lots of Portland stone down on Portland and very nice places for statues. I can think of nothing better than erecting a statue of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to commemorate him as the man who saved the naval air station in Portland by looking to save money for the Navy rather than spending it.

9 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I appreciate the importance of this debate on the defence estimates and their importance to the nation. We spend £23.5 billion on defence and the nation would not be happy if we did not spend that money wisely. I was a little depressed by one or two hon. Members who seemed to boast about how much more we spend on defence in comparison with other countries, because we should spend just the adequate amount to do the job. We should remind ourselves that whatever we spend on defence means that less is spent on education, housing, pensions and other services that enhance the general quality of life. We must therefore spend money on defence wisely and efficiently.

It is my firm belief that when we spend money on defence we should, wherever possible, spend it on our own industries. I get depressed when I hear about defence contracts going abroad, particularly when they could easily be awarded in Britain. That would naturally improve our balance of payments.

We all recognise that, in a changing world, it is inevitable and only right that spending on defence should be reduced. My only criticism, as I have said before, is that I do not believe that we have been earnest enough about diversification. If we used our talents wisely, there would be numerous spin-offs. Let us remind ourselves that we have skilled people who are already trained and who have already cost the nation a fantastic amount of money. I fervently believe that the Government should give those people a higher priority.

I share the sadness of my colleagues who have described the downturn in the shipyards. What has happened to our northern shipyards is an utter disgrace. They do not deserve such treatment, not least because the Government's actions do not match the philosophy that is supposed to guide their proposed changes in defence spending. Ministers boast about the motivation and quality of our work force, but I find it baffling that we do not win orders against competitors. As a result of some of the shipyard closures, some of our highly skilled ship designers have transferred to foreign yards to complete work.

I am a member of the Select Committee on Employment and a few months ago I visited Finland. It is not a large country and it has a population of between 7 million and 8 million. When we visited the Helsinki shipyard it was bustling along with plenty of orders for naval work, foreign work and cruise ships. Even that very week those at the shipyard informed us that it had completed a 70,000-tonne vessel, worth $300 million, which was to sail out to America seven days later. I cannot understand how a small country like Finland can win such orders when our country, with its highly skilled and motivated work force, about whom the Government like to boast, cannot. I shall let that matter ride as the evidence is there for all to see.

There is talk about the possible replacement of the Hercules transport plane. That would be the last major contract for the aerospace industry in Britain. The Minister will be aware that I have tabled an early-day motion about the matter. In the three weeks before the summer break, 160 hon. Members from all parties supported the thrust of my early-day motion which calls for support for the future large aircraft to be placed with British industry.

I am grateful for the two very good letters that I received from Ministers over the recess. However, just before the recess, I tabled a parliamentary question asking how many civil servants had travelled to Lockheed in America this year, and I am still waiting for a reply. I thought that I would receive a reply to that question within a few days, but I have not been told how many civil servants have travelled to America to talk to Lockheed about the contract in which I am very interested on behalf of British industry. After my comments today, and three months after I tabled that question, I might receive an answer in the next two or three days. However, this smells a little and I feel uncomfortable. Anyone would feel uncomfortable if they had received such treatment.

I am not criticising Lockheed and the Americans for their endeavours and the enthusiasm that they will exert to secure the contract. I recognise the validity and the importance that they place on securing a contract which is worth £12.5 billion. A Conservative Member said earlier that he went to Boeing to look at helicopters. I understand why he was invited to see helicopters at Boeing. It costs American firms who are in competition with us petty cash to invite Members of Parliament or civil servants to their companies.

We should ask why those American firms are doing that. Why are the Americans so enthusiastic? I recognise their enthusiasm, but we must be aware of what is happening to our industries in respect of which we hear stories of closures and massive job losses.

The FLA will be the prize. Some 7,500 jobs are involved. If people lose their jobs, and it costs £9,000 per person a year in unemployment pay, that is a big payroll which must be met by the Department of Social Security. In its big sell, Lockheed is claiming that 3,000 jobs will be created in Britain if it gets the contract. That is questionable. However, it is clear that if Lockheed wins the contract, there will be no Rolls-Royce engines.

Mr. Hargreaves: Does not the hon. Gentleman recognise that the engine management systems will be made in this country by Lucas Aerospace in my constituency and that that will secure employment for probably 1,700 people?

Mr. Eastham: I am thrilled for the hon. Gentleman. There may be some 1,700 jobs in his area, but many thousands of people in other areas will not get jobs because of it. We must remember that.

It is obvious that the engines and the major part of the fuselages will not be built in Britain. I must remind the House that when we decided to discontinue Nimrod some years ago, we opted for AWACS—the airborne warning and communication system. When the Americans obtained that contract, we heard many assurances. We were told that there would be spin-off jobs if the Americans obtained the contract. My inquiries revealed that very few jobs were secured as a result of the AWACS contract going to America. I prophesy that the same will happen again. I understand the enthusiasm, as I have said. I just wish that there was such enthusiasm among our industrialists and the Government to make sure that we can compete on a level playing field.

Only six weeks ago, we saw great dishonesty with regard to Lockheed. There was talk about money and bribes being offered to other nationals to secure work. That is not on when it comes to honest competition. We have to be extremely cautious about how we conduct business.

The hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) said that the Government were doing this, that and the other with regard to training, as though that were enough to solve the diversification problem. We have got it wrong; we should spend far more money—real money. Only two months ago, the Germans put aside 1.2 billion deutschmarks for aerospace research and development. That is the amount that we should spend. If we want to diversify, it is no good simply saying that we want to train some aero fitters and turners. The Government have to put up money for research so that we can secure contracts and develop modern technology to enable us to be highly competitive.

We must face the fact that the future large aircraft is the big one for our aerospace industry. Obviously, if we do not join the European countries that were involved in, say, the Airbus, the Germans and French will not buy a Lockheed; they will go it alone. We could combine with the Germans and the French, as we did with the Airbus, and provide a successful future for us all. We cannot stand in isolation in Europe. We must recognise the importance of a European partnership. This is an ideal one for us.

I have said before that one of our major problems is that we do not have a planning strategy. I remind the House that we no longer have a major British-owned car industry, major shipbuilders or a major computer industry. It is possible that by 2010 we will no longer have a major aerospace industry.

9.12 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Parliament's job, as we are constantly reminded, is not to run the country but to scrutinise those who do and to call them to account for what they do. Control of the budget, through votes such as the one on the defence estimates, is the mechanism by which we, as the elected representatives of our constituencies, can exercise that power. Tonight, the House must weigh up the balance of a package of good things and bad in assessing the impact of the "Front Line First" study, upon which the defence estimates are constructed.

On the one hand, of course, the study provides for some very good things, such as the replacement amphibious ships for Intrepid and Fearless and for the new helicopter assault ship, and the Trafalgar class submarines and the four new type 23s. People in Newcastle and Leeds will be much pleased by the order for 259 Challenger 2 tanks. On the other hand, however, as the Ministry of Defence admits, by the year 2000, 18,700 people will lose their jobs as a result of "Front Line First". That is more like 22,000 when one takes into account the number of temporary and part-time contracts. In my constituency, the Ministry of Defence forecasts 348 job losses at a depot where 570 people work at present. The forecast is based on complete closure, so the figure should be inflated.

It is less than one year since the defence costs studies were put in hand by the Secretary of State. The question therefore is whether the "Front Line First" study came first. After all, before that study, there was "Options For Change" in 1990, which reduced the number in the front line. It reduced the number of frigates from 44 to 35, the number of conventional submarines from 10 to nil and the number of mine counter-measures ships from 38 to 24. The number of infantry battalions was slashed painfully from 55 to 40, and manpower in the armed forces was reduced overall by 18 per cent.

If, as I have been told privately by Ministers, some 70 per cent. of naval spares are never used, why was not that area exposed first for cost savings, rather than coming to light only when the most stringent reductions are forced on the Royal Navy? I will happily give way to one of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench if they will answer that question.

I must say immediately that I am a great supporter of the Royal Navy. Its great strength is that it can be poised on the verge of conflict, as well as committed, and can cover its withdrawal. It is an efficient, flexible and effective arm of diplomacy. I want the Navy to have the best equipment and a fleet size that makes it a serious player in international relationships. I welcome therefore the new ships and missiles that have been announced as part of the package.

To go with that, my constituents and I want the Navy to have the best back-up, and that is where we part company with what the Government are seeking to do by asking us to endorse "Front Line First". In Stockton, South we have the most advanced Royal Navy spares depot in the country. It was purpose-built in 1949 to hold the national stockpile of marine engineering equipment. It is in Eaglescliffe because it is halfway between Rosyth and the south coast ports, and it is close to the main engineering parts suppliers in the north of England. To quote from the consultation document, which was finally sent to us five weeks into the 12-week consultation period,

> "it has been concluded that this role could in future be provided at lower cost by means of limited localised stock holdings adjacent to the waterfront."

The four-page document does not set out how that conclusion was reached; nor does it consider any of Eaglescliffe's particular merits as a leading contender for the central stockholding facility envisaged by the study. As the Select Committee on Defence recently found,

> "there is continuing concern about the proposed changes in naval stores, and we intend to take oral evidence on the subject in the near future."

Likewise, the four-page document makes no mention whatever of the operational requirements of the Royal Navy; it simply notes a possible saving of £50 million over the next 10 years. To put it in context, that is one-sixteenth of the £800 million overspend on the Trident base at Faslane—a 72 per cent. cost overrun. That shows the efficiency of some people with regard to organising budgets.

Let us examine the position a little more carefully. The loyalty of the civilian staff at Eaglescliffe to the Navy is unquestionable. They have the lowest recruitment and retention problems in the MOD. They were praised for their unstinting efforts during the Falklands and Gulf campaigns. The depot is not a collection of old sheds, as at some other spares depots. The stores have recently been completely refurbished at a cost of nearly £5 million. The depot has a purpose-built, air-conditioned computer suite, from which the computers have now been taken away and put in a 1960s prefabricated hut at Endsleigh. It has a new office block. It has a new gatehouse and new gatehouse

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

entrance. It has a new surgery. Recently, improvements have been made to the boilerhouse. It has a new RIDELS and REDAC computer network in all the offices. It has new information technology furniture. It also has recently set up a highly successful and dedicated market testing preparation team.

So when the trade unions asked management what the costs of all these things were in April, the Ministry of Defence sent a one-line letter declining to answer them. When the management were pressed during the consultation period, they finally came out with several figures which added up to £6.7 million. Similarly, when Stockton borough council wrote to all Navy captains asking them for their opinion on the quality of the service offered by Eaglescliffe in my constituency, an order was sent from the Navy command to those captains saying that their answers should be "polite but non-committal".

Similarly, the four-side consultation document does not explain how the Navy's spares are collected and delivered, their usage rate, the percentage that are used at the base port or the average length of time spent in the base ports by our ships. Devonport, which has already received a mention from my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), home of half the surface fleet and the refit centre for Trident submarines, is having its Navy spares depot reduced in size. That seems rather at odds with the general thrust of the study as a whole. Portsmouth becomes the new central depot, although it will not be a refit centre.

As we know, Rosyth has been promised half the refit work. All the submarine refits will take place at Devonport and the rest will go to private yards. How long do these ships spend in the base port these days? When I did my secondment to the Royal Navy with the armed forces parliamentary scheme, I found that ships' commitments had increased so substantially that crews were being trickle-posted to them on deployment along with spares. Under the harmony objectives, at least 40 per cent. of time should be spent at the base port. Yet between May 1992 and March 1995, the Defence Select Committee has found that several ships have breached the harmony principles in more than one category. HMS Invincible, for instance, has breached all three categories. Five other ships—Active, Chatham, Newcastle, Campbeltown and Cardiff—are also known to have breached the principles. The Defence Select Committee commented:

> "It is a shocking comment on the extent to which the Navy's resources are stretched that even the Navy's relatively unambitious welfare targets are being constantly breached."

So what is the position? Crews and spares are being sent out all over the world on deployment, as I discovered when I visited HMS Cumberland and found it picking up spares at Tampa Bay in Florida. Therefore, the spares are being freighted, presumably from Brize Norton but also commercially from Teesside airport, to pick-up points around the globe. Ships are spending so little time in base ports that even the First Sea Lord is complaining about the number of commitments for Navy ships.

Why, then, should Portsmouth be any better than Eaglescliffe as the national stockpile of marine spares? Eaglescliffe has better air, road and rail links and a proven track record as a centre of excellence. It has achieved BS5750—the only depot to do so—in its packaging facility. It has been praised by the National Audit Office—the only depot to be so—for saving the Navy money. My constituents contend that it would be crazy and far from cost-effective to break up this centre of excellence, the best depot in the Navy, and move it to Portsmouth.

In his introduction to "Front Line First", the Secretary of State says that one of his two objectives is to

> "spend every pound as efficiently as possible to minimise the overall burden to the public."

So my second big question to the Minister is why not carry out the rationalisation of the depots by way of a straight competition between them and keep the best one? I will happily give way to him right now if he will tell me the answer to that question.

Lastly, I want to make a point about the way in which the whole exercise has been carried out. The Government are making the right decisions—sorry. Government is about making the right decisions for the country. [*Laughter.*] That is what it is about. Politics is about the difference between the perception and the reality of Government decisions. As we live in a parliamentary democracy, our Ministers must not only make the right decisions but be able to demonstrate to the public that that is what they are doing. Their credibility in the northern region is at a low ebb after recent events at Swan Hunter and the Government's failure to relocate the quality assurance unit from Woolwich to Stockton. Both decisions may be easily comprehensible, but they are not well understood in the north of England.

In a statement to the House on 14 July the Secretary of State promised three months' consultation. However, the consultation papers were not sent out until 19 August. For Eaglescliffe, Devonport, Exeter and Wrangaton the documents were all the same and ran to four sides of A4 paper. The figures making the case for the move to Portsmouth go no further than a simple table of potential cash flows. No information is given about the geographical location of northern contractors and there is no information about the number of ships whose base port is Portsmouth. There are 24, with eight moving from Rosyth.

Nothing is said about how £5 million is potentially to be realised from the sale of a 117-acre site. The figure seems to have been conjured from the air.

The documents were not sent to Teesside development corporation, English Partnership, City Challenge, the task force or the TECs in Stockton-on-Tees, all of which will have to pick up the pieces after the closure. There is nothing to show whether Portsmouth has the room to take the extra stores or whether it will be possible to adapt listed buildings.

If my right hon. Friend the Minister persists with the folly of closing the Navy's best depot—and I strongly urge him not to do so—how can he justify the far from open and generous way in which this consultation exercise has been conducted? I cannot wilfully agree to a measure that will needlessly put so many families in my constituency out of work, and I urge the Secretary of State to reconsider the closure. If he does not, I cannot support him in the Division Lobby.

9.26 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I welcome the new Ministers to the Treasury Bench. They are looking rather happier than when I last saw them—on television at the Tory party conference. Four of them were on and they looked as if they were about to face a firing squad. However, I understand that there were 35 hostile motions at the conference, so perhaps that explains why they are looking happier in the House. In the light of the speech by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), they should not become too happy, because three Conservative Members will vote with Labour Members tomorrow. I have been here long enough to know that what is said on the day does not often happen on the night, but we shall be watching, as I am sure will be the constituents of those three hon. Members.

The right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) made an excellent and thoughtful speech. He coined the word "understretch", which we shall hear often in the Chamber if the peace in Northern Ireland holds. The right hon. Gentleman said that understretch was as bad for the armed forces as overstretch and created its own problems.

My hon. Friends the Members for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) made a powerful case for purchasing the future large aircraft or for delaying the decision to replace the Hercules. They spoke not only in a military context but in the context of the dramatic effect that failure to order the FLA will have on the north-west.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) made his customary knowledgeable speech and there was little in it with which we could disagree. The Liberals have no policy whatever. The hon. and learned Gentleman disagreed with us about a defence review, but he seemed to be speaking as a member of the Select Committee on Defence. I am not sure that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) would agree with many of the points made by the hon. and learned Member.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: That is why my hon. Friend is our spokesman on the environment.

Mr. Martlew: He probably has at least one other job. No matter how small the party, there are usually obvious divisions.

The hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee, disappointed me at first because he did not attack the Government—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has done so on many occasions. Perhaps one reason why he did not do so on this occasion was that at the Tory party conference the Secretary of State promised, or we think that he promised, that there would be no more defence cuts. If that is correct, much of the credit should go to the hon. Member for Upminster. However, I do not believe that the Chancellor of the Exchequer takes the same view as the hon. Gentleman. It is obvious that there has been a major argument within the Conservative party. I think that the Treasury will have the last say, but we shall have to wait and see.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) made an excellent speech about Rosyth and about the broader context of Britain's defence policy. She made two points of particular importance, which were reflected in views expressed by other hon. Members tonight. One point was that there appears to be as much politics as reason in the decision to close bases. The other was that the consultation procedure is deeply flawed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) made an excellent, if emotive, speech explaining the problems that 40 per cent. male unemployment brings to a constituency. The north-east is badly served by the Government, but well served by its Labour Members of Parliament.

I make no apologies for reiterating a point that the Labour party continues to make—that we need a complete defence review. "Options for Change" and "Front Line First"—if that be its name—were not objective assessments of our defence requirements, but excuses for cuts. In reality, the United Kingdom's defence policy should be seen against our position in the world. It should be seen in the context of wider foreign policy issues.

There is always a danger—we have seen it in today's debate—of becoming enmeshed in the details of defence weaponry and force capability. The fact is that in many ways defence policy is the servant of foreign policy. Therefore, we need to look not only at our defence policy but at Britain's role in the world. Ever since the second world war, the main defence concern has been our support for NATO. While that is still important, the collapse of the Soviet empire has removed the threat to national security.

However, while the threat to national security is considerably diminished, we live in a far more dangerous and explosive world. Ironically, the cold war helped to reduce the number of local conflicts because there was always the fear that they would spread to global ones. Now, with the scourge of nationalism in eastern Europe, the rise of tribalism in Africa and the continuing unrest in the middle east, the problems facing the world are not only increasing but changing in character.

At this point, the United Nations is being thrust into a pivotal role in maintaining global peace. The question is, what is Britain's place in the new world order? Do we want to continue to have a permanent seat on the Security Council? The Labour party does and, I am sure, so does the Conservative party. Are we prepared to relinquish that to the Germans or the Japanese? It would be ironic if we did. Perhaps the fact that they lost the war is the reason why they are now in such a powerful position. If we are to play an important part in the United Nations, and I assume that Conservative Members are interested in Britain doing that, that implies certain responsibilities. If we are to be a member of the Security Council, we must use our forces in a peacekeeping role—and we do that better than anyone else. We have seen that in the past, and there are the current examples of Rwanda, Bosnia, Cyprus and Kuwait.

Many of the skills employed by our troops in a peacekeeping role were learnt on the streets of Northern Ireland. I pay tribute to the valiant service that our forces have given in difficult circumstances in Northern Ireland over the past 25 years. We must remember that 648 members of our regular armed forces and of the Ulster Defence Regiment were killed during that time. Their sacrifice allowed us to reach the position where we can at last have peace in Ulster.

What effect will a permanent ceasefire in Ulster have on the United Kingdom's defence strategy? I am disappointed that the Secretary of State did not outline his proposals for that scenario. Could we sit by and watch a situation unfold in which British troops were withdrawn from Northern Ireland without any thought of their future

[Mr. Martlew]

role? The danger is that, without a defence review, their reward for 25 years of peacekeeping could be redundancy and P45s.

If the alternatives are more British troops being made available for use by the United Nations or British troops being made redundant, there is no choice. If they served the UN in a peacekeeping role, the question might be asked, "Who will pay?" We could argue about the UN military command structure, which many of us think is defective. We could argue about the lack of a robust reaction from UN troops when they come under fire. However, we cannot argue about the need for more peacekeeping troops under the control of the UN—and our troops are among the best in the world.

Earlier, I referred to the need to take foreign policy considerations into account in the defence review. It has become apparent to me that much of our defence procurement policy is influenced by the need to maintain our industrial manufacturing base. That has come about by previous Governments concentrating too many of our highly skilled, technical resources on weapons manufacture, in direct contrast to the Germans and Japanese, although there are historical reasons for that. The fact remains that those countries are not being hit by defence spending reductions in the way that our country is being hit.

The situation is exacerbated by the Government's failure to invest, or to encourage the defence industry to diversify. The Government have turned their face against diversification and have told the defence industry that they do not favour it.

The cancellation of major military projects such as Eurofighter 2000 would have a devastating effect on British industry, especially in the north-west. What was the Secretary of State doing, giving an interview, published in *The Times* today, in which he said that there could well be a possibility of cancelling the Eurofighter 2000? He can say that to *The Times*, but he did not come to the Dispatch Box to say it in this debate. It is disgraceful that the Secretary of State should even contemplate such a thing. The Labour party has always been in favour of the Eurofighter 2000 project. When I complained to previous Ministers about escalating costs and the delayed maiden flight, I was told that I was carping and that everything was under control. Now the Secretary of State says that we might not buy the Eurofighter 2000 and that the same goes for the EH101. In 1987, the Secretary of State's predecessor, George Younger, said that the Government would order it. Now the present Secretary of State is saying that, if the cost goes up too much, he will not order it at all. Perhaps if we had ordered it in 1987, the cost would have been a lot less. The hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) argued for Chinook. He said that he had been to Philadelphia and seen it. I hope that he takes the opportunity—perhaps he has—to go to Yeovil and talk to Westland and have a word about the EH101. It may not be as exotic as Philadelphia, but I am sure that he would be made very welcome.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Roger Freeman): I have sat silently throughout the debate. I will not be winding up this evening, but will do so tomorrow night.

I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would bear in mind the fact that there is nothing inconsistent in saying, as my right hon. and learned Friend has done, that we remain committed to Eurofighter 2000 and that we take very seriously Westland's proposals for a support helicopter, while saying at the same time that we want good value for money. The hon. Gentleman would be irresponsible if he said, "Purchase at any price."

Mr. Martlew: The fact is that it is seven and a half years since the Government said that they would buy the helicopter. Some £12 billion has been spent on Eurofighter 2000 already, and a large proportion of that money has come from the British taxpayer. The Minister now talks about cancelling the project. It is nonsense. I know that Ministers have written to the American state department to find out the American alternative. It is a disgrace that he should come out with threats like that.

In recent times, there has been intense lobbying about the replacement of the RAF's Hercules. One of the main and compelling points to be made by trade unions and British Aerospace—it is the one that I accept—is that 7,500 British jobs will be saved if the order for the FLA is placed. Failure to do so will threaten the long-term future of our civil aviation industry. We cannot take that risk. Because our manufacturing base is so weak, and because of the Government's failure to support diversification, I can see that, at some time in the future, we shall be in danger of supplying our forces with inferior weaponry, and putting their lives at risk just because we must maintain jobs at home. That terrible indictment of the state of the British industrial base is due to the policies of the Government.

Over the past two years, I have paid special attention to the personnel policies of the armed forces; I am sad to say that I find that many of the policies are still unacceptable and detrimental to their efficiency. It is intolerable that, to some extent, our armed forces are class-ridden, sexist and racist.

Mr. Soames: Will the hon. Gentleman do the House the courtesy of explaining in detail why he believes that the armed forces are sexist?

Mr. Martlew: The hon. Gentleman seems to accept that they are both class-ridden and racist, but he is worried about sexist—*[Interruption.]* I will happily explain. If the hon. Gentleman will give me an opportunity, I will come to it in my speech.

If one looks at the officer corps of the top regiments, one will realise that family background and the old school tie still seem to carry much more influence than does ability. I think that the Minister is living proof of that. The armed forces are conservative by their tradition. There still seems to be a general reluctance to accept women on equal terms. Several NATO countries moved towards expanding the role of women in their forces long before steps were taken in the UK to redress the imbalance of treatment. As far back as the 1970s, countries in north America and northern Europe were pioneering equal opportunity policies. In 1978, women were fully integrated in the US army. Belgium, Denmark and Holland followed in 1987. All those countries made the changes largely in response to equal rights legislation, but the MOD is still technically exempt from section 85(4) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Thank goodness for the equal treatment directive from Europe.

Mr. Brazier: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that our two principal European allies, France and Germany, provide grossly inferior opportunities for women in the armed forces? The equal treatment directive to which the hon. Gentleman referred relates to those already in post; it has nothing to do with opportunities to gain uniformed posts.

Mr. Martlew: To be honest, the Italians are even worse: they do not have women in their armed forces at all.

Until 1990, all pregnant women were discharged at four months. The rules were not amended until 1991, following the victory of two former service women who sued and gained compensation from the Ministry of Defence. Much attention has been focused, especially by the Government, on the high levels of compensation in such cases; that only detracts from the real crime—the fact that women were dismissed in the first place.

Another point is the rank structure. I believe that the highest-placed woman in our forces has the rank of major-general. There are higher ranks, but no women hold them. Moreover, it is obvious that no women are present on the Conservative Benches tonight.

Having carried out research into the employment of ethnic minorities in the MOD, I have concluded that, from the highest level of command, there appears to be an attitude of indifference to racism and—at worst—possible racist tendencies. The Commission for Racial Equality recently investigated the MOD for possible racial discrimination following the recent findings of the Army board of inquiry regarding the case of a corporal. He had been given a new posting to the Life Guards, but, when it was discovered that he was black, he was sent to the Royal Tank Regiment. Following the findings, he was awarded £6,500 in compensation. When I asked the previous Minister of State for the Armed Forces what disciplinary action had been taken against the individuals responsible, I was told:

> "Disciplinary action was not considered appropriate on this occasion."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1994; Vol. 246, c.*440*.]

We still have major problems in regard to equality in the armed forces.

In his speech on 14 July 1994 announcing "Front Line First", the Secretary of State announced that a considerable number of MOD bases would be closed—17 in all. He gave an assurance that full consultation would take place. We have heard what the Secretary of State means by "full consultation": a four-page document issued to hon. Members. I have personal experience of this. Before the announcement was made, I went through a six-month consultation period relating to the closure of RAF Carlisle—and, believe me, it was a farce from start to finish. The Government announced the closure on the same day that they announced that they would allow THORP—the thermal oxide reprocessing plant—to start reprocessing in Cumbria, just before Christmas.

The Minister had met the trade unions, and told them, "If you make the savings, we will save the base." The unions considered, and made some hard decisions; they decided that they could save the base and give the Government the millions that they wanted if they sacked half the work force. They accepted that arrangement, but the Minister then changed the regulations, although he kept the consultation going. That idea of making the consultation last a little longer is fine, but this consultation continued for not three months but six months. It just so happened that, the week after the European elections ended, the Minister decided that RAF Carlisle was to close.

If the consultation period about which hon. Members are worrying gets a bit near to Christmas, we should worry about the fact that the Government will make the announcement on Christmas Eve, and that it will then be hidden. The Government do not take consultation seriously; if Ministers want to change things, that is what they must do.

Mr. Soames *rose—*

Mr. Martlew: The Minister should be careful; he will only have a five-minute speech, and he will be waffling for five minutes.

I am very conscious that we are discussing the defence estimates. This is an annual debate, in which we look back over previous years. In a 1962 debate, speaking for the Opposition, Harold Wilson said that every Secretary of State always has a "pet project". This Secretary of State has a pet project and it appears to be to leave our armed forces demoralised and our defence strategy a shambles.

We have had piecemeal policies of cuts, cuts and cuts, all designed so that the Tories can make one more cut. That, of course, will be in income tax and it will be introduced before the next general election. The Government's policy has nothing to do with the defence of this country; it is all to do with the political strategy of trying to con the voters into voting the Tories in for another term of office.

Do hon. Members believe the Secretary of State when he says that there will be no more defence cuts? Did they believe the Tories when they said that there would be no tax increases and that VAT would not be placed on fuel? It is just another empty promise.

Since 1979, six Tory Secretaries of State have spent £378 billion on defence and what we have today is a mess. The Government are tired and too stale and bereft of vision to have the responsibility to run our defences. It is time that the future of Britain was taken on by a party that is ready and able to meet the challenge. That party is the Labour party.

9.50 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): What a tremendous act to have to follow. This has been, as defence debates always are, a lively and interesting occasion. Profoundly held views have been traded on behalf not only of national but, rightly, constituency interests. With the agreement of the Labour party and, I hope, the approval of the House, I shall speak only briefly tonight since I shall begin the debate for the Government tomorrow and I hope to deal with a number of the points that were made by Opposition Members and by my hon. Friends. I will, of course, write to them at length if I do not deal with their points.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), whom I used to see, when in a previous incarnation at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with his eyes popping out of his head in synthetic fury, is no more

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

convincing as a shadow spokesman on defence. Today in a vacuous speech, he showed a truly deep lack of understanding as to the realities of defence. I think that all hon. Members would agree that the constant, parroting call for a defence review, at a time when the security architecture of the world seems to be changing on an almost daily basis, is a pretty fatuous response to the challenges that defence faces, not only in this country but throughout the world.

The point that the hon. Gentleman made about defence costs studies was not only inaccurate but showed a want of understanding of what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and this Department have achieved in putting back into the front line the enormous number and large range of improvements that are required and are to be warmly welcomed. We are improving resources devoted to training for all three services. We are increasing the strength of the Harrier squadrons and developing the new joint rapid deployment force with a sophisticated package of communications.

All those changes follow logically from the change to the size and shape of the armed forces that resulted from "Options for Change". They have built on the considerable achievements that have been made and are improving and seeking efficiencies, particularly in the support area, where a great deal of work was required.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), in a distinguished speech, supported my right hon. and learned Friend's work in defence costs studies. I think that all hon. Members will wish to pay a great tribute to my right hon. Friend for the work that he did when Secretary of State for Defence, for the important work that he did when he was at the Northern Ireland Office and for the important plans that he laid on the building of this marvellous platform, which we hope will go forward to some form of agreement.

I endorse particularly the tribute that my right hon. Friend paid to all the service men and women and those officials who have done, and are doing, so much in the continuous search for efficiency and improvement and during the critical changes that are of necessity taking place as the Ministry of Defence conducts its business.

The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) made an impressive presentation for his constituents and an industry that he knows well, on behalf of the future large aircraft. He will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has taken note of what he and other right hon. Gentlemen and some right hon. and hon. Friends who were keen to bring the FLA to the House's attention have said.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope) has dropped his almost Trappist practices—his oaths of poverty, chastity and obedience—and returned to the Back Benches whence he recounted to us the three major factors—military, financial and industrial—relating to the FLA that he wished us to bear in mind. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend will have listened with great care to what he had to say.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) noted the necessity of continuing to match resources to commitments. He is a lone voice of sanity on defence matters in his party, and I thought that much of what he said was very sensible. As he knows, we remain committed to our armed forces being properly manned and well equipped and supported. It is wrong to talk in numbers, but I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) that the figure that he seeks is 120,000.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East criticised indirectly the defence costs studies. The exercises that have been undertaken and the way in which the defence costs studies have been structured may not be the ultimate answer, but the work undoubtedly needed to be done, so as to make savings to enhance the capacity of the front line and because of the necessity of a cultural change in the way in which the Ministry of Defence conducts its business.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, congratulated my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on the work that he had done and, like my right hon. and learned Friend, emphasised the importance of the "Partnership for Peace". My hon. Friend welcomed the period of stability for which we have all worked and we all join him in congratulating the armed forces on the way in which they have coped with a period of considerable turbulence and change. It is interesting that the Select Committee, which is extremely active and covers assiduously the whole ambit of operation of the armed forces, has noticed how brilliantly the armed forces have coped with change.

My hon. Friend mentioned the intervals between emergency tours, which is a matter frequently discussed by the Select Committee and the Department. Clearly, things may improve, but it is unlikely that we shall see the day when the forces are not likely to be stretched. Indeed, I think that the forces themselves would regret it if that day were to come. I noted my hon. Friend's call for 10,000 new soldiers and very much hope that the Chief Secretary heard it, too. I also noted his views on the services needed for the future. We will consider his proposals in great detail.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster also mentioned ballistic missile defence, of which we have begun a two-year study. We are grateful for his support in this matter and hope to hear more from him.

The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), who, I am sorry to see, is not in his place, provided perhaps the only opportunity in the debate to hear the rampant voice of the Labour party in its true form. He is a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and a proposer of the only official Labour party amendment on the Order Paper. It is unilateralist, anti-American and represents just about everything the Labour party stands for on defence.

The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent questioned the relevance of our nuclear deterrent and he said that there had been no peace dividend. There has been a wonderful peace dividend. The peace dividend is that we are living in, by and large, a period of peace. We maintain the minimum nuclear deterrent capability required for our security. Great uncertainties and great dangers remain and we have established a stable and secure framework for maintaining the peace. It would be an act of unspeakable folly lightly to dismantle it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby dealt at some length with the question of the Bett review. I hope that—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can the uncalled among us who have been here all day—I make no personal complaint—expect benign consideration tomorrow?

Madam Speaker: May I say to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that I have a very clear record here. The majority of hon. Members adhered to my strictures about keeping to 10 minutes or thereabouts. I have a record of those who did not do so, which is engraved on my heart. I have a record of the hon. Members who were in attendance for the whole of this day. I shall do my best to call them tomorrow. I assure the House that I keep very careful records and I know the hon. Members who took a great deal longer than 10 minutes today.

Raytheon Jets, Clwyd

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I have here a petition given to me by employees of the Raytheon factory in my constituency. It is entitled:

> "On behalf of the employees of Raytheon Corporate Jets to the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom."

It continues:

> "For the attention of the President of the United States of America.
>
> We the undersigned appeal to your integrity to influence the Raytheon Corporation to maintain production in the United Kingdom of the Hawker 800/1000 and Major Variants aircraft.
>
> Our commitment to date has been unquestionable and our achievements within aircraft manufacturing unique."

The work force says in the petition to the President of the United States:

> "we can epitomise everything in the UK that the Raytheon Corporation requires."

That is what my constituents have given me to give to the United States ambassador and it is simply a way in which to show how strongly feelings are running in my constituency.

I have here the names of the Raytheon board of directors. They operate 4,500 miles away in Lexington, Massachusetts. There they plan to rob my constituents of their jobs and my country of one of its precious remaining manufacturing capabilities. It is a list of lawyers, bankers and captains of industry in the United States who are well isolated and well insulated from the consequences of their policies. There is Charles Adams, a retired chairman, there is Mr. Max Bleck, the president of Raytheon, there is Richard D. Hill, the retired chairman of the board of the Bank of Boston Corporation and the First National Bank of Boston and there is Alfred Zeien, who is chairman and chief executive officer of the Gillette Co., to name but a few. The list also includes Dennis Picard, chairman and chief executive officer of Raytheon. They do not know the consequences of their policies for my constituents.

It may well be known that last year British Aerospace sold its corporate jet company to the United States conglomerate Raytheon. When British Aerospace sold the corporate jet company, it said that it was a highly competitive business with a successful product range, but it mistakenly claimed at the time that the purchase by Raytheon would be good for the corporate jet business and for its employees and that it would enable further potential to be realised. Instead, the Raytheon company now intends to transfer production of the Hawker 800 jet to Kansas and it will be investing in an updated version of the 1000 series in the United States rather than here in Britain in my constituency.

At the time of the sale by British Aerospace to Raytheon, I think, and so do my constituents, that the Government should have acted to ensure a successful future for the corporate jet business at Broughton. They should have anticipated the situation that has now developed. My plane-making constituents believe that they are the victims of asset stripping. It was certainly the breakfast sale of the century and the community that I

[Mr. Barry Jones]

represent is still grappling with the implications of the sale. The whole community abhors the proposals by Raytheon.

I support the plane makers totally. They ask me questions. They ask me why the board of British Aerospace sold off that magnificent machine. They also ask me why the then Minister with responsibilities for aerospace permitted the sale. They want to know—and know now—why the Government will not intervene and take some action to save their jobs. They ask why, if the aircraft was good enough for a hard-nosed United States company to buy, it was not good enough to keep in our own country. I remain convinced that the Broughton employees have an excellent case and I want the Government to step in and save those jobs. I want the Government, in effect, to join the fight that we have been continuing in Deeside, in Clwyd and in Wales. It is no exaggeration to say that, in this extraordinary case, my constituents have been betrayed. I know that they have suffered a great injustice. They have been sold lock, stock and fuselage. That is what has happened to them and their livelihoods. Raytheon is taking well-paid, highly skilled jobs of considerable status in industry and it is taking them from my constituents. Raytheon is taking those jobs away from Deeside and relocating them in the United States.

That is an incredible story and the cruel irony is that my constituents will be offered 70 of their own jobs if they are prepared to follow Raytheon back to the United States. That is a very sad statement to make and it is unbearable for my constituents to have to face up to those consequences. They are a very young work force. They have the usual family and financial commitments and they are worried sick about the future. In my near 25 years in this House, I have never encountered such a shabby and such a distressing train of events. It is a disgraceful story.

At home, in the constituency, all of us believe that the day of the announcement, 15 September, was a day of infamy in the history of industrial Deeside. Nobody engaged in industry has ever encountered such proposals as those in my part of Wales. I put it on record that all of the Deeside community supports the plane makers. All members of the community are disgusted by this blatant asset stripping and by the duplicity practised against them. They are disgusted by the cynical manipulation of their skills, their discipline, their loyalty and their success and productiveness.

It would be constructive to show the Minister our weekly newspaper, *The Chronicle*, which ran the headline "Kicked in the teeth". I do not think that that is an exaggeration and the Minister should mark that description well. The evening newspaper, *Evening Leader*, has bluntly summed up the news with the heading "Jobs disaster". The regional newspaper, *The Daily Post* used the word "Betrayed". They are not my words but those used in local reportage. I know from my experience that those newspapers have printed fair descriptions.

The constituency is now set to lose approximately 900 of the best jobs in Wales. We make what has long been the jewel in the crown of British Aerospace—a world-beating, two-engined luxury executive jet that can fly the north Atlantic. It outshines the competition and beats all in sight. That, presumably, is one of the reasons that Raytheon has seen it as a bargain and bought it.

On behalf of my constituents, I beg for urgent, constructive and imaginative Government intervention. That is what I and my constituents want. We want intervention that will save the jobs of those highly skilled men and women at Broughton. As I catalogue this sorry tale, I should like to see the smile wiped off the face of the junior Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry. To see him exchange grins with the Minister of State as I depict the distress of my constituents is not a good sight. I hope that my comments will engender some sense of shame in them. We make what has long been the jewel in the crown of British Aerospace and I beg for intervention that will save the jobs at Broughton.

The Cabinet permitted the sale. The Government said yes to the board of British Aerospace and told it to go ahead. Once the Government gave their permission, the company's subsequent decision became the Government's responsibility. They should face up to it. The community that I represent hopes that they will.

I recall that shortly after the British Aerospace deal with Raytheon, the then Chairman of British Aerospace stood down and went back home to the United States. I read that he received a golden handshake, perhaps it was platinum, of more than £2.5 million. He had done his job. He put in place a sequence of events that has led to my plane maker constituents at Broughton having no future.

Is not it the case that recently British Aerospace workers have paid with their jobs for the incompetence or otherwise of their board chairman? The chairman of the shop stewards, Roger Smith, has written to me and it is only fair to put on record that he wrote:

> "I believe we at Broughton have been betrayed by Raytheon and our Government.
>
> We want the Prime Minister, Mr. Major, to intervene immediately. We were appalled by his correspondence to you"—

their Member of Parliament—

> in regard of the decision."

He continued:

> "The President of the Board of Trade Mr. Heseltine should intervene as he stated 'before breakfast, dinner and tea.' You will recall that it was Mr. Sainsbury who authorised the sale to Raytheon in Mr. Heseltine's absence."

The House may not be aware that last year I took a deputation of plane makers to see the then Minister to beg him not to allow the sale to go ahead. We told him, and certainly the shop floor workers told him, what we feared. What we feared is what Raytheon has recently announced. The Government were told by people who knew what was likely to happen. That is why I plead and beg on behalf of my constituents for Government intervention.

In all fairness and decency, and urgently, the Government should intervene. They should accept responsibility. Mr. Smith continued:

> "We demand Government intervention, no longer can this nation stand by and witness our Aerospace Industry's demise.
>
> Their lack of strategy in regard to the Aerospace Industry is appalling."

Mr. Smith hopes that there will be a Select Committee hearing and he seeks a debate. At least we are having such a debate on the first day after the summer recess. I am grateful that my colleagues from the Principality and from centres of manufacturing are offering their support in this debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and Delyn (Mr. Hanson) for their constant support for me and the plane makers.

The Government seek excellence and best practice. I can give evidence of that. According to a performance summary covering 1992 to 1994, productivity increased by 33 per cent. The overhead costs reduced by $19 million. The labour charging rate was reduced by 16 per cent. The indirect:direct ratio improved by 48 per cent. Product cycle time was reduced by 20 days and the "inventory and WIP" was reduced by $101 million.

We might all agree that it is not a two-bit operation. As the factory is but one mile and 11 fields from my home, I am proud to say that since 1963 the Hawker products have generated $7.5 billion in exports for the United Kingdom. That is a magnificent track record. It is industrial patriotism of a very high order. I am very proud to know the work force who are engaged in making that great product.

The current order for Japan, the air self-defence force maritime search and rescue aircraft, is worth $600 million and is likely to grow to $1 billion. However, in January 1994, Raytheon dismissed 75 per cent. of the established international sales force. Some of my constituents think that their present predicament relates in part to that decision.

Here is some bitter-sweet information. The Department of Trade and Industry carried out a formal assessment of Raytheon at Broughton in my constituency and confirmed its status as a "Centre of Excellence" under the "Managing in the 90s inside UK Enterprise" initiative. Even the BBC chose Raytheon Corporate Jets to feature in a new film illustrating leading edge working practices.

The decision, which I hope may be changed, also has a very serious consequence for British Aerospace Airbus which is also located in my constituency across the tarmac from Raytheon. Airbus has the contract to make the jet's fuselage. Works convenor Mike Nesbitt tells me of his despair. In just two years, he has seen the loss of 2,000 aerospace jobs in that location in my constituency. He does not want to see any more jobs lost. The Raytheon decision may undermine the financial viability of the Airbus site at Broughton in my constituency. We regard that development as being of the utmost seriousness.

The plane makers want urgent Government intervention—that is for sure. They want the Prime Minister to send the President of the Board of Trade to the United States to tell Raytheon that that industrial knifing is not on and that Raytheon must rescind the decision. The work forces look to the Secretary of State for Wales to take the lead in the Cabinet and fight its corner. I will fight on for my constituents. I will not surrender the interests of my constituents. I will work for the changing of the decision—whatever.

Work force leaders want Mr. Denis Picard, the chairman and chief executive, to visit the factory and to engage in discussions with them. So far, all efforts to persuade Mr. Picard to go to the factory and, either in America or in the constituency, to meet shopfloor leaders, community leaders and leading councillors have failed. I ask the Minister to attempt to use his good offices to unlock the door to the chairman of Raytheon, Mr. Picard.

Under the leadership of Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Wanham, there has been tremendous achievement at Broughton. The aircraft assembly has been radically transformed into a very efficient best-in-class manufacturing operation. We have much to be proud of so far. However, I have found Whitehall and the Government to be irresolute and incapable of saving those precious jobs. That is the very daunting truth that I have learnt.

Time is no longer with me. I ask the Minister to step to the Dispatch Box and say that the Government will intervene and try to save my constituents' jobs.

10.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I readily acknowledge the importance of the debate that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has secured. It means much to people in Wales. It is also a matter in which the hon. Gentleman has taken a long, close interest.

The Government share the deep regret that is felt at Raytheon's decision to move its manufacturing facility away from Broughton in north Wales. We fully appreciate what a blow that news has been to the workers at the Broughton plant. Raytheon makes an important contribution to the economy of that part of north Wales. There is a long tradition of aeroplane manufacture in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. That, of course, will continue. It remains, though, a serious loss.

It is important, therefore, to start from a clear understanding of what Raytheon has decided, its reasons for doing so, and the part that the Government played during that difficult period. Regrettable though it is, the company has made it clear that the decision was taken on purely commercial grounds. Only the company was in a position to be able to take that decision. Raytheon has explained that it is a reflection of the current state of world markets.

In its discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the company made it perfectly clear that its decision was in no way a reflection of the high regard in which it holds its highly skilled and committed work force in north Wales. The company has only praise for the way in which the work force has sought to improve productivity over the past year.

I stress also that the company has made it clear that the decision is no reflection of any lack of support—financial or otherwise—from the Government.

It is because we have realised the importance of this matter that Ministers and the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency have remained in close touch with the company over the past few months. My right hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), who was then a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, visited the headquarters of Raytheon Corporation in America in April; so, too, in June did David Rowe-Beddoe, the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency. In April, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales visited the plant at Broughton. He and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Trade and Industry met the president of Raytheon before the announcement was made in September. My hon. Friend at the Department of Trade and Industry demonstrates his keen interest in this matter by being present on the Front Bench. I know that he is looking forward to meeting the hon. Gentleman later this week, as is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

In turn, there has been regular contact between Raytheon and officials of the Welsh Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

[Mr. Gwilym Jones]

Against a background of weak world markets, the Government have lost no opportunity to promote sales of corporate jets overseas. Department of Trade and Industry Ministers have been briefed on Raytheon in advance of overseas trade visits. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Wales and the President of the Board of Trade have used their direct contacts with Governments and businesses overseas to promote sales of the jets. We are continuing with those efforts. It has been stressed that if attempts to secure further sales are successful, we would expect those aircraft to be manufactured at Broughton.

In his most recent meeting, my right hon. Friend invited the president of Raytheon to consider whether the Broughton plant might be allowed to bid for further work within the group. The work force has, after all, demonstrated its commitment to the company over recent months. I am pleased to say that the president agreed to consider that.

My right hon. Friend will now be writing to the president to reiterate those points. We all hope that the company's response will be favourable, but the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I would not wish to hold out false hopes to the House about our prospects of success. The decision to relocate the manufacture of corporate jets to the United States is, ultimately, a commercial matter for Raytheon. To the extent that the Government are able to bring their persuasive powers to bear, it is clear that we are doing just that. The final decision, however, is for the company alone.

I know that the hon. Gentleman will be as pleased as I am that the economy in north-east Wales is showing encouraging signs of strength. Unemployment in Clwyd now stands at 7.9 per cent. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency, it has fallen by nearly 16 per cent. over the past year.

The strength of the local economy is clearly demonstrated by the companies that have chosen to locate in the area. Companies such as Toyota, Sharp and Kimberly-Clark are household names. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that others such as Hamilton Oil, Shotton Paper, Optical Fibres and Warwick International are having an equally important effect.

The Government recognise that they have a continuing role to play in promoting further economic growth. We are anxious to attract more companies to north-east Wales. We are investing in the infrastructure and we are offering companies carefully targeted financial assistance. I am pleased to say that in the six months to the end of September, Clwyd attracted 12 investment projects. Those projects are expected to bring 910 jobs and capital expenditure of almost £71 million in due course. The county has, therefore, attracted more projects than any other county in Wales during this financial year, and the second highest level of jobs and capital expenditure.

The area also benefits from ever-improving communication links. The Government's massive £700 million investment in the north Wales coastal route is the clearest possible commitment of our desire to see improved access to the whole of north Wales. That is not the record of a Government who do not believe in providing carefully targeted support for industry. However, what all these examples have in common is that they facilitate the operation of the markets, rather than interfere with it. In the long run, it is only through healthy competition that companies in north-east Wales and, indeed, throughout the whole of the United Kingdom can prosper and thrive.

I certainly appreciate the desire of the Raytheon work force to fight as hard as it can to persuade the company to change its mind. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the Government must have regard to the consequences of a closure. If the closure goes ahead, it will be important to ensure that an effective range of support services is made available to those who lose their jobs.

The fact that job losses are phased offers some assistance. It provides an opportunity for local agencies to work together to establish how the needs of workers made redundant can be met most effectively.

The North-East Wales training and enterprise council will have a crucial role. I understand that it has already decided to use its powers to allow workers made redundant immediate access to retraining, thereby waiving the normal requirement that adults should be out of work for six months before being eligible for training for work. A full range of wider training and enterprise council training programmes will also be available to workers who might need them.

The Welsh Development Agency has also been active locally and we expect it to continue to play an important role. North-east Wales has a strong tradition of a highly skilled work force. The closure does nothing to alter that fact. That crucial resource can only be of assistance to the agency as it promotes the area as a site for inward investment. It is equally relevant to local companies that are contemplating expansion.

The Government fully recognise what a blow the Raytheon decision has been for the people of north-east Wales, which is why we stayed in touch with the company throughout the past year and Ministers used their contacts with Governments abroad and businesses overseas to try to attract new orders.

The company's decision to close its manufacturing facility was taken on commercial grounds. We did all that we could to persuade it, but it remained a matter for the company alone.

I am confident that the strengths inherent in the north-east Wales economy will help to overcome that blow. The area has an impressive record of attracting inward investment. It enjoys the benefits of an excellent work force and good communications. If the area is to be provided with effective support in the wake of closure, it is essential that all organisations with a contribution to make work closely together. The Government will do all that they can to make sure that is the case.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 18 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Minimum Wage

1. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of a minimum wage on levels of youth unemployment in other OECD countries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Phillip Oppenheim): Minimum wages destroy jobs, particularly among young people. Youth unemployment is far lower in the United Kingdom than in France or Spain, which both have statutory national minimum wages similar to that proposed by the Labour party.

Mr. Luff: I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box. Is he aware that the right hon. Member for Kingston Upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has observed that any fool knows that a minimum wage— [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am quoting.

Madam Speaker: Order. We are not making a good start today. It is not in order for the hon. Gentleman to quote. I am sure that he can do well without that.

Mr. Luff: I shall paraphrase, Madam Speaker. The right hon. Member for Kingston Upon Hull, East has observed that any fool knows that a minimum wage would cause a shake-out in jobs. Could my hon. Friend give an estimate of the size of that shake-out?

Mr. Oppenheim: There are a number of estimates, ranging up to 2 million jobs. I shall give my hon. Friend another interesting quote. John Grant, who was Minister with responsibility for the low-paid under the last Labour Government, recently wrote in *The Guardian* that it was a "pious hope" to expect better-paid workers not to want to increase differentials if a statutory minimum wage were imposed. That increase in differentials would have an enormous knock-on effect through the rest of the economy, severely damage our competitiveness and lead to a massive shake-out in jobs.

Mr. Rooker: Has the Minister seen the report in *The Birmingham Post* today disclosing research that shows that, last year, increases for company directors in the west midlands averaged £50,000 a year? How can he preach to the low-paid that there should not be a statutory minimum wage? Why are employers allowed to exploit the social security system, which has to spend £1 billion a year on family credit for low-paid workers?

Mr. Oppenheim: I may surprise the hon. Gentleman when I say that I, too, would like low pay rates to rise so that people are better paid. However, that must be done on a sustainable basis. The only sustainable way to improve the lot of the low-paid is to improve the productivity, efficiency and competitiveness of our economy and to enhance the skills and education of our work force. Those are the policies that we have been pursuing during the past 15 years, with the result that pay at all levels has risen substantially—in marked contrast to the position between 1974 and 1979, when productivity stagnated and so did pay. The rich may have become poorer under the last Labour Government, but the poor certainly did not become any richer.

Unemployment

2. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in the number of unemployed since December 1992.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Portillo): Seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment has fallen by 405,700.

Mr. Marshall: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his promotion and I thank him for his positive answer. Does he agree that those figures would not have been achieved if we had signed the social chapter and adopted a national minimum wage? Are not the Government seeking to reduce unemployment while the Opposition are seeking to become the natural party of unemployment?

Mr. Portillo: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. It is extraordinary that the Opposition still talk about their aspirations for full employment, when all their policies are a slap across the face for the unemployed. The social chapter would destroy jobs and so would the minimum wage, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has just said. It is obvious that if there were a Labour Government they would be tough on jobs and tough on the causes of jobs.

Mr. McAllion: Does the Secretary of State accept that just as important as the change in the number of unemployed has been the change in the way that the Government count the number of unemployed, which has effectively kept more than 1 million unemployed people off the register? Does he further accept that his policy of pursuing a flexible, deregulated market has simply resulted in millions of British people being denied the right to a full-time job at a living wage and in the British work force being turned into a casual, part-time, low-skilled work force that is not the envy of the world that it was when we had Labour Governments?

Mr. Portillo: It is deeply to be regretted that the hon. Gentleman cannot welcome a fall in unemployment. It is clear, by any measure, that unemployment has fallen. For example, if we use the internationally accepted standard for the measurement of unemployment, the International Labour Organisation standard, it is clear that unemployment has fallen. Why does the hon. Gentleman not welcome that? Why must he always carp? Why must he always claim that the figures have been fiddled? He knows, from every constituency in Britain, that unemployment has been falling. Why does he protest against part-time jobs, which allow so many women to return to work with flexible hours that enable them to meet their children from school? Why does the hon. Gentleman set his face against the legitimate aspirations of those women?

Mr. Dunn: Given that unemployment has fallen by 400,000 and that Britain has the highest number of people in work of any major European Union country, are not the Opposition being small-minded and damaging Britain's standing in continuing to talk down our success?

Mr. Portillo: It is always deeply regrettable when the official Opposition party runs the nation down. That is not good for attracting investment to Britain. Fortunately, people can see that Britain is an attractive place in which to invest. They can see that the Government's policies are producing low inflation and growth. Fortunately, therefore, we had the news yesterday of 3,000 Samsung jobs in the north-east and the news today of the 1,450 new jobs at the Rover Group.

Mrs. Clwyd: As the Secretary of State sets out from planet Portillo on the Starship Enterprise to explore the final frontier and to go where no Tory has ever gone before, what explanation would he give to a Vulcan of his claim that the level of unemployment has fallen by 405,000 at the same time as 500,000 people, who were in work or looking for work, have disappeared from the figures? Has he just blasted them into the stratosphere?

Mr. Portillo: I find the hon. Lady's jokes rather laboured. It is time for the hon. Lady to return to earth, where she will find that unemployment has fallen by 405,000 and that many more people are staying on at school or are in education. If the hon. Lady is regretting that more people are staying on at school to improve their skills, she is even further away from earth than I thought that she was.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Is my right hon. Friend of the opinion that there is still plenty of spare capacity in the economy and that we can look forward to further falls in unemployment?

Mr. Portillo: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the crucial factor is that we continue to sustain low inflation year after year. If we do that, we can have prosperity and new jobs year after year. As long as we pursue our policies we can look forward to a long period in which jobs are created and unemployment will fall. The only thing that could put an end to that would be if, by chance, the Opposition were elected to power.

Restart Interviews

3. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been awaiting restart interviews throughout Greater London on 1 April in each of the past two years.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): Restart interviews are available within four weeks of their becoming due having been notified immediately, and therefore no waiting lists are necessary.

Mr. Dowd: In that case, why did the chief executive of the Employment Service provide me with those figures? They were available only for Greater London. Can the hon. Lady explain why, given that they refer to individual claimants, they are not available for each office? Will she confirm that the figure of fewer than one in 20 people going on to find work as a result of restart interviews has not changed since the scheme's inception?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on both counts. The figures that he has received are almost certainly of those waiting to embark on restart courses. Secondly, 32.2 per cent. nationally and 28.1 per cent. of those in Greater London go on either to a job or to an Employment Service programme as a result of their restart interviews. Will he welcome that?

Mr. Evennett: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Employment Service on its good work in Greater London? Many young and older people have been found jobs by that excellent service. In particular, will my hon. Friend congratulate the Employment Service office in Erith, which does a first-class job for local people?

Miss Widdecombe: I have great pleasure in echoing my hon. Friend's thanks. Of course, restart interviews are by no means the only initiative available to the unemployed. The long-term unemployed also benefit from training for work, job interview guarantee, job plan workshops, job clubs, restart courses, community action, learning for work, 1-2-1, pilots, job finders grants and work trials.

Unemployment, Dorset

4. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in unemployment in Dorset in each month since January.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. James Paice): Unadjusted claimant unemployment in Dorset is down by 5,474 since January of this year, and by 8,291 since January 1993, which is a fall of 25 per cent. I shall, with permission, Madam Speaker, arrange for the full statistical table to be printed in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Bruce: I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box and thank him for recounting the excellent news that the Government's regeneration agency, which is working on replacing defence jobs in my constituency, is doing such a good job. Will he take into account the fact that, over the next five years, we shall lose about 4,500 jobs from our economy? Will my hon. Friend look carefully at what more his Department can do either to persuade the Ministry of Defence not to move everybody away from Portland and Weymouth or to provide maximum help to regenerate jobs?

Mr. Paice: For a long while, my hon. Friend has admirably looked after the interests of his constituents in the context of the defence reductions. He will know that Dorset training and enterprise council has already received substantial extra funds through the Konver initiative. He should take courage from the fact that the Dorset jobcentre now has 1,500 vacancies, which is 30 per cent. more than it had a year ago.

Mr. Chidgey: Is the Minister aware that long-term unemployment in Dorset has been rising as a percentage since April 1992? Will he address the concerns of the long-term unemployed in Dorset and elsewhere as a matter of priority?

Mr. Paice: The Government have a range of programmes, ranging from training programmes and counselling schemes, to encourage and enable the long-term unemployed to get back to work. The Government do not take very much notice of a party whose only interest seems to be to create jobs in selling cannabis and condoms to kids.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend accept that the very welcome reductions in Dorset are due not merely to the Government's rejection of the social contract and the minimum wage, which would have damaged our hotel industry, but to the splendid efforts of industry in Bournemouth and in Poole in winning the "Britain in Bloom" competition yet again in Bournemouth and the "Best Beach in Britain" in Poole, much of which I hope was enjoyed by my hon. Friend and many others last week?

Mr. Paice: I and my right hon. and hon. Friends greatly enjoyed seeing Bournemouth in bloom. We had a thoroughly enjoyable week which led us to be even more convinced that the Government's policies to get the economy going and get unemployment down are the right policies for this country.

Following is the information:

Unadjusted claimant unemployment in Dorset

1994	*Number of unemployed*	*Change on previous month*
January	29,807	1,393
February	29,471	–366
March	28,292	–1,179
April	27,092	–1,200
May	25,948	–1,144
June	24,711	–1,237
July	24,753	42
August	24,797	44
September	24,333	–464

Note: As these figures are on the unadjusted basis they will be subject to seasonal influences.

Youth Training

5. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16-year-old school leavers from Leeds, West were placed on training schemes in September.

Mr. Paice: Some 2,900 young people were on youth training in Leeds in July, which is the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Battle: Is the Minister aware that 169 youngsters still seek a training place today, 79 of whom have no income and are not on benefit, and 19 of whom live in Bramley and Armley in my constituency? Does the Minister know that if a youngster misses a single interview with the careers service he or she is crossed off the list for a guaranteed scheme? What will happen to such youngsters? Are the Government prepared for some youngsters to become "disappeared persons" who have been consigned out of the training and labour market?

Mr. Paice: The Government do not want any young people to be deprived of the opportunity to go on a proper training programme if they do not have a job or have not gone into full-time education. In fact, at the end of August only three young people in the whole of Leeds were awaiting places on YT courses.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that, not just in Leeds but throughout the country, the youth guarantee has proved to be a shambles and a disgrace? Is he aware that, according to the Government's own figures in the labour force survey, 122,000 16 and 17-year-olds were out of work in the spring of this year? Why should any hon. Member, or any 16-year-old school leaver, believe that the guarantee will be honoured this winter? Will not 16-year-olds, too, be out of work and without benefits?

Mr. Paice: The guarantee is always honoured, and we have made sure that training and enterprise councils have enough resources to honour it. At the end of August, only a third of the number of young people who were awaiting places at the same time last year were awaiting them. As for the labour force survey statistics that the hon. Gentleman has given, he should be aware that that figure also includes a number of other groups that we do not categorise as unemployed—for instance, those who are undertaking full-time education courses but who may be looking for jobs at the same time.

Wages Councils

6. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of the abolition of the wages councils on the pay of those in occupations which were previously covered.

Mr. Oppenheim: The 1994 new earnings survey shows that, in the main, average earnings of workers in sectors that were covered by wages councils rose between April 1993 and April 1994, although it is still too early to make a full assessment.

Mr. Prentice: Is the Minister proud of the fact that Britain is the only country in the European Union without legal pay protection for the very poorest? What advice would he give people in north-east Lancashire who see sweatshop pay rates being replaced by slave-labour rates, such as the £80 a week that is being offered by Mr. Joe McBride of Northern Textiles? Should people be grateful for those grotesque wage rates?

Mr. Oppenheim: First, it is not correct to say that all European Union countries have minimum wages or wages councils. Secondly, no one will condone poor employers or bad employment practices. If Opposition Members think that there is some easy way of securing higher wages just by political diktat—without improving the competitiveness, productivity and efficiency of the economy, and without enhancing the skills and educational base of the work force—they are perpetrating an unfair myth on the British people.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my memory playing me false, or is it true that, during the 1970s, the Labour party, when in government, abolished quite a number of wages councils? If it is so wrong for the Conservative Government to have done that, why did the Labour party do it then?

Mr. Oppenheim: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. Between 1974 and 1978, the Labour Government abolished no fewer than 11 wages councils, covering 600,000 workers.

Ms Short *rose*—

Hon. Members: Answer.

Ms Short: I was just attempting to speak, if hon. Members will allow me.

We know that the Minister is new. He is probably not aware that those wages councils were very tiny and behind the times. Let me point out to him that evidence of average wages in a wages council sector tells us nothing about low pay in that sector. I know that he is new: he may not be aware of the research undertaken by the low pay network campaign against poverty, which was published in August 1994, which examined nearly 6,000 jobs in what were previously wages council sectors and found that one third of all vacancies paid less than the wages council rate—

Madam Speaker: Order. I must hear a question from the hon. Lady.

Ms Short: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I asked whether the Minister was aware of research, of which he should be aware. In retailing, pay is 42 per cent. less than the wages council rate. Does the Minister realise that his strategy of encouraging low pay in Britain damages women workers above all? Does he not yet understand, after 15 years of economic failure, that the encouragement of low pay leads to poor training and poor investment, and that a national minimum wage would benefit low-paid families—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] It is a question. Does the Minister understand that a national minimum wage would benefit low-income families, and encourage employers to train and invest instead of competing by cutting wages?

Mr. Oppenheim: I may be new, but I have seen the low pay network campaign report. I do not know how thoroughly the hon. Lady has read the report. If she has read it thoroughly, she will know that the report is based solely on surveys of unfilled vacancies in jobcentres, which tend to be at lower levels than pay for people in work. Not a single person in work was surveyed for that particular report, so on a statistical basis the report is flawed.

As for the abolition of wages councils under the last Labour Government, I do not know whether the hon. Lady thinks that 250,000 road haulage workers represent an insignificant industry. The only way in which we shall increase pay levels is by increasing the productivity of the economy. Since 1979, productivity has increased significantly, as has pay at all levels. That is in stark contrast to the late 1970s, when both productivity and pay in the British economy stagnated. We shall be able to help the low-paid only when we have a more efficient, competitive economy.

Madam Speaker: Order. All hon. Members today—both Back Benchers and Front Benchers—have been far too long with their questions and answers. I want brisk questions and answers in future. I call Sir Donald Thompson. I can rely on you, I am sure.

Sir Donald Thompson: Can my hon. Friend tell me how many jobs wages councils have created?

Mr. Oppenheim: None, sir.

Unemployment

7. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Portillo: In September, seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment stood at 2,566,000; down by 405,700 since December 1992.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Secretary of State realise that such an intolerable level of unemployment would be even worse if the Government adopted his crazy idea of scrapping regional development assistance? Given the thousands of jobs created through regional development assistance to companies such as Samsung and Nissan in the north-east and NEC and Digital Equipment in Scotland, will the Secretary of State publicly recant and abandon any idea of scrapping regional development assistance? Otherwise, he should change his job description to Secretary of State for Unemployment.

Mr. Portillo: I know that the hon. Gentleman has been busy composing early-day motions to undermine his Front Bench, but even so that is no excuse for what he has just said. I have never opposed regional selective assistance. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] No I have not. In my job as Chief Secretary I did what all Chief Secretaries must do—I asked for it to be justified. I rejoice enormously at the 3,000 jobs that have come, through Samsung, to the north-east, but I know perfectly well that those jobs would not have come if Britain had signed up to the social chapter and we had had a minimum wage.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is not it clear that a major factor in our consistently improving employment prospects is our present excellent industrial relations within a framework of Conservative trade union law? Is not it equally clear that if we went back to the bad old days, as proposed by the Bill to be presented later this afternoon by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), that picture would quickly change for the worse?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. During the 1970s we lost 12.9 million working days a year on average. Last year we lost only one 25th of that—about 600,000 working days. Britain now has a marvellous reputation for industrial relations. I noticed that, at the Trades Union Congress conference, it was proposed that all the Government's industrial relations reforms should be repealed.

Minimum Wage

8. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had since 21 July with the United States Administration regarding the effect of a national minimum wage.

Mr. Oppenheim: None.

Mr. Spellar: Can one presume that that is because Ministers might not like the answers that they would receive? Ministers have been pleased to say how many jobs have been created in the United States—that is, of course, in the context of a national minimum wage.

Mr. Oppenheim: I know of the hon. Gentleman's interest in a national minimum wage in the United States. However, I do not know whether he knows that the level of the federal national minimum wage in the United States is £2.70, compared to the Labour party's proposals for Britain of £4. The gap is even greater when one bears in mind that pay levels in the United States are far higher than those in the United Kingdom. Successive American Administrations have allowed minimum pay to wither away by not raising it in line with inflation. The last example of that was the Clinton Administration, who came to power committed to increasing the minimum wage, but two years later have done nothing about it.

Mr. Barron: The Minister said that the minimum wage would destroy jobs in this country. Can he comment on the survey by the low pay network campaign, which showed that since September 1993—after the abolition of the wages councils—27,000 jobs have been lost in the hotel and catering sector? I thought that abolition was supposed to make the number of such jobs grow.

Mr. Oppenheim: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. The survey was done at a time when the hotel and catering industry—which is a seasonal industry—sheds jobs. If the hon. Gentleman is serious about the minimum wage, it is incumbent on him to tell us how he would handle the question of whether there would be a lower rate for youth workers, as happens in the Netherlands. How would he handle the effect on public sector pay, bearing in mind the fact that Labour is now committed not to increase public sector spending? Above all, how would he handle the knock-on effect of differentials, which every trade union leader has told us that they would expect to rise?

Part-time Workers

9. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Government will introduce legislation to protect part-time workers.

Miss Widdecombe: Part-time workers already have a wide range of employment protection rights.

Mr. Donohoe: Part-time employees do not have the same employment rights as full-time employees, especially when it comes to industrial tribunals. Will the Minister give a cast-iron assurance that she will extend the same rights to part-time employees?

Miss Widdecombe: Part-time employees already have important rights, including those relating to race and sex discrimination, health and safety, trade union membership and activities, unlawful deductions from wages and time off for ante-natal care. That is a very comprehensive package.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituency has the lowest level of unemployment in the United Kingdom? Many of those people are part-time workers. The best employment protection that they can have is for their jobs to be protected. Will my hon. Friend give the House a commitment that her Department will continue to scrutinise European Community directives and ensure that it uses its veto, where necessary, to protect the jobs of part-time and full-time workers in this country?

Miss Widdecombe: I am happy to guarantee to my hon. Friend that we will do all that we can to protect part-time jobs and part-time job opportunities when they are threatened by kind-hearted but deeply economically misguided proposals for the further imposition of legislation.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister not know that, as a result of recent decisions in European courts, part-timers in Britain are already protected against unfair dismissal and redundancy? Will the Government now make that clear, if not by answering my letters to that effect, by introducing legislation in the next Session, so that we comply with European law and get rid of that discrimination?

Miss Widdecombe: The Government always seek to comply with any directive to which we have signed up. That will continue to be our position. We will also continue to answer all the letters that the hon. and learned Member sends to our Department. Not one letter has gone unanswered. Perhaps he would like assistance in understanding the answers.

Labour Market

10. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the strength of the link between falling unemployment and the structure of the United Kingdom labour market.

Mr. Portillo: During the 1980s, we legislated to make it easier for businesses to give people jobs and to restrict trade union privileges. In the 1990s, unemployment is falling at an early stage of the recovery. I believe that those two facts are linked.

Mr. Banks: Is my right hon. Friend aware of Opposition Members' support for the European Commission's proposal to allow all new fathers three months' paternity leave? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that proposal and many others like it from Brussels need to be resisted before further unnecessary and costly burdens are placed on competitive British business?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. I simply could not support the proposal. Of course many employers make arrangements with their employees and those can involve paternity leave, but the proposal made to us in Brussels last month was that all businesses should be obliged by law to give any male employee three months' paternity leave. That could have disastrous consequences for small businesses and I was not prepared to sign up to it.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Secretary of State continually says no, no, no to Europe. Instead of telling Brussels where to stop, why does not he stop telling us to accept low wages, stop telling us to work excessive hours and stop telling us to use kids for illegal work, and why does not he stop turning us into the sweatshop of Europe?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Lady's rehearsals are certainly paying off, and practising as hard as she does is worth while.

I want to make sure that we do not destroy jobs in Britain and I am not prepared to have costs imposed upon Britain's employers which would make them less likely to take people on. I believe that people are generally poorer when they are not in work than when they are in work.

Trade Union Reforms

11. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received calling for abolition of the employment and trade union reforms introduced between 1980 and 1993.

Mr. Oppenheim: There have been no individual representations to abolish our reforms which have given trade unionists the right to secret ballots, the right to strike ballots, the right to refuse to strike and the freedom to leave their trade union without losing their jobs. All those reforms were opposed by Labour and by the trade unions, but last year the reforms contributed to the best strike record since 1891.

Mr. Ainsworth: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's trade union reforms are now so popular that even those who fought them tooth and nail recognise the valuable contribution that they have made to industrial relations? Does he further agree that there must be some lingering doubt in our minds as to the extent of the conversion of the Labour party so long as more than half its funding comes from the trade union movement?

Mr. Oppenheim: There certainly seem to be some divisions among Opposition Members as to whether they support our trade union reforms. The reforms have made a massive contribution to the improvements in the efficiency and competitiveness of the British economy. Recent figures have shown that productivity rose by 5 per cent. and exports by 10 per cent. last year, and only today Rover has announced that it is creating many new jobs because of increased exports. Our trade union reforms have contributed significantly to that.

Mr. Denham: Is the Minister aware that four out of 10 workers in the south-east of England are now in the so-called flexible economy of part-time work, zero-hours contracts, short-term contracts and enforced self-employment? Does the Minister recognise that without re-establishing basic employment protection, the future for those and many other workers is one of greater insecurity and uncertainty?

Mr. Oppenheim: The recent labour force survey showed that only 13 per cent. of part-time workers actually wanted full-time jobs. The existence of a large amount of part-time work has allowed Britain to have the highest participation rate of the work force of any major European country. Part-time work is important for the many people who actually want it.

Parliamentary Questions

13. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the cost of answering parliamentary questions to his Department during the past 12 months.

Miss Widdecombe: An estimated £212,300.

Mr. Banks: It is nice to know that hon. Members are keeping Ministers busy, even if the Ministers are not capable of keeping the unemployed busy. Would not it be a nice gesture if the hon. Members who take money for asking those questions sent a certain proportion back to the Department to defray expenses? Alternatively, could not the money be put into a fund for the election campaign of the Secretary of State?

Miss Widdecombe: I do not in the least begrudge the hon. Gentleman the rather large amount of taxpayers' money that has been spent keeping up with his own questions. He has asked about four times the average number of parliamentary questions. If he is concerned about the public purse, he may wish to reduce the number of demands that he makes upon it.

Unemployment, Yorkshire and Humberside

14. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of unemployment in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Paice: In September, seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment stood at 221,300, down 30,100 since December 1992.

Mr. Brown: In welcoming my hon. Friend to his new duties and his long-overdue promotion, may I congratulate him and the Government on those figures? Can he tell the House the extent to which unemployment has fallen in Brigg and Cleethorpes? Is not it true that, as a result of tremendous inward investment projects by Samsung and Kimberley Clark in my constituency, the unemployment rate will continue to fall in the Yorkshire and Humberside region for many months to come?

Mr. Paice: I am delighted to confirm to my hon. Friend that those figures are replicated in his constituency. Unemployment has fallen in the past month, in the past year, in the past two years and in the past eight years.

Mr. Gunnell: I agree that unemployment has fallen in the constituency of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), which is due in part to overseas investment from Kimberley Clark. As one who was directly involved in attracting that investment, may I ask the Minister to accept that it owed a great deal to Labour-controlled Humberside county council and that Labour authorities have been fully co-operative in attracting all inward investment projects? Does he agree that their welcome has played a significant part in achieving many successes?

Mr. Paice: I am happy to pay tribute where tribute is due. The simple fact is that if the Labour council has helped inward investment, a Labour Government certainly would not, because by implementing the social chapter and a minimum wage they would destroy any prospect of inward investment.

Mr. John Greenway: I, too, welcome my hon. Friend to his new duties. Does he agree that the unemployment rate in the rural areas of Yorkshire is way below the average not just in the United Kingdom but throughout the European Union? Does he also agree that the Government's initiative to improve the rural economy even further, announced at last week's party conference, will be a great boost to jobs in rural areas?

Mr. Paice: My hon. Friend knows of my great sympathy for rural areas; he is absolutely right. The

Government's White Paper on rural areas, which was announced last week, will lead to even further stimulus for a range of enterprises to improve employment opportunities in rural areas.

Youth Unemployment

15. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with his EC counterparts on the issue of unemployment in the EU, with particular reference to youth unemployment.

Miss Widdecombe: There have been many discussions, both bilaterally and in the Labour and Social Affairs Council, and Community counterparts are beginning to recognise that high labour costs and inflexible labour markets are among the key causes of high unemployment.

Mr. McFall: Does the Minister accept that it is disgraceful that 16 million people are unemployed in Europe and that it is even more shameful that 20 per cent. of them are young people aged between 18 and 25? Will the Government give a commitment today to consider the future of young people in this country as important? Will they therefore make it their No. 1 priority in Europe and at least say that they will try to get young people back to work?

Miss Widdecombe: It is because the Government are concerned about youth unemployment that we rejoice in the fact that our youth unemployment rate is well below the European average. The unemployment rate among under 25-year-olds in this country is 13.2 per cent. while the European average is 19.4 per cent. Our youth unemployment rate, together with that of Spain, is falling faster than in any other country. There are 84,600 fewer 18 to 20-year-olds unemployed in this country than there were last year. That is the way to lead Europe—by example.

Mr. Rowe: Has my hon. Friend noticed that the folk she meets along the streets are whistling Samsung? This country leads Europe in attracting inward investment from all over the world. Does she agree that that success is a major contributor to the fall in unemployment, particularly youth unemployment?

Miss Widdecombe: It is clear that the reason why we attract 40 per cent. of all investment in Europe carried out by the United States and Japan is our flexible labour markets. Those markets have not been achieved by some neo-classical endogenous theory, but by solid, practical, flexible policies, which have resulted in solid, practical jobs for our citizens. We shall continue to pursue those policies.

Disabled People

16. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment with whom he has had recent discussions about discrimination in employment against disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Employment Department Ministers have had meetings with a number of organisations to discuss the Government's proposals to tackle discrimination against disabled people. Following the consideration of the responses to consultations on those proposals, the Government will take decisions on the most practical way forward.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister realise that a disabled person has a three times greater chance of being unemployed than an able-bodied person? It needs no further consultation to realise that fact, does it? Will the Minister now join the new Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—the last one having been sacked—and agree to support fully the legislation introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry)?

Miss Widdecombe: It is because we recognise the importance of assisting people with disabilities that we have already put measures in hand, while the Opposition have merely talked. That is why 53,300 disabled people were assisted into work by our jobcentres last year; why our access to work scheme has been put into place with an increased budget that now amounts to £14.6 million; why we introduced the disability working allowance; and why we set up placing and assessment counselling teams. And that is why we set up a special consultation process, the 1,000 responses to which the hon. Gentleman dismisses so glibly. We shall analyse those and do them the justice that they deserve.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Campbell: Did the Prime Minister's predecessor break the code of conduct for Ministers when her son, Mark Thatcher, made £12 million from the Al-Yamamah arms negotiations?

The Prime Minister: I have no doubt that my right hon. and noble Friend acted with complete propriety throughout her long and distinguished period as Prime Minister of this country. If the hon. Lady has any evidence to the contrary, I hope that she will produce it rather than peddling remarks like that.

Q2. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Devlin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that yesterday's announcement that Samsung is to bring 3,500 jobs to Stockton-on-Tees will be very welcome in the town, where we have long had high unemployment? Will he confirm the Government's continuing commitment to the sort of regional policies that have brought that about?

The Prime Minister: I very much welcome the announcement by Samsung. It is extremely good news for the north-east. Throughout much of the past 30 years, there have been very high levels of unemployment in the north-east and everyone will recognise the importance of that substantial investment. I know that my hon. Friend has campaigned for Cleveland for a long time and will be very pleased by it. It follows a series of other welcome investments—Motorola, Digital and NEC—none of which would have come to this country but for the economic policies that we have followed, the fact that we are not part of the social chapter and the fact that we are members of the European Union.

Mr. Blair: Since this is our first chance after the recess, may I say how much we welcome the further moves towards peace in Northern Ireland and assure the Prime Minister of our continued support in achieving that peace.

Last Thursday on BBC television, the Chancellor of the Exchequer specifically ruled out a referendum on a single currency. Did he speak for the Government?

The Prime Minister: First, may I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his new position. It carries with it very great responsibilities, and I wish him well in those responsibilities for as long as he holds them.

On Northern Ireland, I am grateful for what the right hon. Gentleman had to say. It is and has been an intractable problem for many years. We have made some progress. There is no certainty that we shall be able to carry the process through successfully to a conclusion. I believe that there is a chance—perhaps a better chance than we have known at any time in the past quarter of a century.

I intend to take the opportunities that exist, but I hope that I shall carry the House with me in saying that we must take them with care, with caution and in our own time. I believe that that is the only way in which we shall carry with us all the people of Northern Ireland, without which we shall not be able to carry the matter through to a satisfactory conclusion.

As for the right hon. Gentleman's substantive question, at the moment no one knows what may be at issue in the intergovernmental conference in 1996. The question of a referendum on any issue does not arise and very probably will not arise.

Mr. Blair: With all due respect, the Chancellor specifically ruled it out and therefore he thought that it did arise. Is not that the problem: that the Chancellor takes one view on Europe, the Employment Secretary takes another view and the Prime Minister hovers between the two? Does he— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House will come to order.

Mr. Blair: I repeat: he hovers between the two. Does he agree that a divided Government is a weak Government, and a weak Government is no good for Britain?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has already said that, were he to form a Government, it would be a weak Government, and that is precisely because he said that his Government would not be isolated in Europe. Irrespective of the issue, irrespective of the British interest, irrespective of the views of the House or the Members of the House, and irrespective of the views of his colleagues below the Gangway, the right hon. Gentleman would follow slavishly whatever Europe says. That is not a credible position for any Government in this country.

We will judge issues on their merits as they arise.

Sir James Kilfedder: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on being the first Prime Minister in more than half a century to achieve the cessation of terrorism in Northern Ireland? Is he aware that the people of Northern Ireland fully endorse his careful and cautious approach because, as he realises, until the terrorists hand over their dumps of Semtex explosives and arms, there is the real danger that they or a breakaway group could easily use them on some pretext, saying that the British Government had failed to deliver their promises?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend speaks with a great deal of knowledge of the situation in Northern Ireland for many years, and has had to live through many tragedies affecting his constituents. I listen, therefore, very carefully to what he has to say about Northern Ireland.

As I said a moment ago, we shall continue to be cautious. Armaments—especially Semtex and detonators, perhaps more than guns—are a crucial issue that will have to be dealt with as we advance the process.

Q3. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: Recognising the Prime Minister's commitment to the national health service, as restated last week, will he understand the worry that exists at national blood transfusion service centres under threat of closure, such as Lancaster and Liverpool, where the staff are drawing attention to the dangers of reduction in service if those centres are allowed to close? Will he intervene now and say that those centres must be kept open to maintain the level of service?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important to have a proper blood service in all parts of the country. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health examines in detail the remarks that he made this afternoon.

It should be recognised throughout the House and beyond that there is no one in the House who does not share an affection for the national health service, who does not wish to see it built up— *[Interruption.]* Many of the Opposition Members who are muttering sat in the House when the last Labour Government cut the hospital programme by a third. They should know that there are now 20,000 more doctors, an extra 3,000 patients treated every day, and one large increase in facilities costing more than £1 million for every eight days throughout the 15 years that the Conservative party has been in power. That is a formidable commitment to the national health service, and it is the commitment of this Government.

Q4. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recent news that there is to be a central computer for organ donors is welcome, not only to the 5,000-plus people awaiting organ transplants, but to their families?

Can he assure us that when the scheme starts it will be given as much publicity as possible to entice as many millions of people as possible to register?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly look at what my hon. Friend has to say. There is no doubt that a central register will help hospitals and bring a great deal of new hope to the people waiting for life-saving operations. We will, therefore, examine the issue of publicity and see that the scheme gets as much as possible .

Q5. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clelland: When millions of British families are suffering mass unemployment, poverty, a deteriorating environment and rampaging crime, is it right that so much attention should be focused on the marital problems of one very rich family?

The Prime Minister: I have no intention of commenting on the subject to which the hon. Gentleman clearly refers.

On the subject of employment and unemployment, the hon. Gentleman might welcome, with me, the fact that unemployment has now been falling consistently, in large numbers, for getting on for two years—including a further fall of 28,000 just a few days ago. That trend looks as though it will continue; it is a trend that has come about because we have now returned to a position of low inflation and high growth. Indeed, for one of the very few periods in the past 50 years or so, growth now exceeds inflation. That is the best guarantee, not only of more jobs, but of ensuring that those with jobs retain secure jobs in future.

Q6. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, on the subject of grant-maintained schools, Norfolk is in the lead? In those schools morale is high and, above all, there is overwhelming parental support. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will not return those grant-maintained schools to local authority control—unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to turn the education clock back to the failed policies of the 1960s and 1970s?

The Prime Minister: I certainly can offer my hon. Friend the reassurance that he seeks. The development of grant-maintained schools has been a great success. It has tremendous support from well over 1 million parents. *[Interruption.]* I think that the Opposition are saying that it is a disaster that 1 million parents are now getting what they want for their children. The Government do not regard that as a disaster; the Government regard that as choice, which I thought was now one of the mantras of the new Labour party.

Q7. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Tyler: In the light of his previous answer, can the Prime Minister reassure the House that his Administration is now a sleaze-free zone?

The Prime Minister: I am as concerned as any Member in the House or any person in this country that we should have the highest standards in public life. I approve of corruption no more than I assume does the hon. Gentleman, and I will not accept it. Our public servants and our public institutions are acknowledged to be among the best in the world. In order to maintain that reputation in administration and in politics, wrongdoing will have to be rooted out wherever it is, and I shall seek to ensure that it is.

Sir Anthony Durant: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his skill in dealing with the situation in Northern Ireland. We strongly support the caution that he is exerting in the negotiations. Meanwhile, will he ensure that there are enough troops on the streets of Northern Ireland to reassure the people of Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance. The details of policing on the streets are properly a matter for the General Officer Commanding and the Chief Constable, not for direct political decision. But for as long as it is necessary for the police, the RUC or troops to be on the streets of Northern Ireland to protect all its people, whichever part of Northern Ireland they come from, they will be made available.

Q8. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McFall: Does the Prime Minister agree that his noble Friend Lord Archer owes the public an explanation as to his share dealings? Will he therefore authorise a DTI report on those share dealings?

The Prime Minister: I welcome the opportunity that the hon. Gentleman has given me to make the position entirely clear; I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is appropriate that I should do so.

There are clear statutory procedures surrounding investigations of the sort that concern Lord Archer. When concern first arose about the Anglia TV share dealings, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade appointed independent inspectors to investigate the circumstances surrounding dealings in Anglia Television shares—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why did they not publish?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will wait a while the whole House will be able to hear the answer that his hon. Friend has requested.

When the inspectors' report was received, my right hon. Friend the President also took independent legal advice on their conclusions. It was therefore on the basis of the inspectors' conclusions and of the legal advice that my right hon. Friend sought that he decided that there was no further action to be taken under the insider dealing legislation. If there had been, action would have been taken.

If I may deal now with the question shouted by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), there is no provision in the Financial Services Act 1986 for inspectors' reports to be published. Indeed, when the Bill was considered before Parliament it was made clear that inspectors' reports would not be published. Investigations are undertaken on that basis; evidence is given on that basis; and it would not be right to change the position retrospectively.

BILL PRESENTED

DEREGULATION OF TRADE UNIONS

Mr. Tony Benn, supported by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe, Mr. Alan Simpson, Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. Bill Etherington and Mrs. Alice Mahon, presented a Bill to amend, and make provision for the amendment of, statutory provisions and rules of law affecting trade unions, and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 28 October, and to be printed. [Bill 161.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INCOME TAX

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Estonia) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Guernsey) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Isle of Man) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Jersey) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Kazakhstan) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Mexico) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Russian Federation) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Estates of Deceased Persons and Inheritances) (Switzerland) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Vietnam) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Switzerland) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Burns.]*

Question agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Order. Would Members who are leaving the Chamber do so quickly and quietly? It is far too noisy in here, and we have business to conduct.

Residential Care Homes

3.32 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to further regulate ownership, control and standards of private residential care homes; and for connected purposes.

I should like to ask the House to entertain the idea of a Bill which, even at this late stage, would enable us to amend the Registered Homes Act 1984 with certain specific changes. I want to introduce national standards for the care of all residents in private or local authority homes or receiving domiciliary or day care. I should like also to improve the registration of residential care homes, to extend the registration to domiciliary care and day units, and to set up an independent inspectorate with responsibility for inspecting all private and local authority homes at least four times a year. I want to specify the ratio of inspectors to beds, and to include all homes, irrespective of size, on the register. I want to stipulate the minimum requirements for the qualifications of staff and principals, and the ratio of trained staff to residents. It is not widely realised that this week the other place has taken decisions on part of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill which would have a direct effect upon residential care homes.

In the light of some of the dreadful cases that have recently come to our attention, the House has a special responsibility. We have only to consider the Frank Beck case and what happened to those in residential care homes in Buckinghamshire who were allegedly raped and subjected to the most appalling abuses, to realise that our legislation is far from perfect and that the sooner it is improved the better.

Nursing homes are currently registered differently from residential care homes. Under the Registered Homes Act residential care homes, whether private, voluntary or public sector, are registered and inspected by local authorities. But private, voluntary and a handful of NHS nursing homes are registered and inspected by health authorities.

Residential care homes are not required to employ nurses. By contrast, nursing homes must have in charge either a registered medical practitioner or a qualified nurse, and there should be sufficient staff on duty to provide skilled nursing to all residents.

Why am I asking for the minimum requirements of national standards? First, it is clear that there are great differences between one county and another in the interpretation of the existing law. Even on the simple business of inspectorates, a Royal College of Nursing survey found that in one health authority one full-time and two part-time inspectors were inspecting 167 homes with 4,110 beds. However, in another health authority that makes inspections a priority, a full-time and a part-time inspector were covering only seven premises with 269 beds.

As soon as we begin to read, even in the daily press, about the cases that consistently come to light, we realise why so many people are deeply concerned about what happens to some of the frailest and the most at risk in our population. Those who suffer from Alzheimer's disease, the mentally handicapped and those who, although retaining their mental faculties, are not able to care for themselves, must be protected whether they are cared for in residential care homes or even in their own homes.

There has been a call to Parliament to institute the same sort of protection for those who go into people's homes to care for them and we should include that in our legislation. It is extraordinary that we demand that those who work in local authority homes should be suitably checked by the police to make sure that they are fit and proper persons while we do nothing to make sure that private units and agencies carry out the same checks on their staff.

One of the difficulties is that private care homes do not have the right to ask the police for that information. If they do, they will discover that it takes anything up to six weeks before any kind of information is forthcoming. In that length of time many people can be quite badly injured through being treated in unsuitable circumstances by unsuitable staff.

The Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill that is going through the other place contains regulations about fire and the care of people in private homes. However, the Department of Trade and Industry has proposed that the registration and inspection process should be subject to review, presumably—because it is being discussed during proceedings on the deregulation Bill—with a view to removing the few current controls.

I have strong reservations about the idea that self-regulation will do in relation to the circumstances that are discussed time and again. Self-regulation would not protect the disoriented person who died when left alone in a bath while the care assistant went out for a cup of tea. Care for the mentally handicapped would not be sufficiently regulated by self-regulation as many people have been subjected to physical and mental abuse.

What is needed is a totally independent inspectorate which, above all, is properly funded. Inspectors must be properly trained and must have the right to investigate the circumstances that are brought to their attention. There must be a proper ratio of the numbers of beds to inspectors and inspectors must have the right to insist on nationally agreed standards that are not imposed, but agreed by all those who are directly involved. Those nationally agreed standards should be available to all and easily checked. Looking beyond the work of the inspectors, I believe that it is clear that many local authorities are failing fairly disastrously in the job that they have been called upon to undertake.

Why do I ask for a minimum of four inspections a year? The simple reason is that members of the press told us that when they asked local authorities how many homes in their care had been inspected, they discovered not only that many of them were inspected only once during the year, but that many authorities were unable to provide accurate information and had no idea which of those homes were to be visited only on a biannual basis. That is not only frightening but it is very distressing for the people concerned and for their families.

Independent inspectors should have the right not just to look at what is happening in our homes, but to publish that information and to make sure that it is available to the families of anyone requiring care for their loved ones.

It is quite horrifying that the Government are suggesting in their new guidelines for the national health service that in future people can be moved automatically

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

from the NHS into private care homes without their agreement, yet their relatives would not have an automatic or simple way of checking up on the quality of care within the homes that their own relatives were in.

Inevitably, when one considers what a battle it is for many parents of mentally handicapped people or those who have elderly and frail relatives to deal with the problems of bureaucracy and the day-by-day problems that they encounter in the safe management of their own families, it is essential that the House should regulate not only private and residential care homes, but the way in which independent private agencies work.

There are no names on the Bill other than mine for a particular reason. I hope that the whole House will associate itself with it and that all hon. Members will take it as their Bill. I beg leave to ask for it to be considered.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody.

RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody accordingly presented a Bill to further regulate ownership, control and standards of private residential care homes; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October 1994, and to be printed. [Bill 162.]

Orders of the Day

Defence Estimates

[SECOND DAY]

[Relevant documents: The Defence Committee has reported on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994 in its Sixth Report of Session 1993-94, HC 68. The First Report from the Defence Committee on the Programme to Replace or Refurbish the Hercules Transport Aircraft, HC 118; the Third Special Report containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 511; the Second Report on the Progress of the Trident Programme, HC 297; the Third Report on the Progress of the Eurofighter 2000 Programme, HC 222; the Fourth Report on RAF Commitments and Resources, HC 252; the Fifth Report on the Implementation of Lessons Learned from Operation Granby, HC 43; the Fourth Special Report containing the Government's replies to the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Reports, HC 660; and the Eighth Report on the Defence Costs Study, HC 655.]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [17 October], That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994 contained in Cm. 2550.—*[Mr. Rifkind.]*

3.44 pm

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Minister, I have to inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I must also inform the House that a great many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. I am therefore putting a 10-minute time limit on speeches between the hours of 6 pm and 8 pm. I appeal to those hon. Members who speak outside those hours voluntarily to limit their speeches so that we can have a good exchange and I can call as many hon. Members as possible.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I am very proud to stand at the Dispatch Box to open the debate on behalf of the Government today and to make my first full speech as the Armed Forces Minister. I believe it to be a great honour to have been entrusted with such a high responsibility and to have the chance to work with such exceptional and outstanding people.

In briefly replying to the debate last night, I attempted to deal with most of the points raised. I hope to deal with more of them today. I shall ensure that those points that I do not deal with in any detail during my speech will receive a full written reply.

I should first declare an interest. For a short but very happy period of my life I was a serving soldier. I have always been a great admirer of our armed forces and the ethos and culture that has brought them and us such distinction and honour over so many generations.

In the 12 short weeks that I have served at the Ministry of Defence, I have been deeply impressed by two particular things—first, the great scale and diversity of tasks and operations upon which our armed forces are engaged; and secondly, what I believe to be the unequalled dedication and skill of the men and women who so ably guard the life of Britain and play such a crucial role in promoting our interests overseas.

The scale of tasks is, frankly, quite breathtaking. I want to try today to give the House a flavour of the breadth of that work. As this debate takes place, the Queen's ships are on operational patrols in the Adriatic, the Gulf, the Caribbean, the South Atlantic and in Hong Kong. Elsewhere, HMS Glasgow and the royal yacht Britannia are supporting the state visit by Her Majesty the Queen to Russia; HMS Middleton is in Poland as part of NATO's standing naval mine countermeasures force; HMS Hecla is engaged on a hydrographic survey in the Indian ocean; and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker Brambleleaf is on her way to the West Indies in support of the West Indies guardship HMS Broadsword.

The greater part of the Royal Marines spearhead battalion is now fully deployed in Kuwait. The House will be pleased to hear that 45 Commando group are undertaking reconnaissance patrols and already exercising their very considerable skills. At the same time, soldiers of the British Army are training in difficult conditions in the jungles of Brunei, exercising in Jordan, manning observation posts in Hong Kong and along the green line in Cyprus, and playing a leading role in the formation of the new South African army, and more than 600 troops are currently in Rwanda providing the most remarkable humanitarian aid and assistance. Since their deployment, the British contingent in Rwanda has delivered about 1,500 tonnes of aid and treated in excess of 50,000 casualties. That is a truly remarkable achievement.

There are also 1,500 British soldiers exercising currently on the Suffield plains of Canada, training very hard indeed to maintain our absolutely essential ability still to be able to prosecute a high-intensity conflict. All that is in addition to major operational deployments in the former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland and the Falklands.

The House will not forget the Tornados, Harriers and Jaguars of the Royal Air Force, and the Navy Sea Harriers, which are flying hourly in support of no-fly zones over both the former republic of Yugoslavia and Iraq. At the same time, the Hercules force continues the task that commenced on 2 July 1992 to resupply Sarajevo. That is an extremely demanding and very hazardous operation requiring quite exceptional skills and it is conducted by a few, specially trained and very brave crews.

Indeed, it is perhaps worth noting that every operational front-line aircraft type of the Royal Air Force is now committed to tasks somewhere around the world with aircraft being operated from a total of 12 deployed bases.

That is the backdrop against which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, in his speech yesterday, drew attention to Britain's place as a major player on the world stage. It is clear that one of the main reasons that that remains the case is that our armed forces and defence capabilities give us the capability to operate around the world. Their outstanding abilities are rightly held in the very highest regard. Their work should be the cause of the greatest pride for everyone in Britain.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Minister is setting out a formidable record, but does he agree that it is important that military standards are at least as high as civil standards? Is not he therefore worried about the Health and Safety Executive's report yesterday about the weapons establishment at Aldermaston saying that had it to meet civil requirements it would have to be closed down as a result of its poor safety standards?

Mr. Soames: The particular point that the hon. Gentleman raised will be dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement tonight, but as to the main part of his question, I have generally found standards in the military to be far higher than those in civilian life.

I have already given a snapshot of the scale of our activities, and I should like now to mention some of the achievements of our armed forces during the past year.

The Royal Navy plays a full part in developing important bilateral relations. This year, contacts with Russia and other central and east European nations have continued to have a high priority.

Earlier this month, the first joint maritime exercise under NATO's "Partnership for Peace" initiative, Exercise Co-operative Venture, took place in the North sea and Baltic approaches. The destroyer, HMS Newcastle, and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Olna, participated alongside ships from Russia, Poland, Lithuania and Sweden, as well as with NATO allies.

This year also saw the renewal of the Royal Navy's close ties with South Africa, which included a marvellously successful visit to Cape Town by the frigate, HMS Norfolk, and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Grey Rover, when some 69,000 people visited the ships during their two-day visit.

The Royal Navy also plays a leading role in a number of other activities. That includes providing assistance in the important fight to counter drug-trafficking. While that is not a dedicated defence task, the services possess specialised equipment and capabilities, which can be and are of great assistance to the civil authorities. They have, in the past year, scored some remarkable successes in that area, helping to recover drugs with a value of more than £30 million.

The prominence given in recent years to the Army's operational commitments, both overseas and in Northern Ireland, makes it easy to lose sight of its presence as part of the mainstream of our life on the British mainland. But we all saw last winter how quickly it was able to respond to local requests for help in the face of extreme weather conditions, notably in January when the Royal Engineers built Bailey bridges to counter the flooding around Chichester.

The Army also plays a leading role in a task that receives little prominence at home, but does a huge amount to cement the most crucial and valuable relationships with other countries and their armed forces, which are extremely important to our national interests—the provision of military assistance to a large number of foreign countries.

That is an activity which we do extremely well across all three services, and our reputation for professional excellence is unrivalled, especially in Africa and the middle east. We currently have eight permanent training teams established in eight African countries.

An outstanding example of that work is South Africa's request for help with the amalgamation of the South African defence force with the armed wing of the African National Congress and other South African forces. To that end we have sent a 34-man team to oversee the integration

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and training of the new national defence force. The primary role of the team is to validate selection criteria and training standards, to monitor training across all four arms of the South African national defence force—army, navy, air force and medical services—and to act as an honest broker in any cases where disagreements arise between the various services.

Short-term teams are also much in demand to meet specific training requirements. For example, a small contingent of Royal Engineers was in Ghana for 11 weeks last spring to train members of the Ghanaian and Sierra Leone armies in minefield detection and clearance skills. Also, a 10-man team has been in Mozambique since February to validate the training of its unified national army.

On the other side of the Atlantic, following the withdrawal of the Belize garrison, we continue to help train the Belize defence force, besides maintaining a substantial unit to provide training support to our own Army combat groups which will be undergoing jungle training there.

Most recently, a short-term training team based in Puerto Rico played a major part in the Americans' pre-deployment training package for elements of the multinational force for Haiti. The 13-man team were involved in training the combined Caribbean Community and Common Market—CARICOM—contingent currently deployed in Haiti. That has been an outstanding success and greatly valued.

Referring now to the Royal Air Force, Tornado and Harrier detachments have now flown a total of nearly 5,000 sorties to date in support of coalition air policing operations in northern and southern Iraq, and their numbers have of course recently been reinforced in response to the recent build-up of Iraqi forces near the Kuwaiti border.

Royal Air Force transport aircraft also continue to provide aid and assistance to the United Nations. For example, 10 Hercules aircraft assisted in the initial deployment, at extremely short notice, of British troops to Rwanda; Royal Air Force Tristars continue to supply those forces. In May this year, two Hercules aircraft assisted in the evacuation of 154 civilians from the Yemen.

Earlier this month, a Royal Air Force helicopter crew received the Shipwrecked Mariners Society's top air-sea rescue trophy, in recognition of their role in the rescue of 13 crewmen from a junk off Hong Kong during typhoon Becky on 17 September last year. That rescue took place in winds of more than 100 mph and 40 ft waves, and well demonstrates the almost unbelievable courage and skill of our search and rescue crews.

In the first eight months of this year, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy search and rescue helicopters and the Royal Air Force mountain rescue teams have been called out to 1,397 incidents, in which 1,095 people were either rescued or rendered assistance.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): As my hon. Friend is talking about the activities of the Royal Air Force, will he congratulate the officers and men, the ground crew and the air crew who spend up to six months of every year overseas on duty? Will my hon. Friend consider the impact on family life and the dedication that is required?

Mr. Soames: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. I am delighted to pay tribute to the Royal Air Force in particular, but the same tribute should be paid to the Army and the Navy. I intend to say a little about that matter.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): On search and rescue, the Minister knows that I have a particular interest in my constituency and that I have written to him about the matter. Does he accept, however, that recent incidents, particularly in the English channel, have shown that the removal of search and rescue facilities from RAF Manston has significantly increased response times and that it is likely that lives will be lost as a direct result in what is, after all, the busiest shipping channel in the world?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He and I have indulged in prolonged correspondence. I find myself unable to agree with the view that he expresses. I am quite sure that he does not really believe that the Government would have made any such changes unless they were completely satisfactory. I am completely satisfied that the changes that have been made fully provide for safety.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State touched yesterday on our contribution to the process of extending security to the east, and I should like to elaborate for a moment on that.

As a member of NATO, we are playing a prominent role in promoting the "Partnership for Peace" initiative. So far, 23 countries have signed, including Russia and almost all countries of central and eastern Europe. "Partnership for Peace" is designed to expand and intensify political and military co-operation throughout Europe, and it allows partner countries to decide their own level of involvement.

One aspect of co-operation already under way is that of combined exercising. So far, there have been two PFP exercises, one land-based in Poland and one maritime exercise. A third is due to begin this Friday in the Netherlands. All three exercises involve participation by NATO allies, including the United Kingdom and states of central and eastern Europe, and are seen as tangible demonstrations of the very real partnership envisaged by PFP.

Independently of PFP, the United Kingdom has made extensive efforts to establish bilateral defence relations with the countries of central and eastern Europe, and memoranda of understanding covering formal contact programmes have so far been signed with 12 countries. So far, we have jointly exercised, on a bilateral basis, with Poland—twice—and Hungary, and are examining the feasibility of exercising with the Czech Republic and Romania. We also have plans to exercise with Russia, and trilaterally with Hungary and Germany. Other areas of co-operation include assistance to Russia in the form of nuclear weapon super-containers to improve the safety and security of strategic disarmament, and the provision of expert advice on military resettlement.

The United Kingdom is also playing an active role in the formation and training of the joint Baltic peacekeeping battalion. More generally, we attach the greatest importance to assisting with English language training for military and MOD personnel in the central and eastern European states, and are actively examining ways of promoting democratic accountability and civilian involvement in their Ministries of Defence. All that amounts to a demanding programme, but I believe it to be well worth the investment in time and effort as a thoroughly worthwhile contribution to the peace and stability of Europe.

As I have said, in the 12 weeks for which I have been at the Ministry of Defence, I have been fortunate enough to have already seen a good cross-section of the services in Bosnia, Germany, Hong Kong and the middle east, and here at home—particularly, of course, in Northern Ireland. Let me give the House some impression of what I have seen.

One of the first visits that I made was to our troops in Northern Ireland. As the House well knows, the provision of support for the Royal Ulster Constabulary remains our largest and most important continuing peacetime commitment. I was therefore delighted to spend two days in the Province last month. The House will not be surprised to learn that, like everyone else who has visited the armed forces in Northern Ireland over the years—indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State paid his own moving tribute yesterday—I was profoundly impressed by the supreme levels of skills, commitment and motivation that I found among the forces at every level and in every arm.

Over the past 25 years, those forces have done a truly remarkable job under the most onerous and difficult conditions. They are very highly trained and very well led, and they carry out their duties not only to the very highest standards of professionalism, but with much good humour, enthusiasm and complete dedication. No praise is too high for them.

I was particularly delighted to have the opportunity to visit my old regiment, the King's Royal Hussars, and to join its members on the streets in Belfast. I was thrilled to find a very fine regiment indeed, which has adapted readily to a new but temporary dismounted role during a most distinguished and successful tour.

My right hon. and learned Friend paid tribute yesterday to the outstanding job being undertaken by Britfor in the former Yugoslavia. I spent three days visiting the services in Bosnia at the end of September, and saw for myself the truly exceptional work that they have done in their peacekeeping role.

I visited the Royal Air Force detachments deployed at a number of bases throughout Italy. I went from Aviano—where I saw the airborne warning and communication system detachment, which is making an extremely important contribution to deterring and detecting violations of the no-fly zone—to visit the Hercules detachment at Ancona. As I have said, the Hercules airlift—often in dangerous conditions—has made a truly vital difference to the humanitarian operation in Bosnia. It is no exaggeration to say that, without those sometimes hazardous flights into Sarajevo, thousands of people would have died of starvation and cold.

My next stop was Gioia del Colle, the base from which the Tornados and Jaguars fly. The timing of my visit was auspicious; only the day before, the RAF had dropped its first bomb in anger in Europe since the end of the second world war. The House will not be surprised to hear that the operation was entirely successful. I was glad to have the chance to meet not only the flight crews but the ground crews, without whose dedication and hard work such successes simply would not be possible.

From Italy I flew on to HMS Invincible in the Adriatic and spent a fascinating night on board. She is a splendid ship, a supremely effective platform and a vital and considerable asset to Great Britain.

The following two days I spent in central Bosnia and Sarajevo. It brought for me a new perspective on the prospects for that war-torn but very beautiful country. Just a few months ago, central Bosnia was in flames and its people were suffering the grossest horrors of a bitter civil war. The change today is nothing less than dramatic. The fighting between Muslims and Croats has all but stopped and very real and tangible progress has been made.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I have listened intently to the Minister's speech so far and I am most impressed with his catalogue of exemplary achievements. They are remarkable. Our forces are so busy. Relentless pressure is placed upon them. Why is it then that we are cutting back so relentlessly?

Mr. Soames: I find that the most fatuous question. I do not propose to dignify it with an answer.

UNPROFOR's mission has moved on from creating the conditions to allow aid delivery to maintaining those conditions. For the most part, there is free movement of convoys and most are not escorted. Yes, incidents take place and the peace is fragile and needs nurturing. But it is there. In Gornji Vakuf, where every building in the town centre was utterly devastated by small arms fire, rebuilding work is in progress, schools are reopening and the local administration is tackling the many difficult problems.

Throughout central Bosnia, UNPROFOR, spearheaded by the British contingent, is not only keeping routes open and maintaining freedom of movement but persuading the locals to take control of their own lives and their communities.

In all this, I cannot sufficiently emphasise the credit due to British forces. It is clear that the British contingent is the key mover in taking forward initiatives, albeit very slowly, to get the various factions together to discuss and work out the future of their country. That is not something that can be imposed from outside by using military force; it needs patience and effort. Our soldiers are providing just that.

Therefore, it will come as no surprise to the House that the reputation of British troops has never stood higher in the United Nations—for their superb training, total reliability and great skill in peacekeeping, learnt over many years.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State yesterday rightly singled out the Royal Engineers for the exceptional work that they have done to restore the fabric of the country. But there are many other heros among British forces in Bosnia. For example, the statistics for the logistic battalion based at Split supporting the British forces are unbelievable. In only four months, they have covered almost 2.5 million km. The Army's DROPS vehicles are, in every two-month period, doing a normal two-year mileage. Despite that exceptional loading on vehicles, to say nothing on the men, a very impressive level of reliability has been achieved.That is a great credit to the logistic battalion, and the House will wish to pay it

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a warm tribute for its remarkable work. Finally, Sarajevo. Busy streets and a bustling marketplace, which only last February was the tragic scene of a grotesque and cowardly mortar attack. Electricity was on and the trams were running.

Of course, concerns, deep worries and anxieties remain. One only has to look up at the Bosnian Serb lines on the surrounding hills to understand why the people of Sarajevo are desperate for UNPROFOR to remain. Talking to some passers-by with General Rose, I was left in no doubt about the strength of their feelings on that matter and their deep sense of gratitude to General Rose personally.

I wish to place on record in the House my profound admiration and respect for the remarkable job that General Rose is doing in the most difficult and trying circumstances. He has our full support. Much remains to be done. There will be no quick fix for the rebuilding of Bosnia, but I am confident that the United Nations approach of consensus is working and can continue to work.

I have also visited our forces in Germany, which despite their decreased presence continue to demonstrate our solid commitment to the North Atlantic alliance. While in Germany, I visited the headquarters of the Ace Rapid Reaction Corps. That was a valuable opportunity for me to have a detailed briefing on the role and responsibilities of the ARRC and the United Kingdom's central contribution to that organisation.

I was much impressed with what I saw. The United Kingdom commander of the ARRC, General Mackenzie, has done a splendid job in welding his team together and giving them a strong sense of purpose and common identity. It is no mean achievement and it is all the more impressive given the short amount of time that the headquarters has been established.

More recently, I returned from a visit to Hong Kong and Brunei, where I was able to see in detail how our garrisons go about their business and get a feel for the reality of the tasks that they perform.

I am pleased to report that morale is high and one cannot fail to be struck by the energy and dedication on display. From the Royal Navy personnel manning the patrol craft in Hong Kong to the crews of the Royal Air Force Wessex helicopters, among Gurkhas in both Hong Kong and Brunei and in the logistic support regiment, which plays a crucial role in supporting the Hong Kong garrison, there is a very real sense of purpose and dedication.

I also want to pay tribute to the outstanding contribution made by civilian staff of the Ministry of Defence—both in support of the armed services and in the support that they provide to Ministers in the formulation and management of defence policy. They are employed in a wide variety of jobs that are essential to defence and to the working of the services at all levels.

Some are right at the sharp end. We have, for example, civilians providing us with essential back-up in Bosnia. Civilian engineers helped to keep our forces operational in the Gulf during the 1991 conflict. Behind the front line, our scientists work at the forefront of technology in the brilliant Defence Research Agency.

Civilian seamen man the ships of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Civilian cartographers provide expertise that is essential—indeed, crucial—to military operations. Civilian police and security guards help to ensure the security of military establishments. Civilians—from storemen to engineers—play a central role in logistic support for the services.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Can the Minister explain why one civilian—the distinguished permanent secretary, Sir Clive Whitmore—found it necessary to go to the then Prime Minister to express the disquiet of the Ministry of Defence about Mark Thatcher's activities in relation to commercial operations with Saudi Arabia? The House of Commons is entitled to some comment. I do not suggest that the Minister should answer now, as one cannot do so off the top of one's head, but in the winding-up speech there should be some considered statement as to why the permanent secretary found it necessary to go to the Prime Minister about such a subject.

Mr. Soames: I thought that I saw the hon. Gentleman boiling up to a question. Sir Clive Whitmore has already denied the veracity of that story. Rather than the answer coming off the top of my head, the question came off the top of the hon. Gentleman's. Sir Clive Whitmore has clearly denied that such an event happened.

Many civilian staff work in agencies in a commercially competitive environment and all are at the forefront of radical change in the organisation and management of defence. A small minority work in the Ministry's headquarters, where they formulate policy advice to Ministers and carry out the functions that are utterly essential to a Department of State. I want to dispel any impression that our civilians are some kind of fourth arm. They are absolutely integral to our defence organisation, and about three quarters of them work in areas headed by senior military officers of all three services. Without them, the defence machine simply could not function.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): We have heard that the Minister has been on his travels in the past 12 weeks. The Secretary of State announced in July that 17 Ministry of Defence bases in this country were to close. How many of those bases has the Minister visited?

Mr. Soames: I have visited a number of bases not only in the United Kingdom but elsewhere, but I do not have the figures at my fingertips. I shall be visiting also a large number of bases in the future. The hon. Gentleman should consider carefully the sensible purpose of the debate which is to debate defence, and not try to make idiotic points.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): May I encourage the Minister to make an additional visit to the Rosehearty bombing range in my constituency where the villagers are anxious about a proposal to extend bombing times to between 10 pm and 12 midnight during the summer months? Will the Minister encourage the RAF to hold a public meeting in the village to explain the proposal in more detail to my constituents? Perhaps the

Minister would like to attend such a meeting. Does he agree that it would be arrogant and insensitive of the RAF to refuse to have such a meeting?

Mr. Soames: I certainly would not agree with any such thing, but I should be very happy to receive the hon. Gentleman in my office—if he can spare the time to come and see me—to hear his views on the matter.

Perhaps this would be an appropriate time to mention an area that many hon. Members asked about yesterday—the arrangements for dealing with staff at locations affected by decisions arising from the defence costs study.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): May I raise one area that my hon. Friend has not touched on in his review of the excellent performance of our forces everywhere—the Territorial Army and the reserve generally? I hope that he will say a word about that subject before he ends his speech.

Mr. Soames: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that matter. My hon. Friend and others have expressed their satisfaction at the outcome of the announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend. The Territorial Army continues to play a crucial role in our affairs and while I am not going to deal with that matter in great detail in this particular speech, I shall be happy to do so on another occasion.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend yet again. On the subject of the Territorial Army, he will know that my constituency houses the B squadron of the Royal Leicestershire Yeomanry. I do not expect an answer off the cuff, but will my hon. Friend write to me to let me know whether the MOD has decided what role the squadron should play within the Territorial Army? Will it be the nuclear, biological and chemical defence regiment, or a part of it?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the question of the Royal Leicestershire Yeomanry, and I shall happily look into the matter and let him have a detailed reply as soon as I can.

Where staff become surplus at a particular location or establishment, I can assure the House that every effort will be made to find alternative employment for them locally, either elsewhere in the MOD or in Departments. As part of that process, we are in close touch centrally and locally with other Departments. That work is of a high priority and we are fully aware of its great importance.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Does my hon. Friend accept that the Royal Marines school of music at Deal is not only well loved but the largest employer in Deal, even if it is small in terms of the total military establishment? Will he take all possible steps to consider keeping the school open for a good few years yet, and not close it in April 1996 in accordance with the proposal?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend has been extremely robust in the defence of his constituents' interests. He knows that we are now in a period of consultation and I shall be very happy to see him and a delegation from his constituency to discuss the matter.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): My hon. Friend is well aware of the great concern in the Swindon area about the proposal to close the Princess Alexandra hospital at Wroughton, because he was good enough to receive a delegation of local people led by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) and myself last month. Does he recognise that it is the overwhelming desire of people in the Swindon area to keep the hospital open? Will he therefore undertake to ensure that my constituents will continue to receive the highest level of health care in the future?

Mr. Soames: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that guarantee, but I cannot give him a guarantee about the future of the hospital. My hon. Friend came to see me with my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) about the possible closure of the hospital. We are still consulting on it, but I hope to let my hon. Friends know the results of that consultation as soon as possible. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) that whatever arrangements are made, they will provide admirable medical care for his constituents and those in the constituencies surrounding Swindon.

The arrangements for dealing with staff at locations affected by decisions arising from the defence costs study is work of a high priority and we are fully aware of its great importance. It is the Department's stated aim to avoid compulsory redundancy wherever possible. In addition to natural turnover, we are therefore making full use of a number of pre-redundancy measures such as recruitment and promotion restrictions, greater use of casual and period appointments, early retirement and voluntary redundancy.

Yesterday, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State dealt comprehensively with the defence costs study and I have no intention of going over the ground that he covered so admirably. I should like, however, to take this opportunity to tell the House that the one defence costs study that was outstanding at the time of the original DCS announcement—the study into defence intelligence—reported as planned at the end of July. I am sure that hon. Members will understand that because of the sensitive nature of some of the subject matter, we shall not be making public all the measures that we propose to implement.

Defence intelligence, and the staffs involved, play a vital role in the work of government, and that will continue. We believe, however, that there is scope to reduce costs through a variety of measures, including a reorganisation of the defence intelligence staff of a similar nature to that being carried out elsewhere in the Ministry of Defence following "Front Line First".

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I have noted what the Minister said about the detail behind the DCS, but is he aware of the decision to transfer the staff from the directorate of standardisation in Glasgow to Bristol, with the loss of 50 key jobs? Can he explain how that squares with the Government's intention to transfer jobs to Glasgow? Can he also confirm that the director of

[Mr. Adam Ingram]

standardisation has advised his staff that he does not agree with the Government's decision and that the policy unit that has been established will not be cost-effective?

Mr. Soames: I could argue with the hon. Gentleman about that matter on another occasion, but while it is true that some jobs are transferring from Glasgow, a substantial number of other jobs are going to Glasgow.

Mr. Ingram: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Soames: No, I must get on. A substantial number of other jobs are going to Glasgow and it will be a net gainer.

As I said, I am sure that hon. Members will understand that because of the sensitive nature of defence intelligence we cannot make public all the measures that we propose to implement. We believe, however, that there is scope to reduce costs through a variety of measures, including a reorganisation of the defence intelligence staff of a similar nature to that being carried out elsewhere in the MOD.

I should now like to take an early opportunity to deal with two important issues on which there has been much rumour and speculation over the summer break: official service residences and the independent review of service career and manpower structures and terms and conditions—otherwise known as the Bett review.

The House will recall that, in his written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) on 4 July, my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), notified the House of the full cost of the restructuring and refurbishment programme at Haymes Garth, the official residence of the Air Officer Commander-in-Chief, RAF personnel and training command, RAF Innsworth.

My right hon. Friend explained the nature of the audit action that had been set in hand to investigate the circumstances in which the expenditure had been authorised, incurred and notified, including a high-level independent external examination. He also announced that a separate audit had been set in hand on expenditure on official service residences more widely to ensure that in other instances financial control mechanisms have functioned properly.

I am pleased to say that good progress has been made on all that work. On Haymes Garth, Sheila Masters of KPMG Peat Marwick, who has been carrying out the examination for us, has largely completed her work and I expect her final report to be with Ministers in the course of the next few weeks. I will then, of course, be considering with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State the follow-up action required. Against that background, we felt it appropriate that the wider question of representational entertainment in the armed forces should be examined by an independent scrutineer of standing, experience and judgement.

I am glad to be able to tell the House today that, at my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's request, Sir Peter Cazalet, chairman of APV plc and deputy chairman of GKN, is conducting such a review, which will examine the requirement on senior officers to entertain and the means by which the entertainment should be carried out. In particular, it will consider whether there are alternative and more cost-effective means than the use of official service residences and other service married quarters, and, in the light of that, whether any properties can be disposed of. It will also examine the requirement for domestic assistance and the funding arrangements for official entertainment. The review is expected to take some three to four months to complete.

We are extremely grateful to Sir Peter for agreeing to carry out that important task. I shall, of course, report to the House in due course on the results of his work. I should like to add that that work has the full support of all three services.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I have detected in the Royal Air Force very little, if any, disquiet about alleged exorbitantly extravagant entertaining on the part of air officers. It is recognised that they have representational functions within the local community, which are widely respected and regarded, not least by Members of this House and Ministers. If any disquiet exists within the Royal Air Force, the bête noire is the question of flying pay. The fact that the announcement that it was under review should be made at a time when two crew men of a Tornado have lost their lives in the highlands of Scotland is the sort of thing that causes disquiet in the services.

Mr. Soames: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend heard me say that the review had the wholehearted backing of all three services. I agree that there is essential representational entertaining to be done, and the important role that Sir Peter Cazalet will be able to carry out will confirm the criteria for that entertainment.

There has been much speculation over the parliamentary recess about the reasons for the Bett review. A great deal of reporting has been highly speculative and, in some cases, downright dishonest and deliberately sensationalist.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made clear yesterday, the fact of the matter is that we commissioned this independent review not for the purpose of cutting costs but to ensure that, as we approach the first part of the 21st century, the arrangements in place are sufficiently flexible and robust and meet our needs in terms of our ability to recruit and retain people of the same admirable quality. In particular, we need to take account of changes in the armed forces and their deployments, and of changes in our national life.

The review is extremely broad, and Mr. Bett and his team bring a wide range of experience to it, including considerable experience of personnel practices, not only in the armed forces but in management and finance in the private sector.

The wide ground to be covered in the review means that a great deal of information must be gathered and assessed. As part of that work, the team has been paying an extensive series of visits to units and commands, both in this country and overseas, when they have held discussions with large numbers of service personnel and their spouses. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State expects to receive Mr. Bett's report by the end of March next year.

Some of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), Chairman of the Select Committee, have expressed concern on a number of occasions at what is seen as overstretch in the armed forces. Let me take this opportunity to say that I well understand their concerns. My hon. Friend will understand that they are beaten over my head whenever I go out and about. But I feel that most of those concerns are wide of the mark. Obviously, the whole defence establishment is undergoing a period of profound change, to enable it to be in the best possible shape to meet the challenges and tasks that lie ahead. It is also plain that the services currently have many and varied obligations and commitments. That involves substantial extra effort, but, in my experience, people join the armed forces for excitement and adventure and to serve their country in an active capacity—not, frankly, to sit around on their butts.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): My hon. Friend will recall that yesterday, in an intervention, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) mentioned the word "understretch". Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that the essential criterion that our armed forces must meet today is flexibility? I agree with what he has just said, but surely a greater role should be given to our Territorial Army to fulfil a more important role as reserves to our armed forces, to give them the flexibility that they require. The Territorial Army, as its members are in units and are trained, should surely be the first line of reserve for our Army, rather than the last, as it is at the moment. Will my hon. Friend comment on the intervention of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater yesterday—about understretch, and ensuring that people are always fully occupied?

Mr. Soames: I hope that I answered my right hon. Friend's argument yesterday, but my right hon. Friend is quite right. We are already making much wider use of the Territorial Army. Indeed, in the Falkland Islands at the moment is a platoon of Territorials, shortly to be reinforced to company strength. We accept that that is an important role that they play.

All those changes involve upheaval, extra effort and all the things that go towards making service life at the moment pretty hectic.

I do, however, recognise the pressures that currently confront many of our service men and women. Before concluding, I take the opportunity to pay a warm personal tribute to a group of people who do not receive the public recognition that is their rightful due—service wives and their families. Many of them, as I speak, may be collecting their children from school, coming home from work or—which is every bit as important—simply keeping the home fires burning. At times of turbulence and high levels of commitment, when their loved ones must be away more often than they, and sometimes we, would wish, I take the opportunity to salute each and every one of them for their patience, fortitude and forbearance and their robust and stoical common sense.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on his magnificent speech, and welcome him to the job that he is now doing. I was sorry to hear that he has not yet grasped the essential point about overstretch. I think that he is wrong in saying that the Defence Select Committee and others are wide of the mark in speaking about that overstretch. Undoubtedly, the 24-month interval between emergency tours should be a minimum. That is widely felt throughout the services at all ranks and that opinion is widely held in the House. My hon. Friend must take another look at that in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Soames: I shall take another look at that because I know how strongly my hon. Friend feels about it and I do not suppose that he will wish to leave the matter there.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I put on record my thanks for the letter that I received from my hon. Friend, who discussed several of the arguments that I made in my speech yesterday. However, I should be grateful if he tackled one essential matter.

Those wives who are waiting at home and those of my constituents who are worried about their jobs wish to know all about the financial background to the decision. If it goes ahead, will my hon. Friend give a commitment that we can examine as many figures as possible, as we did with the Navy base, so that we may either be convinced or at least fight the case for Portland?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he knows, we shall have a full and detailed consultation on those matters, and I am sure that he and I will have further discussions on the subject.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): I am sorry to ask another question at the end of the Minister's speech. He paid a warm tribute to the families of service men. What has he to say to the nine families of the soldiers killed by American A10 planes in the Gulf war? They have yet to receive an adequate explanation from their Government about what happened, an adequate apology from the American Government about what took place or compensation equivalent to that paid to officers because they were from other ranks, although they were killed in broadly analogous circumstances. I have written to the Minister on the subject and received a courteous reply. I should like him now, as a new member of the defence team, to change the Government line on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is in his most seductive mode when he talks like that. I was grateful to him for sending me the paper that he has written on the matter. He and I are due to have a meeting to discuss it. I do not recognise the position as he outlined it. I look forward to hearing the full details of the case when he comes to see me and I shall, of course, give the case the full consideration that it deserves.

I should not wish to close my speech without making a brief reference to the Labour party's defence policy, although I do not wish to intrude on private grief. Every conference motion tabled at the Labour party conference called for deep cuts in defence. Two days after the launch of the so-called new model Labour party, the Labour party conference voted for £6.5 billion in defence cuts and to do away with Trident.

When hon. Members decide which way to vote tonight, they should consider the fact that if they undertake to make cuts of £6.5 billion, they must give us an account of which arm of the services they intend to do away with—the figure represents the cost of one of the service arms. If the House were to vote for the amendment, it

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would be a betrayal of the armed forces and Great Britain. I know that the House will wish to reject such a fatuous and idiotic amendment.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Soames: No, I shall not.

One of the responsibilities of being the Armed Forces Minister is to ensure that the work being implemented across the Ministry of Defence is managed in an honourable, sensible and humane manner in order that we continue to get the very best from our service men and women. They are a credit to Great Britain, and a priceless and unique asset. The Conservative Government will always guard their interests.

4.37 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

> "declines to support the policy of the Government as set out in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994 and the Defence Costs Study and calls for a full scale defence review; condemns the continuing process of piecemeal cuts which is undermining the morale and operational effectiveness of the armed forces and which, as a result, has failed to prepare the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom defence industry for the challenges of a post-Cold War world, for the emergence of a European defence and security identity, for an enhanced role in aid of United Nations peacekeeping and for the new opportunities for arms control; and deplores the way that defence capabilities and installations are being run down in an unplanned way instead of planning to counter the adverse effects of change on communities and individuals by expanding the provision for re-training and re-housing service personnel and by utilising and creating instruments such as positive regional policies and a defence diversification agency."

I warmly welcome the Minister of State and his colleague, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, to their new posts. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces is no lightweight politician and is clearly a difficult act to follow, particularly when he meanders so much around all our overseas posts. I confess that he left us not only breathless but jealous of his air miles over his peregrinations, and eager to change roles and follow in his footsteps. Our only concern, after the promises that he made to write to and meet so many hon. Members, is that the only place that he will be free to meet them will be Heathrow airport. He gave us a breathless exposition that was a mixture between the Boys Own paper and Vera Lynn. When he paid tributes to our forces, the Opposition Front-Bench team wholly concurred with what he said.

The Minister comes to his task, as does his colleague, in the footsteps of Ministers who have received promotion. I hope that the present Ministers will also be promoted before they change positions with us at the next election. They come to their posts at a fascinating time of transition, when defence planners and the defence industry seek certainties that are not there. During the cold war, they knew where they were; the identity of the enemy and the nature of the threat were clear. Now, as the late Manfred Wörner said,

> "There is less of a threat but less peace".

Some compare our position to the confusion of the citizens of classical Rome in Cavafy's poem "Waiting for the Barbarians":

> "Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come
> And some of our men just in from the border say there are no barbarians any longer
> Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
> Those people were a kind of solution".

In our case, the barbarians did exist but they never came.

It is difficult for the present generation of politicians of a certain age to move from the perceptions of the past and to gird themselves for the challenges of tomorrow's world. That problem of adaptation is compounded for us in the United Kingdom by the unwillingness of the Government to set in train a defence review of the kind that has been undertaken in the United States, France and Germany and thus to initiate a national debate on our role in the new global context. The problem is also compounded by the deep divisions in the Conservative party, which prevent the formation of a coherent strategy and which force the Government to move, crablike, by short-term tactics.

The division over Europe is at the heart of the Conservative party. A Cabinet Minister—such as the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont)—needs to be sacked before being wholly frank about Europe. But that right hon. Gentleman's views would be echoed by the Home Secretary, by the Secretary of State for Social Security, by the Secretary of State for Employment and by the Secretary of State for Wales if they, too, were liberated by being sacked. That is the problem for the Prime Minister and the Government when seeking a coherent view on Europe.

There is also a sharp and irreconcilable divide on the Conservative Benches between traditionalists, who understand the excellence of our armed forces and the fact that a military ethos can easily be destroyed but not easily recreated, and the new hard men who understand the cost of everything and the value of nothing. Yesterday, in answer to questioners concerned about stability after the period of turbulence, the Secretary of State said that we could now "contemplate" a period of stability in the sectors that he defined. Those among his Back Benchers who threaten revolt against defence cuts are easily bought off by a lawyer's careful words.

I warn him, however, that the Chief Secretary knows his way around the Ministry. He knows where the bodies are buried; he knows the unfinished work from the defence costs study; and he may require further cuts—due, for instance, to the slippage in the timetable for the budgeted £500 million in 1995-96 from leasing service married quarters to the private sector.

That, then, is the background to our debate on the period since "Options For Change", certain other key Defence Committee papers, the defence estimates and the defence costs study.

Surely 1989 was a decisive turning point in history which has demanded a radical reappraisal of the whole of our external policy. The fact, for example, that warning times of general war are now measured not in hours but in years has led to a proper response by our key allies. We should heed the advice of the oracle at Delphi by knowing ourselves—by recognising that we shall be increasingly unable to do everything and will thus have to make hard choices. Those who have created so much turbulence and loss of morale in our services over the past decade—and particularly in the past four years—are hardly credible when they accuse us, because we demand a review, of seeking to create turbulence.

It is, of course, possible that part of the solution to the problem of overstretch will come from developments in Northern Ireland—which, like the fifth cavalry, will come to the Government's rescue. Of course we wholly commend the Prime Minister and Mr. Reynolds on their initiative and we rejoice in the response of the loyalists last week. We also accept the Secretary of State's wise words yesterday to the effect that it would be imprudent to reduce force levels in Northern Ireland prematurely. Nevertheless a return to normality in our garrison strength in Northern Ireland may now be realistically considered an option or a possibility.

What are the military implications of the breakthrough to peace? Here is a major potential peace dividend: 17,500 soldiers serve in Northern Ireland, an addition of at least £500 million to the military budget. What will happen if, over a few years, we can reduce their numbers to the pre-1969 garrison strength of about 2,500? What will be the effect on training and on tour intervals? Would any forces thus released be assigned to peacekeeping duties? We know that experience in Northern Ireland is highly relevant to such duties.

On the other hand, will these infantry battalions be downsized, to use the jargon? We cannot delay a decision too long, as it will affect both redundancy and recruitment decisions in the coming months.

We need to project possible scenarios over the next 10 to 20 years also because of the length of time involved in procurement decisions. The saga of the Upholder SSKs and the expenditure, for nothing, of £1 billion—the Minister will be well aware of the difficulties of disposing of those craft—well illustrate what I mean by the problems of the time involved in procurement decisions.

Clearly, the massive threat from the former Soviet Union is a thing of the past. I understand that in 1989-90 there were more than 300 intrusions by Russian military aircraft into United Kingdom airspace. In 1993 there were only 12. So how do we plan for the new range of threats? I concede that we see but darkly, but we have to be ready at least for a greater European security and defence identity; we must be prepared for a greater emphasis on peacekeeping in the United Nations and in the conference on security and co-operation in Europe; and we need to redefine the defence and security threat and be ready to seize new opportunities for arms control. Each of those developments has major implications for our procurement policies.

I shall deal first with the future of NATO and European defence, and likely developments within the alliance. As far ahead as we can usefully plan, the core of our defence policy will be within NATO. Yet NATO itself is undergoing a profound transformation. It has lost a threat and is searching for a role. We must ask ourselves whether there is enough consensus between European Governments over that role. NATO has responded well to changes, with the North Atlantic Co-operation Council, the "Partnership for Peace" and the combined joint task forces, but uncertainties remain.

We shall obviously continue to depend on the United States for heavy lift, intelligence, communications and logistics, but we do have some worries about the judgment of the Administration. We thought that the Government's craven unwillingness to oppose the United States view on lifting the Bosnian embargo, which would imperil our troops, was quite wrong. We note that in some ways we are drifting apart: for instance, in the House of Representatives in May, the Barney-Frank amendment was passed, calling for the first time for substantial conditional cuts in the United States presence in Europe.

What about the nature and extent of the Russian threat, or co-operation? Russia has given positive support in Bosnia. It has withdrawn from the Baltic states as promised; it has also withdrawn from Berlin. How do we encourage Russian concern for the resolution of conflicts in its near-abroad without condoning a new colonialism on the part of Mother Russia? It is most important that we try to understand the concerns of this proud country and respond accordingly—by pressing the Baltic states to safeguard the civil rights of their Russian citizens, for example.

There are also important questions about the future of defence co-operation in Europe, with the Western European Union serving both as a European pillar of NATO and as the focus of the European defence identity.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): The hon. Gentleman spoke about the Russian presence in other countries. What is his response to the recent agreement between Moldova and Russia regarding the continuing occupation, for the next three years, of the transnational republic of Moldova by the Russian 14th Army? Is not that totally unacceptable? Was the agreement reached because of Russian threats? What does the hon. Gentleman suggest should happen?

Mr. Anderson: That clearly depends on a judgment on the degree of duress under which the Government of Moldova acceded to the new agreement. That partly defines the problem of how to accept the legitimate interests of Russia, which could have major positive implications for us, without yielding to the view that Russia will assume a new colonial garb akin to that of the old Soviet Union. The hon. Gentleman knows the area well and pinpoints the dilemma facing western planners.

The Government have increasingly sidelined themselves on political and hence defence developments by their divisions on Europe. The implications for our defence industry are fundamental to developments in Europe. The 85th edition of Jane's "All the World's Aircraft" launched at Farnborough in September states that the Ministry of Defence has

> "fallen hopelessly out of phase with virtually all the current European aircraft and helicopter programmes . . . because of . . . an endless search for the ultimate solution to every requirement, by unrelenting rejection of every proposal on cost grounds, by consequent indecisiveness all round and by a mindless service dedication to US products."

That refers specifically to the C130J FLA dilemma which was mentioned by many hon. Members yesterday. Will the Treasury insist on going for the cheaper off-the-shelf alternative or will we dare to look longer and reserve the bulk of the purchase for the European alternative? If we go for the C130J what will be the effect on future European co-operation? If we opt for a wholly

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American solution, will there be any protection against being wholly overcome by the strength of US defence companies?

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman speaks for Labour on defence. What are his views on the RAF being committed to high-risk development and production programmes being carried out at the same time? Effectively, that is what the hon. Gentleman suggests. Until we have accurate figures on what the future large aircraft is likely to cost, how can the hon. Gentleman commit his party in that way?

Mr. Anderson: The Government and responsible people in the Opposition must place heavy weight on what the RAF says, but that is not the only consideration. We must also examine the major implications for the civilian and defence sectors of our aerospace industry and for co-operation with Europe. We have heard what the RAF said to the Select Committee about needing three such aircraft by the turn of the century. There were suspicions that the RAF was pressing for a decision on the C130J before the end of the century because of the perceived trough in expenditure before expenditure on the Eurofighter comes on stream. All those issues must be carefully weighed.

Mr. Colvin: The hon. Gentleman may have inadvertently made a slip in describing the C130J as an all-American aircraft. As was made clear in yesterday's debate, some 36 British companies would be involved in the manufacture of that aircraft and that would provide about 3,500 jobs. British components would be fitted to all the aircraft that were sold worldwide, and there is a target for the eventual replacement of about 1,500 Hercules. The C130J cannot ever be described as an all-American aircraft.

Mr. Anderson: The issues to be considered include whether such jobs would be put at risk if we did not purchase the C130J, the quality of the jobs created and, more important, the number of jobs that would be lost if we did go for that option.

In the context of European co-operation, on 9 September the *Financial Times* stated:

> "There should be no question of excluding American products, but the burden of proof must fall on those defence ministries that wish to buy American where there is a competitive European alternative."

We are in a harsh competitive world with mega-mergers such as Martin Marietta and Lockheed, and United States embassies are mounting a new drive for United States defence products. In the light of our fragmented aerospace defence industry, can Europe, and can we as part of Europe, withstand that drive?

The French are the masters of nationalist procurement and at some stage we must decide whether to have a counterweight to the overwhelming strength of the United States defence industry. We must ask whether article 223 of the treaty of Rome, which excludes defence from the free market, is adequate, or whether the Government together with our European partners should seek to revise it.

I was impressed by a recent Ernst and Young study on the defence industry. It was published in May and concluded:

> "We are currently witnessing the emergence of two defence axes in the West—one European, the other American. The benefits of American expertise and investment are undeniable. But, while collaboration with the US on specific projects may bring mutual benefits, European industry can only act as an effective counterweight if it rationalises cross-border".

That rationalisation should not necessarily be on the model of the Eurofighter with all its inefficiencies arising from the operation of production lines in different countries, but on the model of real mergers, so many of which happen in the United States. The Government must surely have a role in that, just as they have a role in the current dispute between GEC and British Aerospace over the future of VSEL. What is Government policy on the future of VSEL and what are the overall implications for the strength of our defence industry?

Only the Government can make such major decisions, and on them will depend the future of many jobs and the future strength and sophistication of our defence industry.

It is likely that peacekeeping in all its forms will have an increasing effect on the future role of our forces. There is a lively debate under way on the theory and practice of peacekeeping. There is a difference of emphasis, because the United Nations Secretary-General takes a bullish view while the more cautious view of the west is for stricter criteria before intervention—such as a clear threat to international order—and a clear timetable for eventual withdrawal.

Peacekeeping will have major procurement implications: there will be an emphasis on flexibility and amphibiosity and the marines will have a new significance. There are implications for heavy transport and training and for "jointery", one of the themes of the defence costs study, and there will be renewed emphasis on the interoperability of equipment.

I shall now turn to arms control. How are we to redefine the defence and security threats to our interests and press forward with arms control measures, because as we look forward to stability nuclear proliferation raises new threats? Let us hope that yesterday's framework agreement between the North Koreans and the Americans will lead to that problem being removed from the international agenda of concern.

I am a little surprised that the study commissioned by the Ministry of Defence on ballistic missile defence will not be carried out in co-operation with the United States, whose technical expertise we need, and with our European partners, because we need monitoring stations on the continent. Perhaps the Minister can explain why we appear to have gone ahead on a national basis.

On nuclear proliferation, may I ask the Minister for clarification on the following matters? Surely there is a strong case for our taking the lead in pressing for an international conference with a remit to produce an action plan for dealing with the new problem of nuclear smuggling.

What positive steps are we now taking to keep technology in responsible hands? It is surely disgraceful that it took more than two years for the international science and technology centre in Moscow, intended to stem the flow of scientists from the former Soviet Union, to meet; it met for the first time in March 1994 after two years of inaction during which many scientists may have gone to unstable areas which could pose a threat to the west.

It is worrying that the conference on disarmament halted in September with such slow progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty. Surely it is now clear that there is no prospect of a treaty by next spring, as was envisaged, and that slippage in the timetable will have adverse effects on negotiations to renew the non-proliferation treaty beginning in April.

The main causes of delay on the comprehensive test ban treaty are clearly France and China, but Britain also has been unhelpful in seeking exemption for safety tests. The dangers are clear and we expect a clearer lead from the British Government.

On chemical and biological weapons, we signed the chemical weapons convention in January 1993. Why have the British Government so far failed to ratify? In November last year, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), gave only the following explanation: ratification would come "when parliamentary time permits". I can give this pledge to the Government: if that is their real objection, the measure will get a fair wind from the Opposition, so it will not take up much parliamentary time. Are the Government simply yielding to the concerns of the chemical industry in Britain? Why is Britain refusing to take a lead in such a vital matter?

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the report of the Group of Seven, of which Britain is obviously a member, of 22 July 1991? The final communiqué contains the words:

"We reaffirm our intention to become original parties to the"

chemical weapons convention. If the Government signed up to that, surely there is no case for them to be dragging their feet now.

Mr. Anderson: Yes. Clearly the Government said they will be part of the first 65. There is no parliamentary reason for delay because of the pledge that I have given, so we must look elsewhere. Surely the Government must set a example to other countries that may be delaying.

Behind the defence costs study, which is one of the documents before us today, was the Treasury imperative to find £750 million worth of savings; it all flows from that. What happens if those savings are not realised? In the other place, Lord Bramall pointed out that the enhanced equipment programme—that has been promised so many times—depends on future cash flow which is itself dependent on the DCS proposals being implemented.

On the new recruiting proposals designed to save £25 million, Lord Henley, the Lord Privy Seal, said in the other place:

"we shall have to move extremely fast".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 July 1994; Vol. 557, c. 682.]

At present only pilot schemes are envisaged.

What is the reason for the abandonment of plans for the housing trust and slippage in the £500 million programme by 1995-96? How long is the delay and what is its effect on the defence budget? What is the reason for the Government's change of mind on the defence estate?

There are a number of positive elements in the defence costs study. It is well written and surely must be seen as part of a continuing process without the necessity for regular grand, comprehensive reviews. It has also revealed some apparently gross extravagances.

There is much scepticism about the validity of the distinction between front-line and support services—a point made very well by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) yesterday. However, there is merit in the business approach to the management of the defence services where business criteria and vocabulary are relevant. Head office is mentioned and it is claimed that briefing is almost a tedious extra.

Clearly, the business approach can be overdone, but management experience is highly relevant. In one case within my knowledge the man in charge of a multi-million pound budget within the Ministry had been transferred from another discipline and had no financial training. That is wrong. The Government should make the best use of expertise from outside in operational research, personnel and technical matters and, if necessary, import people to each level of the Ministry.

Overall, if, as was stated by the Ministry of Defence, the headquarters is, "too large, too heavy, too bureaucratic," who is responsible for that? Given the number of years the Government have been in power, why has it taken so long? It can hardly be attributed to any deficiencies of the last Labour Government.

The defence costs study is insular in its lack of reference to our allies and narrow in its failure to look at the total costs of redundancy, for example.

How worried is the Ministry of Defence about the current shortfall in recruiting? *The Sunday Telegraph* of 9 October reported that recruiting was "alarmingly behind target". Saatchi and Saatchi has been given £5 million for a recruiting drive. Currently, the MOD is 18 per cent. behind the target for soldiers and 20 per cent. short on officers.

We have had a wide-ranging debate yesterday and today, partly because, as the Select Committee frequently points out, the House has relatively few opportunities to discuss this important subject.

Our fear is that the Government are failing to look strategically and to plan for change because of their internal divisions and because of their general refusal to address the issues. There is a danger that the United Kingdom will be increasingly marginalised in Europe and that our vital defence industries will be harmed in the process.

The tragedy for Britain is that, for party reasons, the Government prefer to avoid key decisions and to feed delusions rather than to address the real issues of what we can and should do well with our excellent armed services, normally not on our own but in co-operation with our allies.

The Government pretend that the state can have no role in tackling the effect of restructuring on industry and communities. The lesson of last week's Bournemouth Conservative conference is that the Government have succeeded in putting clear blue water between themselves and public opinion; they have succeeded in putting clear blue water between themselves and reality and between themselves and British interests. A Labour Government will look long and fearlessly meet the challenge of the future.

5.9 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): I wish to declare an interest as a non-executive director of GEC Marconi. I would be tempted to follow some of the interesting points raised by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), but I feel that I should abide by the 10-minute rule, even at this early hour, so that as many hon. Members as possible can speak in the debate.

Each year in these debates there is talk of reviewing our defences. In my opinion, what is really needed is a review of our foreign policy objectives. The defence forces are nothing more or less than the means of implementing the Government's foreign policy objectives. Defence capability becomes relevant when inadequate capability makes it impossible to carry out foreign policy objectives.

I want to share with the House a report that has just been published by the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies. Its authors are Dr. Christopher Coker and James Sherr. The report has some quite disturbing parts. On page 14, it states:

> "The Defence Operations Analysis Centre at West Byfleet has constructed about eight main war scenarios which are fought and refought as paper exercises to judge just how Britain would fare in the new world order. These scenarios range from a full-scale war in Bosnia to an amphibious landing in a former colony to rescue British citizens. In almost every exercise the Centre concluded that Britain could no longer do much without help. In one, it is the Americans who provide the aircraft to get the troops in place. In another, it is our NATO allies that bolster our undermanned ground forces. In another it is the Americans who are expected to supply air cover. Why the Americans should continue to do so, if we do so little for them, is a question the Centre did not pose."

I agree with the assertion made by many people that we have the most professional armed forces and, therefore, probably the best in quality in the world, but we are not making things easy for them. If the individual soldier in Northern Ireland, before the IRA ceasefire, was working up to 113 hours a week, if units were spending 260 days away from home at one time and if intervals between tours were down to 15 months compared with the minimum of 24, it is obvious that the strain on the Army was increasing.

My concern about the West Byfleet analysis is that the public are not aware of it. I suspect that they think something entirely different—that we can cope with anything that comes along. The question is whether a medium-power can be expected to discharge all of its former responsibilities. The French clearly think so. France spends less on defence than we do. We might feel that it is unreasonably over-conscious of its sense of grandeur. However, France has dominated the United Nations effort in the former Yugoslavia and British subjects were recently evacuated from Aden by French forces. Perhaps that is a sign of the times.

If the West Byfleet analysis is correct, we must question how that state has come about. There are two answers—first, the impact of the Treasury, and secondly, the effect of industrial competition policy. The Treasury rightly insists on financial rectitude, efficiency, prudence and good value for money. We would all agree with that. One of the ways of achieving efficiency is market testing, and again I support the concept. The problem is how we question the rate of progress and the success of market testing.

In the "Market Testing Bulletin", Government Departments are asked to list activities for review. It states:

> "When an activity is reviewed a number of options are considered including abolition, privatisation, contracting out, market testing (with an in-house bid) and restructuring the activity without a formal tender. Therefore not all the activities listed will necessarily be subject to competitive tendering."

I welcome the MOD's ministerial commitment to doubling the value of work for which industry will be invited to compete via market testing. It must make sense to make industry responsible for the in-service support of the equipment that it has designed and built. There can be no better way to ensure that industry is given the incentive to design and produce robust and reliable kit.

Ministers will have to monitor the implementation of savings measures. It would be helpful if the services could keep the savings that they have achieved to fund, for example, future equipment purchases. At least that would give them an incentive.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am following the right hon. Gentleman's speech with great interest. Does he accept that if there is competitive tendering and the most successful tender comes from in-house, that demonstrates that the Air Force is capable of competing successfully with the other tenderers? That ability should be subject to very real public attention and commendation because it shows that the service is rather more efficient than some hon. Members assume.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: I agree that such a position should attract the commendation that the hon. Gentleman suggests. All that I hope is that it would be a genuine competition. Often, criteria and overheads are loaded in. We want appropriate savings to be achieved so that they can be used elsewhere in the defence budget.

A good start has been made, but much remains to be done. I would be nervous of a tendency to replace competition by something called benchmarking, which is much too cosy and incestuous. One of the successes has been the Defence Research Agency and I applaud its achievement of in-house economies. With its expanding role, there may be the possibility of a change of name—perhaps the "National Research Agency" might be a good idea.

The really important reason why market testing should succeed is that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has based the funding of new equipment and research and development on the assumption that savings will be achieved. If the savings are not achieved from market testing or any other system, further slices are taken from research and development and the procurement of new equipment. Cutting the R and D budget causes our defence capability to fall because technological advantage must be the name of the game. The R and D and procurement share of the total budget was close to a half in the mid-1980s; it is now closer to a third. That is very unhealthy.

All that might sound theoretical, so I shall give a practical example. A Sea Harrier was shot down over Gorazde recently. It was not because of any failure by the pilot, but because the aircraft had to fly around the target area five times because it did not possess an anti-armour weapon with a seeker that allowed it to operate in poor weather. Systems are available and I hope that the MOD will consider procuring them so that our front-line troops are not placed in such a position again.

I want briefly to say something about competition policy as it applies to the MOD. I did not just support that policy at its inception—I was one of those responsible for introducing and implementing it. We needed such a policy to make industry sharpen up and become competitive, especially in overseas markets. The "cost-plus" mentality had not served industry well. The danger now is that a policy that was designed to produce fitness is in danger of inducing malnutrition, just like any other policy or activity that is followed to excess or to its so-called logical conclusion.

The vital importance of the defence industrial base to the economy of this country, and—by the speed and flexibility of its response—to the MOD, has never been in doubt. As budget trends move against the MOD, there is a disinclination to invest in new-generation equipment. For example, the specification for the Tornado successor must not be written around existing US equipment, which is the tendency in such cases. If the budget is under pressure, it may be thought better to take an existing system from somewhere in the world and write a specification around it—but then, surprise, surprise, we find that British industry cannot meet the specification. We must now assume that a United States off-the-shelf purchase will not necessarily or automatically be the answer.

In my ministerial days there used to be something called the two-way street in UK-US dealings in defence equipment—the idea of reciprocal purchases by the United States following purchases by the United Kingdom of American equipment. There has been something of a surge of purchases from the United States in recent months, as I am sure that hon. Members will have noticed. Although there are extensive offset arrangements, they are not sufficient to maintain a strong industrial defence base here.

The Ministry of Defence is not only a customer. Because of its monopsonistic position as a buyer, it is also the marketplace. It controls the marketplace. It is clear that a number of foreign Governments are now organising their own markets to operate to the benefit of their defence industries.

It follows from what I have said that there will be advantages to the United Kingdom if the leading United Kingdom companies are of a size and capability to compete effectively in world markets and to make whatever alliances may be necessary to pursue United Kingdom interests.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister's endorsements of the quality of our armed forces. It is important in a debate of this sort that we do not delude ourselves into thinking that our capabilities are better than they are or that our remaining industrial strengths are greater than they are.

5.21 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) speaks with great authority on these affairs. I particularly agree with the points that he made about the loss of the Sea Harrier on the mission to Gorazde. The air crew involved was on a mission impossible. We in this House should be concerned to ensure that when we send our service men into action they have the equipment that they need to carry out the mission that is assigned to them. That is something that we should consider carefully.

The Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence was uncharacteristically generous to the Government in his speech yesterday. As one of the humble foot soldiers on that Committee I should draw the attention of the House to the fact that our report on the defence costs study includes some fairly sharp criticisms. I fear that parts of the "Front Line First" review will further aggravate the damage done by "Options for Change". In particular, the decision to close the Rosyth naval base is just the latest in a long catalogue of shoddy decision making by the Ministry of Defence during recent years.

The massive rundown in our regular forces and their in-house support will stretch our defence capabilities perilously thin. I suspect that the Government will have to rely more and more on volunteer reserves. That point has already been made by a number of hon. Members. It is fair to ask the Minister whether a new reserve forces Bill will be included in the Queen's Speech. That will clearly be required.

I have just returned from a four-week trip to Bosnia, driving a 17-tonne truck for the Edinburgh Direct Aid organisation. Therefore, I want to concentrate on the situation in the former Yugoslavia and, in particular, on the valuable role of the British battalion in the United Nations Protection Force. I was one of 10 volunteers who took six vehicles up into central Bosnia three times with loads of medicine, foods, clothing and other supplies donated by people in Scotland. Edinburgh Direct Aid is one of the small voluntary groups which complement the work of the big agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Overseas Development Administration, to take humanitarian aid directly to communities, hospitals and schools in Bosnia.

Those agencies depend on charitable donations to make up the loads, on volunteers to man the convoys and, crucially, on UNPROFOR to safeguard movement through the civil war zone in so far as that is possible. UNPROFOR is there to help to keep the humanitarian aid moving and to help to achieve peace. I want to talk about both those roles this evening.

The delivery of aid is vital to the victims of ethnic cleansing, to refugees from all the communities in Bosnia and to isolated pockets of Muslims, Croats and even Serbs cut off by the other factions. All are totally dependent on food, medicines and other supplies coming from aid agencies—about 3 million people.

The ordinary people of Bosnia are not responsible for the nightmare. It has been created by nationalist warlords who do not give a damn about the people whom they claim to lead. Most of the Bosnians whom I have met in recent weeks were trying to make the best of a hellish situation with incredible fortitude and dignity. I could give many examples of individuals, hospitals, schools, orphanages and, perhaps most harrowing, homes for handicapped people, which are carrying on in impossible circumstances, but there is no time in the context of this debate.

Our convoy took supplies to destinations in several areas, including the area covered by the British battalion of UNPROFOR. I pay tribute to the British Army medics and G5 personnel for the initiatives that they have set up

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to help local people to begin to revive their communities. Their guidance is an essential resource for aid agencies going into the area and their support is all the more necessary when the aid agencies come under fire, as we did on several occasions in recent weeks.

That was an interesting experience. It is a little hard to believe that some maniac is shooting at one from over the horizon. It is all very well for those who can go up there, see what is going on and come home again, but the people about whom we should be concerned are those who have to live in those communities, who have been living in such circumstances for three long years, taking casualties week after week. Things are grim, but we should acknowledge that UNPROFOR has had some substantial achievements, to which the Minister referred.

When I visited the town of Gornji Vakuf with the Defence Select Committee in February 1993, the main street was the front line in a hot war between Muslims and Croats. There was no sign of civilian life in the town. At that stage, UNPROFOR's task was to try to deliver aid through a war zone or, to be more accurate, a series of war zones.

This month, the picture in Gornji Vakuf was very different. The town is ruined, but there is now some traffic between the shell holes in the streets, people walking around and even a makeshift market with some goods for sale. It is hardly the idyll that the Minister described in his speech earlier this afternoon, but important progress has been made.

That transformation is the result of the new confederation between Muslims and Croats, established with United Nations help on 23 February. The federation is a truly remarkable achievement, given the intensity of the conflict raging in places such as Gornji Vakuf and Mostar, where the fighting was even worse, just a year ago. It means that UNPROFOR has now moved into a new role of peacekeeping on the old Muslim-Croat confrontation lines. Given the recent history of vicious conflict, that pact is obviously extremely precarious, so it is vital that UNPROFOR soldiers should be kept in place for a long time yet to help to keep that peace in place.

I know from my conversations with British soldiers during the past few weeks that sitting at obscure checkpoints in all weathers can be a boring and apparently pointless task, but the strategy is working. It is certainly saving lives and making it possible to begin to rebuild shattered communities. All the soldiers serving with the British battalion and the other national contingents in UNPROFOR deserve our congratulations and thanks for what they have achieved so far.

I know that while I was in the area the Minister of State for the Armed Forces passed through Vitez camp. He mentioned that in his speech. I am sure that he expressed his thanks to Colonel John McColl and the Royal Anglians who are serving there now. I do not know how much of the camp the Minister saw, but I want to report on some of the nooks and crannies that he may have missed. I would not like to have to spend six months there and, since that is what we will have to expect soldiers to do for some time yet, starting with the Royal Highland Fusiliers who are moving there during the next few weeks, that camp needs some improvements.

Most seriously, the recent outbreak of dysentery at Vitez camp raises questions about the water supply. I hope that the Minister will address that point urgently, and tell us what is being done about possible sources of infection. In addition, in wet weather, the camp looks and feels like a mud hole and the toilet and shower facilities are temporary units which are not standing up to the strain of the use that they are getting. The accommodation at Gornji Vakuf and at Kiseljak seems to be rather better, but those locations lack the British Telecom satellite links which are important for the soldiers who serve there. I hope that the Minister will consider that point.

I stress that convoy crews such as ours are very grateful for the use of the Army's catering and other facilities at those bases, but, from the point of view of the soldiers, Vitez in particular needs significant improvements. If the problem is UN bureaucracy for funding, the Minister should not hesitate to kick up a fuss to raise standards for soldiers who are serving there.

I am very grateful for the helpful briefings that I received from the military at sector south-west and Britbatt headquarters while I was in the area. Obviously, the views that I now express are my own responsibility. UNPROFOR is doing an absolutely essential task and it must not be withdrawn. In turn, that means that the United States must not lift or breach the arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, I agree strongly with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who said yesterday that Britain should be prepared to impose a veto in the Security Council if the United States tries to have that arms embargo lifted.

If we were to lift the arms embargo, it would probably take at least a year before the new weapons from the United States could be effectively deployed by the Bosnian Government forces. During that year, neither the Bosnian Serbs nor the Croats—nor their respective supporters—could be expected to sit on their hands. If the arms embargo were lifted, the Bosnian Serb army would certainly launch pre-emptive action to prevent the Muslims taking advantage of their new kit, and Croat extremists would be likely to reopen hostilities rather than risk a shift in power in the confederation towards the Muslims. That hard-won confederation could easily disintegrate.

In those circumstances, UNPROFOR would have to be pulled out, with extreme difficulty, along routes which have countless choke-points—that is, tunnels, bridges and the like—where it is all too easy to obstruct movement. Indeed, even civilians could obstruct movement down those supply routes. Lifting the arms embargo could make things far worse for the beleaguered Muslims. It could be catastrophic.

Apart from that military scenario, it would be unthinkable for the United Nations to walk away from the humanitarian task that it set up in the former Yugoslavia. Millions of people are now dependent on supplies delivered under United Nations protection. I saw some of those people in recent weeks, and it would be a crime to abandon them. Quite apart from our humanitarian obligations, we cannot afford to destroy the credibility of the United Nations as an international peacekeeping organisation. It might not be very good, but it is all we have, and it must be sustained.

Things cannot stand still, either. We need more resources to help reconstruction in the confederation area. I pay tribute to the Army and to the ODA for what they have done to help with roads, bridges and other services. Perhaps the next project should be the reinstatement of the Neretva hydro-electric scheme to restore central Bosnia's electricity supply this winter. That would be extremely good value and a reward for peace in the confederation. I understand that it could be achieved for as little as £3 million. It is worth considering.

Above all, ways must be found to make the Bosnian Serb leadership face up to the need for compromise. The three-year siege of Sarajevo is an affront to European civilisation. The Minister implied that things were returning to normal in Sarajevo. How could he suggest that? The city is entirely cut off and it is subject to regular artillery and sniper fire. Our convoy was denied access to Sarajevo last month, and I understand that last night chetnik irregulars hijacked the cargo from another convoy trying to reach Sarajevo.

The Bosnian Serb army regularly fires artillery and sniper rounds into civilian areas right around the front line, not only at Sarajevo. Yet again, its artillery has blocked the main supply route through Mostar and Jablanica into central Bosnia. When General Rose rightly responded to the latest provocations in Sarajevo, the Bosnian Serb army threatened to attack the United Nations bases. Indeed, I was in Vitez when our soldiers there were put on amber alert because of that threat. The situation is not good and we must remain on our guard.

I appreciate that it is difficult to deal with people such as the Bosnian Serb authorities, but I doubt whether appeasement is the right line, so I was very surprised when General Rose publicly rebuked Bosnian Government forces for seeking to secure part of their own territory during the past month. It is a mistake to try to be even-handed between an aggressor and his victims, especially when one is acting on behalf of the United Nations.

I do not know what the Foreign and Commonwealth Office long-term strategy for the Balkans might be, but I have my suspicions and I fear that General Rose may be influenced by that line. The House should take a close interest in that issue and we should heed the lessons of history, but the debate is not about the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; it is about what our defence forces are doing.

UNPROFOR is doing a vital task remarkably well in very difficult circumstances. Its role should be developed and it should emphatically not be withdrawn. The British battalion in UNPROFOR is one of the force's most successful contingents. The experience of those soldiers in Northern Ireland makes them ideally suited to sensitive peacekeeping operations. The whole House earnestly hopes that the Northern Ireland crisis is coming to an end, but after my spell in Bosnia over the past few weeks and after having visited other areas of actual or potential instability with my colleagues on the Defence Select Committee over the past year or so, I have no doubt that there is much more peacekeeping and peacemaking to be done in and around Europe in the coming years. We must maintain high-quality conventional armed forces to play our part in that vital role, but I have very little confidence in the Government's ability or willingness to accept that responsibility.

5.36 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): It is difficult to follow the speech of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). The whole House was riveted by his description of his recent experiences. I congratulate him on what he has achieved in Bosnia and on bringing that experience to the House. I should very much like further to discuss the hon. Gentleman's experiences with him, but I fear that it would have to be outside the Chamber because I need to make my own speech in my own way.

It is a truism that the certainties of the cold war have been replaced by the uncertainties of what is called peace, but nowhere is that uncertainty more prevalent than among the armed forces themselves, who have had to face extreme uncertainty in recent years. It is absolutely right that the Government should cut defence expenditure to take account of the reality of the international situation, but those inevitable cuts have led to difficulties among personnel and to delays in the procurement of essential equipment.

Now, at last, I hope that we have a new situation. I hope that the defence review, "Front Line First", and the statement by the Prime Minister, which was reiterated by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State yesterday, that we have now reached a position of stability for our fighting strength mean that we can look forward with confidence to the future. Above all—this point was made by my hon. Friend the Minister—I hope that we do not excessively cling to existing members of the armed forces and delay retirement and recruitment. It is important that we should be able to hold out to our young people again the idea that the armed forces provide an absolutely first-class career which provides rewards and excitement.

I want to deal with one matter that might be regarded as rather narrow, and that is the defence medical services. They are an essential part of our armed forces. A NATO circular on the subject states:

> "Effective medical support to NATO forces is essential to operational success and indicates NATO's seriousness of intent and resolve."

Medical back-up is essential. Every four-man infantry patrol has one man who is trained in medical first-aid skills and in the use of sophisticated first-aid equipment. Every member of a naval crew is trained in first aid, and a significant proportion must be trained to a higher level, because first aid primary care is absolutely essential on land and at sea. Members of the Defence Select Committee will graphically recall the demonstration on board Ark Royal in the spring, when, shortly after a hearty breakfast, we were shown exactly what happens on board during a medical emergency. We saw how the naval crew could rally round and support with primary care.

Our armed forces are well equipped with the latest equipment and they are trained to use it. Primary care is not in contention at this point, but secondary care is the subject of part of "Front Line First".

Various factors must be borne in mind. Secondary care is quite a complicated subject. First, however efficient our helicopters and fixed-wing evacuation aircraft ambulances may be, there will still be occasions when it is not possible to treat men away from the front line, and front-line secondary care is needed. We found that in the Falkland Islands, when no airstrip was available for the evacuation

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of our casualties; we are finding it now in Bosnia, where it is too dangerous to use helicopters for the transmission of personnel.

Moreover, there will be occasions when the casualties are too ill to be moved. There will be occasions when no transport is available to move them and when it would be too dangerous to move them. Increasingly, as we participate in United Nations operations, there will be occasions when we wish, with our medical forces, to treat people who are residents of the country that we are aiding. In Bosnia, for instance, there is no wish or intention to ship out those whom our medical forces may be assisting.

A second factor is the use to which we might put our reservists. There are problems here: we are dealing with specially trained people. I have been told that, when a candidate applies for a consultant post in the national health service, he must fill in a form part of which asks him whether he has any reserve commitment to the armed forces. Given the increasingly competitive environment in the NHS, appointing committees might be reluctant to appoint consultants with such a commitment, who might be taken away from their hospitals. Increased commercial pressures in hospitals and the introduction of performance-related pay might also be a factor.

Mr. Donald Anderson: As the hon. Gentleman may know, many of those concerned with our reservists point out that one of the policies stemming from the new hospital trusts is a reluctance to release people for training.

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman backs me up, although I regret that he also makes a political point. Indeed, that factor genuinely inhibits greater use of reserves.

My third point is that the defence medical service must be on the same notice to move as the rest of the armed forces. It is no good sending out the front line first and bringing medical support later. As I have said before, medical staff—certainly in primary care—are right there in the front line wherever the forces go: even when the special forces are shinning down chimneys, medical support is present.

The fourth point is slightly complicated. To attract reputable clinicians into the armed forces, we need accreditation procedures that will allow doctors and nurses in the forces to obtain recognition from the individual royal colleges. It is no good having second-rate medical practitioners in the forces, and training is not possible without accreditation. Training and practice go together, and that argues in favour of increased co-operation between the defence medical service and the NHS.

It is not possible, however, to employ people who are entirely interwoven with the NHS. In times of emergency, surgical support teams, field hospitals, primary casualty receiving ships and casualty treatment ships will be needed; people will be required who can work all hours of the day and night, in conditions of war, when equipment shortages and danger are part of the scene. That means that a dedicated group is needed, capable of taking on all medical care and all forms of surgery, medical aid, ophthalmology, pathology and, of course, nuclear medicine: we need a tough, trained, disciplined cadre.

To integrate such people in the NHS is very good for training, but focusing all medical care in the armed services on one area—provided through the NHS—would have a serious effect. It would leave a large hole as and when mobilisation took place. A delicate balance is needed between those working in the NHS and a back-up procedure allowing gaps to be filled when the medical defence service disappears.

How have we dealt with the problem in the past? Until 1992, the defence medical services had seven hospitals—six if we exclude Catterick, which is quite small and specialised—and there were 1,500 dentists and doctors and 7,500 nurses and back-up staff, making a total of 9,000. In February 1993, there was what the MOD described as a "fundamental reassessment", as a result of which it was proposed to close Woolwich, Halton and Plymouth hospitals, leaving only three. A mere 17 months later, in July this year, "Front Line First" announced that we did not need Wroughton or Aldershot; so now we have one. The figure has gone from six to one in two years—the arrangements will take effect in April 1996.

In February 1993, 1,500 beds were thought to be required, of which between 1,100 and 1,200 would be provided in service hospitals. In July 1994, "Front Line First" stated that we needed between 700 and 800 beds, half of which would be in military district hospital units, while the remaining 375 would be provided in the tri-service hospital at Haslar.

I am more concerned about people than about hospitals and beds as such. The numbers do not add up. As I have said, in 1992 we had 9,000 trained staff in the medical defence service; in February 1993, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton)—then Minister of State for the Armed Forces—announced that we needed 20 per cent. fewer than the original 9,000, which I calculate to be a total of 7,200. "Front Line First" states on page 39, however, that the changes now proposed will result in a reduction of approximately 1,020, making a total of 6,180. I should add that my own journalist sources, which have been right in the past, tell me that there will be well over 4,000 job reductions. That simply does not add up.

There is, of course, a possibility of misunderstanding. It is possible that the previous job reductions have not yet been made. I understand that we currently have 1,600 doctors and dentists in the armed forces, compared with the 1,500 who were thought to be needed in 1993. The job reductions have not been made there, and some of the 4,000 reductions may be made in places such as Cyprus and Germany. "Front Line First" points out on page 39 that the 1,020 job cuts are those

"resulting from Front Line First".

If contemporaneous job reductions are taking place which do not derive from "Front Line First", the House deserves to know about it. As a member of the Select Committee, I must say that I have become suspicious of vague numbers that always seem to crystallise at the wrong end of the spectrum of uncertainty. I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to be good enough to put the record straight, and reassure me by stating the current strength of the defence medical service and its proposed strength following the implementation of defence costs study 15 in April 1996.

Subject to satisfaction on the numbers, I welcome the concept of increased co-operation with the NHS through the military district hospital units. Above all, I welcome the choice of Haslar, in my constituency, as the location of the tri-service hospital. Originally founded in 1753 as the Royal hospital, it has a proud record of medical care for all the services, and also provides a full range of care for civilians. Housed in a superb historic building, it has the latest modern medical equipment. With 1 million people in its catchment area, and with strong links with the universities of Portsmouth and Southampton, it would also be the logical centre for the defence medical training organisations, whose location has not yet been finally decided.

Subject to the points that I have raised with my right hon. Friend, I strongly support the proposals in "Front Line First" and the Government's current posture; but I would be grateful for reassurance on the future of the defence medical service.

5.49 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I am extremely grateful to be called so early in this important debate. Although the Minister of State for the Armed Forces is not here I should like to congratulate him on his appointment. I thought at first that the armed forces had a champion on the other side of the House. However, it would appear that the Minister is supporting the Treasury proposals, so obviously the armed forces do not have that champion. He paid tribute to the wives of service personnel and referred to them collecting their children from school. I have to say that at the school at RAF Finningley they are also collecting signatures for a petition against the closure of RAF Finningley. The closure is a tragedy.

I expected a little bit more from the Minister because to me consultation means a two-way exchange of ideas in which people get together and come up with a commonsense, logical solution. Regrettably, that has not been the case. I am sorry that the Minister operates dual standards. I say that because I wrote to ask for a meeting with him about the closure of RAF Finningley. The request was turned down. Yet I hear from his speech from the Dispatch Box this afternoon that he has received deputations from Conservative Members. The RAF personnel at Finningley deserve a little more. I hope that the Minister will agree to a meeting. It is no good putting forward ideas about the future use or retention of RAF Finningley if we do not have the answers to one or two questions that only the Minister or his staff can give.

We met the previous incumbent of the Minister's office before the decision was made to close RAF Finningley. We talked about possible dual use as a means of deferring some of the RAF's costs. I regret that there does not appear to have been a follow-up from that. When the Minister's letter refers to "Front Line First decisions" it should say "Treasury first line" decisions.

The Defence Select Committee report suggests that many points remain to be substantiated before a logical decision can be taken about RAF Finningley. The Minister's letter said that the need to train crews at RAF Finningley had diminished. That is not the information that we have been given. It would appear that the need to train crews will continue well into the future. I hope that the Ministry of Defence and the Prime Minister will get together. While RAF Finningley has served the nation extremely well in the past and has had many millions of pounds spent on it, we suddenly find that it is not compatible because it is isolated. Either the military staff are correct about the past role of RAF Finningley—in which case the Prime Minister is wrong—or the Prime Minister is right, in which case he should have sacked the military staff.

Mr. Soames: I am sorry that I was not here when the hon. Gentleman started his speech. I recall writing to him, although I do not recall the precise nature of my letter. I am sure that I said in the letter that I would be happy to see him at a later stage. If I did not, I confirm across the Floor of the House that I would be happy to see him with a delegation. I am almost sure that I said that a consultation period was taking place and that I would be happy to see him later.

Mr. Redmond: I am extremely grateful for the Minister's intervention. I have the letter in front of me. While it says that the Minister will be happy to consider any comments, it makes no reference to the request for a meeting. I am happy to accept the Minister's assurance.

We have received many letters and telephone calls about the closure of RAF Finningley. The people involved cannot understand why the decision has been taken to close it. I hope that even at this late stage, the decision will be reconsidered. We talk about the war, misery and suffering that dictators cause in the world. We say that there is a need to send in our troops from time to time to support the United Nations. There has been talk about the armed forces being overstretched. That would be the case if the proposals went through.

I have listened to many hon. Members' speeches about the need for an adequate force. Obviously, if we reduce the military capability of the RAF we will put the lads and lasses at risk. They cannot understand the logic of the decision to close RAF Finningley. I cannot answer some of the questions that are being asked of me because we have not yet met the Minister. It has been suggested that the Dominies are to be moved to RAF Cranwell. I understand that there is no room for the aircraft and that there are not enough married quarters there. There are oceans of married quarters at Finningley. I understand that there is no suitable building for the simulator.

It has been suggested that the Jetstreams may be moved to Cranwell, Brize Norton or Church Fenton and that the Hawks may go to Leeming. The costs involved in those movements and in what has happened at Finningley in the past few years must place question marks over the decision reached by the Treasury. I hope that the Minister will tell the Treasury to go back to its slide rules and come up with something more acceptable to the people in the RAF.

RAF Finningley employs 917 service personnel and 650 civilian personnel. It puts into the local economy in Doncaster an estimated £16.5 million. Given the devastation of South Yorkshire caused by the closure of the coal mines, the local authority and the private sector in Doncaster are doing everything possible to attract employment to Doncaster to take up the unemployment. It is important that we consider other factors because we are closing not simply an RAF station but a school. Over the years the school has built up expertise in teaching service personnel children. As we all know, the children move from station to station across the world. It is important that skilled personnel are available to pick up the children and give them the education that they deserve. If RAF Finningley closes, the school will obviously be put at risk.

[Mr. Redmond]

I could go on, but I am grateful to have been called and as the Minister has given an assurance that we can meet him, I hope to make the points that I was going to make across the Floor of the House on another occasion.

5.58 pm

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): We could have been forgiven a few weeks ago for thinking that Saddam Hussein had simply gone away. But, of course, he had not. Once again, he popped up on the Kuwait border. That, more than anything, illustrates the increasingly idiosyncratic world that has followed the post-cold war era. That is why hon. Members on both sides of the House should welcome the Prime Minister's statement in Bournemouth last week that

"The big upheavals in our armed services are over."

What a contrast that statement makes with the amendment that the official Opposition have at last tabled. What is the defence review that they want? I do not think that any Conservative Member or anyone in the country would believe that such a defence review would lead to an increase in defence spending. Of course it would not.

The Opposition condemn the Government in their amendment and use the words "piecemeal cuts". Given the safety curtain that they have drawn down over their defence policies—a defence review—are we to assume that they are really talking about wholesale cuts? Time would tell, in the unlikely event that they were given such an opportunity.

By continuing to bang on about the need for review—we have heard about it in speech after speech—the Opposition continue the uncertainty for our armed forces. The one thing that those forces need is a period of stability and that is what the Prime Minister offered them in his speech last week and what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence offered them in his speech yesterday.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Is that the reason why the 22 motions criticising the Government at the Conservative party conference, plus the motion calling for a full defence review, were not discussed at that conference?

Mr. Robinson: No, that is not the reason. We had a sensible and worthwhile debate on defence at our conference, in which one theme emerged again and again—that our armed services need a period of stability, following the very necessary changes that we made.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) gave the game away in his amendment, as did the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) in his speech. In that amendment, we still see the true face of the Labour party on defence matters.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State rightly emphasised the path for Britain in the post-cold war period, when he stressed the need for

"armed forces that are flexible, mobile and able to respond to the very curious world in which we now live".—[*Official Report*, 17 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 37.]

"Front Line First" has been a constructive and important contribution to the process of change and it has not been delivered from on high, but worked up through the armed forces, which were involved in it.

The royal naval air station at Yeovilton in my constituency plays an increasingly important part in our nation's defences and I am pleased that "Front Line First" reaffirms that role. The base has a vital contribution to make to Britain's effectiveness and it has done so in many conflicts, including the Falklands and the Gulf war.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the unsung but crucial role that Sea Kings from that air station have played in humanitarian relief operations in Bosnia. That brings me to the crucial role that helicopters have to play to enable us to respond flexibly to unexpected or uncertain conflicts. Although Westland is not in my constituency, many of its employees live in Somerton and Frome, including the chairman. In the EH101, that company has produced a world-beater for the next generation of support helicopters. Merlin aircraft are already destined for the Royal Navy and the NAPNOC—no acceptable price, no contract—negotiations mean, at long last, that a decision on the EH101 order for the RAF is imminent.

I hope that the specifications that are being sought remain realistic and that the matter can be brought to a swift conclusion. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has had an opportunity to fly in the EH101 and I am sure that he will have seen for himself the aircraft's remarkable capabilities.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has already said that he is looking for a balanced fleet of support helicopters, incorporating the EH101 and the Chinook. The two are not mutually exclusive. A confirmed order for 20 or so EH101 helicopters would be a tremendous boost to the work force at Westland and also to the export opportunities that lie ahead for that aircraft. I hope that once the NAPNOC process is concluded there will be no further delays and the matter will reach a satisfactory conclusion.

Future orders for attack helicopters will also be important to the operational abilities of our armed services. Bidding is in progress and I had the opportunity to see some of the competitors at the Farnborough air show. I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to achieve a contract by mid-summer 1995. That objective has been reaffirmed on a number of occasions and I hope that in this instance it can be adhered to.

Naturally, there has been concern about reports in the press of cost overruns on the Eurofighter 2000. I am heartened by my right hon. and learned Friend's continuing support for that project. I am sure that the many sub-contractors who will benefit from it will also be heartened, including companies such as Normalair Garrett in the south-west. Once again, that aircraft is a tribute to the part that Britain can play in co-operative European ventures.

Perhaps this is an appropriate moment to mention the future large aircraft, which has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Much has been said about proposals for the FLA. I would simply say that it should not be forgotten and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will not forget it, although it has been forgotten in certain marketing quarters—conveniently, perhaps—that orders for the C130J are worth as much as £1 million per aircraft to United Kingdom sub-contractors and those include Westland.

Just as I do not see the EH101 and the Chinook as mutually exclusive, I do not see the C130J and the FLA as mutually exclusive. They are different aircraft with different capabilities, in different stages of design. Feasibility studies on the FLA have not concluded, although I had the opportunity to see a remarkable mock-up at Farnborough, which was created in just a few days.

The decision to replace the oldest Hercules aircraft with the C130J will not jeopardise the FLA's future prospects. It will have to stand on its own feet after the conclusion of the feasibility studies. There are many unanswered questions about where the money will be found to secure the development of that aircraft.

Meanwhile, the Hercules has done a remarkable job in many theatres. I have been on Hercules aircraft involved in relief operations in Bangladesh and many colleagues have witnessed the aircraft's flexibility. It is smaller than the FLA would be, which is why, even if the latter were built and orders announced, there would be room for both as part of our future defence needs.

Procurement is important. It is important to British industry and to jobs and it is important that people overseas recognise that Britain still has a prominent part to play in the production of aircraft for world markets. We look to our Ministers to support our companies when they try to win orders. We know that they sometimes have to do so against the odds because other countries use different methods and different financing to support their order books, which often makes it more difficult for us. We compete and we win because we produce good aircraft. We have the technicians and the aviators, and I see many of them in my frequent visits to Westland and to another area of the defence industries, Marconi Underwater Systems at Templecombe in my constituency. Defence contracts are very important to the south-west. We need them, and we need the support of Ministers in winning export orders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Before I call the next speaker, may I remind the House that speeches must now last for no longer than 10 minutes?

6.10 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I should like to focus my comments on weapons proliferation issues, and I shall refer first to chemical weapons.

I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) that the Government should push ahead with the ratification of the chemical weapons convention. The G7 commitment has been mentioned, and we should find parliamentary time to ratify the convention. I know of no hon. Member—certainly no Opposition Member—who would oppose such a Bill. I wonder whether the Government have other things on their mind. For example, the September issue of *Chemistry in Britain*—the magazine of the Royal Society of Chemistry—carried an article entitled:

> "Heseltine drags feet on CWC."

The article said that the President of the Board of Trade

> "has not been prepared to introduce the bill. Post office privatisation is more important in his view."

The proper implementation of the chemical weapons convention should be a defence priority, and I call on the Secretary of State for Defence to press in Cabinet for Britain's ratification to be pushed forward with all speed.

When the defence estimates were published, the Secretary of State told a press conference that

> "the ability to undertake a massive nuclear strike is not enough to ensure deterrence. We need the capability to undertake nuclear action on a more limited scale in order to demonstrate our willingness to defend our vital interests to the utmost."

That is a very silly and dangerous approach which, in effect, amounts to lowering the nuclear threshold.

The Government should instead concentrate on strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The NPT was agreed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970—a few months short of the 25th anniversary of the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima. Twenty-five years on, the NPT faces a crucial milestone in the decision to be taken on its extension.

The NPT obliges parties without nuclear weapons to refrain from acquiring them. In return, states with nuclear weapons took on obligations of their own. The preamble to the NPT talks of

> "strengthening the trust between States in order to facilitate the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons; the liquidation of all their existing stockpiles; and the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons, and the means of their delivery".

Article VI of the NPT obliges the parties

> "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament".

How has the United Kingdom fulfilled those obligations? The short answer is that it has not, and that makes Britain's position on the international stage very difficult. It is the utmost hypocrisy to say that other states do not need nuclear weapons, while maintaining that they are vital for Britain's defence.

The United States and Russia should be congratulated on the progress that they have made in cuts in nuclear arms. Those cuts, though substantial, are only the first step, and much more will be needed. President Yeltsin told the United Nations General Assembly on 26 September that nuclear arms reductions should include Britain, France and China—quite right, too.

Against the trend, Britain is preparing to double the number of strategic nuclear warheads in its stockpile—a maximum of 96 on each Trident submarine against a maximum of 48 on each Polaris submarine.

Aside from the deployment of actual weapons, the Government's policies on nuclear testing have been detrimental to the progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty, which is currently being negotiated in Geneva. If the Government had not spent so much energy in Washington lobbying hard against a test ban, the talks in Geneva might have started a year earlier. China would not have carried out its nuclear test 10 days ago, the second this year. Those tests should be robustly condemned. Although there is no legal link between the comprehensive test ban and the NPT, there has been a growing political link in the eyes of many states. Speedy progress in Geneva is therefore essential.

In my view, action will be needed in other areas. First, there is the distinction between favoured and non-favoured states, and the blind eye which is turned to favoured states that may be breaching international norms. For example, although Israel is not a member of the NPT,

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there has been no public pressure from our Government for it to give up on nuclear weapons. However, Pakistan—also not a member of the NPT—has been roundly condemned for having the same ambition. There should not be one set of rules for some favoured states and another set for other states. The spread of nuclear weapons must be condemned at every turn by every country.

Why do non-nuclear states want nuclear weapons? They want them because they think that it is in their interests to obtain them. They should be convinced otherwise. One step that nuclear weapons states could take is to strengthen security assurances—a demand made by many developing states.

A formal agreement on security assurances could be linked to an agreement on "no-first-use" of nuclear weapons; something which China has declared an interest in seeking. That could be part of a deal to encourage China to stop testing and to phase down its nuclear programme. However, Britain is opposed to general security assurances and to "no-first-use" assurances for political reasons. The Government want to retain the option to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states, and that is quite wrong.

That is proved by the distinction that the Government make between sub-strategic and strategic nuclear weapons. The distinction used to be made on the range of the weapons, but now that the sub-strategic so-called "deterrent" is to be carried on Trident missiles, the distinction has become peculiar. As they are identical warheads on identical missiles, the distinction can be made only in the way in which they are used or are threatened to be used.

The truth is that if any nuclear weapon landed on Britain, it would be seen as strategic. Yet, with this distinction, we are trying to say that that is not the case. If it is the case for Britain, it is the case for all other nuclear weapons states. It is clear that the sub-strategic Trident could not be used against any other nuclear state. Who would the weapons be targeted against? The answer is non-nuclear weapons states, and that is the real distinction between strategic and sub-strategic weapons that the Government have made. It is wrong to adopt the attitude that we would attack non-nuclear states with nuclear weapons.

A radical review of nuclear policy in this country is needed. Last year, Rear Admiral Edward Scheafer Junior—the head of US naval intelligence—said that

> "somewhere, some time in this decade, someone is going to set off a nuclear weapon in deadly earnest."

The prognosis need not be as bad as that, but action must be taken now to avoid such a situation.

Ted Galen Carpenter, director of foreign policy studies at the Cato institute in Washington, wrote in an article in *Foreign Affairs* this year:

> "The United States can take some steps to help make a multipolar nuclear world marginally safer. Under no circumstances, however, should Washington place this country at risk in purely regional disputes that have nuclear dangers . . . the reality is that conflicts between long-standing rivals are an ever-present danger."

He concluded by saying that although nuclear weapons had made the super-powers cautious in their cold war rivalry,

> "it is a leap of faith to assume that the existence of nuclear weapons will produce similar restraint in much more volatile regional settings."

That, again, is a most important argument in favour of extending the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and making it effective worldwide.

As I have just one minute left in which to speak, I want to emphasise that we need to strengthen security safeguards governing the civil and military use of atomic energy. We could have, for example, a fissiles materials cut-off agreement. We need to strengthen export controls on dual-use technologies as well as nuclear ones. It is scandalous that the current export goods control order, a statutory instrument which was passed at a time of war in September 1939, allows no scrutiny of exports from this country. We should have the right to inspect exported equipment in operation at its destination and to check that it is being used—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order.

6.20 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) will forgive me if I do not pursue his argument. We should, however, have a day set aside for a debate on the nuclear proliferation treaty because it is vital to us that we understand what we are on about. Such a debate should command the undivided attention of the House.

The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), said that he was surprised to learn from a research organisation that Britain could not perform certain missions on its own. I shall not go into the detail of that research, but I am not altogether surprised because I do not know of any country, apart, possibly, from the United States, that wishes to or could undertake any serious military mission without the help of some organisation or other country.

Such co-operation is the theme of the Government's defence policy and it runs through the White Paper that we are discussing today. The Government believe that our security operations will increasingly be pursued multilaterally. If the hon. Member for Swansea, East does not understand that, God help the country if the Labour party came to power.

It is right to pursue that theme because our foreign policy and economic interests are linked increasingly to international partners. The chosen instrument for co-operation has been NATO and continues to be so. After the end of the cold war, some people wrote NATO off in quasi-fourth form essays entitled, "Whither NATO". They implied that the end was nigh. As a long-standing member of the North Atlantic Assembly, I have observed how NATO's structure, including that of the assembly, has adapted to the uncertainties of the post-cold war period.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: No, I am sorry. I hate the 10-minute limit on speeches, but I have never been able to speak without it, so I shall use up my time.

The NATO summit of last January marked an important step in its evolution, because it reaffirmed the interdependence of the alliance, its important links with the United States and the need to strengthen the European pillar of NATO. As a consequence, France is now shedding some of its old suspicions and hostility towards NATO and its serving officers are working within NATO's command structure in Bosnia. The setting up of a combined joint task force, based on the principle that NATO should be able to deploy a headquarters combined task force to carry out a range of operations, whether under NATO, the Western European Union or the United Nations, illustrates the adaptability of NATO and the emphasis that it puts on the need for flexible and rapid reaction forces.

All those changes were foreshadowed in "Options for Change" some years ago and justify to the hilt the Government's decision not to indulge in the luxury of a defence review. Such a review, like a royal commission, takes minutes and wastes years so that it is out of date as soon as it is published.

I welcome the "Partnership for Peace" initiative, just as I welcome my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) who have joined the ministerial team. They will add a great deal to our debates, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Yesterday, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State spoke about "Partnership for Peace" and of the magnificent contributions that we have made to that initiative. They have been widely accepted and we can be proud of that contribution.

It is worth considering our defence costs study and "Front Line First" in the context of our international commitments and our membership of NATO. One of the more unpleasant tasks facing a Secretary of State for Defence must be that of presiding over a policy that cuts defence expenditure. My right hon. and learned Friend cannot like that—his Ministers and hon. Members do not like it either. The Secretary of State is not unlike a general who is ordered to conduct an organised and disciplined retreat that could so easily turn into a rout.

The Secretary of State and his Ministers have been buffeted by the Treasury and understandably impelled by the public to seek a peace dividend. They can claim that their cuts have staved off disaster. The Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence no less, who has never been backward in his criticism, has congratulated the Government on the way in which the defence costs study has limited the damage.

We have had a reassurance from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State that a line has been drawn and that no further cuts in the strength of the armed forces are contemplated. That assurance, together with "Front Line First", is the best news that we have had for a long time—and not before time either. Nevertheless the past few years have put an enormous strain on the morale of our armed forces. We should not forget that. Ministers are rightly impressed by their dedication and professionalism. They see them at their best, so it is not too difficult to accept from top military leaders that the talk of low morale is exaggerated. That is the way of service men and service women. Their own pride and loyalty to the services prevents them from bellyaching to Ministers.

I have no wish to exaggerate the impact of reducing the numbers in our armed forces, redundancies or forced amalgamations between units. I cannot, however, ignore that impact, nor should it be ignored. All I can affirm is that it would be astonishing if the changes of the past few years had not made their mark on men and women from whom the highest standards are expected.

We are right to be concerned; after all, we do not have conscription. Our allies expect us to make up for our lack of numbers with quality in personnel, training, equipment and research and development. We know that anxieties have been expressed about all those spheres. If one talks to some of our friends who are part of the alliance, it is particularly disturbing to discover that they have noticed those anxieties. One cannot expect to be a leader of Europe in NATO if those allies find defects gradually advancing in our defence structure. Although it is important to praise the professionalism of the services, that must be backed up with proper support. There should be no question of any further hints of reductions in expenditure on defence affecting the quality of either personnel or equipment.

I am bound to be disturbed to hear of wives and families who have been put under enormous strain through the absence of their men folk; of difficulties in recruiting adequate numbers of adequate quality; of potential leaders at all levels leaving the services and, most important, of a lack of training at a level that exercises skills of command and the deployment of advanced technology well beyond those required for peacekeeping duties, important though they are. I cannot remember when we had our last divisional training exercise, except in the Gulf. Those problems are causing concern.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces referred to the Bett review on the conditions and terms of service of the armed forces. That, too, has caused concern. I hope that it will not cut across the established and well-tried practices that embellish and help to compensate service men and women of all ranks for the many sacrifices that they are called upon to make. Such a review should not be used, nor should we suspect it of being used, as a way of making substantial savings. I was pleased to note how the Minister reassured my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) that that is not the case. I hope that that is true.

I have two questions for my colleagues on the Front Bench. First, are we to take it that when troops engaged in Northern Ireland are no longer needed, there will be no yielding to further pressure for reductions in their number? Some people think that more than an extra 10,000 personnel is needed, but there should be no reduction in their number.

Secondly, if the savings identified in the defence costs study are not realised, can we be reassured that the defence budget will not be cut again or that orders for defence equipment that sustains the quality of our armed forces will not be postponed to a later date?

We all have a shopping list. Mine is a simple one, based on the policy of flexible response, which fits in with NATO. I therefore want a decision on helicopters. There are nice people at Westland, but I am fed up with being bombarded by their questions about when an order will be placed for the EH101. We need that helicopter and we could throw in a Chinook as well, as my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson) suggested. We have kept Westland waiting for too long. I have no doubt that we need an assault helicopter if we want a flexible, effective response. I fancy the Apache. Although I should not wish to repeat the experience, I

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

have looped the loop in an Apache and can vouch for its rapid reliability. The need for a flexible and rapid response means that we must also replace the most aged of our Hercules transport. We cannot have those lolloping around for the next 10 years, waiting for an accident.

In those circumstances, I commend to my hon. Friends the fact that we have enormous support for what has been achieved. However, we hope that the Government will take on board the fears that some of us have expressed in this debate.

6.29 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) in debate, if not in philosophy. I had not heard before that he had gone loopy in the past. I can commend some of his points to the House. We do not agree on everything, but he and I know full well the points on which we disagree. As well as congratulating the hon. Gentleman on a good speech, I commend the speech of the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) and advise Ministers to heed the points that he offered the House. The hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), who has just left the Chamber, made a telling speech on medical facilities.

In the 10 unforgiving minutes allotted to me, I shall concentrate on three areas. First, I visited the Cambodia Trust in Phnom Penh and Kampot and saw there the work being done by a British charity to produce false limbs for the unfortunate victims of the hideous hardware left in that region as a result of the continuous war. The Cambodia Trust trains Cambodians to make false limbs out of materials produced in Cambodia. It then trains the best of those technicians to become lecturers in prosthesis and orthosis. It is currently training administrators and managerial staff to leave a self-sustaining working clinic there within three years, staffed by Cambodians, serving Cambodians, and making all the products in Cambodia. So it will not be dependent on any other state.

That charity seeks to extend its work into other areas of the world. To my knowledge, 27 other countries have huge problems of that kind. Within those countries, 100 million mines have been deployed and 1 million victims are already consigned to sitting in the dust until such time as someone can give them a limb on which to stand and help them to help themselves.

While in Cambodia, I saw at first hand the work of the Mines Advisory Group, which is supervised in the province of Xien Khouane by a man from the Western Isles called Donald Donalson, who was recently made redundant from his job as an RAF bombing range clearance officer. He is doing marvellous work in Cambodia with spirit and great humour. The work being done is admirable.

In that region of south-east Asia, two aspects of the problem are being dealt with by British agencies: the need for amputees to receive provision; and the need for the eradication of weapons that should not have been there in the first place.

The third aspect of the problem that needs a solution is the need for an expression of political will on a global scale. Governments must decide collectively to put a stop to the design, production, deployment of and training in such hideous hardware. The best military minds will agree that it serves no useful purpose. The deployment of those weapons serves only to deny the terrain to everybody else. In so doing, however, it is denied to those deploying the weapons, whether it be on their own land or someone else's. The whole thing is preposterous and serves no useful purpose.

I should like to say a brief word on the general thrust of the defence costs studies. I have already said more than once in the House—I disagree with many of my Opposition colleagues—that the only peace dividend available to us is peace itself. The world has changed so dramatically since the end of the cold war that we have yet to realise the scale of that change. The world is more unstable, there are more trouble spots and they are more unpredictable. The whole question of providing for them is enormous and we cannot predict events.

We have heard a catalogue of the good work done by the forces under pressure and difficulties. The Chairman of the Select Committee on which I serve has expressed concern about overstretching and I agree with him on that. In any given year, 265 nights out of bed is far too much to expect of anyone, even Cabinet Ministers. If the job is so hard and the pressures so high, why on earth are we cutting back? I do not consider that a fatuous question, but I consider the answer given to me a fatuous answer.

In response to questions put by my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on the closure of depots, the Minister said that the remarks were idiotic. I have a few idiotic remarks of my own to make, and they are all in the form of questions. I hope that I shall not receive idiotic answers. I wish to refer specifically to Eaglescliffe, the most modern storage depot in the country, if not in the world—it is brand new. It is remarkable and hon. Members should go and see it. Why has a decision been taken to close Eaglescliffe less than four years after we were assured that it would stay open, when we discussed the Pulvertaft proposals?

Why was the consultation document five years late, so non-specific and so limited that it was confined to four sides of A4 paper? I do not believe that it took five weeks to write four A4 sides. Why was the response to legitimate queries so dismissive and inadequate? Why was a two-week extension to the duration of the consultation period announced less than 24 hours before its closure date? And why only a two-week extension when the curtailment was five weeks plus the obstruction to the questions to the Ministry of Defence? The whole matter is so unreasonable that it makes nonsense of the term "consultation". It beggars description. It is so dismissive that it is disrespectful, and the people of Cleveland deserve a better response.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement and I have had a better than average relationship. I hope that that will remain. Occasionally, he has assisted me and I have sometimes recognised that assistance in the time-honoured parliamentary way. I shall not go into more detail. I have asked a number of pertinent questions tonight, as did the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) in his contribution last night. I do not often agree with him and I do not agree with everything that he said last night, but he made a good speech and the pertinent points in it deserve a response. I had hoped to hear a response to some of those arguments this afternoon.

I am sorry that I could not be here for the first day of this debate, but I read the report of the proceedings this afternoon and saw that the Minister promised to respond today to the points to which he did not respond yesterday.

Mr. Soames: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I am sorry; I have only seconds left.

I was hoping that I would receive a response earlier this afternoon. I listened carefully and did not hear a response. I hope that the Minister, in replying to the debate, will respond to the arguments that the hon. Member for Stockton, South made and those that I made—or perhaps I may have a copy of the letter that he received. I look forward to it. I listen with interest.

6.39 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity of catching your eye in this debate. I shall concentrate, in the time available to me, on two or three items.

I should like to identify myself with the views that were expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson), who strongly expressed the case to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement that there should not simply be a one-sided argument about the order for the replacement of the Hercules. I speak with an interest in the matter, since Lucas Aerospace would be providing the FADEC, or engine control management system, for the C130J. I understand that perhaps 1,700 jobs at Lucas and possibly more elsewhere would be involved in about 36 British companies, which have been successful in bidding for part of that contract. I do not wish to take anything away from the excellent idea of the future large aircraft, but we should remember that that proposed aircraft is only at the feasibility stage at the moment; it has not been completed and it has not flown.

Another aspect of the C130J speaks for itself. A huge amount of time, experience and dedication has been invested in that type of aircraft, especially by special forces. They have had to learn to fly it extremely low, sometimes to drop out of it without parachutes, and to drop equipment and sensitive material, with a great deal of expertise, extremely quietly in hostile territory, which would not necessarily be appropriate in a much larger, as yet untested, aeroplane. I say no more at this stage about that, but I hope that my right hon. Friend has listened. The two are in no way mutually exclusive.

I am in some difficulty, having listened carefully to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) at the time when he produced his "Options for Change", because he promised me then that he would go this far and no further. The announcement of last year's unified Budget on 30 November heralded a further reduction in the defence budget—the third significant defence reduction in four years. The overall effect has been to reduce defence expenditure as a proportion of gross national product to about 3 per cent., in stark contrast to the average of about 5 per cent. in the 1970s and 1980s. That is also in stark contrast to the French defence budget, which is currently 3.8 per cent. and increasing by 3 per cent. every year. Between £3 billion and £4 billion, whichever way one works it, has been cut from the defence budget since my right hon. Friend gave me those assurances.

What does my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State think has happened in the past three years to justify the cutting of a further £1 billion or £2 billion from the defence budget? I ask because my right hon. and learned Friend has said from time to time that that is in keeping with the new world order, but that new world order, such as it was, was taken into account by the "Options for Change" exercise, which brought sweeping cuts in 1990. That acknowledged the collapse of communism, the responsibility hangover from our imperial past and the need to deter possible belligerents from the Falkland Islands or other areas as well as from Northern Ireland. It also provided an insurance premium against most serious post-Soviet threats, including nuclear proliferation spreading especially to religious zealots, whether they be in the form of Gaddafi, Saddam or the mullahs of Iran.

I remain to be convinced as yet that my right hon. and learned Friend has defended the defence budget in a way that I might have hoped that he would have been able to.

Specifically, I should like to identify my remarks about the overall strategy for defence expenditure with those of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), who said that what we really need is flexibility. I could not agree more. Flexibility is the key in determining the type of forces that we may have in the future.

I have been privileged, with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire), who spoke so well yesterday from the Opposition Benches, to take part in the armed forces parliamentary scheme. We have visited installations, sadly about to close, both at Portland and in the area that she represents, in Rosyth, the minor war vessels centre, with which we were both inordinately impressed. They were both extremely well-run operations and I hope that my hon. Friends will give us some assurances that their transition to their new homes will be as smooth as possible, so that they may continue to operate in the extremely professional manner that they have done.

We have also had the opportunity to visit several other vessels, including HMS Nottingham sailing in the Adriatic. The one fact that I should like to share with colleagues in the House tonight concerning that ship was that the morale of its men, although excellent—they are doing an excellent job—is being tested by the duration of their tours. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will be able to implement the harmony guidelines and to ensure that, whether the tours be in Northern Ireland or in such places, on board ships, their length will be reduced. That will help officers and crew and their families.

The Navy has worries about several matters which I hope my hon. Friend might be able to tackle. If we are to have flexible response, if amphibious capability is to be the watchword—the byword—of our future planning, especially in naval strategy, we must ensure that our units for that purpose are in tip-top working order. At the centre of those units we must consider our current fleet of aircraft carriers, which will need replacement by the year 2010 or thereabouts. I hope that my hon. Friends will not forget that we have various other areas of significant expenditure in our budgets, all of which may add to a rather nasty lump or blip during that period.

While speaking briefly about deployment, I said in my previous contribution to the House how much I regretted the decision that was forced on my right hon. and learned

[Mr. Andrew Hargreaves]

Friend to scrap the Upholder class of conventional submarines. Those would have been especially useful for special forces deployment. I hope that my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Ministers of State will give urgent consideration to fitting the sub-strategic nuclear submarines, which I understand might in future carry out such a role, with the necessary hatches or other equipment to enable them to do the job in the same way as the Upholders might have done. I am confident that they will perform that task admirably, but I hope that we shall not hesitate to make the necessary expenditure to ensure that it is as well and professionally done as it should be.

Whatever we may think about defence, the most important thing is that our service men believe that they are being well represented here and in the Departments. I have every hope and expectation that my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend, whom I welcome to the Front Bench, will fight for their interests, as I know that hon. Members will.

6.48 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful for the opportunity of mentioning briefly three issues about which I have written to the Ministers during the recess, and which cause great anxiety locally. I hope that I receive more satisfactory replies in the debate tonight than I have had during the recess. I hope that we have the right Minister of State for Defence Procurement to give me that reply.

Last summer, in the estimates debate, I urgently questioned my right hon. Friend's predecessor about the reports of problems with the ancient Polaris submarines. There had been many incidents. As the Minister knows, there have been further incidents this year about which I have written to him, and especially the incident on HMS Renown in August, which shortly before had had a five-year refit. The Minister admitted to me in a letter that the crew was tested for radioactivity following the return to Faslane and that the submarine had what he described as "a minor defect". Minor defects can turn nuclear submarines into floating time bombs, and they sail down the Clyde past my constituency.

Why is HMS Resolution, the oldest of the Polaris submarines, still continuing in service? It was due for retirement many years ago. Is not the reality that there has been a long series of incidents with those submarines causing dangers to the crew as well as to local people? There should be—I am asking the Minister to institute it—a full safety review of the state of all Polaris submarines so that such disturbing incidents do not occur. Safety considerations must be paramount.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) about the future large aircraft. Many of my constituents work at the British Aerospace Jetstream factory at Prestwick. Dick Evans, the chief executive of British Aerospace, has given me an assurance that some of the FLA work will come to that factory. I am keen to press the case of the FLA as the best long-term replacement for the Hercules. Strong arguments were advanced to show that the FLA option not only safeguards the future of British Aerospace as a whole, which is vital, but is the best aircraft for the country's military requirements. I say to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that I do not think that we can pursue both options.

The Government should recognise that refurbishing the existing fleet—in answer to an earlier challenge, I can say that I have flown in one of them—is a viable option in the short term. The Government should not rush into a decision on the first tranche by the end of the year, but should wait for the results of the FLA feasibility study. I do not think that that is an unreasonable request in the light of all the implications.

Another concern that I have held for a long time, as have a number of my colleagues in rural constituencies—I see that my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is in his place—involves the dangers of low flying. It is a matter of great concern to my constituents. A recent tragic accident at Killin in Perthshire resulted in the loss of two RAF personnel. A Tornado crashed into the hillside narrowly missing a school. I understand that, had it not been for the bravery and skill of the pilot, the aircraft would have hit the primary school. That incident has serious implications. I have received letters from residents in Killin concerned about the implications of low flying.

I understand the need for some low flying training in the United Kingdom, but the Government recognised that it should be reduced as long ago as 1991. I hope that the Minister of State will give a sign today of when the Government intend to reach all the targets for promised reduction in low flying that his predecessor announced three years ago.

Will the Minister consider reviewing and extending the avoidance areas? A number of schools in various rural constituencies in Scotland and the north of England and a number of other sensitive targets are not in the excluded areas. I hope that the Minister will consider an immediate review and an extension of the avoidance areas.

I hope that the Minister will consider seriously the extension of the use of simulators—a policy which was recommended by the Select Committee on Defence. I know that pilots like to fly by the seat of their pants and train in real aircraft, but simulators can be just as effective.

On a subject of great importance, I want to ask the Minister for a commitment on the date of the introduction and full operational capability of the Alfens computer system for controlling low flying. That would be a vital safety addition. It was promised in 1992, and has been delayed again and again. At present, there is no contact between low-flying aircraft, civilian aircraft, helicopters, commercial aircraft and training aircraft. That presents a huge potential danger—there is a major tragedy waiting to happen.

I was astonished to read in *Airforces Monthly* recently that low-flying aircraft are allowed, in the name of electronic warfare training, to use their defensive aids to jam Skyguard radar, which checks the height and speed of aircraft. Skyguard has been given the role of monitoring adherence to the low flying regulations that are so important for safety. Granting such an allowance effectively gives pilots carte blanche to flout the rules. I hope that the Government will launch an immediate inquiry into the report. How can we take seriously a promise to monitor important low flying regulations when the use of Skyguard seems to be a sham? Low flying monitoring must be kept separate from the operational training role or the public's faith in the policing of low flying will be totally undermined.

I have made a few simple, straightforward, but important requests to the Minister of State. I hope that his reply today will provide me with more satisfactory answers than I received throughout my long correspondence during the recess.

6.55 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Truly, the mind of a Member of Parliament is conditioned by the state of his seat. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) was living proof of that as he spoke up on behalf of his constituency—I intend to do the same.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on his appointment as Minister of State for the Armed Forces and on his speech. It is good to have an ex-soldier in his job. We are glad that he has given up his charger for the Dispatch Box—and so, I suspect, is the horse. To misquote *Punch*, as a cavalry man, my hon. Friend will no doubt add tone to what, too often in this place, is a vulgar brawl.

I wish to place on record my tribute to the late Manfred Wörner who, as Secretary-General of NATO since 1988—a crucial time in its history—guided that organisation for the collective security of the west to victory over the eastern bloc. He then began the work, through "Partnership for Peace", of winning those countries over to democracy, warts and all—it has been a difficult and painful transition for most of them. He will be a hard act to follow. His courage and determination to continue his work although he was seriously ill was truly noble. Mr. Willy Claes, whom we wish well, will have a hard act to follow.

Successive defence estimates since "Options for Change" have benefited from the so-called peace dividend, but we were always left with the feeling that the Treasury had as much to do with the exercise as the Ministry of Defence. This year it is different. The defence budget is set in spite of the Treasury, not because of it. That budget is now £23 billion, which means that we spend a greater proportion of our gross domestic product on defence than most of our NATO allies, although it is still less than we used to spend during the days of the cold war.

In 1992, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State set out our three defence roles, the third of which was to continue to contribute to promoting the United Kingdom's wider security interests through the maintenance of international peace and security. I recall that at that time no resources were allocated for that third role. So commitments—for example, to UN peacekeeping operations—could be met only by taking resources from roles one and two. This year, for the first time, there have been specific allocations of resources to role three, as our international commitments have become clearer—but that can leave us seriously overstretched elsewhere, especially as regards tour intervals in Northern Ireland. That worries us all.

As a result of the peace dividend, our teeth have been cut but they have also been sharpened. Now, the "Front Line First" document shows how the cost of our defence administration, the tail, can also be cut to the tune of about £750 million. Like many other hon. Members, I want to know where that saving on administration is going to go. I hope that some of it will be ploughed back into the teeth. What about the £500 million that was going to be saved through the setting up of the housing trust? If that trust does not come into being, where will that money be found?

We are assured that the defence costs study will reduce the administrative costs of defence but will not cut our defence capabilities. Only time will tell; but what we can do now is applaud the professionalism of those who carried out the 33 studies. Three cheers also for the fact that we hear that the Treasury is to embark on a similar exercise—perhaps the Ministry of Defence can assist with that.

Many of the changes under "Front Line First" will involve mergers, closures or even the growth of military bases. About 200 hon. Members will have constituency or other local interests to defend. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) and I take a particular interest in two options: first, the proposal to set up a joint defence helicopter flying school either at Shawbury in Shropshire or at Middle Wallop near Andover and, secondly, the plan to combine the chaplains schools in one tri-service establishment, either at Amport in Hampshire or elsewhere.

As a member of the Defence Select Committee I have visited Amport in connection with our study of the MOD estate, and I have been to Middle Wallop to see the Army Air Corps on many occasions. I believe—this view is shared by the local council, Test Valley borough council, which has carried out a detailed study of the issues—that the case for retaining both the Middle Wallop and Amport establishments is compelling on military and cost-effectiveness grounds. It also happens to be common sense.

The school of Army aviation at Middle Wallop already trains the largest number of helicopter pilots of any of the three services. It is well located to serve Royal Navy bases in the south and many RAF stations nearby. It is near the training areas of Salisbury plain and convenient and acceptable low-flying areas that would not be available in Shropshire—where flying activity would more than double if the Army aviation school were moved there.

Middle Wallop, on the other hand, could easily cope with the marginal increase in flying activity that would result from amalgamation. There is also a considerable civil infrastructure to support both Middle Wallop and Amport House, where 2,000 jobs would be lost if these establishments were closed and the services moved elsewhere.

The Amport RAF chaplains school has already amalgamated with the Royal Navy and is demonstrably cost-effective. If it combines with the Army chaplaincy centre from Bagshot Park, the cost per student day can be significantly reduced without major capital investment—in contrast to what would be needed at other possible locations.

Amport is well located to serve the Royal Navy bases at Portsmouth and Plymouth, the Army garrisons at Tidworth, Aldershot and Bulford and the surrounding RAF stations. Amport is also up and running, unlike the alternatives, where establishment costs would be very high.

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

The alternatives are the redundant education corps establishment at Eltham palace in south-east London, the disused WRAC Queen Elizabeth Park barracks at Guildford and the Royal Naval college at Greenwich. The only serious challenger is Eltham palace. The building is grade I listed, it has been boarded up for two years and, because of archaeological digs nearby, it would have serious planning disadvantages, besides having only 25 years of lease to run. Being in south-east London, it is well away from the hub of military activity. Amport House wins hands down, and has a Gertrude Jekyll garden to boot—good for contemplation.

I want briefly to refer to Farnborough airfield, bec[illegible] no one else has. It is scheduled for disposal, but it is an essential shop window for our aerospace industry. I know that its closure will involve complex considerations. I welcome the fact that the MOD has jointly set up a study group with the DTI to look at its future. Its continued availability is guaranteed only until the end of the decade—only three more air shows—but the airfield needs a firmer undertaking than that. I hope that it survives and that, in time, both the FLA and the C130J will go on show there.

Much has been said about both aircraft. Some people suggest that the air frame of the C130J would be old, but it is not so. It has been completely redesigned, incorporating many lighter and stronger materials. It is thus a new aircraft that follows the original design. I welcome the fact that there will be a feasibility study on the FLA, because I believe that, ultimately, there will be a mixed solution to the problem of transporting our armed forces. Our Select Committee report went into the matter in great detail, and I commend its conclusions to the House.

Having served as a Regular soldier through an earlier period of cuts, let me remind the Minister that the bane of any service man's life is uncertainty. Cuts to both teeth and tail are necessary and sustainable, but so far and no further. Our services now need a period of stability. If the Minister can promise that when he winds up the debate, and then deliver it, his speech will be welcomed here and outside the House.

7.5 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): It will come as no surprise to anyone that, in the short time that I have, I intend to talk about defence almost exclusively in the context of Northern Ireland. After 25 years of violence, one obviously welcomes the ceasefire by the Provisional IRA, the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association.

I have spoken in these debates for the past 12 years and the violence has been going on for twice as long as that. No one in my party, not even my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), has been in the House at a time when Northern Ireland was not suffering at the hands of terrorists. Yesterday, the Secretary of State reassured us that there will be no reductions in troop numbers in Northern Ireland until he is convinced that violence has decreased to the point at which he can allow that to happen. I am glad that he intends to resist the siren voices prematurely and irresponsibly suggesting that troops be withdrawn. Although there is a ceasefire at present, there has been nothing so far to demonstrate its permanence.

This is a good time for me to express the thanks of all in Northern Ireland who oppose terrorism to the 300,000 young men and women—it is a startling number—who have served in Northern Ireland in the past 25 years. I express everyone's thanks to them for what they have done to sustain a degree of democracy in Northern Ireland. I am absolutely certain that no other army in the world would have endured the insults, the violence and the number of deaths that these young men and women sustained while remaining courteous in their day-to-day relationships with the general public and restrained in their behaviour.

Amid the euphoria of the ceasefire it is important to introduce an element of reality. The Ulster Unionist party will work only to advance the political process. We are not out to make political capital at anyone's expense during this ceasefire, but any peace settlement in Northern Ireland must be based wholly on democratic principles of the sort outlined in the Downing street declaration. At that moment in history our Prime Minister, in conjunction with the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, said to the people of Northern Ireland, "We believe in consent; we believe that the people of Northern Ireland have the right to decide their own future." The endorsement of that declaration by the United States was welcome, but one must look carefully at how the IRA has reacted to it and try to put the correct interpretation on what is happening.

The IRA equivocated for months about accepting the Downing street declaration. Mr. Gerry Adams went off to the United States and, helped by some of his friends there, he was given the world stage and expected to talk about the peace process. Unfortunately, as soon as he reached the stage he muffed his lines. When he came back he was faced with the problem that the political basis—what the IRA needs for its campaign of violence—had been swept away by the Downing street declaration. That was why my party was able to predict months ago that the IRA would go for a three-month ceasefire: it needed to obtain a political base from which it could continue its terror campaign.

I caution the House that the IRA intends, at active service unit and brigade level, to recommence its violence in January or as soon thereafter as it believes that it can do so. The IRA does not want to enter the democratic process, and the lack of any sign that it does in anything that has been said by Joe Cahill, Gerry Adams or Martin McGuinness, who have all regressed over the past six weeks, shows that we are likely to be in for a torrid time in the new year. I wish that the IRA would look at the statement issued by the loyalist paramilitaries when they announced their ceasefire. If the IRA could express its intentions in the same terms, the clock could properly start ticking.

Perhaps when the Minister replies to the debate he will clarify a matter that arose today at Prime Minister's Question Time. The Prime Minister said that if the IRA would give up its Semtex, we could move forward. Will the Minister confirm that the Prime Minister was being illustrative and not definitive in mentioning only Semtex? There has been some confusion in the House and in the press about that extremely important issue.

We all want to be optimistic about the permanency of peace. However, as the Minister will be aware, a permanent end to violence would bring with it the loss of [illegible]0,000 security-related jobs which are presently worth about £0.4 billion per annum. Those jobs must be replaced if all sections of the community are to feel that they have a stake in Northern Ireland's success, and that will happen only if economic growth is substantially accelerated. The drive for investment is crucial and the wealth-creating companies in Northern Ireland must have our support if we are to avoid an inevitable increase in unemployment and the problems that go with it.

The recent announcement of a 300 per cent. increase in European Commission funding to the International Fund for Ireland is a well-intentioned response to the possibility of peace in Northern Ireland, but it must be used wisely. That has not always been the case in the past because long-term benefits to the community have too often been hard to identify. If much of the increased IFI resources could be used to provide our young people with extra training opportunities that were relevant to real high-technology jobs, that would prove successful.

In present circumstances we must look to expanding the Province's technological and industrial base, in which aerospace and defence play a key role. Shorts, which has 7,000 employees in the Province and 3,000 in other parts of the world, is our largest employer, and over the past five years it has invested in key technologies and is now a leader in its chosen markets.

The opportunities which the Ministry of Defence's attack helicopter requirement and Hercules replacement programme would open up for aerospace companies in the Province are considerable and would make a major contribution to Northern Ireland's economy in terms of jobs and potential further business. In the Hercules replacement programme, Shorts has joined British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce in the European future large military aircraft project. If the FLA is selected, it will offer United Kingdom companies the prospect of initial work valued at £3 billion. Orders beyond—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Bill Walker.

7.15 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. As always, the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) and his hon. Friends carry the House with them because of their courage and integrity.

I sincerely welcome the pledges that were given by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State about stability in the armed forces. I welcome the tone of Ministers' speeches, and especially that of my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. I am sure that he will be well liked and well respected if he continues in that vein. He will not be surprised to know that I intend to follow the line of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and deal with morale, which must be addressed.

I was pleased that the Minister made public the fact that every type of RAF front-line aircraft is engaged on active operations somewhere in the world. That is important because the aircraft have to be manned both on the ground and in the air and we must look at the impact that that has on families. It also makes nonsense of the specious claims by Mr. David Hart and others about the RAF and the Israeli air force.

Is the Minister aware that air and ground crews now spend six months away from their families each year? In some cases, the time away from home is 270 days a year, and it is important to understand what that means to families.

I spent most of the summer with the Royal Air Force and did so because of my interests, which are listed in the Register of Members' Interests. I am pleased to say I got in some flying hours. People at all levels in the service put a number of questions to me, and I said that I would put them to the Government and the House. First, is the Minister aware that the stress caused by the operations that have been mentioned is occurring at a time when the Royal Air Force has been singled out for yet further manpower cuts which will inevitably reduce the pool of uniformed manpower to support future operations?

Secondly, are the Government aware that by the time the latest round of Treasury-imposed cuts has been implemented by the RAF, manpower will have been reduced by some 40 per cent. since 1990? That is happening at a time when I and many others believe that the world is growing more dangerous and unstable. My question is to ask what steps have been taken to refute the specious claims about the RAF and the comparisons with the Israeli air force. I hope that the Minister will address that.

Is my hon. Friend aware that many of the personnel who will be made redundant by the Royal Air Force as a result of "Front Line First" will be those to whom the Government are looking to provide savings from improved efficiency, the implementation of new procedures and practices and the introduction of market testing? Do Ministers appreciate that many of those who will be responsible for organising and introducing the market testing programme will be the very people whose jobs are at risk? Do they acknowledge that after heaping change upon change on our loyal and outstanding forces, the introduction of the housing trust initiative and Mr. Bett's independent review have been badly timed and damaging to morale? I have to report that those were my findings.

Does my hon. Friend realise that many families are deeply concerned about the future arrangements for married quarters and the education of their children? Does he understand and realise that those matters need urgently to be clarified?

I turn now to other areas of concern and in particular procurement. I shall deal with weapons systems first. I welcome the proposal to purchase cruise missiles, but I have some reservations about the quantity that will be available and the launch vehicle to be used. The submarine is not my idea of an ideal launch vehicle.

The United States uses large surface ships as platforms. That—and the number that can be launched—offsets the less than 50 per cent. accuracy achieved during the Gulf war. The numbers available to the United States make cruise a credible conventional deterrent for the United States. I am not alone in believing that the United Kingdom submarine-launched cruise missiles alone cannot provide the flexibility and determined capability that the United Kingdom may require.

[Mr. Bill Walker]

On Royal Air Force procurement, will Ministers confirm that the conventionally armed stand-off missile and the anti-armour weapon—ASRs 1236 and 1238—will be introduced as soon as possible to complement the mid-life update to the Tornado and to provide the Royal Air Force with those urgently needed weapons? Only that, together with cruise missiles, will be an effective and flexible deterrent capability.

Will the Government acknowledge the crucial role played by the Royal Air Force in the Gulf war and the importance of a properly balanced and equipped service for the future? That is vital. Does my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State acknowledge that the bravery and expertise of the Royal Air Force is held in the highest regard throughout the world? The perception in the Royal Air Force today is that the Government have notably failed to acknowledge it. I am confident that the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), will remedy that. I mean that most sincerely because I welcome the letter that he wrote me about morale.

Cuts in the medical services are affecting morale. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the viability of secondary medical care to the armed forces can be sustained and will he acknowledge that the sharp decline in the number of service consultant specialists brought about by the loss of career prospects will jeopardise the provision of secondary care? Will he make a statement regarding primary medical care and the need to provide adequate levels of health support to military personnel in order to return them to active service at the earliest opportunity? I am standing here today thanks to massive benefits that I gained from RAF medical care after a serious accident. I shall never forget that.

Procurement of the future large aircraft was mentioned earlier. The British Aerospace campaign has not been a wise one. Eurofighter 2000 is much more important than LFA at this time. I do not believe that the Royal Air Force should be faced with two major high-risk programmes at the same time. The Eurofighter is much more important and the Royal Air Force should concentrate on that. We cannot have slippage there.

In their procurement programmes the Germans have funds for development until 2010, which could mean that the aircraft will not fly until 2010. If we do not get the C130J, we shall be in the impossible position that we last faced under the Labour Government, with the wrong aircraft at the wrong time in the wrong place.

The Royal Air Force has been in the vanguard of introducing new working practices and support initiatives, including information technology. I want my hon. Friend to confirm the very disturbing fact that we have fewer military airfields today than at any time since 1933. When did the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for Defence last pay an official visit to a Royal Air Force base in Britain?

7.25 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The House of Commons is entitled to a serious Government response to the alleged activities of the son of the former Prime Minister.

When the issue first arose, frankly I found it distasteful to try to get at the then Prime Minister through her son and I did not ask a single question on the so-called Oman affair.

However, the present position is that many serious people in Britain believe that Mark Thatcher did indeed amass a fortune as a result of an arms procurement and his connection, or supposed or perceived connection, with his mother.

Equally seriously, there is a perception abroad that the integrity of the British state is at stake.

It so happened that I was participating in a conference at Ditchley Park on the Sunday morning when the Mark Thatcher story broke. Ditchley operates under Chatham House rules. Suffice it to say that MOD officials should ask their erstwhile Permanent Secretary, Sir Michael Quinlan, who were the people participating at the conference, because they were people whose opinions about Britain matter.

Ministers cannot just pass by on the other side of the road like a biblical Levite and offer a response as the Secretary of State for Defence did yesterday that

> "Mark Thatcher is neither a member of the Labour party nor . . . the Conservative party."—*[Official Report*, 17 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 49.]

That is simply not sufficient.

I am not a Johnny come lately to this particular issue; on the basis of extremely detailed information from several sources, I asked seven questions on 27 November 1992. They should now be answered.

> "First, are the Government aware that an executive of the defence company United Scientific, introduced Mark Thatcher to arms dealer Sarkis Sohagalian in the autumn of 1983 as part of its efforts to win a contract to sell night vision devices ultimately to be used by Iraq?
>
> Secondly, will the Government confirm or deny that Prince Banda, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, personally presented a letter to former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia in 1985 and that that letter made it implicitly clear that commissions would be paid as part of the Al-Yamamah deal between Saudi Arabia and Britain involving the sale of Tornado jets and other defence equipment to Saudi Arabia?
>
> Thirdly, will the Government explain the purpose of that letter from King Fahd to Prime Minister Thatcher? Will they explain why Mrs. Thatcher dealt with the Saudi ambassador to the United States and not the Saudi ambassador to Britain while dealing with the Al-Yamamah deal?
>
> Fourthly, will the Government confirm or deny that Mark Thatcher received approximately £10 million soon after the signing of the memorandum of understanding for the Al-Yamamah deal in September 1985 and that the agreement on the deal specified that he would receive a further approximately £10 million subsequently?
>
> Fifthly, will the Government confirm or deny that Mark Thatcher and a Saudi Arabian middle man involved in the deal, whose name was Wafic Said, paid income tax on money which they earned from the Al-Yamamah deal?
>
> Sixthly, are the Government aware that, for some time in 1989, Mark Thatcher lived in a house at 34 Eaton terrace while that house was owned by Formugul, a Panamanian company linked with Saudi Arabian business man, Wafic Said, who played a role in the Al-Yamamah deal?
>
> Finally, can the Government confirm or deny that Mr. Christopher Prentice, a Foreign Office official working in the British embassy in Washington in the mid-1980s, was aware that Mark Thatcher was involved in the Al-Yamamah deal?"—*[Official Report*, 27 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 1103–4.]

Much has happened since I asked those questions, including a document originating from United States intelligence which came to light during the

Dooley-Sikorsky trial and highlights Mark Thatcher's role. I shall hand a copy of it to the officials in the Box as soon as I have sat down.

The Prime Minister this afternoon, in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell), said that evidence should be produced. That document, together with another document—an alleged BAe internal memorandum—deserves at least a serious reply.

I do not have time to read out the whole of that document, but under the heading:

> "Meetings with U.S. Embassy staff in Riyadh brought to light the following concerns"

it refers to

> "4 bil U.S. was mentioned in connection with M. Thatcher's son."

At the very least, that must be explained.

Furthermore, the internal memorandum states:

> "The same source also states that there is a sizeable payment to the Conservative Party ('a huge sum') which is being administered by Wafic Said in conjunction with Mark T."

It also states:

> "The additional financial benefit to Mark T. and his friends Wafic Said and other middle men, all non-tax-paying residents of the UK and to the Conservative Party are absolutely enormous, according to the BAe executive."

I want to ask again about Sir Clive Whitmore. A letter sent to my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said:

> "I understand that Sir Clive Whitmore has confirmed that he did not see Lady Thatcher to pass on a warning about Mr. Thatcher's alleged involvement in the Al Yamamah deal."

I have learnt over the years to be very careful about words. I asked whether Sir Clive went to, not saw, the Prime Minister. The MOD press statement is oddly worded. It states:

> "Sir Clive Whitmore confirmed that he did not see Lady Thatcher to pass on Mark Thatcher's alleged involvement in the Al-Yamamah deal. There is no evidence that it was felt necessary for any official concern to be passed to Lady Thatcher."

It is very odd for a statement to say that it was not felt necessary for any "official concern" to be passed on. I ask a direct, blunt question—was there any contact on that issue, official or unofficial, between the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence and the then Prime Minister?

It is not only Labour politicians who are concerned about this matter. The leader in *The Daily Telegraph* on 10 October said:

> "It may be that both he and his mother are able to produce full rebuttals of the *Sunday Times's* allegations. It is to be hoped that they will do so, because it would be an embarrassing matter indeed if the son of the most distinguished Conservative leader of modern times was believed to have gained large personal profit from his family association with Downing Street."

When *The Daily Telegraph* says something like that, there should at least be a response on the Floor of the House. If, as I believe, there has been massive corruption at the heart of the British state, the least that the Government can do is to state their beliefs on the Floor of the House of Commons.

The place where such questions should be responded to is the Floor of the House. They should not be frivolously shoved off. Right or wrong, they must be answered. This issue will not go away because it affects the honour of our country.

Silence or a frivolous response on these issues in the reply tonight will be interpreted only as governmental determination to turn a blind eye to what may, at home and abroad, be a real disgrace.

During Question Time, the Prime Minister said in answer to the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) that wrongdoing would be rooted out. There is an obligation on the Government to deal with these questions seriously, not frivolously.

7.35 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) down his route. Instead, I join several of my hon. Friends in welcoming the two new Ministers of State to their posts. We are fortunate in having two such doughty fighters for the armed forces at what is, to be frank, a difficult time.

Only twice in the past two centuries has the economy of a great European power imploded and collapsed. The events in post-revolutionary France in the 1790s and in Germany at the time of the Weimar republic led to the two bloodiest conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries. No one here today knows which way Russia will go next. We all wish President Boris Yeltsin well. We are pleased to hear of the splendid reception that the Russians are giving our monarch. However, what we know—as opposed to what we hope and think—is that Russia has an enormous stockpile of nuclear weapons and that it continues to produce very large numbers of high-quality conventional equipment.

The recent French defence White Paper, which was published eight weeks ahead of our own, commented on the proliferation of fissile materials and technology from the ex-Soviet states into the middle east and north Africa:

> "It is to be feared that policies of preventive control alone are not sufficient to protect us against the risks of proliferation."

That may be rather rich coming from the French, given their past contribution to various forms of proliferation; nevertheless, they are right on this matter.

The Government are right to recognise that we may have to invest in a strategic defence system, but we must also recognise that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has implications for more than our nuclear defence. The blunt truth is that, before long, we may find ourselves fighting a war of a mixed conventional and tactical nuclear variety. Indeed, we all know that, had the Gulf war happened two years later, it would have been just such a war.

It is just a month before we remember those hundreds of thousands of our gallant former citizens who fell in action. It is worth also remembering that, even before the weapons of mass destruction came into being, it was possible to lose a division in an afternoon. It happened at El Alamein, at Paschendaele and even at Waterloo. It is sobering to remember that our Regular Army is now so small that if—and pray God it never happens—we were to lose a division in an afternoon in a campaign, we would lose almost half our Regular field Army.

That is why the next spending round is so critical. We should be sending a message not only to potential adversaries, not only to our allies—not least in Washington, where there is a strong isolationist movement—but, above all, to our armed forces that we really are backing our rhetoric on defence with a willingness to fund it properly. We should be saying that

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

with our much smaller armed forces, as they now are, we will find the money to provide them with the training, the spare parts and even the basic necessities, such as bringing the married quarters up to a standard fit to live in.

On the subject of the morale of our armed forces, I believe that we are fortunate to have somebody of Michael Bett's calibre to chair the commission. I see from his entry in "Who's Who" that—along with all his other distinguished posts—he is an honorary colonel of a TA unit. But it is no criticism of him or his team to say that the commission is sitting at an unfortunate time. It has been asked to do this work at that point which every management consultant—I used to work as one—dreads, when so many other teams have been working on so many different issues in the organisation under review, some of which inevitably impinge on the same ground.

We should not be surprised, therefore, if, at the end of the day, the commission comes to relatively conservative conclusions, simply on the basis that there is a limit to how much further change the forces can take without serious damage to their morale. Having said that, I hope that I may be allowed to make a written submission to the commission as I have a number of points of detail that I would like to make in the way of suggestions.

I should like to say something about our reserve forces. During the past four or five years, I have been privileged to visit the reserve forces of the other three major English-speaking countries—America, Canada and Australia. We have a number of world-class units in our Territorial Army—we see them winning competitions which prove it—but there is a great deal that we can learn from abroad. One thing that we can say with certainty is that in the last war all three of those countries had an expansion from a much smaller regular base, in some respects managing it more successfully than we did.

The British professional Regular forces are second to none, but some of the ways in which we organise and structure our reserve forces could be improved on and I want to mention three. First, our officer training, so good in the Regular Army, is woefully inadequate for our volunteer reserves. The trend in all three of the countries that I have mentioned is towards trying to bring the training of reserve officers as close as possible to that of their regular counterparts.

For example, in Canada the majority of officers go through two 10-week continuous training periods to become reservist officers. They are carefully tailored to fit in with university long vacations. In Australia, after a weekend-based build-up similar to that for British reserve officers, there is a nine-week training course. In America, some reservist officers train for as much as six months. Our little two-week course at Sandhurst does not begin to compare with those arrangements. I am sure that we all recognise the value of the new roles that are being found for our volunteer reserves, but it is essential that they are given much-enhanced officer and senior NCO training if they are to perform as well as I believe they can.

The second major difference is the lack of adequate call-out legislation. It is interesting comparing the experience of the Canadians, who do not have it, with that of the Americans next door. The Canadians, with their use of reserve forces in a variety of places including Bosnia, feel that it is essential that they, too, should have reserve forces legislation. I add my voice to those of two other hon. Members who have already mentioned that it is vital that we bring forward the reserve forces Bill on which a number of MOD officials are working hard at the moment.

The third comparison that I want to draw is a sensitive one. It is no criticism of the present incumbent of the post, who I know to be an excellent officer, to say that it is wrong that the British general who directs the reserve forces is a Regular officer. He does not even have a tri-service hat. In all the other three major English-speaking countries there is a head of reserves, with a different name in each case, which is a "purple" post, based firmly in each country's Ministry of Defence, who is a reservist and, as such, has the double-career structure behind him—a successful civilian career as well as a military one. That brings the special expertise to the reserve forces issue that can be brought only by a reservist. I know that I speak for large numbers of people, particularly in the officer corps in the Territorial Army, when I say that, with the current reorganisation, it is hoped that the next head of the reserves will be a reservist.

I want to end where I started—by saying that this is a dangerous world. This is a time at which a great deal could go wrong. The most important single message that will be given by the Government to the armed forces in the next few weeks will not be anything that is said in this debate: it will be the message that is given as a result of the outcome of the next public spending round—particularly of the new third year—because that will show where our priority for defence is going.

7.45 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I join in the general welcome to the new Minister of State for the Armed Forces. I thank him for his courtesy in inviting me to meet him to talk about midnight bombing in Rosehearty. I am only sorry that he will not visit Rosehearty himself; it seems to be about the only military establishment in western Europe that he has not managed to visit in the past six weeks. None the less, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy, and hope that it will extend to an instruction to the Royal Air Force to have a meeting with the villagers of Rosehearty who are most concerned about the prospect of Tornados operating bombing runs over their village at midnight in the summer months.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) is not in his place, although he has been here for a substantial part of the debate and made a 20-minute contribution yesterday. It was interesting to note that the word "Rosyth" did not pass the right hon. Gentleman's lips once. Yet in 1992, when he was Secretary of State for Defence, on a foray into Scotland in February that year, he could hardly speak about anything else. I recall debating with him on the "Today" programme the future prospects of the Rosyth naval base in the context of an independent Scotland. Directly, in *The Daily Telegraph*, the right hon. Gentleman was moved to say:

> "Vote SNP, and you ultimately say goodbye to the Rosyth base."

Unfortunately, people did not vote SNP. They voted for the Union in 1992, and here we are, two years later, saying goodbye to the Rosyth naval base—not ultimately, but right now under the Government's proposals.

I do not know why the right hon. Member for Bridgwater did not mention Rosyth in his speech. I do not know whether it was the result of guilty conscience or whether it is now a case of one broken promise more or less from one Secretary of State more or less not really mattering given a Government who have shredded so many promises since the general election campaign. None the less, it would have been instructive for people in Scotland to have had his insight into the consultative document which shows that the base is about to be effectively closed.

That consultation document tries to pretend that it is not a closure—that having a naval base with no ships stationed at it is not, effectively, a closure of a naval base. Everyone in Fife and in Scotland is well aware that whatever attendant services remain at Rosyth for the time being, they are on a very shoogly nail indeed, since the base has no ships—a very limited time scale.

Equally offensive in the consultation document is the attempt to conceal the real extent of the job losses that are threatened by the closure. I had correspondence with the Secretary of State for Scotland during the summer and eventually it was revealed to me that the Government had not included naval personnel transferring from the east coast of Scotland to the south coast of England in the job loss estimate. That was because the Secretary of State for Scotland believed that some of those people might not live in Fife in the first place and therefore did not think it appropriate to include them in the job loss total.

Whether or not all the naval personnel live in Fife or are stationed at Rosyth at present, we can be reasonably sure that when they are stationed on the south coast of England they certainly will not live in Rosyth, Fife or Scotland and, therefore, will be a substantial economic loss to the Scottish economy.

Fife regional council, in its excellent response to the consultation document, details another three direct attempts by the Government to conceal the true extent of the job losses that are threatened for Fife and for Scotland's economy as a result of the Rosyth closure. I hope that when the Minister replies, he will direct his attention to those points on page 12 of the regional council's response and say whether he agrees with each one. They show that—presumably deliberately—the Government have underestimated the economic impact of the closure of Rosyth to the extent of 500 jobs or more.

As that document tells us, and as the Fraser of Allander Institute study which backs it up states, from 1991 to 1997, the total civilian and service personnel job losses from the plans for Rosyth under the Government's proposals amount to 7,000, with a loss of expenditure to the Fife economy of no less than £71.8 million. It is interesting to compare the rigour of the analysis presented by the regional council with the slipshod and sleekit document that the Government produced in the first place.

The consultation document also shows the most obvious bias. Nowhere in the consultation document is there serious consideration of the alternatives—the closure, perhaps, of Portsmouth or Devonport. The closure of Portsmouth was dismissed as prohibitively costly, without any examination. It is said that it is impractical to close Devonport naval base, with no attendant analysis to back up that statement. The document does not even consider the option of scaling down all three conventional naval bases and compare that in terms of cost savings. The only option which is fully examined is that of effectively closing Rosyth as a naval base. How on earth can it be sensible to concentrate conventional naval base capability along a small stretch of the south coast of England?

The regional council's document, unlike the Government's consultation document, looks in detail at the strategic arguments for keeping Rosyth as an operational effective naval base—at oil and fishing interests and at the shipping lanes that need to be policed from a North sea naval base. It is interesting to compare the Government's suggested savings of as little as £160 million over 10 years with the fact that North sea oil generates overall income of £30 million each and every day and that defence experts say that the decision to concentrate on the south coast of England might put this vital strategic resource at some risk.

David Greenwood, who will be well known to those who are interested in defence and who is director of defence studies at Aberdeen university has written:

> "At the moment, any terrorist threat would be dealt with by commandos from Arbroath and the Navy at Rosyth. The Navy's ability to fulfil this role would be seriously impaired if all its ships were based in Portsmouth and Plymouth.
>
> The Navy is responsible for protecting and policing a 200-mile wide strip of water that goes right round the country. It is difficult to see how it could do that with its whole capacity in one corner."

Naval experts, unlike the Government, realise the idiocy of concentrating conventional naval bases on the south coast of England. When we consider the strategic requirements of defence, we find a good argument for keeping Rosyth as a naval base. But if we consider only the Conservative party's political strategic requirements in the south of England, the logic of closing Rosyth and keeping the south coast bases becomes very evident indeed. Although Rosyth was used as a key card in the unionist campaign in the previous general election, now and for ever more in Scottish politics it will be a key example of why the economic fate of communities in Fife and in Scotland generally should not be left to decision-making in this Parliament.

The Scottish National party will vote for the amendment, not because we think that it is a perfect amendment—on the contrary, it does not even mention the word "Rosyth"; we would have liked to have seen the case for Rosyth detailed in the amendment. There are weaknesses in the amendment. It does not confront the incredible lack of logic in the maintenance of missile systems. The Opposition spokesperson said that, warhead per warhead, the Labour party's policy is now to maintain the same number of warheads with Trident as previously were held by Polaris. I should have thought that the international climate dictated a reduction in warheads, not the maintenance of warheads.

The lunacy of the Trident missile system and the expenditure of £20,000 million or more on one aspect of strategic defence which in the modern world has been overtaken by events compares with the loss of key Scottish regiments for the lack of a few million pounds, when an obvious defence need has been identified by Conservative Members for their use in peacekeeping roles in Europe and elsewhere.

I remember the Defence Select Committee once saying that redundant nuclear submarines could be used as tourist attractions. That was actually in a Select Committee report. I am a great admirer of Select Committees, but I do not think that that was the most profound statement ever made by one. Let my last suggestion to the House

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

be this, however: if redundant nuclear submarines and nuclear hulks are worthy of being considered as tourist attractions, let them be tourist attractions on the River Thames, because they will not be acceptable in Rosyth naval base, which wants to be a working naval base, not an elephants' graveyard for nuclear hulks.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The 10-minute restriction will end in a few moments. The winding-up speeches are to commence at 9.10 pm, and many hon. Members still wish to speak. I therefore make a plea for concise speeches.

7.55 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his speech and I associate myself with the glowing tribute that he properly paid to the men and women of our armed forces. The British sailor is one of our greatest ambassadors. I hope that there will be every opportunity for the Royal Navy to visit ports abroad and show the flag. It would do a very good job for Britain if given that opportunity.

This debate occurs at a time of great change, and I should like to consider the role of NATO. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the role of NATO became confused. For instance, who is to be in the sights of our armed forces as part of NATO? It is a great achievement that we do not have an enemy at whom to aim our weapons. One of the great aspects of NATO has been the cohesive force that it has held over many years and brought the United States into the defence of Europe and the free world. Nobody should dismiss that lightly. Many people previously felt that NATO's main purpose should be peacekeeping. A better sense of realism has been adopted by those who have taken an interest in its future role.

Peacekeeping is a long process. It is worth recalling that about 72,292 troops from various nations participate in United Nations peacekeeping roles in 14 places throughout the world. One of the earliest deployments of United Nations forces was in Kashmir in 1949, and forces are still there. Forces were placed in Cyprus in 1964. For NATO to take a lead role in peacekeeping operations would undermine the role of the United Nations in a far wider umbrella able to draw on forces from many other countries, and our own troops would be tied indefinitely to policing areas such as Western Sahara, El Salvador and elsewhere. I do not believe that NATO forces must be confined to the NATO area.

That leads me to the construction of NATO to take account of its role with the rapid deployment force. That is its main function—that is, to show that it has the ability to react quickly and with great force. To do that effectively, we must change the orientation of NATO from a central and northern European-oriented force to one which moves further south and takes account of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the consequent possible effects.

A member of NATO which has a pivotal position in the present structure of NATO—Turkey—should be used for stationing our forces in rapid deployment mode for deployment to areas outside NATO boundaries. If NATO is to be effective it must look beyond its existing bounds and embrace north Africa, the middle east and further afield. It is in stamping out such trouble spots, as was well demonstrated in Kuwait, that we can prevent serious international conflict.

If a really effective rapid deployment force is to be established, it is important to have the right equipment and the men and women who are trained to perform the task well. I am particularly pleased that we have ordered Challenger 2 tanks: that will be a great help to Vickers in Leeds, and is hugely appreciated in Yorkshire. It will also be immensely important to the work that a rapid deployment force will have to undertake.

The helicopter lift will be an important element. I know that a difficult decision is involved. I listened carefully to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson); he has a constituency interest in the manufacture of the EH101, which is a combined operation by Westland and Agusta, but the Chinook—to which he referred—is already in service and gives us the opportunity for standardisation, which I have long preached, and interoperability, while giving us the same use of spares currently in stock in the RAF. I understand that the lift capability of the Chinook is rather greater than that of the EH101, which is important in terms of cost-effectiveness.

We must also consider the offset arrangements. We should push hard to ensure that we have the maximum offset for any purchases. Such purchases must be made on the principle of securing good value for money and the best machine for the job.

Many points have arisen during the debate, which has to an extent latched on to the "Front Line First" White Paper. That document draws attention to the need for more cost-consciousness and financial management procedures. My own RAF support management group in Harrogate has existed since 1946 and has done a magnificent job. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister referred to the civilians who have worked, and are working, in our military forces, particularly in the field of support; they do magnificent work with great dedication. The group that I have mentioned is to be moved to RAF Wyton in Cambridgeshire, which has involved considerable heart-searching and many difficulties for its staff. I sympathise enormously with those employees and their families, who have been faced with a choice between uprooting themselves and trying to find alternative jobs where they are now.

I appreciate the reasons for the action that is being taken, however. We must shape our support for the tasks that our military forces will undertake in future; we must slim them down and use all the technology to make them as cost-effective as possible. Our buildings in Harrogate were not particularly suitable; they were out of date, which is one of the reasons for the move to RAF Wyton, which I deeply regret.

We must do everything possible to secure jobs for those who will be displaced. We must also consider the disposal of redundant buildings and those that are vacated—as will happen with the Army apprentices college. We need to establish a central computerised clearing house, so that a Department looking for buildings can see what types of building are available. The Home Office, for instance, is always looking for buildings to house offenders; buildings are also needed for health service courses. The various Departments must liaise closely to ensure that uses are found for redundant buildings and jobs are secured for those who are displaced by big changes in our military structure.

I am grateful for the opportunity to present my views. I hope that, in the next year or so, we shall continue in the vein of peace that we have been able to secure by maintaining forces that are adequate to deal with any circumstances.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Ten-minute speeches are no longer required, but many hon. Members still wish to speak. I hope that they will co-operate, so that I can call as many as possible.

8.4 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I wish to speak about an establishment in my constituency, Pendine, whose closure was announced by the Secretary of State in a statement on 14 July. That statement came as a severe blow to the establishment's 340 employees; it is in a relatively remote rural location, where comparable alternative jobs would be impossible to find. The closure decision was made despite an 18-month campaign by the work force, supported by the local authorities: they presented the case for Pendine in as forceful and detailed a way as they could.

We were pleased to see that the consultative document published by the MOD on 14 July contained some explanation of why Pendine had been singled out for closure, but we felt that it was deeply flawed. There were three main errors. One related to the assessment of the option to close Shoeburyness. I should point out that attacking another site, or saying that it should be closed, is no part of our alternative plan; we propose a "slimdown" at Pendine, Shoeburyness and Eskmeals, which are all comparable sites.

The consultative document estimated that the closure of Shoeburyness would increase costs by £5 million. We could not understand that. Apparently, the explanation is that much of the work being done there, involving over-water recovery, would have to be done in Australia. I understand that that is not so; about 80 per cent. of the work could be done at Pendine.

The document states:

> "Pendine's range is relatively restricted to seawards and is constrained in its ability to absorb further work. For instance, any southward extension of the danger area at Pendine would infringe the main Swansea-Pembroke Dock shipping lane."

There are three incorrect statements in those two sentences. First, there is no Swansea-Pembroke dock shipping lane; there is light use of that sea area, but it poses no problem to MOD exercises. Secondly, the document says that Pendine's range is "relatively restricted to seawards". The area towards the sea overlaps into the Manorbier and Castlemartin areas: quite a large area is available for test firing—up to 60 km. The last error lies in the words

> "constrained in its ability to absorb further work".

The site at Pendine is composed of 5 square miles of land and 5 square miles of foreshore; within that 10 square miles is a considerable area to absorb further work.

Pendine has a unique test track measuring 1,500 m, built to high specifications. If it closed, that would have to be rebuilt at substantial expense. The document estimates a cost of between £7 million and £15 million, but according to our best information the cost would be nearer £20 million to £50 million. That would negate the savings from closure.

As a steering group, we prepared an alternative document of about 30 pages outlining a future for Pendine, based on a slimdown of its present operations. We proposed that all the work now undertaken should be continued, but that many unnecessary assets be disposed of. Llanmiloe house is a posh mansion used for administration. A lot of land could be disposed of. Major cuts in staffing would be possible. Civilianisation of the MOD staff would reduce the cost. If the Blelloch review was implemented, cuts of about 50 per cent. would be possible in the MOD police.

The trade unions at Pendine have volunteered 30 per cent. cuts in staff across the board as part of our alternative business plan. That 30 per cent. figure was not plucked out of the air. It was proposed by Shorts, the company that we understand would be the contractor in any case if the contract was renewed.

The proposals in our document are all costed and we estimate that if the slimdown proposals were adopted, they would save £2.5 million a year and £25 million over a 10-year period. Those are greater savings than the MOD would achieve by closure. The estimated savings in the MOD consultative document are £7 million to £15 million from closure. Our alternative proposal would save £25 million.

We have put the document to the Ministry. It provides for better savings, a much more predictable option and a safer bet in the sense that we do not know what would be the cost of reprovision if Pendine closed. The plan is achievable on a shorter time scale and with less capital cost. It would guarantee quality of work, continuity and customer satisfaction.

I am glad to say that last week we had a useful one-hour meeting with the Minister and his senior civil servants. It was a courteous and constructive meeting. I was pleased to hear today that the Ministry will seriously consider our consultative document. I hope that the Minister will make a few comments about Pendine in his reply to the debate to clarify the position for the work force there. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the chance to make those few observations.

8.12 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Virtually all the hon. Members who have spoken in the debate during the past two days have commented on the huge changes that have taken place in the armed forces during the past four years.

It is true to say that the "Options for Change" proposals were, to a great extent, accepted by the majority of service men, albeit reluctantly. There may have been a lack of clarity about the direction in which we were going four years ago. There may have been worry about the uncertainty in the world in which we would find ourselves following the demise of the Soviet Union. None the less, there was a realisation among the vast majority of service men that we would probably end up with smaller armed forces.

Although the proposals were called "Options for Change", they were effectively a defence review. The last two defence reviews—if one can call them that—have not been accepted to the same degree as "Options for

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Change". The changes are perceived within the armed forces as essentially Treasury-led and a result of the need for short-term savings in the public expenditure budget, rather than any long-term considerations for the defence of Britain.

I am pleased to see my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on the Front Bench. I am convinced that were it not for the tenacious way in which he fought some of the more outrageous suggestions made by the Treasury, we would be in a considerably worse position than we are.

The last round of cuts has been handled well by the defence team, most specifically in ensuring that the front line did not suffer so much as previously and in finding ways of meeting at least some of the Treasury targets while ensuring that we maintain our front-line strength. However, some people in the armed forces feel much less reasonably disposed than previously towards putting up with the sort of thing that they have had to put up with over the past two years. They are less prepared to take lying down the sort of things that have happened to them in the past two years.

I congratulate the Ministers of State for the Armed Forces and for Defence Procurement on their appointments. Like my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, I spent a fair amount of the summer months either speaking or operating in my capacity as a pilot in the RAF Reserve with both the Army and the Royal Air Force. From that experience, I learnt that, as many hon. Members have said both yesterday and today, there is worry in the armed services about the uncertainty, instability and disruption that has been caused by the changes.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces rightly pointed out, in introducing the debate today, that service life is about change and unpredictability. People often do not know where they will be in a few months or even a few days. The challenge and excitement that that promotes are part and parcel of service life.

I submit that there is a difference between the short-term instability in not knowing where one will be next year or next month and the stability that has always existed in the armed services, in the sense that people knew how long they would have to serve. People knew that they would be looked after and that they were not in just any other job. I distinguish between the uncertainty in the short term and the greater certainty in the long term which, until recently, has been a feature of service life. I sincerely hope that we will now return to the previous position, in which people in the armed services had a clearer idea about what they would be doing in the following year.

The disruptions that have been caused by previous changes in defence policy—"Options for Change" and what followed—are continuing. They have not stopped simply because we appear to have stopped cutting defence. The changes will continue for several years to come. "Front Line First" is fine. I fully approve of the idea of seeking to ensure that the front line is protected, but let us consider that some individuals may do one tour as part of the front line and in the next tour of duty may be posted to something else. Within a month or two of taking up the post, they may find that it is part of the last cuts and they are out of a job. We must get our minds round that sort of instability and ensure that it is reduced to a bare minimum.

I welcome the commission on pay and allowances. I welcome the assurance that it is not simply another cost-cutting exercise. To me, it is an opportunity to regain the support of some of our armed service men and to show that the exercise is intended to ensure that their pay and allowances packages reflect what they do today in the post-cold war environment and that it will take us forward into the next century. I am not so apprehensive as some of my colleagues and I sincerely hope that that is how the study will end up.

I was very much encouraged by the remarks made last week in Bournemouth by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and by those of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his excellent speech last Friday, which pointed out that the defence of this country has now entered a period of stability. The last thing that the armed services want is another defence review, but that is what the Opposition have suggested. It is my view and that of many service men that we have had enough reviews in the past four years. We have had three, and we certainly do not want another.

I found it extraordinary that the Opposition spokesman yesterday suggested at the start of his speech that we needed a review and that we must wait and see, check and then carry it out. A few sentences later, however, he had already pre-empted his review by saying that an incoming Labour Government would reduce the number of warheads on Trident before they assessed the need for the number that we already have. That shows where the Labour party is coming from on defence.

Every Opposition defence review has resulted in defence cuts. Since the war, no incoming Labour Government have not included defence budget cuts as a high priority in their first two years in office. So, for review read cuts and that is what the three armed services are most concerned about.

Dr. Reid: If it is a simple equation of review equals cuts and if the hon. Gentleman and the Conservative party are against reviews, how does he explain that in the 10 years between 1985 and 1995 there has been a 27 per cent. cut in the armed forces budget in real terms?

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman makes a point. Often, no matter which party carries out a review, it means cuts. That is the point that I was making. The hon. Gentleman talks about a review, but on past experience that means a cut rather than any increase in capability.

Let us compare defence expenditure with other public expenditure. Five years ago, expenditure on defence exceeded that on the health service and education and it was a high percentage of the total cost of social security. The health and education budgets are now much higher than the defence budget and—what is even more interesting—the housing benefit budget alone amounts to nearly 60 per cent. of the defence budget. That gives us a clear idea of what has happened to defence expenditure during the past few years. It has reduced in real terms by nearly 25 per cent., or it certainly will have done by 1995. That is why it is even more important to ensure that we do not cut it any further.

In 1990, the Royal Air Force had a front-line combat strength of just under 400 aeroplanes. By 1995, that strength will have reduced to 278. I should have liked to tell the House the number of RAF stations that have been shut down. Last February, I asked that question and was told that someone would write to me. I understand that the Ministry of Defence has had some difficulty defining an RAF station. I noticed in a newspaper report today that the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) received an answer to his question on RAF stations, which was not dissimilar to mine. Could my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State find a way to answer my question about the number of RAF stations that will exist in 1995, compared to the number in 1985 and 1990, as it is relevant?

Mr. Hardy: The House should be aware of the answer that I received yesterday. Since 1989, 20 stations have been closed and a further 14 will close in the next few years. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman will agree, but there is now a serious threat to Britain's capacity to provide runways for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Mans: I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument. I think that the answer that I hope to receive soon will confirm precisely what he has told me.

On the procurement of aircraft, I reiterate the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), who mentioned the need to secure the future of Farnborough. It is the shop window of aerospace in this country and it would be nice to see it continue beyond the guaranteed date at the end of this decade.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State recently mentioned the importance of keeping down the cost of Eurofighter 2000, and I entirely agree. As many hon. Members know, I fully support the project, but we must ensure that the costs do not rocket. It is not merely important to keep down the cost of the activities of private industry. We must also ensure that the internal costs of the Ministry of Defence's procurement executive are reined in.

One of the problems is that the Defence Research Agency has new accounting methods now that it has agency status. Previously, there was a system of internal transfers which, I understand, had no cash value attached. There have been considerable increases—if one can call them that—in that area, due to the way in which the money is accounted for.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): On the subject of defence procurement for the RAF, given that so many thousands of my constituents and those of my hon. Friend are engaged in building the finest aircraft for the RAF—such as the Tornado—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): And mine.

Mr. Hawkins: As are many of my hon. Friend's constituents and many others in our area. They are building Tornados now and they will be involved in building the Eurofighter.

Does my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) agree that it is crucial for the future of the RAF that we have the right aircraft? Will he join me in calling on our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to consider carefully the RAF's future large aircraft need, to ensure that the right aircraft is chosen and that the decision is not too precipitate?

Mr. Mans: I entirely agree, and will return to that subject.

I also associate myself with remarks made about the EH101. I hope that an early decision will be taken on procuring that aircraft, bearing in mind that the intention to do so was announced about nine years ago in the House.

The procurement of the new RAF transport aircraft has dominated this two-day debate. Perhaps I should declare an interest, or more specifically a non-interest. As far as I know, no aircraft company in my constituency is working on either the FLA or the C130J, nor is any company likely to supply either of those projects. None the less, I have a fair number of opinions on the direction that we should take to ensure the right solution.

It is worth bearing in mind the background. As recently as 1991, the Ministry of Defence told the Select Committee on Defence that it needed to replace the Hercules just into the next century—in 2001, 2002 or thereabouts. It did not intend to replace it beforehand.

Earlier this year, there was no clear sign why maintenance costs for the Hercules had risen. The Ministry of Defence seemed to be unable to specify to the Defence Select Committee where the costs had occurred, which worried me. I find it slightly odd that, during the past three years, there has been a rapid change in attitude. From not wanting to procure a new transport aircraft until after 2000, the MOD is now saying that the maintenance of the aircraft is very expensive and has decided to sell some of them off next year. I do not understand how that fits into the scenario of an aging aeroplane that will not last until the next decade.

I cannot see when the decision was taken to change from the previous position of our procuring the aircraft in the new century to suddenly saying that we need it in 1997 or 1998. I believe that those involved have decided to get together with the Lockheed company, which has a new model which appears to be a reasonable aircraft. At the same time, there will be perhaps a little more flexibility than normal in defence forward costings to allow us to take the opportunity of buying the aircraft "off the shelf".

Mr. Wilkinson: Is not it the case that since the Gulf war the utilisation rate of the Hercules fleet has vastly increased over what was anticipated, owing to its support of operations in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Turkey, the no-fly zone over southern Iraq and Saudi Arabia and in the latest episode in Kuwait? Does not my hon. Friend refer purely to a factor of the fleet's utilisation?

Mr. Mans: My hon. Friend makes a good point. As far as I can ascertain, there have been considerable amounts of extra work throughout the various stages of the life of the Hercules, including what happened in Ethiopia a few years ago. There does not seem to have been as much of a change in the use of the aircraft since 1991 compared with what happened in the early part of its history. I shall quickly move on, as I do not want to waste too much of the House's time.

I feel that the Select Committee's report in March this year was a very good one, and it clearly showed what the position was. Since then, there have been considerable

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developments. It has been decided which engines the future large aircraft will have, whereas in March that had not been fully decided. It has also been decided that the project will form a part of the Airbus consortium, and that had not been decided in March either. As recently as last March, we were looking at a service date of 2005 and that has already been moved forward to 2002.

If there was an omission in that report it was that the Committee did not focus closely enough on the costs of maintaining the C130J in relation to the earlier C130 that the Royal Air Force already had. As the avionics and engines would be different, we would have to train people and give them new skills to service the aircraft. While it is a new aircraft in its own right, it still has effectively an airframe which is getting on for 40 or 50 years old.

We can say that the C130J may have a lower initial cost and it may be available sooner. It will undoubtedly have higher operating costs and carry less than the FLA. If the RAF were to procure the C130J, it would in effect be operating two different types of aircraft for some considerable time. Against that, the FLA will be clearly able to take more loads—such as the Warrior armoured vehicle—and it will go faster. I think that, over its full life, the FLA is likely to be cheaper than the C130J.

Mr. Bill Walker: On the matter of extra capacity, will my hon. Friend turn his mind to the fact that only one vehicle of the type that he mentioned can go in the aircraft? How many aircraft would be required to move a regiment? If he works that out, he will find that it would require every single one of the aircraft to move one regiment. That is neither realistic nor sensible.

Mr. Mans: I obviously disagree with my hon. Friend, but if what he says is true, it makes some of the procurement decisions made by the RAF in the past look slightly amiss. There has always been a desire to produce an aircraft that would at least take a fair amount of the Army's normal equipment, such as the Warrior.

It is also important to look at the industrial case for the aircraft. Jobs would be created in this country in both cases, but in terms of the C130J the best estimate is 3,500 jobs, while the estimate for the FLA is 11,000.

In terms of technology, there is no doubt that we would lose a great deal of our ability in wing design if we were not part of the consortium that was to produce the FLA. If we are not in the consortium at the start, our wing technology could be transferred to Germany for the next generation of Airbuses.

I believe that this is a very important procurement decision, because it is likely to decide the route that British aviation in this area takes during the next 10 or 20 years. I strongly recommend to my Front-Bench colleagues that they delay their decision on the replacement for the existing Hercules fleet until at least the first quarter of next year when a clear assessment of the alternatives, time scale and costs can be made. If we do not do that, we may find that we make the wrong decision.

8.35 pm

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I wish to speak specifically in support of the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

We ought not to be under any illusions about what the Government document is. It is not a fundamental review, and it really is an affront to call it "Front Line First". It ought to be called "Front Line Farce". The document fails to address a number of quite specific questions about the nature of the front line and where it is.

In global terms, we ought to realise that the front line—in terms of instability—is to be found somewhere in the regions occupied by 20 million or more refugees from civil and regional wars and by the 20 million more refugees from poverty, famine, drought and fear of persecution. It is to be found within the regions where, surrounded by the massed ranks of the nuclear firepower of the super-states, people have decided to ignore all of us and conduct their own civil or regional wars.

The fault lines of the new front line are to be found along lines determined by poverty, by fear of tomorrow and by the inability to feed oneself or to find water to drink. They are to be found within the countries and communities which are riven by persecution and intimidation, and where people feel that they no longer have a home that they can call their own in a country that belongs to them.

If that is where the front lines are to be found globally, where do we find a recognition of that in the definitions of the appropriate structure of services, of service personnel and of support infrastructures which we would need in this country in relation to our functions in an international environment? Instead of that, we have a farce of a document.

It was exemplified for me yesterday when the Secretary of State said that there were "no sacred cows". He would have been more accurate if he had said that there were "no sacred cows—as long as you ignore the entirety of the arguments around Britain's investment in nuclear arms". That is the one thing which has been specifically excluded by ring-fencing from the review which has taken place and which has been presented to us in this document.

In one sweep over the summer, the £750 million savings—or cuts—incorporated in "Front Line First" were swept aside by the quiet announcement of an £800 million overspend of the Trident programme. If the Trident programme has one virtue—this is probably its only virtue—it is that it is the one programme which makes the channel tunnel look on time and under budget. It is a monstrous waste of money, and its costs are spiralling out of all proportion to even any mythical value which the Trident programme might have.

Let me put it in a different context. In April this year, the House was told that the MOD planned to scrap four new diesel-electric submarines of the Upholder class, at a cost of £1.2 billion. The overspend on Trident would have accounted for almost two thirds of that amount.

It is not only hon. Members who are appalled at the way in which nuclear defence spending has spiralled out of control. The military top brass are becoming fairly brassed off with the incompetent handling of the Trident programme and the drain that it constitutes on the country's defence spending. On 3 August, Field Marshal Sir Nigel Bagnall, Chief of the General Staff between 1985 and 1988, wrote in *The Times*:

> "It is high time that the need for our independent nuclear deterrent was seriously questioned . . . The four Trident submarines provide an excessive capability in relation to our status and requirements, and eat far more deeply into the defence budget than is generally acknowledged."

The 11,600 uniformed service personnel and the 7,100 civil servants who will lose their jobs because of the cuts announced in "Front Line First" will know to their cost how deeply the cost of Trident cuts into the budget for other services.

"Front Line First" should have been willing to confront the nuclear delusion under which the country has been suffering for far too long. We need to face up to certain stark facts. Trident is militarily useless and is a drain on our national and defence resources. It will not deter terrorists or tin-pot dictators. It destabilises rather than stabilises both the United Kingdom's security policy and international ones. Outside the House and outside the country, the Trident programme is understood to be an act of proliferation when the world is calling out for acts of reverse proliferation. Instead, we have a Government who produce documents that are caught between the helpless and the hopeless.

In the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994", the Government made two crass statements about the importance of nuclear weapons. First, they said:

> "Complete and general nuclear disarmament remains a desirable ultimate goal, but nuclear weapons cannot be dis-invented."

It is as though the Government were saying, "Well, we have got them, what can we do?" My answer is simple—they should turn the page not only of history, but of their own document, because they also made two stark claims about the need to obliterate chemical weapons from the planet. First, they reminded the House:

> "An international treaty to ban chemical weapons—the Chemical Weapons Convention—was signed by 130 countries, including the United Kingdom) when it opened for signature in January 1993."

In the following paragraph, the Government state:

> "The United Kingdom abandoned its offensive chemical weapons capability in the 1950s but other states have significant stockpiles to destroy."

It appears to me that the Government were patting themselves on the back for an act of unilateral chemical weapons disarmament. If they lay claim to that as a virtue and sign up to a treaty that sets out the terms and conditions for global monitoring and regulation as the means of removing chemical weapons from the surface of the planet, why cannot we do exactly the same thing for nuclear weapons? All it requires is an act of courage and vision. Instead, we have a Government who are either stupid or cynical, because in the estimates the Government said that

> "the ability to undertake a massive nuclear strike is not enough to ensure deterrence . . . We also need the capability to undertake nuclear action on a more limited scale in order to demonstrate our willingness to defend our vital interests to the utmost, and so induce a political decision to halt aggression without inevitably triggering strategic nuclear exchanges."

People in the world at large will draw some simple and obvious conclusions from the Government's statements. First, they will understand that the United Kingdom is willing to use nuclear weapons in non-nuclear conflicts. Secondly, they will appreciate that we would be willing to do so against non-nuclear states.

We are less than a year away from the opening of the UN conference that aims to extend the non-proliferation treaty. When it comes to exerting pressure to extend that treaty, Britain will have no credibility and no one will believe us, because the world already knows that we reserve the right to use nuclear weapons. Other countries will also appreciate that we are in the process of widening the nuclear gap and that we reserve the right to continue to conduct our own nuclear tests.

The creative cuts should have been directed at our nuclear defences. Substantial savings could still be made if the Trident programme were abandoned. Greenpeace has identified that savings of at least £5 billion could be made in the short term and up to £15 billion over the proposed lifetime of Trident. We should have made those savings and redirected those resources.

The redirected resources should have been targeted in two ways. First, they should have gone towards defence diversification. The United Kingdom's record on defence diversification is woeful, because the Government have no commitment to it. They may talk about the Konver programme, but all that amounts to is £15 million funded overwhelmingly from Europe. That money amounts to little more than the commission that one enterprising individual can get from a decent arms deal these days.

To put it in a wider perspective, we need simply recognise that at the moment Germany is investing £500 million in its own defence diversification programme. Between 1985 and 1991, the American company, Frisbee Airborne Hydraulics, shifted from having a 90 per cent. dependence on arms procurement to one of just 20 per cent.—without losing a single job. One could not say that of any of the British arms supplies industries. They are their own killing fields of our most skilled, qualified and imaginative design technologists and engineers. Their jobs are being lost because the Government do not have a serious commitment to any defence diversification programme. It is tragic to have to say this on the day after China agreed to use American help to finance the refocusing of Chinese defence activities and skills towards improving its aeroplane industry and air navigational systems.

I have a royal ordnance factory in my constituency. I have spent a great deal of wonderful time with people in the ROF who have gone through the most phenomenal agenda of changes that they could make if they had a different brief from the main purchaser of their skills—the Government. They could diversify along the lines of technology redeployment, using skills that they have to focus on the international need for munitions decommissioning in eastern Europe and the middle east.

The work force also have computer-aided design skills and could use them to make buildings, the channel tunnel and aircraft safer. They have proposed a whole range of practical developments, but they are being ignored because of a lack of funding. The technology to protect people and structures exists, as do the skills. All it lacks is a Government with a lead and a vision; instead, we hear little more than platitudes—such are the Government's references to defence diversification.

The second plank of refocused resourcing is service personnel. In an organisational context, that is where the real front line lies in the United Kingdom. We have people and organisations with huge skills, but there is a desperate need for a vision to refocus those skills. They need to be refocused towards peace building rather than

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war fighting. They need to be harnessed in many ways—perhaps around a new international youth initiative and, specifically, towards the massive environmental threats that hang over us all.

I have set out some of those ideas in greater detail in a pamphlet which I published recently, but I shall not try to go through it now. This country needs to rise to the challenge set for it by President Gorbachev when he talked about the three Ds—the need for the world to address the challenges of democracy, development and demilitarisation. Instead, our Government present papers that are still tumbling around the past and tinkering around with the present.

The real sadness of the document before us was brought home to me by a small apocryphal tale that I heard a couple of weeks ago. It was about a conversation between a mother camel and her child. The child asked its mother why it had such big flat feet with thick soles and the mother said, "You have wonderful feet. They are broad so that when you trek across the desert you will not sink into the sand dunes, and they have thick soles so that they will not be burnt by the heat of the sun. Other animals may suffer, but you will thrive." The child camel then said, "But mother, why do I have this hump on my back?" The mother said, "My child, it is a beautiful hump. Other animals would die of thirst in the desert, but you can carry your own water supply, which will get you through for weeks." The child camel then asked its mother, "Why do I have these long eyelashes?" The mother answered, "Your eyelashes are beautiful, my child. In the huge storms across the desert, other animals would be blinded and would grind to a halt. Your eyelashes can sweep away the sand and allow you to see." The child thought for a moment, looked up at its mother and said, "Mother, just one more question: if I have all those beautiful features and abilities, what are we doing stuck here in Dudley zoo?"

The document before us seems to be about Dudley zoo. This country has human and organisational skills that could meet the challenges presented to us by the world outside. We have technological skills, in terms of both high and intermediate technology, which the world desperately needs. People can see a different role which this country could play in international peace building. So why are we tragically stuck with a Government who are intellectually moribund and stranded in their own nuclear version of Dudley zoo?

The world needs its first ex-nuclear state. It needs a defence and international policy focused around peace building. It needs a policy that is free from the shackles of nuclear madness. Those are not to be found in "Front Line First".

8.52 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) was criticising more acutely the Government or the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who is just leaving the Chamber, seemed to cringe in his place because yesterday he gave us an unequivocal undertaking that any future Labour Government—God save us—would deploy Trident.

It has given me no pleasure in recent years to have criticised several aspects of the Government's defence policies. So it is an agreeable surprise for me to be able to welcome, with some reservations, the outcome of the defence costs study which, despite many gloomy predictions, has achieved the general aim of "Front Line First".

I pay particular tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and his erstwhile colleague, my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), for working so closely with the armed services to produce a result that is broadly acceptable from both the military and financial viewpoints. That was an achievement in itself and the issues were addressed in such a way that the Opposition's call for a defence review now rings hollow.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's speech at the party conference could hardly have put the position more clearly: there are to be no further upheavals. It is exactly that statement of stability to come which the Government, the country and everyone in the armed forces want.

It has been a painful process. For the Army, the position would have been untenable had not "Options for Change" been modified in three material ways: first, by allowing four excellent regiments to escape amalgamation and thus preserve their identities; secondly, by adding back 3,000 men; and, thirdly, by the belated recognition that we needed a regular third armoured Army recce regiment. However, may I warn my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, whom I welcome back to the Department, that the problem of overstretch has not gone away. That fact was brought home to me in stark terms when, during the recess in August, I returned to Northern Ireland for the first time since I served in South Armagh 20 years ago. Together with the qualities that we all admire so much and which we have recognised in this debate, of our troops' maturity, resilience, restraint and humour in the face of all the provocation in Northern Ireland, there is a price to be paid. That price is seen in human terms, such as the above-average divorce rate among soldiers serving in Northern Ireland. That pressure has also led some of our most able soldiers to apply for premature voluntary release.

Thus, the question of overstretch will not go away. There has always been a discrepancy between ministerial assurances and the views of commanders in the field. A 24-month tour interval can be satisfied only if two conditions are fulfilled: first, if the Government can, in due course, reduce the number of troops in Northern Ireland, given the welcome ceasefire, which we all hope holds; and, secondly, if the Government stick to their assurance that no further cuts will be made, even if commitments are reduced.

I hope that we shall hear no more of "overstretch"—a term that was once not in our vocabulary—but I also hope that we shall not now swing the other way and start talking of "understretch". I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to avoid understretch and to ensure that the qualities of our British soldiers are used in the right way. They can be used in the right way only if soldiers are properly trained and equipped. It is nothing short of disgraceful that recently it has been impossible to exercise adequately at brigade level, let alone in any higher formations.

The pressure on Salisbury plain is becoming ever greater as troops come back from the British Army of the Rhine. Exercises on Salisbury plain depend on the goodwill of the chief constable of Wiltshire, who must close roads from time to time to make a reasonable exercise at that level possible. Even if the BATUS facility in Canada can be upgraded and simulation techniques are developed, is not it time to look anew at training areas closer to home in the former eastern Europe, so that realistic training can be carried out? I fully accept that most of our future actions will be carried out in the framework of a coalition, but surely it is important for our troops to train independently at the highest possible level.

My hon. Friends have already made powerful arguments to rationalise the equipment aspects. We must have a decision soon for our support and attack aircraft. Both are vital for our future flexibility and effectiveness. Any further delay, I submit to my right hon. Friend, will merely compromise our troops' capabilities to carry out their role properly.

In conclusion—I declare an interest as a reserve officer—I ask my right hon. Friend to reconsider the position of reservists. Saddam Hussein's recent histrionics—they could all too easily develop into something much worse—remind us that we can no longer deploy 25,000 Regulars, especially at short notice, to various areas of conflict throughout the world. Yet the physical annual reporting of reservists has been reduced to a written exercise.

I have already drawn an analogy between that exercise and my writing to the Chief Whip saying, "I will be in the Lobby if there is a Division". I do not think that he would find that any more acceptable than I find the new reservist structure. It is no substitute to fill in a form rather than to appear physically and to report as a reservist. It is an entirely bogus argument that the old system was too expensive in the post-cold war era, and that a new legal system had to be put in place.

We are told that the so-called "high-readiness volunteer" will be introduced, but not until 1996 at the earliest. Is not it an opportunity for a high-readiness Minister to intervene soon to reduce that hiatus to nothing?

Whatever the future holds in what the Secretary of State for Defence described as "this curious world", I am convinced that the Government are on track to enable British troops to lead by example, and to continue to be a force for good around the world, whether in conflict, in humanitarian aid or in a combination of the two.

9.1 pm

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): In the limited time available to me, I shall discuss some issues related to procurement, because I believe that military purchasing should be considered as part of the industrial strategy that every Government should have.

We are moving increasingly towards a position in which large British companies involved in defence are working with their European colleagues to launch joint projects because of the expense of such projects. I hope that the Government will be able to give us an assurance that competitive tendering will work in a way that is designed to help British firms to collaborate with their European compatriots, and that will allow them to collaborate equally, instead of obliging them to enter a subsidiary role. I am conscious that we have little time to discuss that, and I shall therefore be happy to provide the Minister with further information. I hope that he will make himself available to meet any firm in my constituency that has raised the subject with me.

I also want the Ministers to let us know that they will take account of the support that is being provided by other Governments to firms in their countries when they consider defence industries. I think of Pilkington Optronics in my constituency, which is bidding against foreign competition for masts and periscopes for submarines. Sagem in France and Kollmorgen in the USA have received substantial Government finance to help them with their research programme, but Pilkington and its collaborators have had to fund a research programme from their own funds. I hope that the Government will take that into account and will be prepared to provide co-operation with that company and its collaborators to ensure that they can compete for orders abroad on an equal footing.

For example, I draw to the attention of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement the fact that the French Government are making available a submarine so that the French equipment may be fitted to it as a platform for sales abroad. It obviously gives the French company an advantage when it can give an example of its equipment in operation. I hope, in those circumstances, that the Government will go ahead and place an order for batch 2 Trafalgar submarines as quickly as possible, so that that platform can be provided for the companies in my constituency.

Finally, I shall discuss military procurement standards and procedures. As the Ministers will be aware, part of the gap between the price quoted by Swan Hunter and the price quoted by the VSEL Kvaerner consortium for the landing platform helicopter resulted from the cost of the extra overheads of meeting naval procurement standards. I want the Minister to check whether he believes that those standards, their mode of operation and the level of bureaucracy involved are absolutely and utterly necessary. I hope that he will take account of the fact that Kvaerner, which builds gas carrier and chemical carrier ships to extremely high technical and safety standards, is able to produce ships at a far lower level of bureaucracy than applies in naval yards. In those circumstances, it seems that there should be a review of the level of bureaucracy—the gold plating and over-engineering—in naval projects supervised by the Ministry of Defence.

In that context, I wish to raise the subject of the ocean survey vessel. I hope that best commercial practice will be adhered to when quotes for that vessel are submitted. I hope that the speed with which the order is let will be more in line with normal commercial practice than is normal naval practice—in other words, quicker.

We have a great national asset in our defence industries. Many of the firms use technology and personnel at the cutting edge of world developments. I hope that the Government will enable such companies to make the best use of their core technologies by providing them with support when it comes to diversification. That subject has already been touched on, but I hope that the Government will act on it in order to reduce the possibility of job losses as a result of defence cuts.

I regret that the leader of the Scottish National party, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), is not present for the end of the debate. I wish to raise an

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issue related to something that he said. It is important that the Scottish National party should come clean on its plans for defence in Scotland should it gain independence. We need a clear statement from the SNP on whether it intends to retain all existing bases and, if not, which it intends to close. We need a clear statement from the party on whether all existing units based in Scotland will be retained at their present levels. We also need a clear statement from it on whether all Scots in units not based in Scotland will be offered places in the new Scottish armed services. It is essential that the people of Scotland should have answers to those questions. When the Minister responds I hope that he will say that he will provide information when other hon. Members and I table questions designed to identify the costs of a Scottish defence force should independence come to Scotland—something that many of my colleagues and I shall argue strongly against.

9.7 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I realise that I have only a few moments before the winding-up speeches begin.

It falls to most of us either to applaud those troops who serve from our constituencies or to plead a special case for the manufacturers of defence equipment located in or near our constituencies. I shall not disappoint the House, and shall plead for both.

During the debate on this subject 11 years ago I made my maiden speech. On that occasion I had to make valedictory remarks about 450 years of naval history and the closure of Chatham dockyard in my constituency. Sadly, in the last year, we have lost our last remaining naval connection as HMS Wildfire has been closed due to the constraints on the Royal Naval Reserve.

We still have an important defence establishment in the Medway towns: the Royal School of Military Engineering in my constituency. It is the spiritual headquarters of the sappers, who were rightly praised by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces for their wonderful work in Bosnia and around the world. The sappers have served in every campaign that the British Army has ever fought. It is entirely appropriate that their motto should be "ubique"—everywhere. It was during the sappers memorial weekend recently that I exchanged some words with the Chief Royal Engineer who, instead of giving me a battering for the cuts in defence expenditure and resources, was at pains to emphasise to me the excellence, the energy and the enthusiasm of the young officers serving around this country and abroad whom he had visited in the previous 18 months. He did add that, in order to maintain their energy and enthusiasm, it will be necessary to give those excellent soldiers a sense of purpose and stability and to let them know where their future duties will lie—as part of a NATO rapid reaction corps or as part of a United Nations force, keeping the peace in the hot spots that have erupted in the past few years.

The excellent high-technology company GEC Marconi Avionics is located in my constituency; it provided the backbone of employment in the Medway towns during the difficult years after the dockyard closure. Its peace dividend, if such it can be called, has been a reduction in the work force from 7,000 to just over half that number in the past decade. We in the Medway towns look forward to Marconi winning new procurement orders from the Minister of State for Defence Procurement.

The company is particularly interested in the competition to supply the attack helicopter. It has re-engineered the Bell Supercobra into the Venom helicopter—I believe that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has seen the company's work on that. When, in the coming months, he starts looking for value for money when placing an order I hope that he will consider value for money for the whole life cycle of the aircraft. Marconi proposes to offer 90 per cent. of the most capable attack helicopter for 60 per cent. of the cost. In these days of straitened resources, that seems to me the sort of offer that my right hon. Friend will find difficult to refuse.

9.11 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): As usual, we have heard a wide-ranging and extremely knowledgeable number of contributors to this debate, and I hope to refer to many but not all of their speeches. I hope that the Government, having heard all that information and experience, will at least be better informed than before and, we continue to hope, wiser too.

Several hon. Members presented knowledgeable and spirited constituency cases which I do not intend to pursue. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) spoke about his RAF station with great knowledge and spirit. My hon. Friends the Members for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) also raised constituency interests.

One or two of the points made in the debate certainly merit a serious response from the Government. No one likes to embark on a personal vendetta, but my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked some difficult and serious questions about Mark Thatcher. The Minister may not want to deal with such grave matters tonight, but some time in the not-too-distant future someone in Government is going to have to provide some answers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) and the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) raised again a subject which has been discussed here many times and which is close to my own heart: the manner in which the people who work in Rosyth have been treated—broken pledges, broken promises and broken hearts. Future plans for investment made on the basis of promises given by a previous Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), lie in ruins. Thousands of people in the Rosyth area have been left bereft of plans or security, and as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, the problem has affected people in an area much wider than Rosyth itself.

It is my pleasant duty at this point to welcome the new defence team under the old leader. I welcome back the right hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman); I know that he has served the country and the Government well before in defence. We wish him well in his new post. I also welcome the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) to the defence team for the first time. His tribute to the troops was the standard sort that we all pay them, but it was none the less sincere for that. The sincerity of his tribute shone through and must have been apparent to all, as was the pride with which he took his place at the Dispatch Box. It was almost as if he was coming home. I suspect that if the hon. Gentleman had to choose any position in Government, it would be the one that he has been given.

I am much too generous to say that it shows how bad a state the Ministry was in when it had to send for the cavalry. We hope that the Minister's career will be as distinguished in defence as it was in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I am sure that he will have much fun with defence acronyms as in his former post he gave a new dimension to the expression "well hung".

I also congratulate the long-distance runner who is not with us, the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), on his appointment as a Parliamentary Private Secretary. It is not normal to congratulate hon. Members appointed to such posts, but I understand that he is the PPS to the two Defence Ministers whom I mentioned. That is taking cuts a bit far, even for the Ministry of Defence. However, if someone had to be chosen to run between two Ministers, a better man could not have been selected.

I shall say a quick word about the old defence team whose members have all been promoted to the dizzy heights of the Cabinet. I congratulate them all, especially my old sparring partner, the ex-Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the right hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who has become chairman of the Conservative party. We recall with pleasure that as Minister of State for the Armed Forces the right hon. Gentleman presided over a drastic reduction in numbers, plummeting morale and a slashing of support. We wish him similar success in his position as chairman of the Conservative party.

The nature of these debates is to concentrate on differences between the parties because it has not been unknown for political points to be scored. But I shall be unorthodox by first outlining the areas of agreement in the new spirit of consensus under our new leader. We join the Government in paying tribute to the men and women of the armed forces. Last year, as in previous years, they have shown by their courage, discipline and professionalism that they are worthy recipients of the proud traditions that they inherit. As we approach Trafalgar day on Friday, it is worth remembering those traditions. If I had not reminded the House of that, Horatio Nelson's great nephew four times removed, the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, would have done so.

There is common ground between the Government and Opposition on much operational activity. We welcome "Partnership for Peace", which was mentioned at length by the Secretary of State, the memo of understanding and the bilateral meetings between central European and Baltic military organisations.

We were relieved that the worst fears of the Territorial Army were not realised in the pronouncements on "Front Line First". The hon. Members for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) spoke about that. We agree with the Government about the role played by our military in Ghana and Mozambique and further afield, and particularly in South Africa. We also agree about the role of our forces in United Nations peacekeeping.

The Government and Opposition are on common ground about operations in Ireland. Like the Secretary of State, we look forward to the day when British troops—as he put it on the radio this morning—are no more necessary on the streets of Belfast than they are in Birmingham, Cardiff or Edinburgh. Of course, as the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) said, that is subject to the democratic process.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: I shall do so in a moment.

We accept that the de-escalation of a military presence in Northern Ireland and activity there is a function not merely of the political process and progress but of security considerations. We should like to flag up to any member of the Government who is listening that if, as we all hope, peace comes to Northern Ireland, that will not be used as the basis for a simple arithmetical equation by which the British armed forces will be reduced by the number who are freed from deployment in Northern Ireland. There is a critical mass beneath which, if our armed forces and particularly the Army are reduced, it will be impossible to build them up again.

Mr. Harris: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. While I heartily endorse his last remarks, as he is welcoming things, did he welcome the motion passed by the Labour party conference that would have cut our defence spending to the average of western European countries and would have meant a £6 billion cut in our defence budget?

Dr. Reid: No. I did not welcome that. What I did welcome, and which no one has mentioned, was the statement by the National Executive Committee that was agreed unanimously by the Labour party conference, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and that stated a nuclear policy that Labour will enter Trident into multilateral arms control negotiation. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is now better informed. I also welcomed the 22 motions at the Tory party conference that were critical of the Government, none of which was called. In particular, I congratulate the Conservatives of Torridge and Devon, West who called for a full and objective defence review.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): What does the hon. Gentleman suggest the country and the House should make of a Labour party conference that simultaneously passes a resolution calling for the cancellation of Trident and at the same time suggests that it should be retained and entered into multilateral defence negotiations? Does the hon. Gentleman really take comfort in such a farrago of nonsense?

Dr. Reid: I suggest that hon. Members become better informed of the Labour party procedures than the Secretary of State for Defence. Let me explain to him that, in order to be considered for the manifesto of the Labour party, a conference decision has to reach two-thirds support. As the Secretary of State has demonstrated that he is not good at figures, I should explain that that is 66 and two thirds per cent. If something is unanimous, it has 100 per cent. support. The national executive statement received 100 per cent. support as it was unanimous, but the conference decision

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to which he referred received only 55 per cent. or less than two thirds. Had he been informed of that, the Secretary of State would not have been asking fatuous questions from the Dispatch Box.

Let me refer now to areas of agreement. We have long supported the Government's position on Bosnia. Indeed, before they adopted it we proposed a limited humanitarian role for the troops. We concur with the Government's view of the danger of lifting the arms embargo.

In the Gulf, we support the timely response in terms of the dispatch of the troops and Tornado aircraft, although we point out, as we did to the previous Prime Minister, that international legality is a necessary but not sufficient condition for any action, pre-emptive or otherwise. International legality has to be complemented by international political consensus. That is absolutely essential in the Gulf.

There have been, however, substantial areas of discord between the parties. We have made plain our dissatisfaction with the Government's approach to nuclear non-proliferation and their non-approach to a comprehensive test ban treaty. Those issues were raised by my hon. Friends with whom I am not in absolute concurrence on other matters—my hon Friends the Members for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson). In particular, we view the Government's refusal to limit the nuclear capacity of the new Trident system to that of Polaris as a serious impediment to international progress.

Our most serious differences with the Government lie in the topics that are central to today's debate—the reformation of military thinking, the restructuring of the armed forces and the reformulation of strategic purpose. Like others who have spoken in the debate—it was even hinted at by the ex-Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater—we do not believe the Government when they imply that there will be no further changes to our armed forces. No one believes that, except possibly the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson), who in a naive speech tonight—*[Interruption.]* It is in the eye of the beholder. I thought that it was a naive speech because he seemed to think that the status quo would prevail indefinitely as far as our armed forces are concerned.

There will be change in our armed forces. There may be cuts and there certainly will be a reallocation of resources, irrespective of which Government are in power and it does no one any justice to deny that it will happen. The real question is whether that change will be managed, coherent and in pursuit of a strategic objective, or whether it will be the way that it has been for the past three years—incoherent with no strategic objective, piecemeal and unfair. That is why the Secretary of State, who is not only a lawyer but a Scottish lawyer, chose his words carefully yesterday. When asked directly whether there would be any further cuts, he said that he did not contemplate any further cuts. He did not quite add, "at the present time", but it was implicit in what he said.

We can all be reassured that the Secretary of State does not contemplate any further cuts. Of course, he did not contemplate a freeze in child benefit; he did not contemplate VAT on fuel; he did not contemplate the biggest tax rise in British history—but they happened, so let us be warned.

Every time a Minister denies anything, listen carefully and in the background we can hear a chorus of cocks crowing. No denial from a Minister can be taken seriously, especially when we live in a changing world. After all, it is barely three months since the right hon. and learned Gentleman announced the third round of defence cuts in as many years. As with the previous cuts under "Options for Change" and "Defending our Future", the proposals contained in the defence costs study take the form not of a coherent and internally consistent package of reforms designed to serve an identifiable strategic purpose, but of a series of piecemeal budgetary measures and decisions foisted on Defence Ministers by their colleagues at the Treasury.

The Government's defence, as it was tonight with the Secretary of State, is to attack Labour party policy—[Hon. Members: "Right."] Conservative Members may say that, but it is an attack based not on strength, but on weakness. I must tell them that every time I hear the Secretary of State attack Labour party policy, it reminds me of the famous telegram sent by Marshall Foch at the battle of the Marne to Marshall Joffre, which read:

> "Hard pressed on my right—my centre is yielding—impossible to manoeuvre—situation excellent—I shall attack."

That comes to mind every time I hear the Secretary of State—

Mr. Rifkind: They won the war.

Dr. Reid: It is obvious that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is not a military historian. It is no thanks to Marshall Foch that we won the war. The expression, "lions led by donkeys" springs to mind—not in relation to the Secretary of State, of course, but Marshall Foch.

The reality is that the biggest squeeze of all is to come. I warn Conservative Back Benchers not to say that we did not tell them. Honest John is putting it on the line for them. Budget predictions produced last year by Ron Smith, a professor of applied economics at Birkbeck college—not, as far as I know, a member of the Socialist Workers party—reveal the extent of the funding gap that already exists, whoever comes to power in two years' time.

Let us assume that the defence budget falls to 2.9 per cent. of gross domestic product at the end of the century—the exact figure in the Government's projections. Let us assume low inflation and sustained economic growth. Those are all perfectly reasonable assumptions. Let us also assume that the procurement budget is sustained at about its current level. Even then, force levels will have to be reduced to 200,000 in order to balance the books.

For the benefit of Conservative Members, I shall tell them now what I told them three years ago—that there was a 27 per cent. real cut. They did not believe it then, but it is now accepted by the Government. That meant a further cut of 32,900 members of the armed forces, or 14 per cent. over and above the present cuts. In other words, between 1985 and the year 2000, the Government—in whose hands we all know defence is safe—will have cut 40 per cent. in real terms from the defence budget. That is not a conference decision with 55 per cent. or 30 per cent. That is not a theoretical proposition of delegates to a party that is in opposition. That is the reality of a Government in power. A 40 per cent. cut is staring Conservative Back Benchers in the face.

The Secretary of State, who has become the master of illusion with figures, the Paul Daniels of Parliament, producing policies designed on paper, an impressive order of battle, must admit that the Government have failed to provide the necessary training, equipment and logistic support out of the present budget.

Mr. Bill Walker: If the Government decide somehow to find the money to offset what the hon. Gentleman is claiming, will the Labour party support that?

Dr. Reid: If the Government can find the money to offset what is coming, I shall make a promise to the hon. Gentleman. I shall have to find only two other miracles to call for the canonisation of the Secretary of State. We do not need to look in the crystal ball; we can read the book—the report published by the Defence Select Committee, chaired by a Conservative Member, on the implications of the lessons learnt from Operation Granby.

The Government took us into a war with two armoured divisions. When they decided to send one armoured division to the Gulf, 77 per cent. of our Challenger tanks were not operational. Again, for the benefit of those who cannot deal with arithmetic, that means that 23 per cent. of our tanks were operational. The Lada has more operational success than the British first armoured division did under the Government. Yet Conservative Members criticise Labour party policy.

When we look at the explanations given by assistants at the Ministry of Defence in defence of their masters, the situation is not alleviated but made worse. The deputy under-secretary, Mr. Roger Jackling, when asked about the inability to produce soldiers and armoured divisions in the field, said that

> "in the former strategic circumstances, what you actually had in the shop window as part of your deterrent posture was of paramount importance. You did not expect to have to use it."

I hope that no one told the Russians. In a further illuminating sentence, he added:

> "We are now discovering in the new strategic circumstances that perhaps what constitutes your front line is more likely to be called upon to engage in conflict".

There we have it. Under the expert guidance of the Secretary of State for Defence and his predecessor, we have discovered that the Ministry of Defence, 160 years after Clausewitz, has discovered that, in times of conflict, the front line is likely to be called into a fight.

Secondly, with a terrible irony, the Secretary of State, who declared last year that he did not want paper tiger forces, is now branded by his own staff as being part of a Government who, for 15 years, presided over shop window forces. No wonder there is silence on the Conservative Back Benches. That is how far the Conservatives have gone.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: I cannot resist the temptation.

Mr. Robinson: In the light of what the hon. Gentleman has just said, will he give us a hint of what the terms of reference for the defence review proposed in the Opposition's amendment would be?

Dr. Reid: I have only two and half minutes left. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we envisage a defence review that will not be limited exclusively to the Ministry of Defence. It will take into account foreign affairs. I hope that the Prime Minister's office would be involved and I hope that it would be wide enough to weigh cost benefits, not purely within the MOD budget, but the benefits that we get from our position within the United Nations as a result of having a defence force that is capable of playing a role in the United Nations. That is a very general statement in the time available to me, but it is a mile ahead of anything that has been produced by the Government.

Mr. Garnier: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: I must make some progress because the Minister wants to speak.

The Government demonstrate that they have little appreciation of the extensive and complex processes that are required to produce our front-line military capabilities. They have no coherent industrial or defence policy. More than 100,000 employees in the defence sector have been made redundant in the past four years as strategically vital parts of our manufacturing base have been allowed to disappear. The Government are complacent about our ability to transport our armed forces out of area, a point that was made by several Conservative Members.

Above all, the Government are now bent—they are driven by dogma—on a policy of privatising the armed forces. We did not believe that they would do it in respect of the prisons—they have already done it—and they are now doing it in respect of the armed forces. We are not saying that efficiency should not be involved—we are not saying that some services cannot be privatised—but the Government are pushed by dogma and taking it to extremes.

It might be unfair, but we are always left with the impression that the dream scenario for the Government would be the British Army marching into battle, fed by Forte, serviced by Kwik-Fit, stirred by the strains of the London symphony orchestra, and having the solid reassurance that their flank would be guarded by Group 4. That is the Government's attitude. They have followed that dogma through to its illogical conclusion, firm in the belief that the hidden hand of the market will spontaneously cater for the requirements of Britain's national security. It will not.

Mr. Garnier: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: No. I am sorry, but I am at my final conclusion. It is unfair to the Minister to give way, and I have been unfair enough to him tonight.

Echoing the Secretary of State for Defence, the Prime Minister assured the nation last week that

> "the big upheavals in our armed forces are over."

Sadly, in time, I believe that that will prove to have been little more than another empty Tory promise.

The Conservatives have learnt nothing from the reverses that they have had in the polls. I do not want to upset my leader, who would rightfully claim the major advances that he has made in law and order, but, in due modesty, we must point out that the Conservative party which, four years ago, was 42 per cent. ahead in the polls on defence, was 10 per cent. behind last week. I hope that that gives some comfort to hon. Members.

The right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) referred to a report entitled "Arms for Oblivion", which was published by the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies. He did not, out of sympathy for his Front-Bench colleagues, mention its conclusion, which was brought to my attention during the debate. In attempts of honesty and objectivity, my hon. and learned Friend the

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Member for Fife, North-East, who is sitting on the Liberal Benches, and I would like to draw attention to the conclusion of that report. It states:

> "Far from being able to claim that 'defence is safe in our hands' the Conservatives must hope that defence will not be an issue at the next election."

They can hope, but it will, and we shall win that debate and the next election.

9.37 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Roger Freeman): Opposition Members will not win that defence debate and they will not win the next election.

I have listened to a very entertaining, witty and, at the beginning, courteous contribution, and I thank the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), but I shall seek to answer the many points that have been raised.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who is not in his place—

Mr. Martlew: Yes, he is.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman raised allegations in connection with Mark Thatcher. I shall certainly look at the documents that the hon. Gentleman has passed over tonight and he will receive a considered response. However, as for the comments that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have made, I make it quite plain that the transaction between Her Majesty's Government and Saudi Arabia was on a Government-to-Government basis in which no commissions were paid, and no agents or any middlemen were involved. I will look at the documents and write to the hon. Gentleman.

The Select Committee report, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) referred, and which is the background of the debate, rightly started, on its front page, by affirming the need for NATO. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that NATO is the bedrock of our defence policy. It has been successful; we have deterred the Soviet Union; we have won the cold war. That is the reason for the significant reduction in our armed forces following "Options for Change". Now the threat has moved to the south and the east, but that does not invalidate our membership of NATO. As I have said, it is the bedrock.

Our alliances with European countries are important, but we must never forget our association with the United States, our reliance on it—in part—and our close friendship with a country that still maintains 100,000 troops in western Europe.

The defence costs study, which the debate has largely concerned, relates to support for the front line. It is logical that that should follow on from "Options For Change". It has represented the pulling together of a great number of initiatives started in the Ministry of Defence and it is perfectly sensible for us to aim for £750 million of savings in 1996-97.

Let me tell my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster, who chairs the Select Committee and raised the point in its excellent report, that we will achieve those savings. We have many dozens of proposals, some out for consultation and some still to come. In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), who is not yet in his place, let me say that if we achieve the target—I feel confident that we shall—the benefits will come back to the armed forces. It is wholly appropriate that their efforts should be reflected not only in better capability on the front line, but in better equipment.

I should make it plain to my hon. Friends the Members for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes)—and to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), who spoke yesterday—that if and when we are able to withdraw troops from Northern Ireland, which Northern Ireland Members know will be no easy task, the size of our armed forces will not be affected. Any benefits will come not in redundancies, but in a partial reduction of the overstretch that has been mentioned; my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made that clear.

Let me reply to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) by saying that the Prime Minister spoke in an illustrative fashion when he talked about Semtex. I can confirm that he meant that we want Semtex and all other weapons to be laid down by the terrorists before progress can be made, as I am sure all hon. Members would wish it to be.

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House mentioned problems with the defence costs study. The study is not an annual round; it has been a special exercise. I have already referred to our £750 million target. My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), and indeed the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, alluded in passing to the expected receipts from the sale of married quarters—approximately £500 million in 1995-96. I confirm that we intend to proceed with that programme, while refining and improving it. It is a unique and difficult transaction, but we are determined to bring it to fruition; otherwise the defence budget would be affected, and we are determined that that should not happen.

In connection with the defence costs study, let me say in particular to my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce)—who expressed his concern about Portland with great force and courtesy—that I have visited Portland in the last two weeks. I should tell my hon. Friend, and other Conservative Members who have expressed concern, that the consultation exercise continues, although it has been formally completed in part. It will be fair and open, and will continue until Ministers reach a decision.

I invite all hon. Members who have raised concerns about the defence costs study to raise them in person, either with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces or with me. We share responsibility, and I do not regard anything as foreclosed. We want to ensure that savings are yielded to the defence budget, but yielded in a sensible fashion.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) raised the specific issue of Pendine. I confirm to him that we have concluded that we need to rethink the proposals. The hon. Gentleman was perfectly fair; he raised legitimate concerns about the way in which the financial calculations had been done. He was fair enough to say that his group would guarantee those savings, but he asked us to look at the matter in a different fashion which might permit the continuation of the Pendine range in view of the cost of re-provision of the test tracks elsewhere. I accept the force of his argument and I confirm that I will be in touch with him in due course. That is an example of an intelligent response to the case made by the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), together with the trade unions, in a fair and convincing fashion. We will listen where it is appropriate and where a change of approach is required by the facts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, who is not here at present but will read my remarks in the record, asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State yesterday what specific enhancements would result from the defence costs study. We made commitments about the front line. It is not possible to be precise, but it is our belief that savings of about £100 million a year can be ploughed back into augmenting the front line.

In July my right hon. and learned Friend announced a range of measures which will improve front-line capability. The key to the defence costs study is, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, that we will retain our capability. My right hon. and learned Friend has gone further and said that we will not have a series of annual defence mini-reviews. We are not going to cut. There are no further proposals for reductions in regiments, aircraft or ships. Therefore, I can assure the Select Committee that we are now into a period of stability.

Of course, there are several years yet to run in which the original proposals in "Options for Change" and the defence costs study will work themselves out. I cannot deny that. The hon. Member for Motherwell, North was right when he said that there had been significant cuts and that there were still more to come. However, the important point is that we have no further announcements to make. What you see is what you will get. That will bring stability and an improvement in morale to the armed forces.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) was helpful when he referred to the need continually to improve efficiency in the armed forces. May I report that in the year ended 1 October 1995—the year that we are just starting for testing—we expect £334 million-worth of support activity to be tested. That represents a 50 per cent. improvement on the past year. Market testing in the Royal Air Force was raised with me by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman. My right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) announced last year the formal three-year review of the RAF Maintenance Group Defence Agency. Since then, and following consultation, we have announced the decision to rationalise the RAF storage facilities.

Since my appointment I have visited both RAF Sealand and RAF St. Athan. I can now outline briefly the way ahead for both stations. We intend to press ahead now with a vigorous market-testing programme at the two stations to achieve best value for money through competition and the involvement of the private sector as soon as possible. That will be within the framework of Government ownership. However, within that framework, industry will be fully consulted and will be able to make innovative proposals for the maintenance and repair of RAF equipment. Proposals could include partnership—the private sector in partnership with the existing work force—and Government-owned contractor-operated stations.

I was greatly impressed by the work force at both RAF Sealand and RAF St. Athan and commend their dedication. I do not rule out in-house bids. Both trade unions and work force will be fully consulted.

May I associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who paid tribute to the Royal Air Force and stressed the importance, within a contracting service—the numbers are reducing dramatically—but one with better equipment, of the need to maintain morale?

Mr. Wilkinson: What authority or disciplinary powers will officers in the Royal Air Force have over contractors responsible for the maintenance of RAF equipment? That is of the greatest importance in engendering confidence in the contracting-out process.

Mr. Freeman: I can assure my hon. Friend that when a regrettable incident took place involving one private sector contractor at St. Athan the contractor was promptly and correctly removed. That experience does not invalidate the market-testing exercise because it was part of the normal process of contracting out certain work. At St. Athan—the major RAF air base—the RAF in-house team won the bid on the 25 Fatigue Index project involved in the repair of the Tornado F3 fighter aircraft and I congratulate them. That is a sign that in-house bids can and do win.

On value for money in procurement, the Eurofighter 2000 and the EH101 support helicopter were mentioned by a number of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members. The key point is that, although we have a commitment to the Eurofighter 2000 programme and we need fresh support helicopters for the Royal Air Force, that need will not be fulfilled at any price. We are determined about that and I hope that this message will be heard clearly by the manufacturers. We will negotiate with them in good faith, but the project must represent good value for the defence vote. That is not an excuse for delay as we need to make progress. The House wants to hear of a conclusion to our consideration of both projects and it will get it.

As for a Hercules replacement—many of my hon. Friends raised the matter—the report of the Defence Select Committee—

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Freeman: May I make my point, then I shall give way briefly for the last time?

The Defence Select Committee report put the issue clearly and I agree with it. The Committee said that the aircraft, which are nearly 30 years old, are experiencing increasing maintenance and decreasing viability. That is plain fact and, therefore, I have to do something. I must make a recommendation about action to my Secretary of State soon—whether this month, the next or early next year remains to be seen. I cannot avoid doing something, but that something is not buying the future

[Mr. Freeman]

large aircraft because it is probably 10 years hence. I hope that that project makes excellent progress and I wish it well as a commercial project.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Freeman: No. I must finish my point. The issue before us is whether half the fleet, say, should be refurbished to push on its life for another 10, 15 or 20 years, or whether we should order the only possible aircraft—the C130J—now. That is the issue. It is not a matter of whether we should compare the C130J with the future large aircraft, but of ensuring that the military need of the Royal Air Force is met. We will try to reach that conclusion as quickly as possible. I wish the FLA project all godspeed. I think that we all want a European project and a European design for an aircraft—it is still many years in the future—that can compete and we in the Ministry of Defence will certainly be glad to consider the aircraft, but at the moment it is only a concept.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we have heard a great deal about the future large aircraft during this debate, mainly from members of the official Opposition? Does he agree that we do not yet have reliable estimates, not merely of development costs but of the procurement costs? Does he also agree that the Hercules replacement programme should be placed on a value-for-money basis and, above all, on the requirements of the RAF? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that that would secure an excellent opportunity for aerospace firms in my constituency and elsewhere within British industry, both now and in the short and long term?

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend will have heard my hon. Friend, and when we come to make the decision the speeches from Members on both sides of the House will be taken into account.

In drawing to a conclusion, I shall first refer to the arguments from both sides of the House regarding ballistic missile defence. That is an extremely important subject on which the Government intend to spend not only time but resources in developing. We are not going to go it alone in developing a response to ballistic missile threats in western Europe. We will co-operate with the United States and with our colleagues in Europe, but I am glad to announce that we have placed a contract with British Aerospace for a pre-feasibility study to look at some of the options which are available to us.

When I was in Washington recently I was able to confirm with the Deputy Secretary of Defence, Dr John Deutch, that we would make a contribution from our own resources—albeit a modest one at this stage—towards some of the technology demonstrators, particularly in the fields of radar and surveillance.

On Trident, I say in response to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that I have seen the report from the Health and Safety Executive concerning safety at Aldermaston. I commend what Hunting-BRAE has achieved and the plans for additional works at Aldermaston, but the Government accept in principle the argument that we should license Aldermaston and Burghfield, subject to discussions about timing and implementation.

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury) *rose—*

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have only three minutes left.

On testing and the chemical weapons convention, the Government will ratify the convention as soon as possible.

Finally, I turn to the two Opposition amendments on the Order Paper. First, there is the official Opposition amendment, which calls for a defence review. Which commitments do the Opposition wish to eliminate? *[Interruption.]* The Opposition had ample time to consider which commitments the Government should reduce. What is the right size of the defence budget? The Opposition have no arguments. They have complained about £750 million of savings in the defence costs study, but, having complained, they have no arguments about how to fund the increase in the defence budget which would occur if those savings had not been made.

Again, on the defence diversification agency, the Opposition have no arguments about the cost of that initiative. So the official Opposition amendment simply calls for a defence review and contains no policy arguments whatsoever.

The other motion on the Order Paper—which we will not have the pleasure of voting on—has been signed by 45 Opposition Members. The motion was carried by the Labour party conference and calls for the elimination of Trident—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Motherwell, North protests, but 45 of his hon. Friends signed the motion. The hon. Gentleman cannot sweep that underneath the table. Forty-five of his colleagues want to scrap Trident and cut the defence budget. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I can count. The hon. Members should look at the early-day motion at the back of the Order Paper.

In arguing the unilateralist case, the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) said that he wanted defence cuts of £8.5 billion. That would mean cutting the Royal Navy, scrapping our nuclear deterrent and making many cuts in the defence budget. We would have to leave Germany and reduce our—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) may laugh, but where would he make £8.5 billion worth of cuts?

As a result of our policy, we are now in for a period of stability and major enhancements in our defence capability. We have the right balance between commitments, forces and finance. The Opposition remain divided; they are either unilateralists or a vacuum for a defence policy. If they fight the next election on that basis, they will lose the issue. Oppose the Opposition amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 304.

Division No. 304] **[21.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt. Hon. Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hicks, Robert
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prentice, Ms Bridget (Lew'm E)
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S ' F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams Alan W (Carmarthen)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley, and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt. Hon. Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg " Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt. Hon. Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ruclif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt. Hon. Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. (Strgfd)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry

Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr Sydney Chapman and
Mr Timothy Wood

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 321, Noes 32.

Division No. 305] **[22.17 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg " Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chidgey, David
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ruclif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don (Bath)
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael

Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. (Strgfd)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Sydney Chapman

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Dafis, Cynog
Devlin, Tim
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Gerrard, Neil
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken

Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Mullin, Chris
Pickthall, Colin
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Timms, Stephen
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Simpson and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994 contained in Cm. 2550.

LAW OF PROPERTY (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL [*LORDS*] [*MONEY*]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I beg to move,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other enactment, and

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums to be paid into that Fund under any other enactment.

It is a pleasure to be associated with the fast tracking of the Law Commission proposals.

10.31 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): This is a modest and uncontroversial proposal and we intend to give it a fair wind. The thanks of the whole House are due to Lord Brightman for the manner in which he dealt with the matter in the other place and got the Bill into its present shape. We hope that the Government will enable some 36 other matters in all of which the Law Commission is eagerly awaiting the disposal to be proceeded with in a similar fashion in order that the backlog of law reform and the concerns expressed by the President of the Law Commission, Mr. Justice Brooke, can be dealt with adequately. With that, we wish the measure well.

Question put and agreed to.

BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert G. Hughes be discharged from the Select Committee on Broadcasting and Mr. Timothy Kirkhope be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Stephen Dorrell be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Sir George Young be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Local Government, Bedfordshire

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.32 pm

Sir David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to have a short debate on the future of local government in Bedfordshire. May I first welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) to the Front Bench. This is his first innings there. We in Bedfordshire are delighted at his promotion. Who better to answer the problems of local government in Bedfordshire than an adjacent Member? The people in Bedfordshire and I will listen closely to what he has to say.

May I start by saying that the Local Government Commission's preferred option for the future of local government in Bedfordshire is a north-south split, which is extremely unpopular among my constituents.

The *Dunstable Gazette* of 5 October drew attention to an independent poll carried out on the matter which said that the people of Dunstable and the surrounding area

> "voted overwhelmingly against the setting up of a 'Super Luton' council"

which would be part of a north-south split.

Bedfordshire county council—obviously an interested party in these matters—said in a press release of September 30 in relation to the poll:

> "This must send a clear signal to the Commission that the residents"—

of Dunstable and the surrounding area—

> "do not want to be in the same authority as Luton."

I have had a very large number of letters and discussions during the long recess, not only from people in South Bedfordshire who do not want to be merged with Luton, but from people from Mid Bedfordshire who do not want to be merged with Bedford.

I have also received a considerable number of representations from companies, particularly small and medium-sized businesses where the management tend to live locally. Those letters and the discussions I have had express extreme hostility towards a merger with Luton and it is impossible to believe that people would feel comfortable with a South Bedfordshire-Luton merger.

One strong objection to the north-south split is that southern Bedfordshire would have lack of balance, with 48 councillors to 32 for the whole of the rest of the area. Luton's interest with 48 would predominate.

In central Bedfordshire, the balance would be much fairer, with Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard about the same size, with a reasonable balance between South and Mid Bedfordshire towns and with rural areas reasonably balanced against urban areas.

Education reform is clearly of the greatest importance in local government reform. Luton, as a result of its former county borough status, has a different system from the rest of the county for its schools. Although it has proved possible to run the two systems in an area the size of Bedfordshire, it would not be practical to do so in an area the size of the proposed new authority—that is, Southern Bedfordshire. Either Luton or South Bedfordshire would have to change and the considerable cost of that should be taken into account.

There are strong links between Mid and South Bedfordshire now, with Mid Bedfordshire children attending schools in Leighton Linslade and South Bedfordshire children attending Harlington upper school in Mid Bedfordshire. Because of the different school entry ages, there are very few links between South Bedfordshire parents and Luton schools.

I note the commission's suggestion that Luton should not be cut off from its hinterland, but it always has been—first as a county borough and later because most planning decisions are a matter for district councils, rather than county councils. In any case, as most of the available undeveloped land in South Bedfordshire is green belt, it is difficult to see how Luton could expand in that direction. Any attempt to make major changes in the green belt would cause enormous protests. Indeed, even minor changes in recent years have been highly controversial.

On the question of housing, it is doubtful whether South Bedfordshire has enough available land to meet its own needs. There has been very rapid development in recent times, especially in Houghton Regis and Leighton Linslade, and there is considerable demand for housing from the children of those who moved into South Bedfordshire who are now grown up and getting married. We really could not accommodate Luton's needs as well.

It is simply not true to say that South Bedfordshire looks to Luton for its transport needs. Leighton Buzzard has its own station and many people from the rest of the area prefer to use that rather than Luton—a tendency which is growing since the construction of the Leighton Buzzard bypass, which makes it quicker to get to Leighton Buzzard from Dunstable. Others use stations such as Harlington and Flitwick in Mid Bedfordshire or stations in Hertfordshire.

Traffic problems, too, show little in common between South Bedfordshire and Luton, but considerable connections with Mid Bedfordshire. The question whether Dunstable should have an A5 bypass is really of very little concern to Luton. The problems of heavy traffic going through Woburn in Mid Bedfordshire and Toddington in South Bedfordshire are almost identical and need a common solution if one can be found.

In the local government report on the north-south split proposal, there is considerable comment on Dunstable and Houghton Regis, but very little on Leighton Linslade, which I find quite amazing. Leighton Linslade and Dunstable are of similar size. The people of Leighton Linslade really have nothing in common with Luton. There is no common employment base; shopping outside the town tends to be done in Milton Keynes; Leighton Linslade people have their own railway station and they use Buckinghamshire hospitals. I suspect that many people who live in Leighton Linslade practically never go to Luton at all. There is also nothing in common between Luton and the villages. On the other hand, there are considerable links between South and Mid Bedfordshire through the various farming organisations.

It is traditional to consider Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Luton as linked industrially, but many of those links no longer exist. I note the commission's reference to the Bishop of Wolverhampton's report in 1988, but much has changed since then. General Motors is, alas, no longer a major employer in Dunstable, with the Bedford Trucks plant first sold off and then collapsing. Now, the component plant of AC Delco has been sold off. General Motors still has land in South Bedfordshire, much of it

[Sir David Madel]

used for storage, but so it does in Mid Bedfordshire with its test track at Millbrook. In any case, the 1988 report referred to links with part of South Bedfordshire, not Leighton Buzzard and most of the villages.

There is another example of the difference between Luton and Dunstable. We recently had a visit from the chief executive of English Partnership to see how he could help with the problems in Dunstable resulting from the failure of Bedford Trucks. The chief executive immediately identified the major problem of lack of access to the site and the need for the A5 bypass. That has nothing to do with Luton at all.

There are considerable links between South and Mid Bedfordshire. I have already mentioned schools, rail and roads. The parliamentary constituencies, too, cross the border, with parts of Mid Bedfordshire in my Bedfordshire, South-West seat, and both Mid and South Bedfordshire villages in Luton, North.

As for where people identify with, I suspect that everyone identifies with their smallest unit, be it town or village, and that identification with Luton or Bedford by their inhabitants is with the town rather than with the local authority.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Perhaps I might suggest to my hon. Friend that in terms of the regeneration of industry within the south of the county, links have occurred on the basis of applications for European grants, and so on. Perhaps in his eyes, on that basis alone, there are advantages for the south of the county being as one. He will know that the South Bedfordshire district council, of which I am also a representative, has put certain initiatives to Luton. On that basis alone, my hon. Friend might think that that could be of great assistance to the southern part of the county.

Sir David Madel: I am all for co-operation with Luton, as my hon. Friend will know. I am all for talking to Luton, co-operating with Luton and thinking with Luton, but I am utterly opposed to domination by Luton, and there will be domination by Luton if we have a north-south split.

I conclude with some questions and suggestions. Why was not the status quo suggested by the commission as an option? It is for Hertfordshire, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows. What is sauce for Hertfordshire should be sauce for Bedfordshire, as an adjacent county with many similarities. Why did not the commission consider the status quo, minus Luton, with Luton being a unitary authority, and the rest of the county staying as it is?

Although my first preference is for three unitary authorities—I make it clear that that is my preference—Bedfordshire minus Luton, that is two unitary authorities, one Luton in its own boundaries and the rest Bedfordshire, is infinitely preferable to a north-south split.

If the commission is wondering, after three torrid months, how to proceed, let me make a final suggestion to it. I refer it to a speech that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made on 27 February 1993 to the Conservative local government conference. He said:

> "But a structure that lasts will not be one that Whitehall has imposed. It will be one that grows naturally from people's loyalties and local traditions."

The Prime Minister added:

> "In the 1990s I want to agree a new pattern—one that lasts, in its turn, well into the century to come."

Let me say straight away that a north-south Bedfordshire split does not grow naturally from people's loyalties and local traditions, and there is no way that a north-south split could last well into the next century.

The Local Government Commission has some days to consider what I have said and what my hon. Friend the Minister may say before it makes its final recommendation. I say to it this: abandon the north-south split and please come up with something for Bedfordshire that avoids local uproar and is for the benefit of the people of Bedfordshire as a whole.

10.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Sir D. Madel) for initiating the debate and giving me the opportunity to deliver my maiden speech as a Minister. I do so in response to an hon. Friend who, if I may say so, is twice as important as other hon. Friends because he is not only a distinguished Member of the House but a constituent of mine.

I am also glad to see in their places my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), who has been a tower of strength during my entire time in the House.

It is thoroughly appropriate that I should speak on this subject not only because I am a neighbouring Member of Parliament but because I was born in the county of Bedfordshire, in the town represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North—a Bedfordshire lad.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that North Bedfordshire cannot agree with Luton on many matters and that that is why we should have the three local councils?

Mr. Jones: As a Bedfordshire lad, I am well aware of the differences of outlook of the towns throughout the county—of their different traditions, different cultural backgrounds and so on. But I hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North says.

Understandably, my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West has used this opportunity to make clear his own views on the future local government of Bedfordshire, and I have listened very carefully to the points that he has made. I am sure that he will appreciate that it is not open to me to speak with the same freedom at this stage. It would not be right for me to comment on suitable local government structures for the county while the commission is still considering these matters.

The commission published its draft proposals for Bedfordshire on 17 June. There then followed a period of some two months for local residents and others to make their views known to the commission, which is required to take into account all the representations that it receives during that period as it draws up its final recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State later in the year. The Government play no formal part in the review process until we receive that final report. We shall then, of course, consider very carefully the commission's recommendations and the arguments and evidence in support of them.

As for my hon. Friend's point about the failure of the commission to consult on the status quo, I understand that, in its leaflet for Bedfordshire residents, it explained that it must recommend that there should or should not be change.

It may, however, be helpful to the House if I restate the principles which underlie the review and which we shall have very much in mind as we decide whether to accept, reject or modify the commission's final recommendations, for Bedfordshire and for all other review areas. I shall also comment briefly on the progress of the review and on some of the implications for local government services and the staff who provide them.

Mr. John Carlisle: One understands that my hon. Friend cannot refer specifically to Bedfordshire and the Local Government Commission's report at this stage, but perhaps he will indicate that Her Majesty's Government are intent on going ahead with the commission's recommendations, whatever they might be, and that there will be no pulling back at this stage—or, indeed, later—from its excellent recommendations not only in respect of Bedfordshire but for local government throughout the country.

Mr. Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have to consider each proposal on its merits. So far, of course, we have had the opportunity to judge the proposals only in respect of two counties. My hon. Friend must be patient and see what happens in respect of the other counties on which we have had final reports, and he must wait even more patiently in respect of areas where we have not yet had final proposals, such as the county of Bedfordshire.

After all, the review is not about change for the sake of change. We have not asked the Local Government Commission to draw up a national blueprint for reform or to create a uniform pattern of local authorities. Among other things, we expect it to consider local views and local circumstances, as it is conspicuously doing, and to recommend the most suitable structure for each review area. We shall look at each set of recommendations on its merits, and we shall consider carefully all the arguments that are put to us in each case.

We believe, of course, that there are strong arguments in favour of unitary authorities. In a unitary authority, the public know who is responsible for the delivery of local services. That clarity of responsibility in turn improves accountability. When services are delivered well, or indeed badly, voters know who in local government is responsible and can express their approval or disapproval clearly through the ballot box. Having a single layer of central support services rather than two can reduce bureaucracy and enable more resources to be concentrated on the front line, and bringing services together under one roof opens possibilities for co-ordinating them in a way which gives consumers a better deal.

The review is not simply about creating more unitary authorities, however. It is about providing local authorities and local people in each area with a chance to consider the best means of delivering effective and convenient local government which reflects local needs and identities. There is room for diversity, taking into account local preferences, history and tradition.

Whatever structures the Local Government Commission recommends, they must enable proper provision to be made for all local government functions. We shall be looking at that aspect of the reports very carefully, with colleagues in other Departments. Our advice to the commission on functions is set out in our policy guidance. We have drawn the commission's attention to the fact that strategic, regulatory and enforcement functions will often be promoting the welfare of the wider public; and we have said that special consideration should be given to the maintenance of teams of experts, such as child care workers, and specialist assets such as archives. But we have also reminded the commission that one of the benefits of unitary authorities would be the greater scope for looking at functions in the round, while another would be clearer accountability. Both those benefits would be diluted by statutory joint authorities for specific functions, other than the law-and-order and fire services. We are encouraging authorities to develop voluntary arrangements for dealing with functions; statutory joint authorities would be very much a last resort.

The cost of change is, of course, an important consideration about which many people are understandably concerned. Local government reorganisation should be worth while and cost-effective over time. We have always accepted that some investment will be needed to secure the benefits of change, but existing local authorities and their successors have a clear responsibility to keep transitional costs to a minimum and do their utmost to realise the full benefits and savings associated with reorganisation. We recognise that there will be a time lag between the incurring of transitional costs and the accrual of savings and receipts, and we are considering proposals to allow authorities to borrow to meet transitional costs pending realisation of those savings and receipts.

Naturally, there has also been concern among staff who are employed in local authorities that may be affected by reorganisation, and who are consequently uncertain about what the future holds for them. Let me make it clear that we intend to ensure that staff are treated fairly: that is why last year we set up an independent staff commission to look carefully at, and advise us on, the staffing issues that arise from reorganisation. The staff commission has made a series of regional visits to authorities; it has also issued a useful circular, which sets out the rules for deciding which authorities will be transferred automatically to successor authorities by statutory transfer order. The circular also describes the scope for open competition for senior posts, and defines which employees will be eligible for prior-consideration appointment to posts.

Most staff will, of course, simply transfer to successor councils on existing contractual terms and conditions by means of a statutory transfer order. The staff commission will be advising on the categories of staff who will transfer automatically in that way, but we expect them to include nearly all the operational staff—such as teachers, care workers and housing officers—who provide services directly to the public. As for staff who do not transfer by transfer order, it will be for successor authorities, in consultation with outgoing authorities, to decide whether any of them will nevertheless transfer under existing employment legislation.

[Mr. Jones]

We are also considering the responses to our consultation exercise on the Government's proposals for a redundancy scheme specific to local government. Our proposals seek to set levels of compensation for staff who leave local government employment which are both fair to those individuals and affordable to the taxpayer. The proposals give protection to staff by providing a guaranteed minimum floor of payments, while giving local discretion and flexibility to employing authorities to pay above that up to a specified ceiling.

As for the progress of the review programme, I am pleased to report that it is still very much on course. We have received the commission's final recommendations on 10 review areas; we have laid—and this House and another place have approved—an order implementing the commission's recommendations for a single unitary authority for the Isle of Wight, where the authorities are now in the process of planning for change. We have also accepted the commission's recommendations for the establishment of four unitary authorities in Cleveland, and we shall shortly be laying an order before the House to implement change there. The commission is undertaking further reviews of Gloucestershire, Derbyshire and Durham; we shall announce our decisions on its outstanding final recommendations in due course.

The commission has now published draft recommendations in respect of the remaining counties under review, including Bedfordshire. As I have explained, it would be wrong for me to say anything at this stage which might give the appearance of prejudging the outcome of those reviews. The public consultation periods on all but four of the areas have now closed, and the commission is drawing up its final recommendations. We look forward to receiving those recommendations by the end of the year.

Make no mistake: we are firmly committed to structures which meet local needs. Our aim remains to give local people a structure of local government that meets their needs and wishes, and one that can use its resources effectively. I hope that all those with an interest in local government in Bedfordshire, and in the other areas under review, have taken the opportunity to inform the Local Government Commission of their views. We want structures to be based on local consensus, and that can be achieved only if all those involved have taken part in shaping their local government for the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 19 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

City Centres

1. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will encourage new investment in and revitalisation of town and city centres.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): Yes, through the combination of a strong national economy, sensible planning and specific measures such as city challenge to unlock local commitment.

Mr. Evennett: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing problems in the towns of Crayford and Erith in my constituency and in Bexleyheath shopping centre, caused by the proliferation of new out-of-town shopping developments? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital that we restore and revitalise our town centres so that they do not become ghost towns? We must have more investment, life and jobs in our town centres to make them vibrant once again.

Mr. Gummer: I have made it clear that I believe that the future development of stores should encourage and enhance town centres wherever possible. We have made that clear in policy planning guidance notes 6 and 13 and I shall be issuing some further directions.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to answer the questions that were put to him more than six months ago following the reversal of his discredited planning policy, which has blighted thousands of businesses in towns and city centres? What assistance does he intend to provide to those local authorities and businesses that have had to sit back helplessly during the past 15 years while the Government have slavishly supported the principle of out-of-town developments—a policy which has undermined the effectiveness of local councils and businesses in their attempts to regenerate towns and city centres? What will he do to compensate those councils and businesses for his mistakes?

Mr. Gummer: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman is concerned to climb on board Conservative policy in these matters and I know that he is extremely embarrassed by the fact that he did not think of it first. But the fact is that out-of-town shopping centres have played an important role in the new kind of retailing in which Britain leads. There is a balance to be gained, on which I am determined to insist. I do not want to stop those developments that are there, but I do want to ensure that, as far as possible in future, any developments will enhance the city centres. That is a perfectly reasonable balanced policy, but, as such, it is unlikely to attract the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. David Martin: Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to promote the sometimes novel idea these days that people should live in city centres, so that they do not turn into ghost towns at night and so that we have a mix of commercial premises, shops and residences where they should be, as well as out of town?

Mr. Gummer: The genius of towns is that they are places where people can live, work, shop and take their leisure together. One of the disadvantages that has arisen in recent years—often as a result of the municipal policy of councils that did not want mixed development—has been that people have been pushed out to the edge of towns instead of giving the life that is necessary to the centre.

Nitrogen Dioxide

2. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the increase in recorded nitrogen dioxide emissions since 1984.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): Total United Kingdom emissions of nitrogen oxides, expressed as nitrogen dioxide equivalents, increased from 1984 to 199[illegible] by 540,000 tonnes, and have since declined year by year. Emissions in 1992, the latest year for which validated figures are available, were 110,000 tonnes below the peak values.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Despite that, the Minister knows that air pollution is an increasing problem in towns and that bad air is triggering even more attacks in children who suffer from asthma. Why does not he just accept that money spent on an integrated transport system would not only save many people in Britain from greater discomfort, but would clean up and improve the air for all of us in our city centres?

Mr. Atkins: I agreed with the earlier part of the hon. Lady's question. I have a daughter who suffers from asthma and I know at first hand in my family the problems experienced by asthmatics, so I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Lady's point of view.

It is no use assuming that pollution is the Government's fault, however. We all create pollution in one form or another and all use vehicles in one form or another, so pollution is partly of our own creation. But the Government recognise the importance of reducing pollution, which is why we spent money on research and, in conjunction with the Department of Health, are examining ways and means of improving the situation—and why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport made some interesting and pertinent announcements a week or two ago that will contribute to alleviating the problem that concerns the hon. Lady.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: As vehicle emissions are a major contributor to air pollution and are linked to increases in childhood and adult asthma, will the

Minister confirm that the Government are arguing for increases in petrol duty above those already planned and for cuts in the road-building programme? Will he back the launch today of the clean air through oxygen campaign for the oxygenation of fuel to cut emissions?

Mr. Atkins: I cannot comment on matters that are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be as pleased as I am that my right hon. Friend is taking the action to which he referred. As to oxygenation, I am interested—as are our expert advisers—in any schemes or products that could help to reduce pollution. However, the value of oxygenates remains unknown and some claims made for them have not been proven. There is a long way to go before the action that the hon. Gentleman suggests could be known to be helpful.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Government may not be entirely at fault for rising levels of air pollution and asthma, but Government inaction must carry a substantial part of the blame. Why is it that this country has only 34 national nitrogen dioxide monitoring stations? Why did the Government decide recently not to make monitoring a statutory duty for local authorities? Above all, why do the Government refuse to adopt a properly integrated transport strategy, which would be the long-term answer to the problem?

Mr. Atkins: At long last we have an admission from the hon. Gentleman, as opposed to an emission, that the Government are not wholly at fault. I go further, and suggest that the Government have an extremely good record on emissions. We are meeting all the deadlines that the European Union requires of [illegible] and have plans for improvements. As to monitoring stations, I take guidance from my specialist and technical advisers—as would the hon. Gentleman if he were [illegible] my position. We are advised that the monitoring devices and their location are as good as anywhere in Europe. I am entirely confident that the results that we are receiving from those devices are entirely accurate and give a fair picture of what needs to be done.

Mr. Robathan: I am sure that my hon. Friend will be glad to know that I do not consider that the Government are blameworthy in this sphere—*[Interruption]*—which makes a change. Will my hon. Friend the Minister support increased research into electric vehicles, which could have a major impact on reducing inner-city pollution? Will he, together with his colleagues in the Department of Transport, further encourage cycling in cities and outside them, and consider the use—particularly in London—of the river, which is totally under-used? That could go some way to reducing congestion and improving air purity in our cities.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend makes some interesting points. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London are made aware of those concerns.

Local Government Finance

3. **Ms Church:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to meet representatives of the local authority associations to discuss the settlement of local government finance for 1995-96.

12. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to meet representatives of the local authority associations to discuss the settlement of local government finance for 1995-96.

13. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to meet representatives of the local authority associations to discuss the settlement of local government finance for 1995-96.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): I discussed the finance settlement with local authority associations on 10 October.

Ms Church: When the Minister discussed those plans with local authority associations, did he give them an assurance that the report in the *Local Government Chronicle* on 7 October, to the effect that he did not put up a fight against Treasury plans to freeze local authority expenditure, was untrue? Can he assure the House that the Treasury plans published in the Red Book will not be cut further, leading to additional cuts in vital services and higher unemployment?

Mr. Curry: The local authority associations had obviously seen that report, and my right hon. Friend, if I am quoting him accurately, said that they should not believe everything that they read in the paper.

Mr. Khabra: Will the Secretary of State outline to the House what steps he is taking to remove the anomaly that exists in the local government revenue support grant settlement, whereby six outer London authorities have no choice but to pay their teachers the inner London weighting allowance, whereas it is calculated in the standard spending assessments that they must pay only the outer London weighting allowance? That is an anomaly. Will the Minister answer the question, please?

Mr. Curry: I understand that the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) is meeting representatives about that this afternoon. But I can be helpful to the hon. Gentleman. His question touches on the earlier cost adjustment—the sums that are directed towards the south-east area to compensate for higher labour costs. I made it clear to the House last year that I was not satisfied with the way in which those sums were directed in the south-east area, and that I would therefore review the relationship between central London and outer London and the taper towards the south-east. I shall propose changes to that when we announce the rate support settlement, and I hope that they will give some satisfaction to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: Why is it that, in the previous SSA settlement for local government, the Secretary of State did not take into account the Prime Minister's pledge to help people who could not afford to pay VAT? Many of my constituents find that, when they apply for a community charge rebate, the assistance that they get for VAT is taken into account. Will the Minister do something about that?

Mr. Curry: With respect, the hon. Gentleman misunderstands the purpose of the SSA systems. Compensation for VAT has been announced in the context of the pensions measure. As regards the SSA, we try to distribute an amount according to the needs of local authorities and their ability to deliver a standard system. The hon. Gentleman came with representatives from Coventry last year to discuss certain matters. In the present settlement those matters will, of course, have been put right from his point of view, so I hope that he will be satisfied.

Sir Peter Fry: When my hon. Friend speaks to the local authority representatives, will he make it clear not only that there should be concern over the way in which the area costs adjustment is currently calculated but that fundamental change is needed to prevent the kind of unfairness that currently exists, particularly in counties such as Northamptonshire, which has suffered considerably as a result of not being included in the adjustment?

Mr. Curry: I know that my hon. Friend is very concerned about that. I have met him and his fellow Members of Parliament from the county, and we have plans for a further meeting quite shortly on the matter. I recognise that the area cost adjustment is, of course, liked very much by those who receive it and that those who do not receive it find it difficult. It is a question of balance. I hope to get the most sensible balance that we possibly can in that area.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: May I inform my hon. Friend that my constituents are interested not only in how much money is provided but in how it is spent? They are therefore extremely anxious to secure the abolition of the high-spending Lancashire county council, but unfortunately the county has seen fit to spend huge sums of ratepayers' money circulating to every head teacher, every head governor and every Lancashire county council employee a wholly distorted view. We very much hope that the commission will not permit itself to be influenced by that wholly unfair action on the county council's part.

Mr. Curry: Whether or not moneys have been spent legally is a matter for the district auditor. As regards the future structure of Lancashire, until the Local Government Commission issues its recommendations I have no role to play. When it does so, I have no doubt whatever that my hon. Friend will be one of the first through the doors.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: But is it not the case that Conservative local authorities tend to get less Government grant per head but nevertheless charge the lowest council taxes on average? Is not that best exemplified by Gravesham borough council, which, in its last year of Conservative rule, had the lowest council tax in Kent, yet which, in its first year of Labour rule, already had the fourth lowest?

Mr. Curry: It is true, of course, that the grant tends to be directed to those inner-city areas with the greatest need. But I am very happy to pay tribute to Gravesham borough council for the excellent way in which it administers the funds in north Kent. It plays a very important role in the whole of our strategy for the area.

Mr. Rooker: When considering the settlement for 1995-96, will the Minister pay attention to the country's second city? Birmingham funded the international convention centre with only its own taxpayers' money and European money, but the Conservative central council will meet there next year only if it receives a £53,000 grant and subvention. The Tory party should pay its own way before using Birmingham's facilities.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that once a local authority has received grant, it can use it for the purposes that it deems most fit for the area. Birmingham chose to devote its funds to the construction of facilities. Contractual relationships between Birmingham and anyone else are entirely a matter for those concerned.

Mr. Waterson: Is my hon. Friend aware that East Sussex county council, which currently enjoys the benefits of a Lib-Lab pact in its ruling group, appears to have overspent by £1 million so far this year on its social services budget? When my hon. Friend comes to use his powers both in terms of the settlement and by way of capping, will he bear in mind the profligacy of many Labour and Liberal Democrat-controlled authorities?

Mr. Curry: As my hon. Friend knows, we issue the rate support grant in consideration of the needs of local authorities; the limits to which they are allowed to spend have no political colour. It is an absolutely objective system, the Opposition party accepts that it is objective and while I hold this job it will continue to be objective.

Mr. Straw: As objective as it has been in Westminster and Wandsworth, shall we say.

Does the Minister understand that the universal capping of council budgets is not only unjustified and undemocratic, but has failed to work in its own terms? That, by the way, is what many members of the Minister's own party are now saying.

Will the Minister confirm that six Conservative associations—including one in Croydon, in the constituency of the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford)—submitted resolutions to this month's Conservative party conference which called for capping to be scrapped? Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that so great was the fear that those resolutions might be carried that not one of them was called? When will he recognise that nothing symbolises the over-centralisation of the country more than authoritarian ministerial control over services that local communities should be free to provide?

Mr. Curry: I am perfectly aware that capping is not popular with all councillors, including some Conservative councillors. I am not ashamed about that; they are quite free to express their opinions. But there are other considerations, such as what the nation can afford and the requirements of public finance. I should be obliged if the hon. Gentleman would tell me whether he intends, in the first year of a hypothetical Labour

Government, to abolish capping immediately and allow local authorities to spend all the accumulated receipts without restraint. That would be a very important contribution to public finances.

Retail Industry

4. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to make the most of the planning opportunities provided by continued development of the retail industry.

Mr. Gummer: By encouraging retailers to develop forms of retailing which can, where possible, locate in places, such as town centres, where everyone can benefit from the competition and choice that they bring.

Mrs. Lait: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Boots Properties is currently finalising plans for exactly the kind of town-centre shopping development that he has recommended? Does he agree that such town-centre shopping provides access for all—both those with and those without cars—and also has benefits in terms of car emissions? Will he give some further information about the timing and content of the planning guidance that he has said that he intends to publish?

Mr. Gummer: It would be wrong for me to comment on the specific example given by my hon. Friend, because it might be the subject of a review by the Department and by me. I certainly believe, however, that encouraging larger stores to play their part in the revivification of town centres will be good for everyone. It will provide opportunities for those without access to motor cars. That will be a necessary part of any concept of sustainable development in the future.

I hope to extend the information on the current planning guidance pretty soon.

Mr. Stevenson: Does the Secretary of State accept that traditional town and city-centre markets are an important part of the retail industry? Does he recognise that, in their dash for deregulation, the Government propose to remove local-authority market franchise rights? That will cause severe damage in areas such as my constituency in Stoke-on-Trent. Will the Secretary of State instigate an urgent review on this piece of Government dogma before the damage is done to our inner cities and town centres?

Mr. Gummer: I have looked at this matter carefully because not only the hon. Gentleman but my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) and others have raised the issue with me. I hope to be able to make an announcement soon.

Mr. David Nicholson: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the necessary, and probably overdue, issue of planning guidance that protects our town and city centres against out-of-town developments. That is desirable. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the guidance is sensitive enough to enable councillors to object to undesirable urban developments such as the proposed removal in Taunton of the facilities offered by the County hotel and their replacement by retailing facilities?

Mr. Gummer: I shall not discuss the particular aspect raised by my hon. Friend, but he is right that we are talking about guidance. It does not apply in any specific case. There may be good reasons for deciding not to agree to a development. Not long ago, I turned down, on appeal, a development in the centre of Ludlow. I believe that there are cases when the proposed development is unacceptable either for design or for other reasons. We must then take appropriate measures. Generally, most people in Britain would like to see a further enhancement of our city and town centres rather than development outside. They do not object to much that has been built outside because it provides services that people want and has changed the way retailing takes place. However, they do not want it to be overdone.

Mr. Pike: We welcome the Government's change to supporting our town centres and shopping areas within those centres. However, will the Secretary of State recognise that the change in retailing increasingly means that small corner shops are closing in outer areas of town? Will he realise that people who depend on those shops need public transport? It is essential that we have good public transport to our town centres and retail shopping areas. It is also essential that the needs of the disabled are protected in those new shopping areas because it is increasingly difficult for many disabled people to get round the new type of shops.

Mr. Gummer: I doubt whether it is increasingly difficult for disabled people. Many of the newer shops provide better facilities for the disabled and I am impressed by some of the changes that have taken place in some of the large retail outlets recently.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that nearly 50 per cent. of the budget of the Department of Transport is spent on public transport when it accounts for only 10 per cent. of journeys.

Homelessness

5. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households were accepted as homeless by local authorities in England during the last 12 months; how many were living in temporary accommodation at the end of this period; and what were the equivalent figures for 1979.

Mr. Curry: In the year ending June 1994, 128,000 households were accepted as statutorily homeless by local authorities in England; in 1979, 56,000 households were so accepted. At 30 June 1994, 51,450 households were living in temporary accommodation; no comparable figure is held for 1979.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister recognise that the disgraceful increase in the number of homeless and in the numbers in temporary accommodation, which I can assure the Minister has risen fivefold since the early 1980s, reflects in part the behaviour of certain councils such as Westminster which has been deliberately keeping council properties empty and for sale while leaving homeless families in temporary accommodation? If the inquiry that begins today confirms the district auditor's preliminary finding that Lady Porter was guilty of improper, disgraceful and unlawful conduct, will the Minister be the first to condemn her?

Mr. Curry: It might reflect also the behaviour of councils such as Southwark which leave some of their social housing empty rather than allow people to come from other boroughs to fill the empty houses even though they are in need. The hon. Gentleman needs to look a little closer to home and he will find some of the answers to his questions.

On Westminster, if there is proven to be any wrongdoing, we will condemn it as we have always said we would. That is a matter for the auditor, not for the Government and I am not involved.

Mr. Thomason: Does my hon. Friend agree that the private sector provides accommodation for many people who would otherwise be homeless? Will he confirm that, unlike the Labour party, the Government wish to support and encourage the development of the private sector?

Mr. Curry: That is true. The number of households living in the private sector has increased from about 1.6 million to almost 2 million, which is welcome. We clearly wish to sustain that development. It depends heavily, of course, on housing benefit. It may also depend to some extent on people who have empty property and are unable to sell it. We need to keep looking at ways in which we can ensure that the private rented sector continues to fulfil housing needs in Britain.

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister confirm that his Department has received the preliminary results of the research it commissioned by Pat Niner at Birmingham university on the homelessness code of guidance? When does the Minister intend to publish that research, or will the Government's intended changes to homeless law be introduced in the next 12 months, regardless of the research and of public comment on it?

Mr. Curry: We have made it clear that we intend to legislate on those homelessness provisions as soon as parliamentary time permits. The hon. Gentleman might be interested in the remarks of the chairman of the Chartered Institute of Housing, Mr. Peter McGurk, at a meeting at which the press were present, where he said that he thought that the Government had got their homelessness proposals about right.

Mr. John Marshall: As the private rented market was decimated by decades of rent control and as Labour-controlled councils have more than 10,000 empty council houses in London, is not it complete hypocrisy for the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) to talk about this issue?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend has put it in much more pungent terms than even I would have been able to do.

European Environment Commissioner

6. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the European Environment Commissioner; and what was discussed at the meeting.

Mr. Gummer: I last met the Commissioner on 4 and 5 October at the Environment Council. We discussed a wide range of environmental issues.

Mr. Davidson: The Government still have not used the powers given to them under the transfrontier shipment of waste regulations to ban shipments of toxic waste. When do they intend to use those powers?

Mr. Gummer: The Government's policy in these matters is under discussion with our colleagues in the European Union. The hon. Gentleman will realise that we are trying to ensure that dangerous waste of various types is properly dealt with. In a transitional period, it is necessary to deal with waste rather differently if facilities are not present in some European Union countries. We hope to do that in the future. I am trying to find the best way of dealing with the problems that we have now. Of course, in the longer run we will have an entirely different system.

Mr. Heald: When my right hon. Friend next meets the Environment Commissioner, will he explain to him the detail of the integrated pollution control system that we will have in this country following my right hon. Friend's announcement last week? Will he press for a European directive to drag the standards of our partners in Europe up to our extremely high standards?

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to say that a number of our colleagues in the European Union accept that what we are doing in integrated pollution control leads the field. I hope that the European Union system will be based on the British system. We are negotiating that at the moment. Some countries, notably Germany, have their reservations, but I believe that in the end what is obviously the best system will win out.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Secretary of State aware of the vote in the European Parliament on 30 September opposing South Africa's proposal to resume trade in elephant meat and skin? The Commissioner apparently is not taking that very seriously. Will the Secretary of State impose upon him the need to take it seriously? Will he also give us the views of the British Government on the South African proposal to downlist the elephant from appendix 1 to appendix 2 of CITES?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman and I have been on the same side on whales and I think that the same will be true of elephants. [*Interruption.*] Uncharacteristically for both of us, we are in favour of large animals. We are trying to use our best endeavours, not just negatively to oppose the propositions that have been put forward, but to find ways in which the undoubted expertise in southern Africa can be used to help other parts of Africa, where the position of elephants is much worse. A real problem exists. There are too many elephants in some parts of southern Africa and far too few in others. I want to try to reap the benefit of what is happening in the south.

Mr. Skinner: Come on Sabu.

Mr. Gummer: I would say to those who speak from a sedentary position that many people take this matter extremely seriously, although perhaps not in Bolsover.

Mr. Dafis: Did the Commissioner and the Secretary of State discuss the Government's proposals for an environmental protection agency, and did the Commissioner express his disappointment at the fact that the Government's draft Bill, which some of us have heard about but few of us have seen, omits any reference to the precautionary principle or to sustainable development? I express my sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman, who has had to face the opposition of the Secretary of State for Wales, but I assure him that, in this, the Secretary of State for Wales does not speak for the people of Wales, any more than he does in relation to anything else.

Mr. Gummer: The Secretary of State for Wales has been extremely supportive on these matters. I am concerned to have an environmental agency that will fully meet the promises that we have made internationally on sustainable development. Responsibilities should be based on sustainability and growth— the two must be held together, which is precisely what I am seeking to do. I intend that the draft Bill should be precisely that. I cannot promise to take on board all the suggestions that the hon. Gentleman may wish to make, but I will look at them carefully.

Water Industry

7. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with the chairmen of the privatised water companies about the future of the water industry.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend and I have discussions with water company chairmen from time to time on matters of current and future interest to the water industry.

Mr. Hanson: Is the Minister aware that, more than a year after Ofwat issued guidelines on disconnections, only four companies have complied with them? Disconnections in England and Wales are now twice as high as before privatisation. Is not this another example of woefully inadequate regulation, which results in high disconnections, high prices and high salaries?

Mr. Atkins: Disconnections have decreased by 33 per cent. on last year, so the hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. I know that the Labour party is committed to doing away with disconnections, but it should realise that it is out of touch with people. In the area represented by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and myself, North West Water conducted a poll of its customers and found that an overwhelming majority wanted to retain the right to disconnect, bearing in mind that the process, which goes up to a court order, is exhaustive and necessary to protect proper customers from bad payers.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: When my hon. Friend next meets his counterparts in the European Council, will he urge them to adopt European water directives that are based on proper scientific evidence? Our constituents are very concerned about the rate of increase in their water bills, which can be inflated unnecessarily by directives being based on unscientific evidence.

Mr. Atkins: I have considerable sympathy with my hon. Friend. There is a suggestion in Europe that water should be of a pristine quality, which seems to be going much too far. The cost of ensuring such water quality would lead to extremely expensive bills in some areas and my right hon. Friend and I are ensuring that our colleagues in the European Union understand that point.

Mr. Burden: The Minister spoke of the reduction in the number of disconnections. Does he share my concern about the increase in the number of what are called self-disconnections as a result of the introduction of prepayment water meters by water companies? Does he agree that the legality of these devices is questionable and that the system needs rapidly to be reviewed?

Mr. Atkins: I have said many times from the Dispatch Box that it is my view, that of the regulator and, I think, that of many people across the party divide, although I recognise some dissension, that metering is one of the answers, if not the answer, to the payment of water bills in the future. I remind the hon. Gentleman that it is only one option— there are others. I take the point that he made about prepayment, but the overriding concern— expressed synthetically by the Opposition— is about disconnections. I remind the House, however, that the disconnection facility was written into a Bill in 1945 that was promulgated by a Labour Government.

Mr. Nicholls: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman of South West Water, will he remind him that water charges were eventually pegged in the south-west only because of the efforts of Conservative Members of Parliament and because of the actions of Ministers in the Department of the Environment? Will he further tell the chairman that he would do better to spend his time welcoming that development instead of scuttling off to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to see whether, even now, he can impose greater price rises on the south-west than is justified?

Mr. Atkins: I spent some time in the west country during the recess and wherever I went I was astonished at the reaction of many people to the immense efforts of Conservative Members of Parliament, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), to make the case most strongly for the amelioration of water bills, commensurate with the remedial work necessary to improve quality. As ever, my hon. Friend is quite right.

River Pollution

8. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with the National Rivers Authority about emissions from abandoned mine workings; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir Paul Beresford): My Department maintains regular contact with the National Rivers Authority about this and other matters. The NRA report published in March on this matter of concern was taken into account in our consideration of the legal framework for abandoned mines.

Mr. Mullin: Is not it a plain fact that there is absolutely nothing to stop British Coal or its successors turning off the pumps and walking away and that, if that happens, the River Wear, one of the most beautiful waterways in Britain, and many others will be devastated? Who will pay the costs of maintaining pumping after British Coal has disappeared? What assurance can the Minister give that pumping will be maintained for as long as is necessary?

Sir Paul Beresford: I am rather disappointed that the hon. Gentleman clearly has not done quite as much homework as his earlier requests, comments and correspondence implied. The NRA is the enforcing authority and the Coal Authority will be responsible for the safety and environmental aspects of abandoned mines, including subsidence and effects on the water environment, except where the responsibility rests with the private sector. They have a specific budget for this purpose, and the Coal Authority will maintain all necessary pumping operations to prevent such water pollution; in fact, the appropriate Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry made that clear in another place during the debate on the Coal Industry Act 1994.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my hon. Friend agree that the NRA is doing a remarkably good job clearing up such pollution? Is not one of the problems the fact that some of the old mine workings predate even the nationalised coal industry and that we have a major problem in this respect?

Sir Paul Beresford: That certainly is correct and it is the reason for the approach that we are taking with the NRA and the Coal Authority.

Mr. George Howarth: I welcome the Minister to his new post, but I must tell him that, in assuming his new responsibilities, he should be aware that everyone, including local authorities in mining areas, the NRA and British Coal, agrees that the present situation is wholly unsatisfactory. Will he accept that it was irresponsible of the Government to pass the Coal Industry Act 1994 without resolving once and for all the grey areas that bedevil the subject and thus ensuring that we all knew how the problems were to be dealt with? Does he realise that if, during the passage of an environmental protection agency Bill, he can come up with a formula for resolving the problems, everyone in the coal areas will be grateful and he will receive the Opposition's co-operation?

Sir Paul Beresford: Interestingly, I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman, although I welcome his forward-looking approach. We all accept that this is a difficult matter, but steps are being made in the right direction. I remind him that the consultation document "Paying for our Past", which is now completed, will allow us to continue our review.

Isle Of Wight

9. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions he has made on the combined standard spending assessments for the new unitary authority on the Isle of Wight.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): We shall announce our proposals for standard spending assessments for 1995-96 shortly after the Budget.

Mr. Field: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on his promotion and thank him on behalf of the Select Committee on the Environment for all his hard work and enthusiasm when he was its Chairman? I understand that he will be replying to my Adjournment debate on SSAs on Monday evening, but, in the meantime, will he confirm to my constituents that he is well aware of my concerns about the level of the SSA for the Isle of Wight's new unitary authority and especially of the problems caused by severance by sea?

Mr. Jones: One of my vivid memories of the Select Committee on the Environment is the fact that my hon. Friend took every opportunity to advance the cause of his constituents, in connection not only with standard spending assessments but with everything else. In expressing my gratitude for his kind remarks, I confirm that we shall discuss those issues next Monday. I look forward to it.

Local Government Commission

10. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to present proposals arising out of recommendations of the Local Government Commission for England; and when the proposals for Warwickshire will be reached.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Timing of any orders will depend, first, on when the Local Government Commission makes its recommendations for each county; and then on other factors such as the wider parliamentary timetable. The commission is due to submit its final report for Warwickshire in December.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that a substantial number of my constituents and other Warwickshire residents wish to retain the local government status quo and oppose the idea of a unitary solution being imposed on Warwickshire? Is he further aware that there is much cross-party support for the retention of the status quo? Will he therefore join me in calling for a free vote on the matter when it is discussed in the House of Commons?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend's last question is not, of course, a matter for me. But on his more general point, we have not yet had the final proposal, and he will have every opportunity to try to persuade the commission. After we receive the final proposal, no doubt he and other Members representing Warwickshire will take every opportunity to alert my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself to their views.

Mr. Betts: Is the Minister aware that there is much support among the Opposition for progress towards unitary authorities, despite our reservations about the way in which the commission has operated? However, does he accept that several matters concern us, on which we shall need assurances from him? One of those matters involves potential safeguards for the employees involved. Is the Minister aware that when the metropolitan counties were abolished a generally acceptable scheme was introduced to allow for the transfer of employees and to protect them? Will he give an assurance that he will examine that scheme and consider introducing it for the non-metropolitan areas?

Mr. Jones: Naturally, the future of the employees concerned is a matter of anxiety for them. As the hon. Gentleman will know, we have consulted on the various measures necessary to protect their interests. No decisions have been made as yet, and I will certainly bear the hon. Gentleman's comments in mind.

Mr. Alison: Does my hon. Friend recognise that, although the Boundaries Commission expressed no very strong views on how the future boundaries of York city might be drawn, people who live in the villages round York and within the existing city boundaries have extremely strong views? The overwhelming majority believe that any future York city boundaries should be tightly drawn and should not extend into the Greater York planning area. If that is news to my hon. Friend, I hope that he will digest it with an open mind, and nudge the Secretary of State so that he may digest it likewise.

Mr. Jones: Clearly, Warwickshire's boundaries extend rather further than I had thought, but I will certainly bear my right hon. Friend's comments in mind. As he knows, we have not yet come to a final decision on the county of North Yorkshire.

Mr. Henderson: May I add to the Opposition's welcome to the Minister in his new appointment? Further to the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), does he accept that the matter is not simply a case of dealing with the staff issue as such, but that the staff's anxiety is beginning, wrongly, to influence the whole review? Instead of its being judged on whether we have the right structure, organisational effectiveness or community democracy, in many areas the review is judged according to its impact on the staff. Would not it be right to withdraw that issue and give the assurances that my hon. Friend sought, and then to get on and deal with the review on its merits?

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind welcome. As he knows, I was present at a meeting where he and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) raised precisely those issues, and Ministers are still considering them. As the hon. Gentleman knows, an early announcement would be helpful in reassuring the staff, and we are moving towards that.

Petrol

11. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the current level of consumption of unleaded petrol in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the environmental effects of the reduced use of leaded petrol.

Mr. Gummer: Unleaded petrol currently accounts for over 58 per cent. of the market. Since the fuel was first introduced, emissions of lead from road vehicles have been cut by almost 50 per cent. and, at the same time, average airborne lead concentrations recorded in urban, rural and kerbside monitoring sites have fallen by approximately 74 per cent.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the great success of the Government's policy over the past nine years can be measured by the dramatic fall in airborne lead concentrations, which, as he just said, amounts to some 74 per cent? Does he also agree that, as a result of the transfer from leaded petrol to lead-free petrol, there has been an increase in other emissions, especially those such as benzene, which contain carcinogens? On that basis, does he agree that there is still a need to encourage conversion to catalytic converters in more than the existing 15 per cent. of the vehicle fleet in the country to reduce the threat of benzene, which has simply replaced the existing threat of leaded petrol?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the success of the policy and the way in which there is much less lead in the atmosphere. Perhaps he is overstating the matter to say that the problems with benzene are as great or parallel. In fact, there is not much evidence to show that unleaded petrol contributes much to an increase in the amount of benzene. However, he is also right to point to the need for catalytic converters and for the use of, particularly, hot catalytic converters, which work from the first starting of the motor.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: The Minister will be aware that there is growing concern about benzene and that it is used largely in the sale of super unleaded, 98 octane petrol, where the replacement of the lead content, the octane rating, has been boosted by the addition of benzene. Surely that area, and the whole policy, need to be considered because of the grave health concerns.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is right that we should always look at the concerns. I do not think that we should overdo it. The level permitted by the European Community directive is a maximum of 5 per cent. The typical UK content is lower; about 2 per cent. So, already, we are well below the limits which are placed on us. I quite agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should keep a very close watch on this and we are doing so. If there is any cause for concern, and I believe that there are ways in which we could meet that concern, I will certainly act.

Mr. Sweeney: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the amount of not only lead emissions but other pollutants is falling and will he update the House on the controversy over whether unleaded petrol or diesel-powered cars are better for the environment?

Mr. Gummer: There is a great deal of improvement in many areas, but we must constantly look at ways in which we can do better. I am not in any sense complacent. The problem with diesel really depends on the nature of the journey. When diesel cars are used largely for longer journeys, there is a real environmental advantage. If they are used for stopping and starting in towns, the balance goes the other way. As is so often true about environmental decisions, they are not as clear cut as some would have us think. Our duty is to try to get the best answer and the best balance that is possible. I believe that the Government have a good record, not only in absolute terms, but in comparison with our continental colleagues.

Local Government Review

14. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the local authority associations to discuss the progress of the local government review.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. Friend met the chairmen of the local authority associations only yesterday. He expects to meet them again on Monday 12 December.

Mr. Hall: Notwithstanding the discussion that has already taken place in the local government review, may I urge the Minister, when he next meets the local government commission, to tell it that the Government are still committed to the concept of unitary local government and to explain the reasons why that concept is still right: it strengthens local democracy, it removes a two-tier system that is quite confusing and it allows councils to be responsive to the needs of the communitiesthat they represent. It is right for towns such as Warrington, Macclesfield and Halton to gain unitary status in the review.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman puts a very persuasive case for unitary authorities, which are right for some if not many areas. But we are not committed to a particular pattern of local government and there will be areas in which public opinion and the recommendations of the commission are incompatible.

Mr. Matthew Banks: When my hon. Friend next meets local authority association leaders, will he restate the commitment given to me by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that when the commission has finished its work on the shire counties, it will have an opportunity to consider the metropolitan areas, such as my constituency, where a strong desire for change has been expressed?

Mr. Jones: I am happy to repeat that reassurance.

Mr. Skinner: Is not it about time that this local government review was scrapped? It has already cost the taxpayer more than £1 billion and it will mean the sacking of more than 100,000 people who are engaged in local government work. For the life of me, I cannot understand why some of the people on our side can go down the road of unitary authorities, which will result in more people being added to the dole queues and more quangos as opposed to democratically elected councils. Is not it fair to say that, although 300 towns and cities in this country are represented here, more Members of Parliament come from areas that have a rural character, where villages are miles apart and where a two-tier system is absolutely necessary? The best thing the Government can do is leave well alone and let the status quo remain.

Mr. Jones: It is part of life's rich pattern that there should be different views on local government and its future. I note that that pattern is more complicated on the Opposition Benches than Conservative Members perhaps imagined.

Home Ownership

15. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the level of home ownership in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: In the period March 1979 to December 1993, the level of owner-occupation has increased from 56 per cent. of all tenures to 67 per cent. in England, from 35 to 55 per cent. in Scotland, from 59 to 72 per cent. in Wales and from 51 to 68 per cent. in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my hon. Friend accept that those figures reflect a deep commitment on the part of the British people to home ownership which the Government have done so much to promote over the years? Did my hon. Friend see a recent survey that showed that, despite the recession, it was the aspiration of most young people to own their own homes? Will he therefore endorse and expand those initiatives that the Government have put in place to make that aspiration possible?

Mr. Jones: I can certainly confirm that the survey to which my hon. Friend referred is one of a series of surveys that show that that is the preferred aspiration. However, it is not the right answer for everyone. We have taken several initiatives to encourage home ownership. If my hon. Friend has any other suggestions as to how home ownership might be made more possible, I shall be happy to consider them sympathetically.

Mr. Straw: On one of these so-called initiatives to encourage home ownership—the much-trumpeted rents-to-mortgages scheme—will the Minister confirm that in the first six months of the scheme, from September 1993 to March 1994, there were just two completed applications and that that pathetic response was achieved despite the spending of more than £400,000 of the public's money on publicity and propaganda? That is £200,000 per application. Will the Minister therefore confirm that, even by this Government's appalling standards, that scheme has turned into one of the most expensive fiascos on record? Had local councillors been responsible for waste and profligacy on that scale, they would by now have been surcharged and disqualified from office. Should not the same happen to the Ministers responsible?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman fails to understand that the purpose of an information campaign is to inform and that it is very early, in terms of the development of the scheme, to judge the numbers. It takes a long time to go through the legal processes. If we are to judge by the experience in Scotland, the numbers will grow in the weeks and months to come. The hon. Gentleman seems to be implying that any scheme to extend home ownership is something that he is unhappy about. That is rather typical of the Labour party's attitude generally.

Mr. Duncan Smith: While congratulating my right hon. Friend and his hon. Friends on the great success in getting more people into home ownership, and while urging them to continue to do that, is not there a parallel need to do more to release the private rented sector? If we wish to see a mobile population which is able to take jobs at one end of the country or the other, we must also ensure that people are able to find homes in those areas.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is quite right. We are committed to choice and diversity, and that includes the private rented sector—directly, through encouraging lettings in that sector, and indirectly, through encouraging the participation of housing associations, to ensure that the number of private lettings increases.

Waste Disposal

16. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts concerning the control of waste disposal.

Mr. Gummer: I have regular contact with my EU counterparts. The most recent discussions I have had with them on issues relating to waste disposal were at the Council of Ministers in Luxembourg on 4 October.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Referring to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson), does the Minister appreciate that there is a good deal of concern in south Wales about waste disposal, and that the situation has been further aggravated by an application from the American company Browning Ferris to install a plant at Newport? The firm has a rather infamous record, so will the Minister consult the Secretary of State for Wales with a view to getting the application rejected? Does he agree that it is wrong to make south Wales the dustbin of Europe?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will look at any application properly and without prejudice. In these environmental matters, however, there is a need to clean up the waste that has already been created. We must play a proper part in that if we are to avoid leaving a dustbin that is not cleaned up. The hon. Gentleman owes it to his constituents to explain that fact to them.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you aware that this morning the Home Secretary joined the Lord President of the Council, the Secretary of State for Health, the Secretary of State for Education, the Paymaster General for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Under-Secretary of State to launch a Green Paper on drugs? I can appreciate the embarrassment that this has caused the Home Secretary, because the document appears to accept the need for a comprehensive strategy to tackle drugs and drug-related crime—a strategy which he rejected during proceedings on the Criminal Justice Bill.

Would it not be appropriate for a statement on such an important issue to be made in this Chamber, so that we can test the document and question whether there has been a genuine change of heart by the Government? Is this not a discourtesy to the House, and a further example of the sort of behaviour by Ministers that you have deprecated in the past?

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does it relate to the same point of order? [Hon. Members: "No."] As the House knows, I am always keen for any important statements of policy made by the Government to be made to this House first. I have seen the document, which is of a consultative nature, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman understands. It is, of course, up to the Minister concerned to decide for himself whether he wishes to make a statement to the House or to use some other method.

I do, however, understand hon. Members' keenness to question question Ministers on this subject. I hope that it will not be too long before the issue comes before the House in such a form that we can all consider it and hear answers to some of the questions that hon. Members are seeking to ask.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, the Home Secretary announced an additional £2 billion expenditure on anti-crime closed circuit television schemes for England and Wales. Today, I repeatedly contacted the office of the Secretary of State for Scotland asking whether he intended to make an equivalent statement for Scotland—only to be told that no one there knows what the position is.

Have you, Madam Speaker, been approached by the Secretary of State for Scotland to be told that he intends to make such a statement to the House about Scotland? If not, is it within the rules of this unitary Parliament that Ministers should be allowed to announce anti-crime schemes, paid for by taxpayers' money, for one part of the United Kingdom but not for another?

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed by any Minister that he seeks to make a statement, but my recollection is that Thursday follows Wednesday, and that Thursday is the day when the Leader of the House announces the business. The hon. Gentleman may be lucky then, although I do not promise that he will catch my eye.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Article 9 of the Bill of Rights protects the right of this House to regulate its own proceedings, including the conduct of its members. There are all sorts of historical reasons for that, and no one is likely to dispute the fact that we, not the courts, should do this. It is also most important for the reputation of Parliament that, in regulating our own procedures and the conduct of Members, everything should be seen to be above board, and that there should be as little secrecy as possible.

The point I want to raise with you, Madam Speaker, is as follows: if a Committee has been duly appointed by the House, as it has been, to look into the conduct of two hon. Members, are we in a position to tell the Committee that we are dissatisfied with its sitting in private, and that we believe that it should sit in public for most of the hearings?

Obviously, when it comes to discuss its conclusions, it must do so in private—no one disputes that—but I for one, and many of my hon. Friends, are deeply disappointed that the Committee of Privileges has decided to sit only in private. Are we therefore in a position to tell that Committee that we believe that most of its proceedings should be public?

Madam Speaker: There has been no official report yet to the House; what I have seen has been from the media. As the hon. Gentleman and the House know, all our Committees, including the Privileges Committee, regulate their own affairs. They must be left to resolve the matter. The hon. Gentleman must not look to me as a court of appeal. We have established very important working Committees in the House, and they must be left to conduct their own affairs in carrying out the task with which they have been entrusted by the House.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to written question 222 on today's Order Paper? The hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) asked the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement about Stratford grant-maintained school. That school is in my constituency, and there is a lot of controversy surrounding it. Would it not be courteous for the reply to the question to be given to the constituency Member concerned, rather than his having to wait until it is printed in the *Official Report*? It is matter of courtesy, upon which you could advise Ministers.

Madam Speaker: I often have to remind Ministers and Back Benchers that there should be a high degree of courtesy in the way in which we deal with each other in the House. I have always thought that, if an hon. Member tables a question that relates to another Member's constituency, that Member should be informed. I hope that what the hon. Gentleman has said has been heard by the Minister, and perhaps he will be sent the typescript answer to the question. We now must move on to the ten-minute Bill.

Maximum Wage

3.37 pm

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to fix the emoluments of chairpersons, chief executives and senior managers of private limited companies and public bodies so that their combined annual earnings do not exceed twenty times the average take-home pay of their non-managerial employees save if the said employees agree through a ballot of their non-managerial employees or through their union to permit salaries of their chairpersons, chief executives and senior managers to exceed a 20:1 ratio.

Before explaining why I think the Bill is worthy of serious consideration, let me clear the ground of three misconceptions that have arisen so far in public discussion of it.

First, it is not aimed at entrepreneurs, the geniuses who invent a new product or service and create companies that make them millionaires. I admire Richard Branson and Anita Roddick. Ms Roddick pays herself £138,000 a year, so she would not be affected by my Bill. I welcome the tall poppies in our business field, and wish that there were many more of them.

Secondly, it is not directly aimed at the scandalous pay-offs to company directors, privatised utility pay-offs, Ministers serving on boards of companies or, indeed, the corruption that *The Sunday Times* exposed in 10 Downing street in the 1980s.

Finally, my Bill does not proposes a compulsory wage set at any given upper limit. I see a glint in your eye, Madam Speaker, as the boss of all Members of Parliament, at the thought of earning 20 times our meagre salary.

My Bill does not propose to set cash limits, as the Chancellor does with his public pay policy; it represents an effort to a start a national debate about how we pay ourselves as a nation for the work we do and the wealth we create.

The pay that our top executives have been awarding themselves has lost all touch with rationality and the market.

I shall take as an example my constituency of Rotherham. The starting salary for a cashier at Barclays bank there is £7,000 a year; the chief executive of Barclays earns 100 times that amount.

At the Rank Hovis plant in Rotherham, the base rate for an operative is £164 a week. Greg Hutchings, the CEO of Tomkins, which owns Rank Hovis, earns £1.2 million a year—145 times that amount.

The pay of the chief executive of British Steel is 33 times the pay of a Rotherham steel worker.

Some people may say that, if we do not pay those rates, our top managers will disappear to work abroad; but nowhere in Europe do similar pay ratios exist. The head of Thyssen, Germany's biggest steel firm and a much bigger company than British Steel, earns only 16 times the pay of a German steel worker—half the United Kingdom ratio.

Other people will say that those large salaries are justified because many people are employed and big sales are generated. Yet the chief executive of Volkswagen, Europe's biggest car company, which employs 250,000 workers and makes sales of $80 billion a year, is paid 25 per cent. less than the pay last year of the chief executive of British Aerospace, a company with one third the number of employees and one third the magnitude of sales.

If we examine the new growth areas of the dynamic Asian economies, the comparison is even more grotesque. There are eight top managers in Japan with salaries of more than £650,000 a year, compared with the 90 that I have identified in the UK. The earnings ratio between a top executive and an engineering worker in Japan is between eight and 12 to one—compare that with GEC, where Lord Weinstock earns more than 33 times the average male earnings in industry.

That sense of teamwork, that lack of a big gap between top and average pay, is perhaps the reason why Japanese companies have been so much more successful than ours in recent years.

The noble Lord Hanson was quoted recently as saying:

> "The labourer is worthy of his hire: but no more than that."

I agree with him, because that corporate greed reflects the last great closed shop in the British economic system—the company boardroom. There, men—it nearly always is men—executive and non-executive directors, meet in private, pushing their snouts deeper and ever deeper into the trough: this Government of sleaze with their boardrooms of greed.

In addition to the low-paid in my constituency, two categories of people are being diddled by that deliberate widening of the wealth gap. The first group consists of shareholders. It may be odd for a Labour Member to defend shareholders, but they have their right to a place in the sun. According to a survey carried out by CM Financial Analysis, nearly one third of top UK companies have given their directors pay rises that outstrip the rate of return to shareholders in the past three years.

The second group that is being diddled consists of middle managers, skilled workers and directors of small and medium-sized companies, who are significantly underpaid in comparison to their European counterparts as a price of the overpayment of top bosses.

What is needed, and what in part my Bill proposes, is to empower shareholders and all employees, so that they have a genuine say in the firm. If trade union reform was the issue of the 1970s, company boardroom reform is the issue of the 1990s. We need to return companies to their shareholders and their employees if we are to reverse the economic decline of the past 15 years.

With the accession—as many Members will know—of the new member states of the European Union, Britain has sunk to 11th place in the per capita GDP rankings in Europe. We have the widest wealth gap of any European or dynamic Asian economy. My proposal is based not on the politics of envy, but on the comparative economics of efficiency. Company executives have conflated salaries, performance pay and stock options in a way that disconnects them from their workers and shareholders.

An English writer, a Member of the House but not a Labour Member, wrote 130 years ago of our country being divided

> "into two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings as if they were dwellers in different zones or inhabitants of different planets."

Once again, we live in a divided nation. The vast majority of members of the Cabinet represent constituencies within commuting distance of London—an

M25 Administration who know nothing of, and have no sympathy for, the north and other regions. The greed of some top executives has transferred them to another planet.

My Bill is a modest attempt to bring those people back to earth, to return companies to their employees and their shareholders. But it has a deeper purpose. It is an attempt to reduce the wealth and pay gap, which has grown alarmingly wide. It is an effort to help make again one nation in which all may play a part, and all may have a share.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Denis MacShane, Mr. Ken Purchase, Ms Margaret Hodge, Mr. Barry Sheerman, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe, Ms Glenda Jackson, Mr. Nick Ainger, Ms Angela Eagle, Ms Diane Abbott, Ms Dawn Primarolo and Mr. Gerald Bermingham.

MAXIMUM WAGE

Mr. Denis MacShane accordingly presented a Bill to fix the emoluments of chairpersons, chief executives and senior managers of private limited companies and public bodies so that their combined annual earnings do not exceed twenty times the average take-home pay of their non-managerial employees save if the said employees agree through a ballot of their non-managerial employees or through their union to permit salaries of their chairpersons, chief executives and senior managers to exceed a 20:1 ratio: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 163.]

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) referred in his speech introducing his Maximum Wage Bill to "this Government of sleaze". Similar comments were made during the previous remarks of the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell). Is it in order for Members of Parliament constantly to use that expression? To talk of a "Government of sleaze" is not only bad for the House of Commons, but I question whether it is in accordance with parliamentary convention and the best principles of the House.

Madam Speaker: It is in order to criticise Governments in that general way, but it is certainly not in order to criticise individual Members. However, I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter with me. I remind the House of the wise words of "Erskine May":

> "Good temper and moderation are the characteristics of parliamentary language."

We might all remember that at all times, however high our tempers might rise on occasions.

Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

SECURE TRAINING ORDERS

Lords amendment: No 1, in page 2, line 16, at beginning insert

("Subject to subsection (2A) below")

3.48 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments 2 to 5, 7, 8, 10 to 18, 21, 188 and 189; and Government motions to disagree.

Mr. Howard: Part I of the Bill provides for, among other things, a new custodial sentence for persistent young offenders—the secure training order. The order may last for between six months and two years, the first half of which would be spent in a secure training centre and the second half of which would be spent under supervision in the community.

Throughout the passage of the Bill, the Government have made it clear that the new secure training centres will be different from anything tried before. They will be centres housing a specific category of persistent offender, and the regime will be tailor-made for them so as to provide the right kind of training and care within a secure environment.

Lords amendment No. 2 and its consequential amendments would allow the courts, when making a secure training order, to choose between local authority secure accommodation and a secure training centre for the custodial part of the order.

Lords amendment No. 4 and its consequential amendments would allow the local authority, when detaining a juvenile subject to a secure training order, to apply to the court for the remaining period of detention to be replaced by a period in other non-secure local authority accommodation, or a period of supervision or a period of detention in a secure training centre.

Amendment No. 4 would also allow the director of a secure training centre to apply to the court for the remaining period of detention to be spent in local authority secure accommodation or other accommodation, or for a period of supervision.

The proposals for the new centres were carefully designed to address the problem of persistent young offenders. The amendments would undermine our ability to respond specifically to that serious problem and would make the operation of the new provisions haphazard, inefficient and much less effective.

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I intervene because it is proposed to locate one of the new centres in my constituency. How long would it take to implement the Home Secretary's proposals, and how long to implement those in the amendments?

Mr. Howard: I am astonished that the hon. Lady, coming as she does from north-east England, should raise that point, but I will deal with it precisely and expressly.

[Mr. Howard]

The amendments are based on the assumption that local authority secure accommodation would be used instead of secure training centres. I remind the hon. Lady of the attitude of Labour local authorities in her part of the country. At a meeting with directors of social services in the north-east on 19 February 1993, it was agreed that firm proposals to provide the additional 12 secure places assessed as being required would be brought forward by the end of April 1993.

By the end of July 1994—15 months later—no commitment had been forthcoming from those Labour-controlled authorities. At that point, the Department of Health had to make the decision to transfer the resources elsewhere. I trust that the hon. Lady regrets getting to her feet to ask that question.

Ms Armstrong: I am seeking a specific response. When would the Home Secretary's proposals be implemented, and when would it be possible to implement the amended proposals?

Mr. Howard: It is obvious from my remarks that I can give no indication when local authority secure accommodation would be available, because Labour-controlled local authorities, including those in north-east England, have not presented proposals, despite giving firm undertakings to do so. That is a complete answer to the hon. Lady's question.

In accepting the amendments, much was made in the other place of the alleged flexibility that they would bring to the secure training order. Although that argument has superficial attractions, it does not stand any scrutiny. Secure training centres, in their design and their regime, will be tailored to a specific type of offender of a relatively narrow age range. Only in such a dedicated institution will it be possible to provide the specialised regime needed to tackle the behaviour of that group and the range of educational and training programmes that will meet their individual needs.

In contrast, local authority secure accommodation cannot provide that focused regime. That accommodation caters for a variety of difficult and disturbed juveniles in a wide age range. Some are serious offenders, others are on remand, and many are not offenders at all. With such a group to cater for, local authority units cannot provide the concentrated, specialised regime that is the aim behind secure training centres.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, for any 12 to 14-year-old to be made subject to a secure training order, it is almost certain that he would already have been the subject of a supervision order? In fact, that is a requirement of the legislation. That would have meant that he would have been in local authority secure accommodation. That would still be available to the court, even with the secure training order—so why do we need this provision?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right when he says that the Bill requires, as a condition of eligibility for the secure training order, that someone should have been subject to a supervision order—and, indeed, had failed to comply with its requirements. So the logic of the situation is that attempts would have been made to improve the behaviour of offenders in that category, without obliging them to be detained in secure accommodation, but that those attempts would have failed.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that householders in Scarborough are fed up with the activities taking place at the Stepney road children's home, which range from mindless vandalism and theft to arson? Is he further aware that the county council social services department has shown itself utterly incapable of controlling that establishment? Quite apart from the fact that that establishment should be closed down now, does not that case show the importance of my right hon. and learned Friend's amendment?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not comment on the particular example he cites, because I do not have any detailed knowledge of it, but the general point made by him shows that, once again, he is the authentic voice of North Yorkshire. He speaks for his constituents and represents their views, in marked contrast, on these matters particularly, to those who contribute to the debates from the Opposition benches.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): May I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) that that area of North Yorkshire, vital though it is, is not the only area in Britain that is gravely concerned about the misdemeanours of young people who are not properly controlled in local authority homes? I have one such home in my constituency, about which I have battled for at least two years, and all the residents have a long list of problems.

In the latest incident, a young girl was let out at half past two in the morning; she was involved in a car accident and lost a leg. But no child of that age should be able to roam around outside a home at that hour while in the care of the local authority.

Mr. Howard: I have great sympathy with the views of my hon. Friend. Indeed, there are many examples in Birmingham of the large number of offences that have been committed by a very small group of persistent young offenders, for whom the sentence is particularly designed.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Howard: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but then I must make some progress.

Mr. Gunnell: Should not the Home Secretary make it absolutely clear that there is a distinction between the local authority homes, which have just been mentioned, and local authority secure accommodation? Will he acknowledge that Leeds has secure accommodation for 27 children, and that there are plans for its expansion, as he knows? Does he agree that no person has ever got out of that home? Indeed, the Minister of State commented in Committee on the very good standards there. Will he not draw a distinction between children's homes and secure accommodation?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said a few moments ago, he would have heard me explain in some considerable detail why local authority secure accommodation is not appropriate for the group of persistent young offenders for whom the secure training order is particularly designed.

The secure training order will be a sentence of the court. It is Parliament's responsibility to ensure that the effect of any sentence is consistent for all cases. If the amendments are accepted, the secure training order could be served in a wide range of institutions, with varying regimes. Many of the local authority secure units are very small, with places for as few as eight or 12 young people. Persistent offenders will simply not get the training they need if they are dotted around the country in twos and threes in such units.

In contrast, if all secure training orders are served in secure training centres, the courts will have confidence in the regime involved, as it will be underpinned by statutory rules and set out in the contracts with the individual operators.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): My right hon. and learned Friend makes a very important point. It is a question not only of locking youngsters away, but of giving them proper education while they are there. Is he confident that, if the Lords amendment were allowed to stand, the children would receive adequate education tailored to their particular needs?

Mr. Howard: Not only am I not confident that that would happen were the amendments to remain in place, but one of my principal points of opposition to them is that it would be almost impossible to provide the high calibre regime of education and training for those young offenders that it is our intention to provide in secure training centres.

An additional difficulty with the amendments is that they provide the courts with no guidance on which cases should go to secure training centres and which to local authority accommodation. It would be impossible to predict how the courts would use the power to choose between secure training centres and local authority accommodation, or what portions of sentences would be served in custody. It would be necessary to provide accommodation in both centrally provided secure training centres and local authority accommodation, but the proportions would be unforeseeable and there would be a huge element of risk of either under or over-provision in either case.

4 pm

As a result, the measures would be rendered unnecessarily expensive and wasteful of resources. Further pressure would also be placed on the local authority stock of secure accommodation, which, even with the planned expansion to take account of other measures in the Bill, will be insufficient to meet the increased demand created by the need to accommodate juveniles subject to the secure training order.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is the Home Secretary really saying that he needs to provide guaranteed numbers in order to get the private sector to provide training centres? Is that not the real motive for resisting the Lords amendment, which would not stop the setting up of training centres, but might introduce some doubt about whether they would secure the numbers they would require to be economically viable?

Mr. Howard: I have just dealt with that point. As I said, the uncertainty that would arise if the amendments were allowed to stand would mean that the measures would be rendered unnecessarily expensive and wasteful of resources. We know that the Liberal Democrats do not give a fig for resources or for expense, and that there is no responsibility in their attitude to these matters; Governments, however, must approach them rather differently.

Beyond the practical issues in the amendments are important points of principle that concern the Government. As I said a moment ago, the secure training order is a custodial sentence, subject to the Criminal Justice Act 1991: in other words, the length of the sentence should reflect primarily the seriousness of the offence, which is a decision for the court at the point of sentencing.

To allow the courts, in effect, to adjust the length of the custodial part of the sentence at a later date—presumably on account of some change in behaviour or circumstances—would be at odds with that principle. Indeed, it is extremely doubtful whether the courts would welcome such detailed involvement with the future treatment of a young offender after the point of sentencing.

There may be very rare cases in which a juvenile serving the secure part of the secure training order clearly needs to be moved to other accommodation—when he or she develops a mental or physical illness, or when there are grave concerns about his or her ability to cope with the regime.

That is partly why the Bill already contains, in clause 2(4), a power for the Secretary of State to transfer an offender

"where the circumstances of the case require".

It is not intended to use the power routinely, but it provides an avenue to allow the moving of juveniles in exceptional cases, and goes some way towards meeting the aim of the amendments.

The Opposition parties have scaled new heights of double dealing during proceedings on the Bill. Both parties abstained on Third Reading, to avoid the public opprobrium that they richly deserved; yet in debates on the detail of the proposals, they have sought to wreck those proposals at every turn.

The official Opposition, in particular, voted against giving courts the power to lock up persistent young offenders—young people who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) pointed out, have been given every possible chance to reform and have refused it. The public must be protected from them, and the Conservative party would provide that protection; the Opposition would leave the courts with no power whatever to act. By their actions on this part of the Bill,

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the Opposition stand condemned as totally out of touch with public feeling, and we shall make sure that the public never forget it.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Howard: I am happy to give way to the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael).

There are serious and insuperable difficulties in the amendments—difficulties of both practice and principle. For that reason, I urge the House to reject them.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The Home Secretary read his peroration, which was presumably prepared by Conservative central office, with style and drama. The trouble is that nobody believes him. Nobody believes him when he accuses the Opposition of not wishing to place powers in the hands of the courts.

Why is the Home Secretary opposing the Lords amendment? Clearly, he has no faith in the magistrates because it simply gives magistrates courts discretion to deal most effectively with the youngsters who come before them. The Home Secretary wants to take away discretion from the courts. The message of the speech that he has just made is that he does not trust the magistrates.

The Home Secretary should listen to the complaints from, and the concerns of, Conservative Back Benchers. Their complaints and attacks are not about the Lords amendments but about the Government's abject failure to tackle the problems of crime. Is the Home Secretary suggesting that we should leave discretion to him as the only residual way of dealing with inappropriate placements? He must be joking.

The Home Secretary has blamed others for the lack of local authority secure accommodation, but it is the Government, the Conservative party, who have ensured that such accommodation is not available. The delay in providing secure places has been due to the Government's unwillingness to suit their actions to their words. I can give a simple illustration. Long before I came to the House, I was one of many people who campaigned for the provision of secure places to end the scandal of young people aged 15 and 16 being held in adult prison accommodation. They are still being held in adult prison accommodation because, despite the then Home Secretary eventually promising in February 1991 to provide secure places, they have still not been provided. We now have the promise that some of them may just about be delivered this year, but, because of the confusion between the Home Office, the Department of Health and the Welsh Office, the money was not made available and the support was not provided. The Government are to blame.

Mr. Howard: How can the hon. Gentleman blame the Government for the delay in light of the example that I gave the House a few moments ago about the Labour-controlled authorities in the north-east, which gave a commitment in February 1993 to provide those secure accommodation places and had failed to make good that commitment in July 1994? They made that commitment on the basis of what they knew about the arrangements under which the accommodation was to be provided.

Mr. Michael: I like the way in which the Home Secretary leads with his chin every time. He has just read again from the script that he gave us a few moments ago. I gave him an illustration that I have followed over the years and which I know about. There are still no secure places not only in Wales but in other parts of the country because the Government have failed to respond to requests from local authorities to make available the necessary resources and to support their applications. My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) has knowledge of the position in the north.

Ms Armstrong: After hearing the Home Secretary, I am almost lost for words. Many local authorities have been seeking to extend and develop secure accommodation while the Government's record is lamentable. At Medomsley, a new kitchen was built on the existing prison in 1986. That cost £2.5 million and was never opened because the Government got into trouble with their prison policy and closed Medomsley. They now want to build one of these new secure training centres there. There is a planning application with the local council, but the Home Office has failed to pay the planning fee so the council cannot deal with the application.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend has illustrated once again the way in which this muddled and incompetent Government fail to deal with the problem even when they choose the method to do so. I am surprised that the Home Secretary does not want to apologise for the way in which he has failed to deal with the issues.

Mr. Howard: Will the hon. Gentleman now answer the specific example that I put to him and to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) on the precise point of the provision of local authority accommodation? Labour-controlled local authorities in the north-east promised to provide that accommodation in February 1993 and had still not made good that commitment in 1994. What about an answer to that?

Mr. Michael: What about an answer from the Home Secretary about the fact that the local authority requested the Government to fulfil the promise made by the then Home Secretary in February 1991 and that this year the Government have still not delivered the goods? The Home Secretary is not credible. He comes back with the same form of words. My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West has swept him from the board. The Government are responsible for the matter. They have failed to deliver.

We are dealing with another age group—11 to 15-year-olds—on which the Government are failing the country. That group is dealt with in the part of the Bill that the Lords amended. The Government's embarrassment is illustrated by the disgraceful way in which the Home Office Minister portrayed events on the "Today" programme this morning.

At every opportunity, *Hansard* records in the House and in Committee the way in which the parliamentary Labour party has tackled every important issue positively and constructively, including how we deal with young offenders. Those hon. Members who follow the record will know that we set out an alternative agenda on Second Reading that would have tackled crime, nipped young offenders in the bud and dealt with the problems faced by our people. We have opposed the bad ideas, supported the good and proposed positive improvements and alternatives to some of the more muddled ideas proposed by the Government.

Mr. Bermingham: As my hon. Friend said, the Home Secretary has failed. I shall put to my hon. Friend the question that I sought to put to the Home Secretary. What is the position if, having had a child assessed by psychiatrists, educationists and everyone else, all the reports go to the court and the court decides, for example, that the child should go into secure training? What would the position be if it were found that two years were not long enough to secure the re-education and rehabilitation of the child, who still remained a danger to society and needed to be constrained? There is no provision for that.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is right. If the amendment is rejected, varying the time limits would be in the hands only of the Home Secretary. A limited period is specified in the Bill. The Home Secretary would have sole discretion to vary in any direction.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will the hon. Gentleman deal with the point that has just been put to him? In Committee, his party suggested half the length of sentence and a minimum of only one month.

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman would have heard my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) if he had not been so keen to intervene with his prescripted question, which is, of course, inaccurate. In one of the amendments to the Bill, we sought greater discretion over the time that youngsters would be sent to secure accommodation to save the Home Secretary from the mess that he is getting into with this legislation.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Does my hon. Friend agree that the answer to some of the questions that have arisen are in the section on juvenile offenders that is contained in the unanimous report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on juvenile crime? Many of its recommendations have been warmly endorsed by the Opposition Front Bench. The report considers a new national agency scheme that would take charge of the problem of persistent juvenile offenders. I regret to say that, despite all the warm words of the Home Secretary, the report has been ignored by the Home Office.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is right. In the past 12 months, the Home Secretary has been concerned only to score one or two points by implementing some of the measures contained in his speech to the last Conservative party conference. He has been seriously unsuccessful in achieving that end. He would have been much better advised to spend time studying the excellent cross-party report produced by the Home Affairs Select Committee rather than trying to implement his own ideas.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Is he aware that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) is wrong to suggest that the Home Affairs Select Committee concluded that an agency should replace secure training centres? The recommendation was that there should be an agency in addition to secure training centres.

Mr. Michael: The hon. and learned Gentleman's loyalty to his Home Secretary knows no bounds— he should receive some reward. I should have thought, however, that he would be more loyal to the findings of his Committee, rather than leaping in to diminish their value and to defend the Home Secretary.

Mrs. Roche: I took the precaution of bringing the Select Committee's report with me. The recommendation states:

> "We recommend the establishment of a new national agency to manage the custody and supervision of persistent juvenile offenders and others who receive custodial sentences."

It could not be clearer— even to Conservative Members.

Mr. Michael: I wonder whether the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) wishes to intervene once more to withdraw his defence of the Home Secretary and to defend his own Committee, or does he wish to make no further contribution?

4.15 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green is muddled. The Select Committee decided to assume that secure training centres would be implemented by the Government. We went on to propose that, in addition, an agency should consider the running of all these matters at some stage in the future. To suggest that, in some way, the Select Committee was proposing that there should not be secure training centres along the lines that the Government recommend is complete nonsense. Anybody who asserts that clearly has not read the report.

Mr. Michael: I suppose that we should expect an expert advocate to be able to twist and turn in that way, but it says little for the hon. and learned Gentleman and I am sure that members of his Committee will be disappointed to find that he has not been more loyal to their findings.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): The Secretary of State mentioned secure accommodation in the north-east of England. I have just been on the phone to representatives of the social services in Northumberland, who tell me that they are having talks with the Department of Health with a view to trebling the amount of secure accommodation in Northumberland and with authorities in Sunderland and Newcastle on building secure accommodation somewhere in Northumberland. Rather than not doing anything, it looks like the north-east is well ahead of the Home Secretary.

Mr. Michael: I am afraid that the Government always seek to knock the easy target of local government— usually inaccurately and when the error has been made by them rather than by local government. Labour Members are ready to criticise local government when it fails to do its job, but the Government are always ready to criticise local government, even when it is doing a decent job, despite their failure to support and assist its work.

The context of this amendment cannot be disguised by the irrelevancies of Conservative Members' interventions. This is an enormous rag-bag of a Bill, which implements a conference speech that itself was ill-considered. Much

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of the Bill is ill-considered and badly targeted. The Government have failed to take part in sensible discussions and to accept common-sense improvements from the Labour party— or even in this case from Conservative Members of the House of Lords.

The Bill will fail to tackle the real target of reducing crime, speeding up justice, cutting reoffending and making society safer. On a number of issues— custody for young offenders, the protection of innocent people and, above all, criminal injury compensation, which we shall debate later— the Government have handled the programme in a ham-fisted manner and have caused outrage in the House of Lords as well as elsewhere in the country.

In moving the amendment that the Home Secretary wishes to overturn, Lord Carr made it clear that he did not seek to alter or weaken the sentence of the court. That is an important point to remember. The amendment was passed because it is clear that the creation of colleges of crime for 12 to 15-year-olds will cause further problems and will not be an ideal way of meeting the need for secure places for persistent and particularly difficult young offenders. Their lordships sought to mitigate the dangers of the Government's proposition.

Even the Government do not pretend that youngsters will be sent away to a secure unit for ever. Those youngsters will return home at some point and it is crazy deliberately to create a regime that makes preparation for that return more difficult and makes it more likely that a returning youngster will reoffend, and in ways that are more serious and damaging to the community as a whole and to individual victims. That, however, is the truth about the system that the Home Secretary wishes to create. If he is determined to press ahead with his colleges of crime, it is only common sense to allow the courts the discretion to be flexible when deciding where a young person serves part of his sentence. That does not mean discretion to social workers, to the Home Secretary, to managers or to accountants but discretion to magistrates, whose responsibility it is to consider the safety of the public.

The first effect of the amendment would be to enable a court making a secure training order to specify that the period of secure detention is to be spent in local authority secure accommodation rather than a secure training centre. The court could specify that only after consultation with the local authority.

Dame Jill Knight *rose—*

Mr. Michael: I shall give way in a moment. Work by the Dartington social research unit into the benefits of different types of regimes—*[Interruption.]* I understand from the comments of one or two Tory Members that they believe that taking note of research is odd. Like the Prime Minister, they want to understand a little less before taking decisions that will damage the public and the eventual victims.

The research to which I referred—

Dame Jill Knight *rose—*

Mr. Michael: The hon. Lady must contain herself for a moment. Research into the benefits of different regimes reveals that considering the family circumstances of a young person is most likely to achieve success, especially as many young people leaving secure units return to their families.

The Association of Chief Police Officers highlighted the problem with existing secure accommodation in its evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs in February 1993. It stated:

> "in areas of the country where secure places are not available, the young offenders are taken long distances, which often reduces the opportunity for family contacts to be maintained, thus actually increasing the difficulties of the offender and weakening family support when it should be encouraged."

The Government are intent on pressing ahead with that very type of regime in the centres that they propose. The amendment would not stop them doing so, but it would allow the court an element of discretion, and thereby avoid some of the worst effects of the Government's proposals.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman made great play of people using scripts, but I am not using one; nor was my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald). I note that the hon. Gentleman is careful not to leave his script; perhaps he is afraid that he will not be able find the exact spot when he returns to it. The flaw in his argument is that he seems to think that it is perfectly sensible and sound to send tearaway children into local authority care, but, as is the case in Birmingham, local authorities frequently admit that they cannot control those children.

Mr. Michael: It is sensible to proceed logically, which is why I did not want the hon. Lady to interrupt me in the middle of my logical speech. She has just woken up to the subject that we were debating a few minutes ago and from which we have moved on.

Local authorities do sometimes find it difficult to deal with some very difficult young people, and that is why many are frustrated by the fact that the Government have not given them sufficient resources to provide adequate local authority secure places. That is the disgrace. If the hon. Lady does not know enough to appreciate that that is the problem, I suggest that she study the issue with some diligence. I now return to the matter of secure training orders, to which we had proceeded before the she intervened.

The Magistrates Association said:

> "It is vital that links should be maintained with the child's family and community by a designated social worker so as to facilitate rehabilitation. In the Association's view, this can only be achieved in small, locally based units."

It is, therefore, sensible to accept the logic that magistrates should have the opportunity, where appropriate—where an application for an order is made and in the limited circumstances dealt with in the amendment—to consider whether it is appropriate to vary where a young person is placed.

Mr. Stephen: We all know that there are good parents and bad parents. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that all too often the parents, because of their own criminal or other deviant behaviour, are part of the problem?

Mr. Michael: That is sometimes true, and that is the sort of factor that magistrates should take into account in exercising the discretion that the Lords amendments would give them. If the hon. Gentleman considers that point, he may find himself in agreement with the sense of the Lords amendment, because it does not fly in the face of his argument.

Secondly, the courts would be able to decide that the regime in a local authority secure unit, including education and training, would be more appropriate for the young offender than the regime in a secure training centre. There has been considerable discussion on the matter, and there is much evidence to support that case.

The Minister responding to the debate in the House of Lords suggested that secure training centres would deal specifically with persistent offenders and would therefore be better able to provide a regime to tackle offending behaviour. However—this answers the objections of a couple of hon. Members—the criterion in the Bill for the use of the order is that a young person should have been convicted of at least three imprisonable offences, not necessarily on different occasions. That would include many young offenders who are not very persistent.

The Minister in the House of Lords also said that the age group would be relatively small, but, as clause 5(2) makes clear, secure training centres will accommodate young people between 12 and nearly 17. The oldest will be those who were sentenced when nearly 15 to a two-year order, and who have been recalled from supervision to the institution after release. That wide age group, and the likely sophistication of some of the inhabitants of the homes, give us cause to worry that they will develop into colleges of crime, rather than places that will return young people to the community more likely to obey the law.

The Home Office's research has shown that local authority secure units provide a better quality of regime for young people than do larger institutions. A court may therefore prefer to commit the young offender to a small local authority secure unit that would provide more individual personal attention and therapy, and a less institutional atmosphere, than a larger secure training centre. Such a unit may also be able to prepare the way for continuity when the young person is released.

Where a court wished a young offender to be held in local authority secure accommodation rather than in a secure training centre, the Lords amendments would give it that choice. Obviously, such a choice would be based on the evidence and the facts, and would be made only in the narrow set of circumstances set out in the amendments.

There are several circumstances in which the power to exercise flexibility over the period of detention might be used. First, a court may commit a juvenile to a secure training centre many miles from his or her home area, although it feels that detention in local authority secure accommodation would have been more appropriate, if no such place is available at the time of sentence. A local authority place may become available later, and it may be clear to the secure training centre staff that the child would be more appropriately held in such a place.

That is a simple example of a situation in which it would be common sense for such a variation to be made. It is not adequate to say that the Home Secretary could exercise the power in such circumstances. We all know about the bureaucracy that is involved in getting such a decision to the point of being reviewed by the Home Secretary. Some of the young people would probably be pensioners by the time that process was complete.

Secondly, a child in a secure training centre may be disturbed or suicidal, and the way in which training and treatment is provided may make a local placement more appropriate. Thirdly, a child in a secure training centre may make excellent progress and respond positively to the regime there.

Following assessment of a child committed either to a secure training centre or to a local authority secure unit, it may become clear that he or she would be more appropriately placed in an open community home, with foster parents or in some other manner that would be more effective in preventing future offending. Surely that should be our priority—to prevent future offending, to avoid future crime and to protect people who could become victims. Finally, there could be circumstances such as compassionate grounds—for example, the death or serious illness of a close relative—which would make a transfer to accommodation nearer to the home area desirable.

Those are just a small number of examples of when it would be appropriate to employ the flexibility provided by the Lords amendments. I do not envisage that the flexibility provided by the Lords amendments would be used on that many occasions. That is why I find it difficult to understand why the Home Secretary is so negative in refusing to accept them.

4.30 pm

Dr. Godman: I intervened briefly on the Home Secretary to ask for confirmation that the measure or the related measures do not extend to Scotland. I should be grateful for the confirmation of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on that point. We may well be facing something much more formidable in the proposed criminal justice Bill for Scotland, which, I think, will be announced in the forthcoming Queen's speech.

Mr. Michael: I am always prepared to sympathise with my hon. Friend about likely developments in Scotland, but it is very unwise for an English or a Welsh hon. Member to comment on them. My understanding is that we are talking about a matter that will affect England and Wales. It will be interesting to see what legislation there will be in the next Session and whether the Home Secretary will succeed in blocking the bringing forward of a Bill to provide a body to deal with miscarriages of justice or whether the Lord Chancellor will succeed in pressing for that legislation, which was one of the 27 points which, still, have not been delivered. With my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), I shall look with interest to see what is set out in the Queen's speech.

In practice, it seems that the directors of secure training centres, which, of course, will be run by private commercial organisations that have a direct financial interest in maintaining high occupancy, may not often apply to a court to move a child elsewhere. Nevertheless, the amendments, if accepted, would introduce a desirable element of flexibility, subject at all stages to court decisions, into the operation of the secure training order. Our objective should be to ensure that the secure training order, in view of the Minister's insistence in proceeding with it, is as workable as possible.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the contents of the whole part of the Bill under discussion

[Mr. Bermingham]

were a poor attempt to bring real care and training to the young who offend and re-offend? It was once again a hurried measure, by a hurried Home Secretary, who has hurried ideas and who hurriedly fails every time.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is quite right. The measures were put into a statement in the House without thought, and even without consultation with the Department of the Home Secretary's predecessor, who, unfortunately, did not have the sense or gumption to think things through, to listen to the Select Committee on Home Affairs and to come up with something a good deal more sensible. The problem today is that we are able only to consider the Lords amendments, which provide a limited opportunity to introduce a little flexibility and common sense into the measures that have already passed through the House. For the acceptance of that little bit of common sense, rather than simply to look for a quick fix or a quick headline, I appeal to the House. That little element of flexibility would not undermine or damage what the Home Secretary seeks to do. It would simply provide a little common sense—

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Michael:—which would allow the system to be slightly better targeted and less damaging than it could otherwise become. I shall give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman if he can hold his breath until I get to the end of a sentence.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I wish that he had held his breath a little longer. Will the Labour party give a commitment to implement the agency that was recommended by the Select Committee on Home Affairs and about which the hon. Gentleman has said much this afternoon?

Mr. Michael: It took a long time for the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee to think up that question and to return to his feet. We would be far more interested if he would tell us whether he would press his Home Secretary to implement that recommendation—or, has he so little confidence in the recommendations of his own Committee that he is not bothering to do so, and so little interest in the recommendations of his own Committee that he did do not even know that that recommendation was there until my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green produced the evidence? During the passage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, we made clear the constructive alternative strategy that we would adopt. That strategy would succeed in dealing with problems of crime, which are not even addressed by the Home Secretary or the Government.

I understand why the Government and their tame Back Benchers wish to distract attention from the wording of the Lords amendment. They want to do that because the amendment is modest. Indeed, it was tabled by a Conservative peer in an attempt to prevent the Government from digging themselves even deeper into difficulties in future. That is why the House should accept these modest amendments which were passed in another place.

Mr. John Greenway: The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), tried very hard to disguise the fact that the Labour party is opposed to secure training units and to the provision in the Bill, but he failed. The public, who are crying out for something to be done about persistent juvenile offenders—

Ms Armstrong: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No, I have hardly started my speech.

The public, who are crying out for something to be done about persistent juvenile offenders, will note the Labour party's attitude. I want to bring a more dispassionate approach to the issue because, although we can have party political arguments in this place, people of all parties want something to be done about persistent juvenile offenders. That is what the Bill attempts to achieve.

Ms Armstrong: Is it not true that none of the centres will be built or in operation before the next election? Is not the real reason why the Home Secretary refused to answer my earlier intervention that nothing in relation to the secure training orders will be up and running before then? The Government cannot even get round to paying the planning fee to make progress with the planning application.

Mr. Greenway: I have some sympathy with the idea that it is taking too long to get the secure training units up and running. However, I can tell the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) and the Labour party that it might have been helpful if, when the legislation was passed a year ago, the House had accepted it with enthusiasm. Instead of its taking a year to get the measures through Parliament, we could then have had the legislation on the statute book six months ago and—for reasons which will become obvious—that would have been very helpful in a particular case.

I said that I wanted to try to take a dispassionate view of the matter. In supporting what my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary wants to do, I want to refer to the case of a 14-year-old boy who appeared at York youth court on Monday. That 14-year-old has acquired the nickname "Blip Boy" because of his effect on police crime statistics in the York area. He has already been convicted of 38 burglaries and thefts. At York youth court on Monday he admitted a string of further offences which included five burglaries and attempted burglaries, theft and handling, aggravated vehicle taking, assaults, possessing controlled drugs and possessing an offensive weapon, all—and this is the point—while he was living in social services accommodation in North Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.

Lady Barron, wife of Sir Donald Barron who is much respected and a very senior public figure in the York area—as is Lady Barron—and apolitical in the extreme, said that she would have liked to have given that 14-year-old boy a custodial sentence, but she could not do so. All she was able to do was to give him a two-year supervision order—but had it been within her power to give a form of custodial sentence, that would have been the court's preference.

I want to refer to some of the things that that young man has done. A 65-year-old woman required hospital treatment after she was assaulted by the boy when she spotted him burgling a neighbour's house. The youngster has also assaulted social workers who tried to restrain him in social services accommodation.

I am told by York magistrates court that the young man in question fulfils all the conditions set out in the Bill for a secure training order. He has already been the subject of several section 25 orders and has a long record of absconding from local authority secure accommodation. A senior figure at the court told me this morning that it is highly probable that, as long ago as six months, the court would have preferred to give the youth a custodial sentence, because it was perfectly obvious that every other measure had failed—and not for want of trying. The social services had tried everything without success. I do not criticise them for that; indeed, the House should commend the work of social services departments that are trying to deal with these juvenile offenders. The fact is that they cannot always succeed, however. The task is beyond them. We need something else, and that is why the secure training orders are so important.

Mr. Beith: Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that, with the Lords amendment, such a person could be made the subject of a secure training order as soon as the Bill receives Royal Assent, when an obligation would be placed on a local authority to keep the person in secure accommodation? If the amendment is not agreed to, we shall have to wait until one of these centres has been built before anyone can be given a secure training order.

Mr. Greenway: I understand that, but we are dealing with legislation that will have to apply for a long time to come, not just the next six months or so. I do not therefore believe that we should take the route proposed in the Lords amendment. Magistrates, after all, will not be compelled to sentence a juvenile offender to a secure training order. They will still have at their disposal the whole current range of sentences, including a supervision order, or a requirement to be in local authority social services accommodation, or a section 25 order: none of that will change.

We need a clear-cut alternative that goes beyond what is currently available. The Select Committee report mentioned 200 or 300 youngsters in this context, although that report was referred to today with considerable inaccuracy by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. When we scrutinised this matter early last year, we were told that 200 or 300 places would probably be required, and there will have to be specialist care, education and training in them. I do not see such care being provided in local authority accommodation. It will require a special kind of unit, and that is what the Government want to provide.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West talked about the speed with which the system could be put in place. It is clear to me that the secure training units need to be built as quickly as possible. If my right hon. and learned Friend catches your eye later in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that he will tell us how quickly he believes the units can be established. This matter has nothing to do with whether magistrates or police officers support the Conservative party, another party or no party. They all genuinely believe, with the public, that magistrates do not now have at their disposal what they need to deal with these youngsters. So we should give secure training units a try. If people are watching our debate this afternoon, they will see that, once again, the Government have come up with an imaginative idea to respond to public concerns, but that the Labour party has confirmed yet again that it does not have a single policy on how to deal with these youngsters.

4.45 pm

Mr. Beith: I do not think that the conclusion of the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) followed from his argument. His argument was that there is an urgent problem, which he instanced by a case from his area. He then failed to recognise that a more immediate way of dealing with that problem is to allow secure training orders to go ahead under the terms of the Lords amendment, which would allow them to be brought into effect straight away using existing local authority secure accommodation. The Government have belatedly provided for more such accommodation and for an increase in the number of places available in it.

It ought to be common ground that such measures arise because of genuine public concern about the fact that there are at least some young offenders who have frequently absconded from the accommodation in which they were placed and who have persistently reoffended. There is certainly a small number of very persistent young offenders who have received a great deal of press attention and who present the public with serious problems. There is therefore genuine anxiety on the part of the public, who want reassurance that the courts, empowered by this House, can put such people in places from which they cannot abscond and then reoffend. They should also be given the right training and education while they are locked away in the right sort of accommodation.

How one sets about that is the subject of some public argument at the moment—what should the legal framework be? The Lords have genuinely considered the Government's approach; they have not thrown it out of the window, but have sought to modify it and to give the courts a choice. A reason offered for legislative action in this area has been the belief that the courts did not have enough options open to them. One hears magistrates say in private that they feel that their hands are tied. One effect of the Lords amendment is to untie their hands and to give them more than one way of applying a secure training order.

Listening to the Home Secretary, one might imagine that the amendment was the product of rabid anarchists. In fact, it was moved by, and carried with the support of, members of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's own party—indeed, the amendments were moved by one of his distinguished predecessors in the course of a responsible discussion of a difficult problem. The amendments came about because of the considerable experience of some Members of another place, several of whom served in Conservative Governments.

Listening to the Home Secretary, one might also imagine that the amendments will affect a large number of young offenders and will, if left in the Bill, undermine work with a large number of them and delay its effectiveness. None of those suggestions is true. We are talking about only 200 young offenders who could be the subject of such orders—that at least is the maximum number of places that will be initially provided.

If the Lords amendments are not agreed to, there will be delay and no chance of bringing in secure training orders until the places in the private sector institutions are provided. With the amendments, the Bill could be

[Mr. Beith]

effective from the moment of Royal Assent, and the orders could be used as a means of dealing with young offenders.

One could also be forgiven for imagining, from what the Home Secretary said, that the Government have a clear picture of the kind of regime of supervision and training that will do the trick in the institutions. Several times the Home Secretary said that, with their 40 young people each, the institutions will enjoy the right supervision, training and education regimes. That betrays a degree of knowledge about what we are going to do with these people which neither I nor many professionals in the field claim to share. There is no such certainty about what measures will effectively help some young offenders to lead useful lives and to abandon the ways of crime into which they have entered at such an extraordinarily early age.

There is a great deal of professional discussion of such issues. All the experience of recent years suggests that Home Secretaries who come along with solutions turn out not to have them at all. What happened to the short sharp shock that was supposed to be a proven method of dealing with young offenders? We have it no more because it did not work. The borstals and approved schools went because gathering together large numbers of persistent young offenders in such regimes did not appear to work. It was not that Ministers thought they were unpleasant or undesirable institutions; they simply had a high reoffending rate and other means had to be sought to deal with the problem. The Home Secretary should not glibly use phrases such as "an appropriate regime of education and training" as though there were a known and recognised answer to the problem.

Clearly, improving youngsters' education so that they have the opportunity to make a useful life must be part of the exercise. Some young people who become involved in that level of crime appear to be pretty intelligent and shrewd about how to carry out crimes and how to evade them. They have energies which need to be channelled effectively. A number of them are clearly in need of discipline and a framework in which they can begin to understand that they have obligations to others.

One can see some of the elements, but pretending that one has the right answer has been the mistake of successive Home Secretaries. The present Home Secretary would be wise not to make that mistake, particularly given that his own Department's research casts such doubt on the matter. The Home Office research and planning unit paper No.66, entitled "Juveniles Sentenced for Serious Offences", published in 1992, states:

> "The study also found that offenders who had been in secure units in the local authority community home system were significantly less likely to have been reconvicted two years after release than those released from young offender institutions."

The research evidence does not suggest that there is an alternative regime in a different institution which we know will work. We are arguing only about how we can guarantee the security that the public require; there is no menu of better methods of providing training for young people readily available.

The professionals working with this age group in local authority homes and social service departments or with the next age group in young offender institutions are trying with great difficulty to deal with changes that society has thrown at them. It is an extremely challenging task to which there are no simple answers.

Clearly, in some cases there are arguments strongly in favour of the smaller local authority home with secure places. A larger institution may offer less prospect of building up stable relationships with staff for children of 12 or 13 who have had no stable home relationships and for whom a purely institutional environment with no stable relationships with other people may offer no way out of the way in which they have traditionally reacted to the lack of stability in their lives.

Mr. Stephen: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, local authorities have had secure accommodation for quite some time. Could he explain why they have not so far succeeded in solving the problem?

Mr. Beith: I do not think that anyone has the solution to the problem; that is the burden of what I am saying. Nor should the Home Secretary pretend that he has the solution. One result of our discussions is that it will be possible and accepted for local authorities to apply greater security in their own secure accommodation places, and the new institutions, when created, should also be secure, but that says very little about the effectiveness of the regimes within them.

Young people will not be in those places for long. Two years later, they will be out in the community with the possibility of committing many more crimes. Indeed, they will be entering the peak ages at which young people commit crimes and they will pose a threat to many more potential victims of crime if they do not come out with a better attitude than that with which they went in. That is why, in particular cases, the court is entitled to examine whether it is likely that a particular young person might be better placed in a small local authority home, which has secure accommodation with the prospect of building up stable relationships, than in a large institution where that child might become the prey of many other hard young offenders, perhaps with greater criminal experience and tendency than him or her.

There is also the problem of distance. The secure training units will be limited in number and may be so far from the homes of some young people that making plans to readmit them into the community at the end of the order or sentence will be difficult. Parental, family or friend contact, which may be crucial in getting them back into society, cannot be achieved.

Clearly, the circumstances may vary. The Lords amendment is asking only for the opportunity for the court to choose in the light of the various circumstances. Indeed, it provides the opportunity for the court to be convinced by the initial experience of private sector secure training units that they offer a better regime for certain youngsters. I remain to be convinced of that, but there seems no good reason why the court should not have the option to place the child in one or other type of institution.

I return to the point that I made to the Home Secretary in an intervention. His resistance to the Lords amendment is driven by the belief that he has to offer the private sector a tempting deal. He has to be able to say to the private sector, "Do not worry. The courts will not be able to send them anywhere else. They will have to send them to you, so your capital will not be at risk. You will have a guaranteed number of places." That is one of the difficulties—and there are a number—about relying on the private sector to provide crucial facilities for custody and for taking away liberty because someone represents a threat to society.

We have great reservations about the privatisation process in the prisons. Taking away people's liberty for the good reason that their liberty poses a threat to society is something that the state does in limited circumstances and over which the state ought to exercise firm authority and control on everyone's behalf.

The Lords amendment is a reasonable compromise with the Government's position. The associated amendments, which provide opportunity for subsequent movement from a local authority place to a secure training centre or vice versa, represent a useful element of flexibility for the court, but not for the Home Secretary or social services departments.

If the Home Secretary were not so worried about the need to offer the private sector a financially reliable deal, he would accept the Lords amendments and recognise that his faith in the secure training units could be tested against the possibility of local authority places being more appropriate for some youngsters.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Was not the response of the Opposition to my right hon. and learned Friend's exposition of the justification for secure training orders amazing? It was utterly wide of the mark, it was wrong in comprehension, and one can only assume that it was delivered in a state of panic, because the words of their leader—"tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime"—is so manifestly contrary to the way in which the Labour party has behaved in the House over the past 15 years.

If the Labour party were tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, it would have supported the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, it would have supported the various Criminal Justice Acts, Public Order Acts, and Prevention of Terrorism Acts. The embarrassment of the Labour party is in realising that it has opposed all those measures because it can not carry its supporters in the House, while the public are totally on the side of stronger action being taken to reduce terrorism and crime in all its forms. That embarrassment causes the Opposition to behave in a totally illogical and incomprehensible way when we propose reasonable, sound and sensible suggestions.

Mr. Michael *rose—*

Mr. Bermingham *rose—*

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. He must have an opportunity to respond. I should like to hear whether his response is any different from the responses we have heard when the same accusation has been made before.

Labour opposition to the secure training centre and to the secure training order shows that the words "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime" were just an act; they are just empty words meant for television.

Mr. Michael: I wonder whether the hon. and learned Gentleman can summon up rather greater accuracy than he has so far. Will he explain why he followed the Home Secretary into voting down a variety of proposals that were made in Committee—such as the idea of a national strategy to deal with drugs and drug-related crime and measures to deal with weapons and a variety of other issues? His case is the one that the Conservative central office puts out, but it is not accurate.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: When the Government make proposals, they make practical proposals. When the Opposition make proposals, they make absolutely impractical proposals, which are often complete and utter nonsense, even though they continue saying that they will be tough on crime.

I would not be allowed to take up the time of the House in replying in detail to what the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said, but so many of the proposals are completely impracticable nonsense. If they had had any merit, the Government would have supported them. Proposals are not made by the Labour party only; the Government always consult many organisations before reaching conclusions.

We have just heard nonsense about the Home Affairs Committee report. There has been a total misunderstanding. It shows that the Labour party is flailing again. It is as though members of the Labour party think that, by flailing their arms about and trying to attack, they give the impression that they are being tough on crime. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), who no doubt will make her contribution, confused herself, but certainly the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth confused himself.

5 pm

When we proposed a new national agency to manage the custody and supervision of persistent juvenile offenders and other people who receive custodial sentences, we were suggesting its introduction over a longer period. It was not meant to be an immediate replacement for our suggestion of secure training orders. We made that clear in our report:

> "on the assumption that the Government does intend to press ahead with its present plans for secure training orders, there are a number of points which we believe to be crucial."

We then suggested ways in which the secure training orders might be improved; some of the suggestions have been taken up by the Government. We suggested that there should be a qualifying threshold and we suggested certain provisions, some of which the Government have adopted.

We spoke about the size of the centres and concluded that

> "there should be a wide spread of units each containing no more than 15 inmates, though in large centres of population it may be possible for more than one unit to be sited together."

We spoke about intensive staffing of those secure training centres, recommending that

> "a staffing ratio of at least two staff to each inmate should be the norm."

We spoke about education and training in the secure training centres, and we said that we believed that

> "the emphasis of any custodial regime for young people must be more educational and therapeutic than punitive."

We spoke about the length of time to be served and we recommended that

> "there should normally be a minimum period of six months served in custody"—

a recommendation which was rejected by members of the Opposition—

"following which, according to his or her response, the individual should be . . . freed to intensive community supervision".

We spoke about aftercare in the secure training orders, recommending

"intensive supervision for those sentenced to secure training orders as soon as they are judged fit to return to the community".

We recommended

"that the Home Office learn from the lessons of private sector involvement"—

I emphasise that—

"in the prison service before granting any contracts to the private sector to run centres where secure training orders will be served."

All that is on the basis that there is to be a secure training order. It is not on the basis that there should be no secure training order. It is nonsense to suggest the contrary, and it misleads anyone who is listening to the debate.

Mrs. Roche: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way, but it is obvious that he is completely muddled himself—not for the first time. If the hon. and learned Gentleman reads the report carefully, he will see that, leaving aside the issue of secure training orders, which the Committee did not consider one way or the other, the Committee entitled that section of the report on the new national agency "A more radical" approach.

I asked my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) why we had not heard from the Government and the Home Secretary when they would implement that more radical approach, which they appeared to have welcomed cautiously when our report was published. It appears that the hon. and learned Gentleman has completely muddled the entire subject.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: If that is what the hon. Lady intended, it is not what she said. Certainly, it was not what the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth understood the hon. Lady to say. If she is going on to say that we did not even consider the secure training orders, I have just read out page after page of our report in which we suggest certain measures that the Government may take with their secure training orders.

Furthermore, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has the effrontery to take the position that the Government should respond to the youth agency proposal, when his party refuses to commit itself to that. If one wants a classic example of the Labour party's total confusion and flailing about, what better example than that?

The hon. Gentleman asks why the Government do not accept the proposal of the Home Affairs Select Committee to create that agency and, when asked whether he would implement it, refuses to answer the question, simply because he cannot say yes, will not say yes and does not want to say yes. If the Opposition believe that the public will be impressed by that performance, they have another think coming to them.

The basis of our proposal for secure training orders is that the public are fed up with the hard core of persistent juvenile offenders who have gone on and on committing offences, and the magistrates and Crown court judges have asked repeatedly for a means of tackling the problem. Local authority provision has never been adequate to deal with hard-core persistent juvenile offenders, of which there are not many.

When the Home Affairs Select Committee went to America, we asked, "How do you deal with your hard-core persistent juvenile offenders?" They asked us, "How many are you talking about?" We said, "Two or three hundred." They asked, "Which town are you talking about?" We said, "That is in the whole of the country," and they said, "We have 300 or 400 hard-core persistent juvenile offenders in every town and city in the United States of America."

However, we learned from the Massachusetts experiment, which we went there to watch. We drew conclusions, and we recommended that, in the fullness of time, one agency should control the sentencing of all young offenders. However, we cannot implement that in the short term.

Opposition Members ask why we have not implemented all that already. It will take even longer if we follow an agency route, which will take many years to develop. I hope that we shall do that in due course. The Government have not ruled it out.

Mr. John Greenway: Was it not also the case that, under the Massachusetts experiment, any youngster, from the age of 12 or 13, who was sentenced to one of the orders, which would put them under the control of that agency, would be under the control of that agency until the age of 18, and could be recalled to custody by those who ran the agency at any time during that five or six-year period? Would not that be a radical departure from everything that Labour Members have said this afternoon?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Another radical departure would be the recommendation—with which we do not agree—that one cannot re-programme children's minds, if they are going badly wrong, in as little as six months. One may need years. We may have to bite that bullet in due course. Young offenders who are taken out of circulation because they are persistently evil and go off the rails time and again may need longer than six months, even under secure training orders, for the full weight of re-programming facilities to be brought to bear effectively on them.

However, that is for another time. For the moment, let us do what we can, as efficiently and as effectively as possible, to tackle the public's worry about the persistent hard core of juvenile offenders who have committed so many of the appalling crimes that we have heard about recently, and for which the secure training order is a positive solution.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): What really upsets my constituents is that so few people commit so many offences, and that, while they are not in custody, they are leading local gangs. One per cent. of those in the age group commit 60 per cent. of offences. In a market town in my constituency, a custodial sentence was imposed on some youngsters which meant that they were out of circulation. While they were out of circulation, they were not committing burglaries.

If they have a tough custodial regime, they come out not as the Opposition would suggest, but with pride in themselves, because they have learnt something. They have become healthy. They have found that they can do something and achieve something in life. That is the point—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. That is a long intervention.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: But it was a good intervention, with which I agree.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Will my hon. and learned Friend note that, in the Vale of Glamorgan, close to the constituency of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), there is a council home from which young offenders have been able to wander at will and commit further offences, such as taking without consent? My constituents are crying out for the provision of secure units to which young offenders can be sent. When a couple of offenders from Llantwit Major in my constituency were sent away by the court to an institution in England, there was an immediate dramatic drop in the offender rate in that small town.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I agree with my hon. Friend. It touches on another point that we learned in Massachusetts. One of the important requirements for giving secure training to young offenders is the need to separate them from their bad influences, from the gangs and perhaps from their bad families. It is all very well having institutions close to where their families and friends with bad influence can visit, but Massachusetts told us that they must be put a long way away, so that they are totally removed.

The Government are not proposing to do that. They have a humane attitude to this—although they may have to adapt that attitude in due course. I am not saying that our suggestions are 100 per cent. perfect. That kind of change may be needed if what is proposed does not work. As we say, we will suck it and see.

Perhaps the Government are right and Massachusetts is wrong. If the Government are right, we can carry on with such close co-ordination between the secure training centres and the family homes from which the young offenders come. That is an important point, which I hope my right hon. and learned Friend will bear in mind.

We have said, "This is the problem, and this is a positive solution, which has general support." When we go round and explain it to our constituents, whether Conservative or not, they say, "Good, excellent, splendid." They simply cannot understand the Opposition being opposed to it.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that those who are calling most for such a provision are judges, recorders, assistant recorders and magistrates, as well as the rest of the population? They have been crying out for years for more secure accommodation for the worst of the young offenders.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Yes, of course. I am sorry that I put that point so badly earlier that my hon. Friend had not accepted it then.

The Lords amendments will undermine a provision which is sensible, practicable, and which has the support of the overwhelming majority of people, including the judges. The amendments suggest what the Labour party has always suggested, which is that its own power base, the local authorities, where it is often in a substantial majority, can deal with the question of young offenders much more effectively than any other institution. Apart from the fact that that has never been proven in the past, which is one reason we have come to this situation, it is totally impracticable.

5.15 pm

Opposition Members do not seem to have grasped the point that what we want to do with young offenders, to re-programme their minds by education and training and one-to-one hands-on help, cannot be done in local authority care. One reason is that local authority institutions are not just for persistent hard-core juvenile offenders: they are for all other kinds of juvenile offenders, who might be much less to blame and have done much less wrong than the hard-core persistent offenders.

To put the two together in the same institution will only make the less bad worse, because the persistent hard-core juvenile offenders are what we say they are—hard-core, hard-bitten; it has gone into their souls. We must somehow get hold of their souls and change them. They will be the strong ones influencing those who have done wrong, but not so much wrong.

Those local authority institutions have children in care who have done no wrong. Why should they be locked in secure accommodation with hard-core persistent offenders who will teach them their bad ways? There is no way under the existing situation, preferred by Opposition Members and Members of the other place who supported the amendments, that we can hive off those who are less guilty of crime and those who are guilty of no crime at all from those who are persistent hard-core juvenile offenders, unless one has a new institution for the last group.

It is not just that that is impractical; it is that the heart of local authorities has never been in dealing with the worst kind of offenders. When one goes round, they say, "We are local authorities. We are social services. We are not here to punish the bad. We are not even here to educate. We cannot. We do not have the resources, the powers or the facilities to do so." Their heart is not in it.

Their solution to the hard-core persistent juvenile offender has too often been to give them a holiday, send them to Center Parcs or on safari; let them see what the good life is and perhaps they will be good in order to get the good life rather than bad. But as so many offenders have said when they have come back from such holidays, "They must be joking. Whoever thought that I would change after I had been to Center Parcs or on safari somewhere in Egypt? They must be mad."

Mr. Bermingham: What has that got to do with the amendment?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: That is the kind of attitude that the local authorities have to dealing with persistent juvenile offenders. It is no good, it does not work and it is not what the public want. It is certainly not the sort of remedy that judges, whether magistrates or Crown court judges, want to pass by way of judgment.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that this very day listening to this debate is a group of parents who have come all the way down from Scotland, from the Strathclyde and

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

Dumbartonshire area, where 500 young children have been killed in the past five years by dangerous drivers, many of whom are juveniles? They think that six months' detention is a totally inadequate punishment for the bereavement that they have suffered.

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Lady has clearly not read the Bill. It does not apply to Scotland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for me.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Yes, but my hon. Friend was making a point which applies as much to England and Wales as to Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is a general point. People are concerned, and it is because of that concern that the Government are doing something concrete which the Opposition do not wish to see done.

Not only is the local authorities' heart not in it, but we can see that local authorities are not anxious to be involved from the interesting point that my right hon. and learned Friend made about the meeting of the Labour-controlled local authorities in February 1993 at which they suggested action by July but nothing happened.

No action is being taken because their hearts are not in it. They do not believe that local authorities or social services exist for that purpose. Members of the Home Affairs Select Committee visited some facilities. At one of them, we were told that the cost to the local authority of caring for one person was in excess of £3,000 per week. If that is the best that a local authority can do with taxpayers' money in dealing with hard-core, persistent juvenile offenders, it requires another think, more management and a different organisation.

The Government do not intend to introduce a new form of borstal, approved school or glasshouse—all of which institutions, I agree, have not proved successful. They propose nothing less than the re-programming of children's minds when they have gone off the rails. That requires education, training, care and love, as well as punishment and discipline. That cannot be done by local authorities, but only by a specially dedicated organisation, which the Government are establishing.

Opposition Members say that local authorities could provide a satisfactory alternative, but all the evidence shows that that alternative has never been and can never be satisfactory. Their proposals would only undermine what the Government will achieve by taking a positive step to deal with hard-core, persistent offenders. It may not be 100 per cent. good, but it is 80 per cent. good. We can continue to improve it, and it will work. To do other than to reverse the amendments and to give the plan a chance would be madness.

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): The amendments would give a court making a training order the discretion to specify that the period of detention should be served in local authority secure accommodation rather than in a secure training centre. That appears to be a reasonable and flexible amendment. Clause 2(2) seems to allow the court to commit an offender, if a place is not available at a secure training centre, to a local authority-registered children's or voluntary organisation home. It does not stipulate that it should be a secure place. I am sure that it would not go down particularly well with some hon. Members if young people sentenced to a secure training order were, because of a lack of sufficient appropriate accommodation, placed in children's homes. That would create the problems complained of this afternoon. Perhaps the Home Secretary will clarify whether that could happen.

The Government are trying to deal with the complex problem of juvenile crime with a simplistic solution and are paying little attention to its likely effectiveness. To put juvenile offending in perspective, the number of juvenile offenders in Stockport in 1990 totalled 1,600 and in 1993, 1,400. The major offences were shoplifting, youth car crime, public order transgressions and nuisance—basically, kids on the street. A small group was involved in drug dealing and protection. All those are of great public concern—especially car crime and shoplifting, which cause higher insurance premiums and food prices.

A study by Stockport's Youth Justice team of all juveniles who appeared before Stockport juvenile and Stockport youth courts between 1 January 1990 and 31 March 1994 revealed that from a total of 1,500, four boys legally fitted the terms of the secure training order. At the time of sentencing, the magistrates could have imposed a custodial sentence on three of the boys but did not do so. That leaves only one boy who could have been committed to a secure training centre, which would have made little impact on Stockport's crime statistics and would not have greatly improved its residents' quality of life.

A fraction of the juveniles who come before the courts merit supervision orders. I mention that because breach of a supervision order is one precondition for a secure training order.

Youth offenders have complex problems. School exclusions have rocketed and there are high illiteracy rates, complex problems at home and lack of parental control. Parents who seek help have little preventive support until the problem becomes so acute that there is statutory intervention. It is largely a question of resources being applied to stop juveniles offending. Perhaps statutory responsibilities on local authorities under the Children Act 1989 need to be properly funded and monitored. One cannot disentangle the provisions of that Act from legislation on juvenile justice.

The Home Secretary announced new national standards for supervision orders.

Mr. John Greenway: Good for him.

Ms Coffey: Exactly—well done, but making sure that supervision orders work is labour intensive and time consuming. The Home Secretary has not put the necessary resources behind those new standards, which is a pity because supervision orders can be effective. Some 80 per cent. of those who serve custodial sentences reoffend, but only 55 per cent. of those who undergo non-custodial treatment do so. One does not need to be a genius to know why. If children are kept in a normal environment, they will mature. If they are placed in an institution that contains a criminal sub-group, all that they will learn are further criminal attitudes and values. That is why community treatment is much more effective than custodial sentencing.

Mr. Stephen: Does the hon. Lady agree that one reason why juveniles who serve custodial sentences reoffend is that in this country, a young person is not placed in custody unless he or she has exhausted almost every other way of being dealt with? We are dealing with the hard core who are put into custody, and it is hardly surprising that they reoffend.

Ms Coffey: Even in the case of hard-core offenders, all the statistics show that placing them in prescriptive custodial care does not help them in the long run, if one wants to avoid such offenders spending their juvenile lives in custodial care and their adult lives in gaol—something that no hon. Member wants.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough) *rose—*

Ms Coffey: I must press on. Crime must be tackled early. Children must be kept in education, because their exclusion from school is not helpful. A preventive duty on local authorities must be given high priority, bail support schemes should be properly funded, and youth provision must be re-examined because that is a cornerstone in crime prevention.

Perhaps children should be placed in children's homes as part of a preventive strategy. I view that as community treatment, in an effort to stop children offending before they become eligible for custodial sentences that include secure training orders. However, local authority children's homes are closing because of budget pressures, and recommendations to improve residential care in the public and private sectors, national standards and training have not been implemented by the Government. Perhaps the Home Secretary will talk to the Minister with responsibility for children's homes about introducing new standards for them, to complement the right hon. and learned Gentleman's national standards for supervision.

Unless standards improve and there is increased availability of appropriate places to meet children's needs, the amendments—welcome as they are—would still compel local authorities to place children hundreds of miles from their homes, with placements dictated by cost rather than needs. The cost of crime to the public is high. Preventive measures also cost money, but crime prevention is complex, and the measures that I have mentioned will reduce crime, to the benefit of the community. That is what it is about. Opposition Members know that there are children who need control, who need to be placed away from home, and who need to be in secure accommodation, but let not Conservative Members pretend that that is a solution to the problem of juvenile crime. It is not and it is not enough.

Mr. Bermingham: I sought to intervene some six times on the Home Secretary to ask him a simple question: what if the miscreant needed more than two years' retraining? He did not let me intervene. I suspect that he guessed that the question was coming. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who is the Opposition spokesman, allowed me to intervene, and he did know the answer. It does cover it. That is the problem with this part of the Bill.

5.30 pm

I have been on the Home Affairs Select Committee for the best part of 10 years. I have been a practising barrister and declare an interest. In that time, I have had the opportunity to look time and again at the problem of juvenile crime. In 1986, the Committee went on a trip to America. When we announced where we were going—to Massachussetts, to look at how juvenile crime was dealt with there—the Home Office sent the Minister of State, with a couple of officials, to have a look. Nothing happened. We produced a report on drugs and other things. On another occasion, the Home Affairs Select Committee went again. Things had moved on a bit in the years since I was there. I did not go that time, because I did not want to see, at the expense of the state, something that I had already seen—once officially and two or three times privately. But back came the information. Things had changed slightly in Massachussetts, but what had not changed there was the effectiveness of the programme. It reduces reoffending.

In his speech at the Blackpool conference last year, the Home Secretary made 27 points. One has been implemented so far, and one of them was to be tough on crime. I have a suspicion that the Home Secretary will not like what I am about to say. On Second Reading—I did not serve on the Committee that considered the Bill—I made the point that the Home Secretary has still not got it right. He has tinkered with it. He has gone for it on the cheap. He has not gone for it effectively. There are not 200 persistent young juvenile offenders in this country; the figure is probably nearer 500 or 600. Not a single institution has been built to provide the treatment necessary. When will he provide an institution to deal with the first 12 or 15? Please, Home Secretary, tell me, because I have an awful feeling that it ain't going to be for quite some time.

The Home Secretary was, in his day, a very good planning lawyer, but his Department cannot even pay its planning fees, we hear, so it has not even started. One would have thought that the Home Office would think about what society wants. It is all very well for the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), who is Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, to go on and on in his 20 minute-plus speech. If one says something, at least try to make a point. The point is that there is a persistent problem. There are people from Scotland in the Gallery whose children have died. If we are to protect the children of England, we must contain the persistent offender.

Mr. Garnier: I would be grateful for a little explanation. Is the hon. Gentleman advocating, in principle, support for the provision of secure training units, but regretting their lateness in coming? I am confused by the difference between his opinion and that of the Labour Front Bench.

Mr. Bermingham: If the hon. Gentleman had waited a little longer, he would have found the answer to the question. It is very simple: there is a need for containment of the persistent offender, who can be as young as eight, nine or 10. Let us not walk away from it. Anyone who has practised—my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, who has much experience in these matters, will agree with me—recognises the existence of the problem. The question is how to deal with it. This measure, for reasons that I will come to in a moment, is not the answer. It is a partial answer, but, unfortunately, it will not be effective in the weeks and months that lie ahead. The persistent young offender may, for various

[Mr. Bermingham]

reasons, have problems that cannot be ironed out in six months, nine months, 12 months, 15 months or two years. It may even take longer.

Mr. Stephen: Is the hon. Gentleman therefore saying that he would have supported the amendment that I tabled on Report and Third Reading, which would have made secure schools available to children from the age of 10 to 18?

Mr. Bermingham: I go back to the point that I have made constantly in the House over 10 years. Provision needs to be made for the persistent offender to be contained. Then, as they progress in the training, retraining and education, they earn their way out of it. So the containment becomes less stringent as one goes forward, until ultimately one is rehabilitated into society. That is what happens in Massachussetts—or did 10 years ago. The outcome was not 74 per cent. reoffending, which this country had at that time, but 28 per cent. That is an enormous amount of crime solved. I am saying that, if we had that system, the hon. Member for Sedgefield *[Laughter.]* Not Sedgefield—[HON. MEMBERS: "Forgotten him already!"] No, it is the face of the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) which beams across the Committee Room at me week after week. His was the constituency I sought to remember. His example at York would have been dealt with by the system that I have been advocating for 10 years.

Let us take what the Government have now proposed. I have said that it was a hurried measure, hurriedly thought out and hurriedly implemented. It produces a two-year package some time in the future. It will not become effective with the Royal Assent, because the Home Secretary has not had the units built. The money for that is not available yet. I am hoping that he will say that he will have the first unit available on 1 January next year. I suspect that he cannot.

There is a little nasty in the Bill—put out to private tender. Why does the Home Secretary object to the amendment? It has positive benefits.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: It is a wrecking amendment.

Mr. Bermingham: It is not. If the hon. and learned Member for Burton would occasionally try to understand that some people do things for a non-political purpose, because they care about the safety of citizens in this country, I would be grateful.

The amendment enables the court, whether it be a judge or magistrate, to select the option. They could be in a position—they have had all the reports—to select accordingly. If the amendment is passed, the Home Secretary will know, from the date of Royal Assent, that courts can bring secure training into effect simply by using the local authority avenue. It is a possibility.

So, once again, the Government have not thought through the matter of dealing with persistent offenders, which society demands. They have brought a measure to the House which they cannot implement immediately, and we are left with no solution to the problem for some time to come. The Home Secretary will tell me that the bulldozers are moving, the bricklayers are working, the money is pouring in, and the training units—

Mr. Howard *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bermingham: The Home Secretary shakes his head because he knows that they are not there. He knows that the money is not there for it at the moment either.

I am sorry to say that the measure is a sham, designed for publicity. It is not a practical, working measure that could be brought into effect tomorrow. The Lords amendments give us some hope that something can be done. I urge the House to support the Lords tonight.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I apologise for not being able to listen to all the speeches at the beginning of the debate.

This is not the time to go into a full review of juvenile justice or why people offend. We should accept that the reason for the clauses and amendments that we are discussing is the fact that a small minority of people behave abominably: they may be troubled children, but the trouble that they cause to society is enormous.

I do not want to open up the issue of whether children should be sent to the equivalent of gaol, which is also a debate for another time; I will say that, if the secure training centres are established, there will be nothing like the concentration of numbers that has occurred in institutions set up in the past. I welcome that. I have some doubts about whether a total of up to 50 people will be manageable, but I do not wish to delay the debate by going into details.

I speak as a former chairman of the Church of England Childrens Society, which used to look after some most troubled children, and I have observed how difficult and important it is to achieve progress in individual children. We are not concerned now with what to do with children for six months or two years; we are concerned with helping to reconstruct their lives—with redemption and resurrection, and the re-creation of a life of worthwhile activity.

Only five centres will be available to the courts. I may receive advice from more knowledgeable people, but I hope that it will not be possible for magistrates to send young offenders to those centres for periods of at least six months; I hope that such offences will be deemed serious enough to warrant a Crown court hearing.

Are we right in regarding at least Lords amendment No. 15 as a wrecking amendment? I do not think that it is. I am convinced by those who argue that it extends the powers of the courts, and I do not think that we should limit those powers if Lords amendment No. 15 contains additional opportunities. Unless I hear convincing arguments to the contrary, I intend to support Lords amendment No. 15 or an equivalent to it.

Mr. Gunnell: It is welcome to hear positive comment from a Conservative Member. Part of the problem during the debate has been their persistent confusing of local authority children's homes and local authority secure accommodation. The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) suggested that a young criminal in York had escaped from local authority secure accommodation; I think that that is most unlikely. That young person was probably in a children's home. As the Home Secretary knows, the regulations governing children's homes, introduced by the present Government—I think that the latest regulations were introduced in 1990—insist that children cannot be locked up in such homes.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) painted a farcical picture of local authorities. It was, in fact, a serious criticism of the Home Secretary's expenditure. The Home Office is paying for more than 20 of the occupants of a local authority secure home that I know in Leeds, and was involved in the capital expenditure involved in its creation; it would not be paying some £70,000 a year per child for the accommodation unless it was effective. In Committee, the Minister of State said that he had visited that facility in Leeds and accepted that it was doing a good job. Leeds also runs the "bed bureau" dealing with local authority secure accommodation throughout the country, and knows about the nationally available facilities.

Lords amendment No. 15 puts the point very clearly. Why is the Home Secretary not prepared to allow choice? The hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) said that judges and magistrates did not like the proposal, but that is nonsense: it will allow them to choose the accommodation that they consider suited to the individuals with whom they deal, knowing their offences and background and how far they live from the five available centres.

Why does the Home Secretary say that magistrates and judges should not have the power to decide? In my view, there are only two possible answers, one of which was given at the outset by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). Either the Home Secretary does not trust magistrates to make the right decision, or he believes that, if they have the powers to make that decision, there will not be enough clients for his centres. As the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) suggested, he needs to bolster the numbers.

5.45 pm

We must eliminate the notion that local authorities provide accommodation that is not secure, and houses a multiplicity of types of children. As the Home Secretary knows, to enter secure accommodation young people must have committed offences for which they would receive a 14-year custodial sentence: the offences must be very serious. The children in secure accommodation in Leeds have indeed committed grave offences—offences as grave as murder in some cases. They are in secure accommodation because society and the local authority rightly believe that they need to be there, and that the public need to be protected from them.

I do not think it right to categorise local authority secure accommodation as collecting all sorts of young people, and to suggest that those entering it are likely to corrupt or be corrupted by those already there. I support the amendments because I believe that the "colleges of crime" argument is a strong one, and that we are creating another cause of crime when we put together 40 serious juvenile offenders in care that is at the very least untried, because we have not tried privatising accommodation for children of that age who have committed such offences. I believe that we should give magistrates the choice, and I believe that the Home Secretary's real reason for not wanting to give them that choice is less that he does not trust them than that he does not think that the new centres will get off the ground unless a clientele is collected fairly promptly.

We should be concerned not just with the period of accommodation, but with rehabilitation and the prevention of persistent reoffending. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) gave the statistics—figures of 80 per cent. and 55 per cent. for two different types of treatment. I feel that we are opting for the type which, so far, has been shown to have the worse record.

If the private sector is to bid not only to provide accommodation and care but to provide aftercare, the position will become extremely difficult. If an offender is given a secure training order, say, in Cornwall and then goes to Oxfordshire—that being the site of the nearest centre—how will the same person in authority be able to provide aftercare back in Cornwall, where I believe the regulations state that the offender would have to be seen just once a month? How will it be possible to provide the level of aftercare needed to integrate the offender back into the community? If he stays distant from his community, the chance of his reoffending will be all the greater.

I feel that the Lords amendment gives us a chance to improve the Bill, and to improve the position for many of the young offenders who will come before the courts. I am very sorry that the Home Secretary seems determined not to let it stand.

Mr. Hawkins: I shall speak very briefly, just to deal with a matter which Opposition Members raised time and again in Committee, and which has now been raised again by the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell). He suggested that different past treatments for offenders showed differences in reoffending rates, but he was not comparing like with like. Opposition Members repeatedly make that mistake. Often the most serious juvenile offenders, whom I used to prosecute over many years at the Bar, received the most serious sentences. They were precisely the hard-core offenders who would reoffend. One is not comparing like with like because those who commit less serious offences are given supervision orders and are less likely to reoffend.

In order to deal with the most serious juvenile offenders, we need sensible, secure provision. The only Labour Member who seemed to understand that is the only one with real experience over many years at the Bar, the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). He recognises that there is no point in sending the most serious young offenders on safari holidays because it simply sends a signal to those offenders that they are being rewarded for their crimes. What about the law-abiding children whose parents cannot afford to send them to Center Parcs or on safari holidays? We need secure training centres because while those juveniles are in those centres they are not breaking into old ladies' houses and that is what the public want to see.

Mr. Howard: With permission I should like to respond to the debate.

We knew that we would have to make allowances for the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). We knew that he would go to any lengths to curry favour in the elections taking place today. Clearly, his approach is that the best way to perform effectively in those elections is to put as much distance as possible

[Mr. Howard]

between the truth and the remarks one makes. That was the principle that he adopted and, for all I know, it may be the most effective technique for election to the shadow Cabinet.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth suggested that the Opposition have always adopted a constructive attitude to these matters. Has he forgotten that in another place the Labour party, led by the noble Lord McIntosh, voted to take out of the Bill the whole of part I which would have deprived the courts of any powers to send young offenders to secure institutions of any sort? The hon. Gentleman responded enthusiastically to an intervention from his hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), who suggested that there should be scope for a longer period to be spent in a secure training centre. He had no answer to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), who pointed out that the only amendment from the Labour party in Committee was designed to shorten the time to which people could be sentenced to a secure training centre, not to lengthen it.

The hon. Gentleman behaved disgracefully—there is no other word for it—to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), the Chairman of the Select Committee, who gave him chapter and verse on how the Committee recommended an agency in addition to the provision of a secure training centre. Without the slightest foundation, he accused my hon. and learned Friend of twisting and turning when my hon. and learned Friend was simply pointing out the truth.

The reality behind the approach of the Labour party and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth was revealed when in his closing remarks he said that one of the things that are wrong with the provision is that it assumes that anyone who has committed three offences is a persistent offender. That is the attitude which the Labour party brings to consideration of these matters and it is as well that everyone should know about it.

We heard an interesting speech from the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I welcome him, somewhat belatedly, to his new responsibilities. I hope that he holds that position on the Opposition Benches for a long time, particularly if he makes a habit of making the sort of speech that he made today. He attributed to me opinions that I have never expressed, he attacked me for arguments that I have never advanced and he constructed his speech on a basis that did not deal with the points that have been made in the debate. We had splendid speeches from my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton, who explained precisely why the provisions are necessary and why the amendments from another place should be rejected.

The hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) advanced statistics on reoffending that have been comprehensively answered in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins). The hon. Lady attacked our proposals for secure training centres on the basis that they are not the whole solution. I accept that they are not the whole solution and we have never advanced them as the whole solution. However, they are an important part of the solution and we have to have them. We shall have them as soon as possible.

Local authority secure accommodation is no alternative, for the reasons that I gave in my opening speech. It is no use pretending that there is local authority secure accommodation available that would enable the courts to pass sentence the day after Royal Assent. It is not available in sufficient quantities. It is not available largely for the reasons that I put to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong). I gave her the specific example of Labour local authorities in the north-east that have not been providing the accommodation and she had no answer to that point. She replied with the pathetic point about non-payment of the planning fee and I shall deal precisely with that issue.

It is true that we have not paid the planning fee in respect of our application for planning permission for a secure training centre. We have not done so because it would be improper for us to do so before we obtain Royal Assent. Had we sought to disburse moneys before Royal Assent, the Labour party would be the first to complain that we were flouting the will of Parliament, behaving improperly and seeking to spend taxpayers' money without proper permission to do so. That is the simple truth. I would that we could make greater progress, but we must abide by the proprieties, as we always do. That is why the planning fee has not been paid.

Ms Armstrong *rose—*

Mr. Howard: I do not know what the hon. Lady is going to say.

Ms Armstrong: Why did the Government apply for planning permission some weeks, if not months, ago and ask the local authority to deal with it immediately?

Mr. Howard: We are not allowed to spend money until we have Royal Assent—*[Interruption.]* It is extraordinary that the Labour party, which tells us daily of its aspirations to government, is so completely unaware of what the proprieties demand in relation to these matters.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South criticised us for not yet having a secure training centre in being. Of course we do not have such a training centre. That is what the legislation is about. We want the legislation in order to be able to provide secure training centres. That is why we are here.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) was not here at the beginning of the debate. I hope that, had he heard my opening speech, he would have understood why we are not prepared to accept the amendments from another place. We believe that we are dealing with a discrete group of persistent young offenders. We believe that they need a particular remedy that is tailor-made for them. They need a high-calibre regime of training and education, which we intend to provide in our secure training centres. That is why we think that that is the right sentence for the courts to pass on them. That is why we think that the amendments that were passed in another place should be rejected.

For those reasons and for the reasons that I gave in my opening remarks, to which the Labour party has not responded, I invite the House to reject the amendments.

Mr. Michael: With the permission of the House, I should like to reply.

The laughter that greeted so many of the Home Secretary's comments showed the ridicule into which he has brought his high office. I suppose that we should be pleased that the Home Secretary returned the loyalty of the Chairman of the Select Committee. However, he is as inaccurate as the Chairman in the account that he gave of these matters.

I remind the House that a vote against the Lords amendments is a vote to refuse discretion to magistrates and a vote against a commonsense approach to the prevention of reoffending. That is what it is about.

6 pm

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 298, Noes 272.

Division No. 306] [6.00 pm

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McCrea, Rev William
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Rowe Andrew, (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smyth, Rev Martin (Belfast S)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. (Strgfd)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)

Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil (Belfast N)
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Simon Burns

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm

Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. John Spellar

Question accordingly agreed to.

Government motions to disagree agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 32

EFFECT OF ACCUSED'S FAILURE TO MENTION FACTS WHEN QUESTIONED OR CHARGED

Lords amendment: No. 30, in page 21, line 12, after ("questioned") insert ("under caution")

Mr. Michael: I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 1, after 'caution', insert—

', and after being given the opportunity to be legally represented,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to take the following:

Amendment (b) to the Lords amendment, in line 1, after 'caution', insert—

'and after being informed that he has a right to legal advice'.

Lords amendment No. 299.

Mr. Michael: The Lords amendment would add the words "under caution" and would provide the protection that, before comment can be made on silence, the suspect should have been cautioned.

Our amendments would ensure that the suspect was given the opportunity to be legally represented or, at the minimum, informed that he has the right to legal advice.

The reason for our amendments is very simple. The sophisticated crook will be aware of his rights, will insist on being legally advised and represented, and will not be caught out by these provisions. Without the protection of legal advice, as proposed in our amendment, the vulnerable and the innocent will be put at risk.

We can quote excellent authority for our proposal, because we share the view expressed by the Royal Commission on criminal justice, which said:

> "The majority of us believe that the possibility of an increase in convictions of the guilty is outweighed by the risk that the extra pressure on suspects to talk in the police station, and the adverse inferences invited if they do not may result in more convictions of the innocent."

We have already gone far further than the royal commission envisaged, because the Bill would allow comment on things that were said long before a suspect reached the police station. Given the strong views of the royal commission, our amendment is the minimum acceptable to protect the innocent.

The royal commission went on to say that it believed that it would be not the professional criminal who would be most likely to be affected by the change proposed in the Bill but

> "the less experienced and more vulnerable suspects against whom the threat of adverse comment would be likely to be more damaging."

In discussions on the general issue of the right to silence, we proposed an alternative that would have more accurately hit the target that the Government said they were after— the possibility of ambush defences— at an early stage. I shall not reopen that question, because we are dealing with a very narrow point, which is to ensure that people receive the necessary protection under the Government's proposals.

Having failed to persuade the Government to change their mind, we have consistently sought to add safeguards to the Bill to ensure that the protection provided by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 applies. It is odd that the House should swing from trying to build in protection for the innocent to the very opposite— providing no protection at all.

In view of the Government's chosen direction, we seek to ensure that the protection offered by the previous legislation applies, especially in respect of vulnerable and innocent people. We believe that the provisions should operate only when the accused is in the police station, and that he should have access to properly qualified legal advice.

When we discussed the issue on Report, the Home Secretary felt that no additional safeguards were needed. Indeed, he said:

> "I disagree with the proposition that inferences should be restricted to the period after cautioning."—[*Official Report*, 13 April 1994; Vol. 241, c. 281.]

However, that is the point that the Government were forced to concede in another place, and it is the import of the amendment that we are discussing.

The Minister must consider carefully the vulnerable nature of many people accused of offences. It is right that someone who is guilty should be convicted even if he is of lower than average intelligence or ability, but it is also right that we should take account of his circumstances and ensure that there are appropriate protections.

The problem was highlighted in a recent study of 160 suspects held at two police stations. Work prepared for the Royal Commission on criminal justice revealed that their mean IQ was 82—well below the average of 100— and that one in three scored 75 or below, equivalent to that of the bottom 5 per cent. of the population. My point is that such issues have been carefully considered by a royal commission; a large sum of public money was spent on ensuring that research informed the considerations of the royal commission.

The Government have taken policy decisions—what the House agreed before the Bill went to another place— but, despite those decisions, it remains appropriate for the Government to consider protection for the vulnerable. For that reason, I urge the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) to accept our amendments.

We are proposing that the suspect should have been given the opportunity to be legally represented before inferences could be used. The suspect may not wish to exercise his right, but he should at least have the opportunity to seek legal help and to know that that opportunity is his as a right. As I said, the sophisticated crook—the person who has been involved in offences before—will have that knowledge in any event. The people at risk will be the unsophisticated and, indeed, the innocent.

The protection we seek is all the more necessary because it is likely that many suspects will not have understood the new caution. Is that surprising, as it is hardly an object lesson in clarity? We must remember that

[Mr. Michael]

we are dealing with not only guilty but innocent people; and who, at a time of stress, will understand the convoluted wording of a caution which will very often be read to them speedily? It reads:

> "You do not have to say anything, but if you do not mention now something which you may later use in your defence, the court may decide that your failure to mention it now strengthens the case against you. A record will be made of anything you say and may be given in evidence if you are brought to trial."

Let us consider the innocent, vulnerable person, as distinct from the sophisticated crook. The innocent, vulnerable person—indeed, the innocent person of some intelligence—may find it difficult to understand what he is being told. The sophisticated crook will not need to understand the caution, because he will have already worked out what he is going to do. We should be under no illusion that the sophisticated crook is a reason for refusing the amendment.

The codes of practice under PACE currently require the police to inform a person of his right to legal advice after he arrives at a police station. People questioned before they arrive are in danger of their silence being used against them without their having been informed of their right to legal advice. In addition, the Bill as drafted would mean that if the police failed to inform a person of his right to legal advice once he or she had arrived at the police station, the court could still take into account the person's silence despite the breach of the codes of practice.

Our amendments, therefore, provide the innocent suspect with the safeguards necessary to ensure that he is not convicted and which the sophisticated suspect will always have. I commend them to the House as a means of providing a protection only where a protection is sorely needed, not as a means of taking us back to earlier arguments. I hope that the Minister will accept them.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that, because of a demonstration in Parliament square, people cannot leave the Norman Shaw building and that, equally important, internal mail cannot be brought here. Surely it cannot be right that such a demonstration should be allowed to interfere with the proper workings of Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall ask the Serjeant at Arms to make inquiries.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): Before deciding to move amendments Nos. 30 and 299 in another place, the Government reflected carefully on what was said in a full debate in Committee in another place on safeguards and on the provision dealing with inferences drawn from silence. The debate focused especially on clause 32, which allows inferences to be drawn from the failure to mention a fact on which the defendant later relies for his defence and which he could reasonably have been expected to mention when questioned.

A number of opinions were expressed, and the Government agreed that it should be made a condition for the drawing of inferences that a person had been warned about the possible consequences of his silence. Lords amendment No. 30 amends the Bill accordingly. Amendment No. 299 would make corresponding changes to Northern Ireland legislation.

Regrettably, I must advise the House to reject the two amendments to Lords amendment No. 30. I have already advised the House to agree to the Lords amendment as it stands, and I have explained what the Lords amendment is and is not intended to do. Clause 32 provides that, when a defendant puts an explanation before the court which he has not previously mentioned to the police, the court can draw proper inferences from that fact.

It is based on the proposition that if an innocent person has an explanation to give, he can usually be expected to give it at the first reasonable opportunity, not store it up for use when the proceedings have developed as far as a trial. If an explanation is withheld at the earlier stage but offered at the trial, we believe that the courts should have the opportunity, which is at present denied them, to consider all the circumstances and to draw sensible conclusions.

It is common ground between the two Houses, and between the Government and the Opposition, that that process must be subject to some safeguards. The only question is how far the safeguards should extend and how far they can reasonably extend without depriving the clause of its effectiveness. The issue has been extensively discussed in both Houses.

In this House, explanations were given by the Government of the safeguards already inherent in clause 32 as drafted, in the procedures for which provision is made in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and in the codes of practice issued under it. The House decided that clause 32 should be added to the Bill in its original form and a number of amendments, including some similar in effect to those now proposed by the Opposition, were defeated.

The debate on safeguards was naturally renewed in another place and, again, a menu of comments and suggestions was made. Even among those who believe that some amendment was needed, there was no unanimity about what form it should take. The Government and the House of Lords itself had a choice to make—should any amendment be made and, if so, what route should it follow?

Eventually, however, a clear decision was reached, and it is expressed in Lords amendment No. 30. That decision was to include a requirement that a person must have been a suspect under caution but not to include further requirements similar to those now proposed by the Opposition. This House's earlier decision not to include such amendments was a deliberate decision, not a mere oversight.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I should be grateful if the Minister would explain how the new provision will apply to questioning by someone who is not a policeman. As the Minister will be aware, the clause covers questioning not only by the police but by other people, such as store detectives and possibly private security staff. Will he explain how a caution will work in such cases?

6.30 pm

Mr. Maclean: The amendment that we are accepting from the House of Lords, which I am recommending, applies to all the categories of people specified in the Bill and in earlier legislation. We do not seek to change the categories of people who, whether they be in Customs and Excise or in private security, may at times question suspects.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) explained why, even at this late stage, he favours the Opposition amendments—or at least, he explained why he favours one of them. I shall explain briefly why I advise the House to reject both the Opposition amendments. The essential question at issue is when the possible drawing of inferences should start.

The scheme of clause 32 is to enable the court to inquire into and to draw conclusions from any contrast between what a defendant says to the court and what he said or did not say earlier. The question is: how much earlier? In the form in which clause 32 left the House for another place, the answer was: from the first moment when a person was questioned by the police. If we add Lords amendment No. 30, as I advise the House to do, the answer will be: when a person is clearly being treated as a suspect and has been given due warning.

However, if we took one of the Opposition's amendments, in effect the answer would become: when the suspect is formally interviewed at a police station, having had an opportunity to talk things over with a lawyer. I must advise the House that I consider that unnecessarily restrictive. In some situations, it could prevent clause 32 from having the desirable and sensible effect of enabling the courts to look at all the circumstances.

In some situations, what a suspect says or does not say to the police immediately after being cautioned will be a good deal more telling than what he says or does not say after receiving legal advice. It is not only the Government who believe that amendments such as those urged by the Opposition would be too restrictive. The various options were carefully considered in the debate in another place, and Lords amendment No. 30, although moved by the Government, was designed to give effect to points put during that debate by the Lord Chief Justice.

On 23 May, the Lord Chief Justice said in the House of Lords:

"As we have already heard, there are some . . . who would limit the comment on silence under that clause"—

that is, clause 32—

"to the police station, where all the safeguards of the defence lawyer being present and tape recording are in place. That is a somewhat too limiting restriction.

As I have suggested, there are cases in which silence at or near the scene of the crime is particularly important."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 23 May 1994; Vol. 555, c. 523.]

I emphasise the Lord Chief Justice's words:

"at or near the scene of the crime".

That was the issue at stake when the Lords discussed the amendments before them, and that is the issue at stake today.

I advise the House to accept the Government's view, shared by the Lord Chief Justice and others in another place, that there is no injustice in allowing inferences to be drawn from an exchange that took place at or near the scene of the crime, provided that the person is on notice that he is a suspect, and that the circumstances were such that he could reasonably have been expected to offer his explanation at the time.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I do not claim to be a great expert on the subject, as many of my colleagues are, but like many other people in this country I have a certain instinctive reservation when I hear about the right to silence being abolished—that is how the measure has been described—because we all think that a fundamental liberty is somehow at stake. Then we look into the matter more closely, and discover that it relates to inferences being drawn, and so on. So we are taken even further into the subject.

I have listened carefully to the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and to my hon. Friend the Minister. For non-experts, the matter boils down to the simple fact that we have all had drawn to our attention an increasing wave of petty crime—at least, I assume that most hon. Members have had that experience. My constituency, notably its chief town, Buckingham, is no exception.

Having listened to the Opposition spokesman and to the Minister, I approach the problem from the point of view of my local police station, where I say to the police, "What shall we do about the rising tide?" I do not want to exaggerate, because that does not help anyone, but there is a rising tide of petty crime in my constituency, as in many others. My local police give me frightening examples showing how their hands are tied, or at least one hand is tied behind their backs, when they try to arrest the people responsible and to achieve convictions.

I believe that the Opposition previously attempted to restrict the measure so that it did not affect magistrates courts, but that that amendment has now been dropped. That leads me be a little suspicious of their position on the subject. I start from the premise, not that there is a huge serious crime wave in my constituency—there is not—but that there is a wave of petty delinquency. The local police often know who is responsible, but they can do little about it, often for reasons connected with the right to silence.

Mr. Michael: It is only fair to clarify the situation. We proposed adopting the recommendations of the Royal Commission on criminal justice, as an alternative to the Government's approach. That would have meant a pre-trial review, which would have enabled comment to be made on issues that had not yet been raised.

The Government did not accept that, and since then we have sought to build in protections to ensure that, in attempting to catch the guilty and sophisticated—a target at which we all wish to aim—we do not accidentally catch the innocent and vulnerable. It was in order to manage that balance that we tabled the amendment, and that is the narrow point with which we are concerned.

Mr. Walden: I take note of that. We must all be frank about the fact that there have recently been serious miscarriages of justice in our country. So what the hon. Gentleman says about striking a balance is uppermost in my mind when discussing the narrow measure before us.

What swings me in favour of the Government is the fear that, if we try to refine the matter too much, we shall come down on the side of the possibly—I stress the word "possibly"—guilty. As I keep saying, I have no expert knowledge of the higher legal arguments, but I know about the local arguments.

Common sense must guide some of us in such discussions. Last week, I was faced with a deputation of 12 local shopkeepers thinking of leaving the town of Buckingham because of a combination of low sales—I

[Mr. Walden]

cannot blame those on anyone now in the Chamber—and the physical insecurity of their premises. When that happens, one begins to think that things are getting a little out of hand.

When one talks to the police, one finds that perhaps they could do something more effective about the problems if their hand were strengthened a little. Without being sentimental, I must say that I do not think that the police I know in Buckingham would take undue advantage of the legislation to browbeat supposed offenders.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth read out the caution. Certainly the speed at which he read it could be slightly confusing for someone in the emotion of the moment. On the other hand, the caution is couched in fairly simple English, and one would hope that the legal officers concerned would read it plainly and slowly. I fail to see quite how the sense of that caution could be conveyed in more simple language.

The Government are right to resist the amendment—not because the Opposition are in any way trying to undermine the intention of the Government to ensure that criminals are brought to book and so on, because that is a slightly simplistic debate, but because, as the Minister said, there is a risk that, if we lean a little too far in the wrong direction, we could prevent this important amendment to the law from having its full effect.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am very disappointed that the Government are insisting on proceeding with changing the right of silence. If the Government had merely insisted that people could not produce ambush defences when a case had gone to court, I would not complain at all. But if the Government are to change the rights of someone before a case reaches trial, they must demonstrate overwhelmingly that there is a need to do so.

Quite frequently I hear evidence from police officers alleging that guilty people get off and that more guilty people get off than innocent people are wrongly convicted. But it is very difficult to demonstrate that. I understand why police officers feel like that. When they are absolutely convinced that they have got the right person and the jury finds against them, they are bitter and frustrated because professionally they have failed. It therefore makes a substantial impact on them. Obviously, they are not conscious of the miscarriages of justice in the other direction, so they have tended, over a period of time, to suggest that there is a major problem. I do not see a major problem and the way in which the Government are attempting to tackle the issue is unfortunate.

If we are to change the law, we must provide the protection, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said, for people who may be described as vulnerable. I do not think that the Minister has grasped what often happens to my constituents. They are not well-organised people. They do not have a diary secretary who keeps a list of where they should be and organises their lives. Their lives are fairly disorganised. Their memories of what happened a week or a fortnight ago are not exact and precise, and if they are in a difficult situation, they are not likely to come up with a sensible and rational explanation. They are not likely to be able to balance one defence against another and they may end up by weakening their genuine defence because their first reactions are ill-considered.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The hon. Gentleman is making his argument in favour of the Opposition amendments in terms relating to the vulnerability of particular suspects. Does he agree that the legislation merely enables a court to draw inferences from silence, but only those inferences which are proper? The circumstances in which the people being questioned—the accused—find themselves and the vulnerability of those persons would be highly relevant to what is considered a proper inference. So the hon. Gentleman is advancing matters that are already adequately provided for in the proposed legislation.

Mr. Bennett: I do not think that they are adequately provided for in the proposed legislation. If one considers certain circumstances—I was about to describe some—such as a person's response with hindsight, in many cases, one wonders why on earth that person did not give the same explanation initially. However, consider, for instance, someone who has just been chased by an alsatian dog. The alsatian grabs the person by the leg. The police officer who is handling the dog comes over and brings the dog off. There is a fair chance that, under the present proposals, the caution will be administered at that point. The first question that the police officer will ask is what the person was doing on that piece of land or what he was doing behind the building which the police officer assumes someone has just burgled and is running away from.

Afterwards, I would have thought that if it was drawn to the attention of a jury that the individual answered "I do not know", or made some other relatively irrational comment, it would be difficult to convince them that the person's genuine reason for being there was correct. If the reason was not put forward at the first possible opportunity, it would become an argument in the court. To get across to a jury that under the stress of just having been chased by an alsatian dog, somebody would not react—

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Gentleman does not trust juries.

Mr. Bennett: It is not that I do not trust juries. I think that it is difficult to put the jury into that frame of mind. Juries are supposed to be comprised of average citizens who have experienced things, but not many jurymen will have been chased by an alsatian dog and at that point had to produce rational explanations.

6.45 pm

There is the same argument when considering the whole matter of putting forward an alibi. Many of my constituents, if asked where they were on a particular occasion, would find it extremely difficult to react at that moment. Again, I suggest that many people on a jury would find it surprising, if a substantial crime was committed at a particular time, that someone could not at that immediate instant put forward their alibi. In fact, it may take quite a time for that individual to work out the circumstances. I do not agree that there is evidence of the change being necessary.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I confess to being rather ignorant about much criminal procedure. However, as I understand the right to silence, it is not merely exercised at the point of caution. It is persisted with, right up until the last possible moment and to that degree. It seems that most juries who were confronted with somebody who at the time said, "I would rather not say anything, but when I have had time to collect my wits and stop panting from being pursued by the alsatian, I will tell you as much as I can", would think that that person was in a very different position.

Mr. Bennett: As I said at the beginning of my speech, as far as I understand it, there is no difference between the two parties in saying that before a matter comes to court, it is reasonable that the defence should put forward its case. In other words, we are taking away any ambush that the defence can produce of an alibi, which it is difficult at that stage for the prosecution to check. There did not seem to be any disagreement over that. The problem arose over at what stage the inference may be drawn. The Opposition have been suggesting that as long as someone has put forward his defence at some pre-trial conference, it would be sensible to draw the line there, whereas the Government have been insisting on moving it further and further forward so that the right to silence is removed at a very early stage. That seems to be where the disagreement lies.

My final administrative point is that one of the problems for the police is that we have continually changed the rules. It is all right for us legislators to imagine what will happen, but the police officer on the beat has to turn it into something practical. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth suggested, the proposed caution does not seem to be practical. One fears that the entire procedure will not be especially practical. It will give the police officers extra problems in administering the procedure and, therefore, it will not help us to catch more criminals. The fundamental problem is that we do not catch enough people—it is not that those people who are brought before the courts are let off. If the Government had addressed the problem of ensuring that more people were caught rather than worrying too much about the legal processes after they are caught, we would have done a lot better.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has not made a good case. Is not he aware that, frequently, the problem is not that of catching the criminal, but of bringing that criminal to retribution when he is in court and is, in fact, guilty?

I want to make two brief points. A very strong case was made for a change in the law a few months ago when a man and a woman who without any question had murdered their child walked free from the court because of the right of silence. That was only the latest of many similar cases and there was much publicity about that case at the time.

We should not concern ourselves so much about the wild alsatian. The points made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish were more a red herring or a wild goose chase. It is absurd to suppose that a jury in a British court of law could not differentiate when given the right to

"draw such inferences from the failure"—

to speak up—

"as appear proper."

We are concerned about an essential change in the law. Justice is about not only catching criminals, but protecting the public from criminals and ensuring that criminals receive their just desserts.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) that the parents went free totally because of the right of silence. It has more to do with the fact that if the evidence is consistent with one as with another, the burden of proof has not been discharged and it is not possible to say which of the two parents is responsible for the killing. That is another problem.

As my hon. Friend the Minister is aware, I support the Government's proposals on the right of silence. I have advocated the removal of the right of silence for the many years that I have been a Member of this place because I wanted tape-recorded interviews. My colleagues will be aware, as I have said so on many occasions, that I am unhappy with allowing evidence to be adduced of any confession on the way to the police station unless it has been tape recorded.

Having said that, I am not completely happy with the Government's refusal to accept the Opposition's proposals. I am unhappy about having to agree, even vaguely, with anything that the Opposition suggest on law and order, for reasons that I have given on many occasions.

By excluding the right to legal advice, we are giving a suspect the opportunity to say, "I didn't explain what I was doing because, quite frankly, I was scared and I wanted a solicitor to be there to ensure that when I explained it to the police, they got it right rather than wrong." The effect of that would be that a point would be made to the jury which might make the jury say, "Well, we are not happy about this."

As the object of the exercise is to ensure that more of the guilty people are convicted, that would be better achieved by removing an excuse that an accused person will, after this, be able to use by saying, "I was scared and I needed someone to be there." That is an impressive jury point.

However, I find myself driven to the conclusion that it is inevitable that we make this kind of exclusion, although I say that reluctantly, because of the nature of the change that we are making to the right of silence and the ability to make a comment. I take on board the point made by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). It is up to the jury. I simply want my hon. Friends to realise that it will not help us to obtain more convictions of the guilty.

Mr. Beith: I have reflected on the situation described by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). Might not it be just as likely that an accused person will say, "I didn't reveal my explanation at the time because I didn't know what it would mean if I admitted to another crime, perhaps a lesser crime than the one that I was involved in; I certainly didn't want to say anything about that without legal advice"? The point that would then be made to the jury is that they should not believe anything that man says because he must clearly have other convictions.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: That raises other problems and the right hon. Gentleman's comments do not meet the point that I am making. I am making a much simpler point and I need not repeat what I have just said. I am unhappy

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

about this, but I understand that it is inevitable. Therefore, I reluctantly go along with the Government's response to the Opposition's suggestion.

I should like clarification on two points. First, speaking frankly and openly, we have been worried by the fact that too often solicitors may have told accused people to say nothing when, on many occasions, what they may have said could have been helpful to the defence. I wonder whether the problem of what solicitors shall say, bearing in mind the new caution, has been sorted out by the Law Society and its ethical committee. How far have those considerations progressed with the Law Society? Is it changing its rules and ethical obligations to conform with the changes proposed in the Bill?

Secondly, regardless of how the caution works in Northern Ireland, no one can deny that it is quite convoluted. It can be simplified. I wonder whether the proposed caution is set in stone or whether it is open to wider consideration which might produce a shorter and simpler version. Modesty forbids me from suggesting one now, but I will quietly, perhaps in a letter, propose alternatives to my hon. Friend the Minister, and I hope that others will do likewise. It is obviously sensible that we should have as simple and as straightforward a caution as possible, particularly if we are not going to allow legal representation in certain circumstances.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): In this brief intervention I want to refer to a constituency case which may be interpreted as suggesting that the right of silence should be expunged, but which I hope will convince the House that it is not that which should attract attention, but the need for common sense in the legal process.

Not very long ago, a man was caught breaking into the house of a constituent of mine. The police responded to a call with enormous speed and the man was caught red-handed burgling my constituent's home. When the police accosted him, he said "I am exercising my right of silence." When the papers went to the public prosecution office, it decided that it could not prosecute because that man was exercising the right of silence. The Minister may recall that I had correspondence with the Home Office on the matter which led, I believe, to its being reviewed.

It is not the existence of the right of silence that was wrong. What was wrong was that the court was denied the opportunity to hear that charge and perhaps ensure that the criminal who was sheltering behind the right of silence secured a rather tougher sentence for wasting public time and causing mayhem than was the case.

I suggest that the Minister should advise the Crown Prosecution Service to allow the court to have the opportunity to exercise its judgment rather than remove a freedom which may be of considerable historic importance.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 264, Noes 286.

Division No. 307] [7.00 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John

Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McCrea, Rev William
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)

Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil (Belfast N)
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bowen Wells and
Mr. Timothy Wood

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New clause

Child testimony

Lords amendment: No. 43, after clause 45, to insert the following new clause—*Video recordings of testimony from child witnesses—*

> . In section 32A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 in section 32A(5)(b) the word "adequately" shall be inserted after the words "dealt with".")

Read a Second time.

7.15 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 3, leave out from 'section 32A(5)(b)' to the end of line 4 and insert—

> 'the words ", in the opinion of the court, has been dealt with in his recorded testimony" shall be omitted and the words "has been dealt with in his recorded testimony unless the judge grants leave, such leave to be granted only where he is of the opinion that an examination in chief is necessary to clarify matters not adequately dealt with in the witness's recorded testimony, or that an examination in chief would be in the best interests of the child" shall be inserted in their place.'.

In moving the amendment, which deals with the video recording of the testimony of child witnesses, I wish to thank the NSPCC, of which I am a trustee, for doing most of the work in researching the need for such an amendment.

Section 54 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 added a new section 32A to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 after section 32, which deals with the giving of evidence through television links. Section 32A(5) has been amended by the other place during the passage of the Bill by the insertion of the word "adequately", so that it now reads:

> "Where a video recording of the testimony from a child witness is admitted in evidence, the child witness shall be called by the party who tendered it in evidence and that the witness shall not be examined in chief on any matter which in the opinion of the court has been dealt with adequately in the recorded testimony."

The original purpose of the provision when it was inserted into the 1991 Act was to protect the child witness from having to give an oral examination in chief which would then be scrutinised and compared with the recorded testimony, leading to cross-examination of the child on trivial differences between the oral and recorded testimony. The legislation prevented an oral examination in chief and there would, therefore, be no second telling of the child's story which could be microscopically compared with the video recording.

The addition of the word "adequately" has dealt with one previous difficulty with the legislation as it stood. As a result, where a taped interview is flawed because issues have not been properly brought out, or because some issues have been missed out altogether, the prosecutor can now seek to clarify those matters so that relevant evidence is no longer prevented from coming before the court. However, the provision still prevents the prosecution from refreshing the child's memory or giving the child witness an opportunity to warm up before cross-examination through a succinct examination in chief.

The only alternative is for the child to view the taped interview. For a young child to watch a long interview on video is, at best, a tedious experience; at worst, the child may refuse to watch it. The child witness, therefore, faces a hostile cross-examination which leaves him thinking that the whole process is pointless as no one believes him. The amendment would allow a judge to grant leave, having regard only to the welfare of the child, for the child to be examined in chief, even though matters have been adequately dealt with in the recorded testimony.

The NSPCC tells me that six judges support reforms of the legislation. Mr. Justice Kay wrote to the Home Secretary on 6 July 1994 about a trial in Swansea involving a paedophile ring. His letter states:

> "My concern as to Section 32A(5) is limited to the effect that it had on the children. The procedure meant that the child saw me briefly on their monitor at the start of each session and thereafter they saw counsel for the defence who was cross-examining, but no-one else. Under the Act, since it was not suggested by the prosecution that matters had not been dealt with either adequately or at all in the video, I had no power to allow any questions by the prosecution before this process began.
>
> The children were thus confronted for days at a time by hostile counsel putting questions to them, as they were obliged to do on their instructions, that almost every word they uttered was untrue.

> They saw no other person in court and had no opportunity to see that there were others present who did not share the views apparently being expressed in the court.
>
> As the process continued, the children became more and more frustrated. Some declined to answer questions making it clear that they saw no point in doing so if everyone doubted every word they said.
>
> I am sure that a number of lessons need to be learned from the Swansea trial. One that seems to me obvious is that the children would have found the giving of evidence far less of an ordeal if before they were subjected to cross-examination they had had the opportunity to answer a few questions from prosecuting counsel who would have appeared to them to be accepting their answers and not challenging them.
>
> I am totally against any idea that the prosecution should be given a free range to ask questions in addition to the video and that the time a child spends in the witness box should in any way be prolonged. I am equally firmly convinced that some questions from a friendly counsel would be beneficial to the child in many cases. I urge that further consideration be given to this aspect of the matter and that the experience of those witnessing the consequences for children of this provision should be drawn upon."

There can be no doubt that a court process that intimidates children carries the risk that relevant evidence will not come before the court. The amendment has the safeguard of judicial discretion to ensure that it will be used only in a small number of cases in which the child's welfare calls for it. I cannot pretend that the amendment will solve the problems that confront children in giving evidence in court.

I strongly support Lords amendment No. 43, but I and many other people believe that the further amendment will help to relieve the strain on children and to prevent even the strongest case of abuse collapsing in the courts.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I wish to add my anxieties to those that have been expressed by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). I declare an interest as an honourary consultant to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children on law and policy matters.

The Minister knows that I introduced an amendment, couched in not dissimilar terms, in Committee. I recall his remarks at that time, but I think that he and the Government have been overtaken by events. The Government were then asking for clear evidence that the operation of section 32 was causing the difficulties to which the hon. Lady has referred.

The NSPCC provided that evidence. Evidence has been provided by judges, who communicated with Members of the House of Lords. Additionally, the powerful and, in my view, exceptional letter was written by Mr. Justice Kay following the case in Swansea. In my experience, it is extraordinary for the Home Secretary to have received such a detailed letter, outlining the anxieties of a judge about the operation of that section.

It is important to understand what the judge was complaining about. He was dealing with a situation in which a child was giving evidence by way of the video link. Therefore, the only person whom the child saw throughout the time of giving evidence—let us remember that one of the children gave evidence for a full week—was the defending counsel, who challenged every word that the child said. The judge argued that a more balanced view would have been given in the interests of the child if a discretion had been available to the judge along the lines that the hon. Lady proposes in amendment (a).

When I mentioned the matter in Committee, the Government's view was that there was not really a problem. It has now been made clear that, in many instances, children suffer as a result of the interpretation of that section. We have the evidence of that not simply from the NSPCC, which is active in that sector, but from judges.

I well recognise that the Government would wish to have properly researched information on which to act, but the Government must on occasions respond to the requests of the judiciary, based on their practical difficulties in operating that enactment. There is not a jot of difference between the intentions of the Government and those of the Opposition in relation to the matter. Surely everyone in the House wants the courts to be as user-friendly for children as possible. That is the reason why the original enactment was passed.

I express my anxieties to my hon. Friend the Minister, and ask whether he will give close attention to the observations that have been made by members of the judiciary, especially in the exceptional letter from Mr. Justice Kay, following his practical experience of the paedophile case in Swansea.

Mr. Beith: I added my name to amendment (a) because I share the worries that have been expressed, especially in the light of two cases that have occurred in the north-east and the many others throughout the country.

Many parents are worried that when their children have been the subject of abuse—that is not in doubt in the type of case to which I am referring—their evidence is not heard by the court. The secondary consequence is that accused persons may be unable to demonstrate or prove their innocence or be found innocent by the court. Therefore, many parties remain aggrieved at the end of abortive trials and investigations in cases of that type. Unless we can find a satisfactory basis on which children's evidence can be admitted and appropriately considered by the court in cases where there may be, in the nature of the event, a lack of other corroborative evidence, we shall spread that sense of injustice.

The greatest fear is that it will become impossible to bring people to trial for the sexual molestation of young children as long as they can ensure that the event takes place where there is no witness. That is a very worrying state of affairs, which has certainly given anxiety to parents in my constituency and elsewhere.

The issues have been given focus by a case that took place in the Newcastle upon Tyne Crown court: Regina *v.* Lillie and Reed, and the judgment of Mr. Justice Holland in that case. It is worth giving the House at least a flavour of what led the judge in that case to feel that the children's evidence was inadmissible. The judge spent a long time looking at the video recordings and made many comments on the reasons why he did not feel able to allow the jury to see those video recordings and treat them as evidence.

> "The very length of the recordings, together with the marked variations in her story, reflect exactly what one would expect of a 4 year old, namely, an inability to give an intelligible account of events, certainly of those events that are relevant to these proceedings.
>
> That incapacity, I emphasise, was no reflection whatsoever upon"

the child,

[Mr. Beith]

"merely a reflection of her age, of the subject matter, of its emotional impact on her and, perhaps above all, of the delay between the events under investigation and the interview itself.

Second, granted that"

the child

"will be a year older when she would be exposed to cross-examination in any trial in this matter, I am quite satisfied that her capacity will not materially be improved."

All the circumstances that I have mentioned—the very young age of the child, the difficulty in producing a sequential story properly set out, and the fact that time will elapse between the offence and the making of the video and between the making of the video and the cross-examination—are common to cases of that type, and they increase the fear that it will not be possible to proceed in very many such cases.

I give the House another example from the judgment:

"She cannot, therefore, appreciate the premise upon which an important line of cross-examination must proceed, namely, the variation between accounts given at differing times in the course of recordings."

Those are hurdles that children of three and four will not be able to overcome. We are therefore contemplating a situation in which it will not be possible to secure convictions of guilty persons in such cases if so rigorous a test is applied in all instances.

Before that judgment was delivered, but after it had been ruled in court that the video evidence would not be admitted in that case, a case went to the Crown Prosecution Service in my constituency in which there were some similarities. It was clear that an offence had occurred, corroborative evidence was lacking and the Crown Prosecution Service had to decide whether it could proceed, and whether the evidence of the video interviews with children involved was a sufficient basis on which to do so.

I wrote to the Attorney-General to express the fear that the Newcastle case might influence that case and others, and that it might lead the Crown Prosecution Service to be extremely cautious. That case did not proceed, and there may be many others in the same situation now.

Therefore, I express the hope that a combination of the wording of the Lords amendment and consideration of the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), with the assistance of the NSPCC, might eventually give us a more certain basis of proceeding in cases of that type. Clearly, it will be difficult and a great onus will rest upon the court and the jury in considering whether they can rely on what the child says on the video recording, together with the evidence that an offence occurred—that feature is common to most of these cases—and such other evidence as can be adduced. If the child cannot be heard, the sense of grievance among parents, and the sense of anxiety that it is no longer safe to put a child in a place such as a nursery where such an offence could occur, would be great.

7.30 pm

Common to the two cases to which I have referred is the fact that both relate to public nursery institutions—nursery schools or nursery classes. One can imagine the anxiety of many of those working in the sector if the fear becomes greater and greater, as well as that of parents who have had the shattering experience of knowing that their child has been the subject of sexual molestation and having no way of bringing that child's evidence to bear.

I hope that the Minister understands and recognises the depth of concern on the issue. I appreciate the difficulties, but we must find some way to ensure that such matters are properly brought to trial and innocence proved when there is no evidence of guilt.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) and my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) care deeply about the way in which the criminal justice system treats child victims and witnesses. The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has made clear his similar feelings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor spoke deeply and passionately in Committee, but not at great length—thank goodness—on the subject. He has been persistent in hounding the Government to move along the route that he thinks appropriate.

The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme moved amendment (a) with the eloquence and sincerity that the House has come to expect from her. It is an interesting amendment and I have some sympathy with the points that she and other hon. Members have made, but, for several reasons, I have to advise the House that, although the Government agree with their lordships in amendment No. 43, we cannot at present support its further extension in the hon. Lady's amendment (a).

Both amendments operate on section 32A(5)(b) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. That section provides that where a child witness has given evidence in chief by means of a video recording, the prosecution may not then examine the child on any matter dealt with in that recording. The purpose was to protect the child from repeated cross-examination designed to expose discrepancies between the video recording and the child's examination in chief.

It appears that that provision may hinder the prosecution in one respect. Where an issue is mentioned but not fully explored in the video recording, the prosecution is unable to question the child any further about that issue. That may prevent the prosecution from bringing a relevant and important point to the attention of the court. During the passage of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which introduced that provision into the 1988 Act, we took the view that it was sufficient to deal with that danger. We were happy to put the matter beyond doubt by accepting an amendment to this Bill in another place which allows the prosecution to conduct a limited examination of the child to bring out points not adequately dealt with in the video recording.

The hon. Lady's amendment restates in slightly different terms that clarification of the law, but it goes further, in providing that the prosecution may examine the child on any matter dealt with in the video recording, whether adequately or not, if the judge believes that that is in the best interests of the child. As the hon. Lady has pointed out, it would enable the prosecution to refresh the child's memory, or give the child an opportunity to warm up before the cross-examination by the defence. It might make the whole process a less intimidating experience for the child witness, and we are all in favour of that.

The hon. Lady's amendment raises some rather difficult issues. The whole purpose of the provision in the 1988 Act is to prevent a child from having to go through the trauma of repeating the evidence already given in the video recorded interview. If the hon. Lady's amendment were accepted, there is a danger that some prosecuting counsel would use the opportunity to cover the same ground in a different way, in the hope that the child's testimony over the closed-circuit television link would persuade the jury in a way which the video recorded evidence in chief did not. It allows the prosecution a second bite at the cherry. Nothing in the hon. Lady's amendment would prevent the video recorded evidence in chief from becoming an alternative to an examination in chief rather than replacing it, as the 1991 Act envisaged.

We also remain concerned about some practical matters. A capacity for the prosecution to warm up a witness at the beginning of cross-examination may not deal adequately with the problems faced by children who have to undergo very long cross-examination. A few simple, warming-up questions on Monday morning would not be much comfort to a child who is still being cross-examined on Friday afternoon. If the intention is to allow the prosecution to warm up the child on more than one occasion—I am sorry about that expression, but it seems to be the one in common parlance—perhaps at the beginning of a new day in court, or when the defence moves on to questions relating to a second count on the indictment, that would not only prolong the trial but could also prejudice the defendant who might reasonably feel that his counsel's examination was being unfairly hampered and interrupted. If it is simply a matter of putting the child at ease at the start of questioning and preventing bullying or unfair cross-examination, the judge is already well placed to look after the child's interests.

In short, I am not persuaded that the benefits of the hon. Lady's amendment would outweigh the disadvantages that I have described. I should be happy to consider any proposals that she and my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor, who has long since considered those matters, might have for overcoming those difficulties. In any event, further reforms of the law in this sector would be premature at this stage. I am sure that my hon. Friends would advise me that, much as we welcome the opinion of one learned judge, it would not be acceptable to change the law on the basis of one case or one letter from however respected a judge.

The House and the hon. Lady will know that we have commissioned research by Professor Graham Davies of Leicester university into the effectiveness of the children's evidence provisions introduced by the 1991 Act. We expect his report at the end of the year. In the light of that, we will consider afresh what further changes may be needed. Therefore, although I have listened with great interest and respect to the cases made, I must advise the House to reject amendment (a). However, we can agree with their Lordships on amendment No. 43.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Can such changes as my hon. Friend has in mind as being possible, if the evidence that he receives is of an appropriate kind, be made without legislation?

Mr. Maclean: Primary legislation would most likely be required if we wished to amend the 1988 Act.

Mrs. Golding: I am saddened by what the Minister has said. The Government seem to be more interested in locking up children than they are in finding a way to give justice to children.

Mr. Maclean: That is unfair.

Mrs. Golding: I feel strongly about it. The way in which children give evidence in court is the result of shoddy compromise. We have gone from one Criminal Justice Bill to another, patching up, adding bits here and amending there, instead of devoting one large section of the Bill to enabling children to give evidence easily in our courts. I am saddened that the Minister has not taken the opportunity tonight to help children to give evidence by reducing the strains and stresses that they feel.

It is not true that only one judge has said that that needs to be done. Mr. Justice Holland said that he would not subject small children to a confrontation and cross-examination as their first encounter in court. Many judges hold that view, and it is time that the House listened to the people who must deal with such children and know of the stress that they suffer. I am sorry that the Minister could not go further tonight.

Question, That the amendment be made, *put and negatived.*

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 58

POWERS TO REMOVE PERSONS ATTENDING OR PREPARING FOR A RAVE

Lords amendment: No. 47, in page 44, line 13, after ("apply") insert ("—

(a) in England and Wales,")

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 48, 51, 56 to 63 and 173.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Existing powers in Scotland were previously deemed to be adequate to deal with any problems likely to be encountered in controlling unlicensed raves. We were mindful of the fact that in extreme cases the police already have powers to seize music-making equipment and that those powers may serve as a deterrent to persons who might otherwise be inclined to hold illegal raves. Furthermore, there was a limited measure of control in respect of raves that enabled local authorities to require a licence for the use of premises as a place of public entertainment. In another place, we

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

undertook to review whether those powers were sufficient, in a preventive capacity, to stop the growth in illegal raves in Scotland of the type experienced in England.

The outcome pointed to the possibility that persons who arrange such events may turn their unwelcome attention to the north if prevented from mounting raves south of the border, thereby causing misery to local residents. The Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland concurs with that view.

7.45 pm

Amendment No. 173 will have the effect of extending to Scotland prevention powers in relation to raves and the power to retain and to charge for seized vehicles and property, including musical equipment under clause 59. Although the existing rave scene in Scotland can adequately be contained, it may not be able to deal effectively with any increases in such events if organisers decided to exploit the potentially lucrative market in Scotland. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), who tabled relevant amendments in Committee. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) also raised the issue.

Incidentally, in case any hon. Member does not know, a rave—for the purposes of clause 58—is a large gathering in the open air at which incredibly loud music is played during the night, likely to cause serious distress to local people. We are not in favour of unlicensed uncontrolled raving. In contrast, a licensed rave is a form of entertainment including dance and music that is approved by local authority licensing procedures and which, by definition, is unlikely to cause serious distress to local people.

Mr. Beith: The Minister may be encouraged to know that plans were made to hold a rave of the first kind in my constituency, within one mile of the Scottish border. That was desisted from after strong local opposition. I am relieved to inform the Minister that the organisers did not proceed to stage the event immediately north of the border, as they might have done.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The right hon. Gentleman's point reinforces our argument that pre-emptive measures are necessary. I commend the amendment to the House.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 70

INTERIM POSSESSION ORDERS; FALSE OR MISLEADING STATEMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 70, in page 56, line 19, at end insert—

("( ) A person commits an offence if, for the purpose of resisting the making of an interim possession order, he—

(a) makes a statement which he knows to be false or misleading in a material particular; or

(b) recklessly makes a statement which is false or misleading in a material particular.")

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments No. 71, Lords amendment No. 72, amendments (a) and (b) thereto and Lords amendment No. 73.

Mr. Michael: As I understand it, the effect of this group of amendments will be that a person will commit an offence if he or she makes a false statement to resist the making of an interim possession order. In a sense, it is the mirror image of the offence of obtaining an interim possession order using a false statement.

Our concern is that we are confronted by two sets of legislation—civil law and criminal law—relating to the same situation. In tabling this amendment, the Opposition seek clarification of the position and difficulties in which a person could find himself.

When the issue was debated in the other place, the Lord Chancellor was still in the process of finalising the details for making interim possession orders through civil law. There was to be an opportunity for legitimate occupiers, in limited circumstances, to make representations against the making of an order. The Lord Chancellor's decisions appear in a document issued by his Department in late July. In fact, it is a consultation paper on the proposed rules and forms of new procedures to combat squatting in housing, shops and other buildings.

That document states that the Government concluded that the determination of rights of occupation should continue in the civil courts but with an accelerated procedure and criminal sanctions available for non-compliance with an interim possession order. We have in view the situation in which an order is sought by an occupier to recover property. Obviously the most acute situation arises where the property is a house or a flat, but it relates also to other types of property. The former case concerns us most.

The new procedure will enable a person, referred to as "the applicant", who is entitled to immediate possession of a building, or part of a building, to apply to a county court for an interim possession order, provided that notice of an intention to commence proceedings has been given to the alleged squatter, known as "the occupier". The applicant will be required to attend before the judge, who will decide whether to make an order.

The important point is that the occupier will not be given notice of the hearing; nor will he or she have a right to attend. Therefore, a decision may be made in the civil proceedings without the occupier necessarily being aware of those proceedings and without the occupier having a right to be present. The court is expected, in the guidance given by the Lord Chancellor, to receive undertakings to protect the occupier in the event that the order is set aside.

My experience with housing—particularly inner-city housing that is in multiple occupation and where there is a great movement of people in and out of bedsits—is that, frequently, there are circumstances in which landlords go to the edge of the law and beyond in seeking to influence what takes place. I have seen people moved out of properties in which they should have been able to protect themselves and remain. Protecting the rights of people is an area of considerable difficulty. Although there is a requirement on the court in terms of the evidence that must be produced and the satisfaction that the court must seek, we are dealing with an area in which, often, vulnerable people are in considerable difficulty, sometimes having to accept a flat or bedsit in unacceptable circumstances which are outside the requirements of the law. That makes them even more vulnerable. That is a grey area that concerns me, and is one which may cause people considerable difficulty.

If the order is made, it will require all occupiers to leave the premises within 24 hours of service of the order. Failure to obey the order will constitute a criminal offence. That is the point where we move from what is a civil process. Failure to obey an order made under that process becomes a criminal act. In circumstances in which somebody is occupying a property to which they have no right, or in circumstances in which they really should get out, I can understand why the Government seek to give that criminal sanction.

But where a house in multiple occupation is being dealt with by the landlord at the edges of the law, or perhaps in contravention of the law, we must ensure that there is some way of protecting the vulnerable individuals, as they are often young people. Sometimes they are young people who have come out of care. Sometimes they are young couples with a baby who have had to find accommodation at short notice. On some occasions, perhaps—as a lawyer friend suggested to me yesterday when we were examining these circumstances—members of a family may have fallen out. In such circumstances, the situation is far from clear-cut. It is certainly not as clear-cut as the circumstances that I understand the Minister seeks to target.

In the situations set down by the Lord Chancellor, an occupier who believes that he or she has a right of occupation may apply to have the order set aside. What is that person's situation? My understanding is that he or she will have committed a criminal offence if, in the meantime, he or she enters or seeks to continue to occupy the property. In other words, even though an order may be set out at a later stage, because of the existence of that order, that person will have committed a criminal act by continuing to assert his or her rights of occupation. That is a reasonably clear situation, which arises out of the overlap of civil and criminal law.

It is certainly the case that the individual would be uncertain of his or her situation. If the person believes that he or she has a right of occupation and at a later stage goes to have the order set aside and is unsuccessful, that person will have committed a criminal act, albeit with the belief that he or she was not committing a criminal act during the life of the order, because it is sustained. It is arguable that that person may have been committing a criminal act, even if the order is set aside, but obviously it is less likely that that will be pursued or stand on the record. It is possible that it could stand on a record somewhere, because I have yet to find the process set out anywhere by which the individual is found guilty or where that person can clear himself or herself of the offence. The problem is that the offence seems to be automatic.

My understanding is that, with a criminal offence, there must be a process of deciding, hearing and making a finding of guilt, but that does not appear to be the case in the overlap of criminal and civil law. It seems to be that the making of the order and the contravention of the civil order is automatically a criminal offence, even when dealing with an individual who has a right to continue in occupation. The problem is that, if a person has that right, it is not necessarily sustained by the court, because the court will not come to a decision on every occasion. There might be marginal decisions, especially in the circumstances to which I referred, where a tenancy or family arrangement is not in the definitions that are sanctioned and clear in law.

I come back to the point that there is a danger in such a state of affairs. The Opposition amendments offer protection and, unless they there accepted, there will be a danger that somebody could find himself or herself guilty of a criminal offence as a result of a civil procedure of which he or she is not aware and despite being in the honest belief that he or she is not committing any offence and has the right to occupy the property. If the person enters the premises, which he or she is entitled to occupy, that person is, presumably, committing an offence. How does a person become guilty of the offence in the circumstances envisaged under the Bill? What proof is required? What is the capacity for proving the innocence of somebody who asserts that he or she is not committing an offence in those circumstances? Might not we risk making an innocent person guilty of a technical offence and therefore giving them a criminal record, when, in fact, we are simply dealing with a vulnerable person whom the law should protect?

I hope that the Minister will accept that, in the circumstances that I have envisaged, there are dangers that vulnerable people—the very people who would be least likely to know their rights—could be in difficulty. It is for that reason that I have tabled my amendments. Amendment (a) seeks to insert words that would make it clear that the onus of proof shall lie on the person who obtained the interim possession order. That, with the protection that is in the legislation against people making a false declaration, seems to me to help to some extent.

Amendment (b) would insert another exemption. Somebody would not be committing an offence in the circumstances described if that person were able to produce evidence to a court that satisfied that court of the entitlement of the person to occupy the premises other than as a trespasser. That is something which the individual could seek to do immediately, without delay, even if he or she was unaware. That person would not have to wait until the date of making the return to the order to produce evidence and would therefore not put him or herself at risk of committing a criminal offence during the period to the return date.

I hope that the Minister will see that I am not trying to interfere with the general intention of the clause or, indeed, to interfere with the general intention of their lordships in their amendment. I am simply trying to bring in further protection, which could apply only in the sort of circumstances that I have outlined and could not therefore obstruct the use of the Act in the way intended by the Government. I hope very much that the Minister will feel able to accept both amendments, but particularly amendment (b).

Mr. Maclean: I listened carefully to what was said by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), and I think I understand his worry. I accept that he is not trying to wreck the proposals—these are

[Mr. Maclean]

certainly not wrecking amendments—but I think that he has misdirected himself slightly; or, to be really fair as I always am, perhaps the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) misdirected him slightly. I hope that I can show that the amendments are unnecessary.

8 pm

Amendment (a) would place the onus on the property owner to prove that someone found on premises subject to an interim possession order was a trespasser. It is not right, however, for a fundamental element of the establishment of a criminal offence—proving that the defendant was a trespasser—to be removed from the burden on the prosecutor and placed in the hands of the person who obtained the interim possession order. That person must satisfy a civil court that he is entitled to obtain the order; once he has obtained it, if someone is found on the property or subsequently enters it, that may be a criminal offence. It is the duty of the prosecutor to satisfy a criminal court later, and satisfy the requirement of the normal criminal burden of proof, that that person was trespassing. We cannot lay the burden on a person who is not the Crown prosecutor.

Mr. Bennett: The majority of my constituents do not want to risk committing an offence. They want certainty; they do not want the worry involved in letting someone else prove the case.

In the area that I used to represent, people who had bought biggish houses on mortgages would put in four or five bedsits, often illegally. At some point, the mortgagee would foreclose and repossess the dwelling, leaving the occupants of the bedsits in a difficult position: having, in some cases, paid a month's rent in advance, they would suddenly be told that they were out on the street. In such circumstances, it would surely be unfair to tell the occupants that they were not entitled to return to their bedsits and take possession of their own property, but it seems that the Government's proposals would land them with the worry that by going back in they would commit a criminal offence.

Mr. Maclean: That is a civil matter for the civil court to determine in the first instance, when an application is made for an interim possession order. The civil court must be satisfied at that point. I understand the purpose of the Opposition amendments, and I do not condemn them as wrecking amendments, because they clearly are not.

Mr. Bennett: The people whom I described—the occupants of the bedsits—knew nothing about the proceedings of the giver of the mortgage and the owner of the property. They simply returned to find that the ownership of the property had changed, and they were locked out on the street. In such circumstances, people's natural reaction is to try to break down the door to get back into a bedsit that they believe they have a legal right to occupy.

Mr. Maclean: It is proposed that the occupant will be informed of the intention to apply for an interim possession order by whoever is involved. The Lord Chancellor clearly wishes to cover that in his rules, so that the occupant is informed that someone—whether it is the person he believes to be the landlord, or the Timbuctoo property company—is trying to gain possession of the property, so that he can make written representations to the court. That is a civil matter. The burden of proof, if and when an interim possession order has been granted, is another matter entirely. We cannot have "civilians"—that is, those who obtain interim possession orders—taking on the burden of proof in a criminal case; that is the Crown prosecutor's duty, and if he does not carry it out he will fail.

Mr. Michael: The Minister's comments are quite helpful. They are beginning to clarify the procedure that will apply.

In the civil procedure, the court would presumably require evidence that an order had been served; but it would presumably be up to the applicant to produce that evidence. I can envisage circumstances—as, clearly, can my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett)—in which a court might be misled. The real problem arises, however, with the shift into the criminal part of the proceedings. How is the criminal case determined? How is it triggered by the sort of breach that would cause worry to constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, or to the people whom I cited in my earlier illustrations?

Mr. Maclean: The Bill is clear in this respect. A criminal offence could be committed if a person granted an interim possession order found people on the premises in breach of that order—or, if the original people had left, a new bunch came in five minutes later. Those are the basic makings of the offence. The Crown Prosecution Service would have to decide whether, in its judgment, an offence had been committed, and advance its findings to the court; the court would then have to make the ultimate decision that the offence had been proved to its satisfaction, according to the full criminal law.

As the provision stands, a prosecutor would have to prove in any criminal proceedings that the defendant was a trespasser; in the same way, he would have to prove all the other elements of the offence. Moreover, the prosecutor would have to prove that to the satisfaction of the court—that is, beyond all reasonable doubt. There is therefore no risk that a legitimate occupant would be wrongly convicted of the offence, which is the eventuality against which the Opposition wish to safeguard.

Mr. Stephen: Is not the crux of the matter the fact that the criminal court would not be bound to assume from the mere fact of an order's existence that the occupier was a trespasser? It would be an absolute defence for the occupier—that is, the defendant in the criminal proceedings—to show that he was not in fact the trespasser.

Mr. Maclean: That is the next point with which I shall deal.

Mr. Michael: I understand the example given by the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen). The law may be clear, but the situation is not clear to a person who goes into a property believing that he has a right to do so. In the circumstances cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, when there are locks on the door, is that person entitled to enter a property to which he has an legitimate right, or is he putting himself at risk because it may be decided later that the civil court does not accept that he has a legitimate right to enter the property, even to recover his possessions? In such circumstances, people will put themselves at risk of gaining a criminal record.

Mr. Maclean: It is clear that, once an interim possession order has been granted, the possibility exists that a criminal offence will be committed by people who breach it if, later, a criminal court is convinced that an offence has been committed. If the criminal court subsequently discovers that the person concerned is not a trespasser but a legitimate tenant—or has a right to be on the premises for another reason—the prosecutor will have failed to prove his case, and the person will not be convicted.

Mr. Michael: Let us suppose that a large company, with a bureaucratic organisation that may therefore be inaccurate, locks up a property that it believes itself to have legitimately repossessed. Those in occupation are unable to enter the premises without transgressing the order; they are therefore unable to do anything until the return date of the order, which they can then challenge.

Amendment (b) would allow such people to appear before a court immediately and to say that they have evidence—a rent book, an agreement or a letter from the previous owner, for instance—enabling them to go back into occupation without committing a criminal act. They could not do that gratuitously or at will. Without such evidence, surely there is no opportunity for them to resume occupation.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman's scenario ignores one point. Under the Lord Chancellor's rules, the occupiers would have to receive notification that a property company, for example, was applying for an interim possession order, and have a chance to make representations to the court. Before the court could grant the interim possession order preventing the occupiers from entering the property that they considered to be theirs, it would have to be satisfied that the person applying for the order had a legitimate right to do so. That is the first safeguard.

The hon. Gentleman's amendment is not tacked on to the part of the Bill that the hon. Gentleman thinks it is. The effect of the amendment is that someone found on premises subject to an interim possession order would not be guilty of an offence if he could prove to the satisfaction of the court that he was lawfully entitled to occupy the premises. With respect, that is unnecessary since in its own definition the offence applies only to trespassers and cannot catch someone who legitimately enters the property. If a person proves to the court that he has a right to enter the property, he is not a trespasser and, therefore, no offence is committed. I understand why the hon. Gentleman has tried to put in place a safeguard, but the safeguard is already in the wording of the law.

Mr. Michael *rose—*

Mr. Maclean: We are making heavy weather of this.

Mr. Michael: It is important to get this clear. Can the Minister tell me how, in advance of the return date of the order, that person would persuade anybody of his legitimate right of occupancy?

Mr. Maclean: I apologise. Will the hon. Gentleman please repeat his question?

Mr. Michael: Prior to the date of the return of the order, how would that individual persuade a court—it could be a magistrates court; it would not have to be a civil court that had made the order—that he has the right to occupy the premises and therefore avoid any accusation that he is committing a criminal act?

Mr. Maclean: A trespasser would not be able to avoid that allegation. Many people cannot avoid allegations that they have committed crimes, but that does not make them criminals by any means, thank goodness. If the police decided that someone was on property in breach of an interim possession order, they would presumably want to apply the criminal offence. The prosecution would have to prove to the court that the person was there illegally as a trespasser. If, in the mean time, the civil court has decided that the person is not a trespasser—that is a telling point in a criminal prosecution—the prosecutor would not be able to succeed. The prosecutor would have to prove beyond reasonable doubt—the normal standard in a criminal court—that the person was a trespasser. If, in the hon. Gentleman's hypothetical scenario, the person is not a trespasser, he cannot be found guilty.

I fail to see where the problem materialises. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman raised these amendments because he was worried about the effects of the law in this area. However, the law is quite clear. The hon. Gentleman's amendments are unnecessary. I give the hon. Gentleman credit for trying to ensure that people are not wrongly convicted by trying to impose the new criminal burden of proof in a civil matter, but, as I have said, that is not appropriate. The hon. Gentleman's second amendment is not appropriate on the basis that a person cannot be convicted of a criminal offence unless he or she is a trespasser. One does not need to add that anyone who is not a trespasser cannot be convicted.

Mr. Michael: I accept that the law may be clear, but the risk at which somebody can find himself put as a result of the decision of a civil proceeding at which he need not be present and at which he has no right of hearing is a risk which we should not take. We need only provide the ability for him to avoid that doubt by going before a court and saying, "There is no doubt and here is the evidence of my right to possess." Nobody without that evidence would be able to persuade a court, so there is no risk that it would weaken in any way the provisions of the Bill in regard to either the civil proceedings or the criminal element.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I have been listening carefully to the arguments. Does not this

[Mr. David Ashby]

apply to every criminal act? The issue is whether the prosecution can prove the case or whether there is doubt. It happens in every criminal act.

8.15 pm

Mr. Michael: No, it does not. That is wrong. The possibility of having committed a criminal act arises only as a result of a civil order being made in which the person most directly affected is not concerned. The doubt is real and it should be capable of being cleared if evidence can be produced. We should not have to wait until the end of the civil proceedings in order to clarify a person's criminal standing.

I appreciate that the Minister has tried to respond positively to the points I have raised and we have had a genuine debate. I shall not seek to press amendment (a) because the Minister's point about the responsibility for producing evidence is reasonable. However, with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to press amendment (b) to a Division.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment No 71 agreed to.

Clause 71

INTERIM POSSESSION ORDERS: FAILURE TO COMPLY AN OFFENCE

Lords amendment: No. 72, in page 56, line 42, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

> ("(2) Subject to subsection (2A), a person who is present on the premises as a trespasser at any time during the currency of the order commits an offence.
>
> (2A) No offence under subsection (2) is committed by a person if—
>
> (a) he leaves the premises within 24 hours of the time of service of the order and does not return; or
>
> (b) a copy of the order was not fixed to the premises in accordance with rules of court.
>
> (2B) A person who was in occupation of the premises at the time of service of the order but leaves them commits an offence if he re-enters the premises as a trespasser or attempts to do so after the expiry of the order but within the period of one year beginning with the day on which it was served.")

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment: (b), in line 9, at end insert—

> '(c) evidence is produced to a court which satisfies that court of the entitlement of the person to occupy the premises other than as a trespasser.'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East) (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have to report to you, Sir, that access to the House is being impeded by certain members of the Metropolitan police. Cars are being allowed down Whitehall, the Embankment and Victoria street, but I was advised to walk through Birdcage walk to make the Division. I had to get out of my taxi and walk quickly. No doubt there may be other hon. Members who will not know of the police activity. I explained to the policeman that I was a Member of the House and that there was a Division pending.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I have had a report from the Serjeant at Arms that there are difficulties, and I have asked for a further report. We will make a judgment when we see what happens. I am relying on hon. Members' ingenuity at the moment.

The House having divided: Ayes 250, Noes 290.

Division No. 308] **[8.17 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.

Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil (Islwyn)
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Jim Dowd

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony

Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McCrea, Rev William
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smyth, Rev Martin (Belfast S)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil (Belfast N)
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Timothy Wood and
Derek Conway

Question accordingly negatived.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 75

REPEAL OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS RELATING TO GIPSY SITES

Lords amendment: No. 79, in page 60, line 24, at end insert—

("( ) This section is subject to subsections (4A) and (4B) of section 152.")

8.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 157, 160, 169, 315, 316 and 335 and the Government motions to disagree.

Mr. Jones: Clause 75 would repeal the gipsy site provisions of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, including the duty placed on local authorities to provide caravan sites for gipsies in their areas. It would also repeal the Secretary of State's powers to designate local authority areas and to direct authorities to provide sites or additional sites. It would further repeal the Secretary of State's powers under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to pay grant to local authorities in England and Wales in respect of the capital cost of gipsy site provision.

It was our original intention to bring these repeals into force immediately on Royal Assent. Amendment No. 79 and the amendments grouped with it would delay those repeals until after 1 July 1999. The sole exception would be the repeal of the designation provisions in the 1968 Act, which would come into force on Royal Assent. Even after 1 July 1999, the repeals could come into force only by means of commencement orders in relation to local authority areas. Each order would be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. That process would obviously mean further delay in bringing the repeals into force in England and Wales, in some cases long beyond the initial five-year extension.

The Government disagree with the amendments and I invite the House to reject them. One of the noble Lords who tabled the amendments in another place argued that the proposed delay would give local authorities an opportunity to reduce substantially the shortfall in the provision of accommodation for gipsies. We do not believe that a five-year reprieve would have such an effect.

In the past 13 years, the number of gipsy caravans stationed on unauthorised sites has remained broadly the same year after year— an average of 4,000 caravans each year since 1981— even though 100 per cent. grant for the capital costs of site provision has been available since 1978 and £87 million has been expended on site provision. The shortfall in provision has been largely due to natural growth in the gipsy population. Plainly, site provision is barely keeping pace with the growth in demand and is not reducing the shortfall.

There is simply no basis on which to believe that a five-year extension would lead to sites being provided for all gipsy families who have no lawful place to camp. What would a five-year delay achieve? It would not make it any easier for local authorities to find suitable sites; nor would it check the natural growth in the gipsy population. The evidence of the past 24 years suggests that in five years' time we shall be no further on in reducing unauthorised camping.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): My hon. Friend mentioned the natural growth in the gipsy population. First, will he reassure me that there is no possibility or danger of what we understand here as new age travellers— whom most people would not regard as gipsies— benefiting from the planning arrangements that the Government's proposals envisage? Secondly, will he address the concerns, of which I think he is aware, that have been expressed by the National Farmers Union, which fears that the removal of the Lords amendments might result in a worsening rather than an easing of the present problem for farmers and others arising from unauthorised encampments?

Mr. Jones: On my hon. Friend's first point, I do not believe that there is a major danger, as there has been a court finding on the definition of gipsies as opposed to new age travellers. We are pretty confident on that count. On his second point, we shall have to see how local authorities behave, but the proposed powers are stronger and cover a far wider part of the country, which should be enough to reassure the NFU.

We have serious principled objections to the amendments. My Department has carried out a detailed review of gipsy site policy. The consultation paper that my Department issued in August 1992 elicited almost 1,000 responses from a wide range of interests, including local authorities and organisations representing gipsies and landowners. We considered carefully all the responses before making our legislative proposals. That process has taken more than two years to reach this stage. It is now proposed that there should be a further delay of at least five years in bringing these long-awaited reforms into force and we believe that that procrastination cannot be justified.

We recognise that council site provision has contributed to alleviating the difficulties experienced by the gipsy community. Indeed, the predicament of gipsies in England and Wales is now far different from in 1968. At that time, probably fewer than 10 per cent. of gipsy caravans in England and Wales were stationed on authorised sites, whereas the figure is now about 46 per cent. A further 24 per cent. are on authorised private sites, and many more are stationed on tolerated sites where they are allowed to stay with reasonable security from eviction. Some of our critics have claimed that our reforms would place gipsies in the same predicament that they faced in 1968, but that is manifestly not the case.

We believe that public provision of sites has now reached an acceptable level. Public accommodation has been provided for 46 per cent. of the total number of gipsy caravans in England and Wales. We do not believe that it is in the public interest to continue to maintain what has become an open-ended commitment to provide sites for all gipsies seeking accommodation at the public's expense. It is our view that the right approach now is to encourage more gipsies to establish their own sites through the planning system. We know that many gipsy families would prefer to establish their own sites rather than reside on council sites. The National Gypsy Council has for a long time supported the case for private provision. Private site provision has increased by more than 135 per cent. since 1981. Our intention is to encourage that trend.

I am familiar with the argument that the planning rules are stacked against gipsies and that consequently many of them are wont to purchase and occupy land without first getting planning permission. That practice invariably adds to their problems. In January, my Department issued a circular entitled "Gypsy Sites and Planning" which provides a framework that we believe will give gipsies the confidence to use the usual planning procedures to establish their own sites.

The new guidance advises planning authorities to set out clear policies in their development plans to meet gipsies' accommodation needs, to consult gipsies and their representatives when preparing their plans, and to advise and offer practical help to gipsies with the planning procedures. We are determined to ensure that the planning system operates fairly and that planning applications for the development of gipsy sites are treated on the same basis as other applications.

The Government are committed to reducing the level of unauthorised camping. Unauthorised camping by gipsies and other travellers causes serious nuisance and offence to landowners and local communities. All hon. Members know that the dimensions of that problem, and public awareness of it, have increased in recent years. Public expectations are high. In some areas of England and Wales, hardly a week passes without a new incident of unauthorised camping making the headlines in the local press. The reaction of local people is always the same: "Surely something should be done about it" and "Surely the police or the local authority must deal with this nuisance". There is always bewilderment and frustration that the powers currently available to local authorities are circumscribed and rarely allow authorities to take effective action. Our proposals will enable them to control unauthorised camping in their areas.

We have presented a comprehensive package of proposals which we believe will reduce unauthorised camping and give gipsies reasonable opportunities to find suitable accommodation. Our proposals would replace a system of site provision that has been in operation for 24 years and has manifestly failed to achieve those objectives. The lengthy period of procrastination proposed in the amendments would serve no useful purpose and would be greeted with dismay in many quarters. I strongly urge the House to reject the amendments.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I congratulate the Minister on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box. He and I served for a number of years on the Select Committee on the Environment, and it was a pleasure to hear him answering questions earlier today and now to hear him open this debate. However, the fact that we are discussing gipsies during a debate on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill highlights one of our main objections to the proposals. We believe that the proper way to deal with the issue would be in a Department of the Environment Bill rather than its being included in this Bill, which covers so many different subjects. The Minister will not be surprised to learn that we do not agree with him and I can say at the outset that we intend to divide the House.

We believe that the Lords amendment is a modest proposal and should remain in the Bill. We said on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report and, indeed, when the right hon. Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) introduced a private Member's Bill on a similar subject, that the Government's proposals to repeal part of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 do not solve any problems but create more. Delaying the implementation of the relevant part of the Bill would give the Government, local authorities and everyone else involved at least five more years in which to consider the sensible way to proceed.

8.45 pm

What would be achieved by passing the Bill in its original form without the Lords amendment? To do so would criminalise some gipsies and increase homelessness; it would cause family breakdown and place added pressures on social and education services. It would certainly not solve any problems. Indeed, it is our view that it would create more problems and improve nothing.

As the Minister knows, about 38 per cent. of English local authorities are designated. The Bill would give similar powers to all local authorities, whether or not they were designated. At the moment, designation provides local authorities with powers to act rapidly through the magistrates courts to remove unlawfully parked caravans and their occupants from highways or unoccupied land or from occupied land with the landowner's consent.

I wish to make it clear again that we are not condoning the trouble caused by people on a minority of unauthorised sites. I am sure that hon. Members of all parties have had to deal with such problems. However, the majority of the gipsy population do not create such problems, but we are once again being asked to legislate against all gipsies and people who live a similar life style in order to deal with the problems created by a minority. That is wrong.

The Minister mentioned the provision of private sites. We have no objection to that or to the provision of smaller sites, whether publicly or privately funded. We must approach the matter positively. If the House were to accept the Lords amendment, we should be able to examine the question at greater length.

The Minister knows that the view that I am expressing is not held exclusively by the Labour party but has the support of all three local authority associations—the Association of District Councils, the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. It also has the support of the National Farmers Union, an organisation which does not usually side with the Labour party, and that of Save the Children Fund, which believes that the Government's proposals are wrong.

We accept that local opinion is often very much opposed to applications for gipsy sites and that it can be extremely difficult to secure the establishment of such sites. However, we must recognise that that is so whether sites are publicly or privately funded. A new way forward must be found.

The Minister's predecessor always said that he accepted in good faith that it was not the intention to force gipsies on to sites in totally unsuitable and undesirable areas, next to rubbish tips, and so on. Some people think that we should look for that type of solution. Even though we disagree on his principal proposals, I hope that that is not what the Minister would advocate.

In the consultations, the Government suggested that they would like to encourage more of the people involved to move into permanent housing. Given the Government's record in providing affordable housing for rent over the past few years, it seems crazy to add to the problem by adding another category of people who do not want housing, and telling them that going into such accommodation is the only way forward for them. That is nonsense.

Save the Children, which has taken a close interest in the subject throughout the consultations with the Government and at every stage of the Bill's progress through the House, has sent a letter to all Members of Parliament, which says:

> "As providers of services to children in Gipsy and Traveller families, our concern is for their welfare. Availability of sufficient and suitable caravan site accommodation is the best way to safeguard the health of children, their access to schooling, and their emotional development."

Those are important facts which we must recognise, and I believe that the Government's proposals would move us in the wrong direction.

The letter continues:

> "The shortage of legal stopping places means that some families have no option but to stop on unauthorised sites. We consider the duty on local authorities to provide sites should be retained and that this will help minimise the incidence of unauthorised stopping."

The problem today—if we accept that there is a problem—is caused not by over-provision of sites, but by the fact that to date 62 per cent. of councils have failed to provide sites within their areas. I am sure that the Minister will point out that many of those councils are Labour-controlled, and I accept that; I am not making a political point. I simply say that the local authorities concerned must consider the problem and see what they can do.

We believe that the five-year delay that would result from leaving the Bill as it came from the House of Lords and agreeing to the Lords amendment would enable the Government to examine the developments that took place during that time. We should like the gipsies themselves to be involved in discussions at national and local level, and everybody could try to find a positive way forward.

In the discussions that I have had, it has been clear that many people believe that the sites provided by many local authorities, designed for 30 or 40 caravan pitches, are too big. Authorities should consider smaller sites that would accommodate the extended family life style that many gipsies lead. Smaller sites would be more desirable for them, and would often cause less friction locally. I accept that such smaller sites could be privately or publicly funded.

Clearly, we shall not achieve anything by supporting the Government in deleting Lords amendment No. 79 and the related Lords amendments. We must try to examine the situation positively, and recognise gipsies' needs for access to education for their children—I referred to that a few moments ago—and access to health service provision, whether through a general practitioner or through community health services. Ante-natal care and safe childbirth are also important. All those issues must be considered, and so must the environmental health implications.

We have had many debates on such issues, and many stronger alternatives have been debated at earlier stages in the Bill. I realise that we cannot reopen all those debates tonight. However, the Opposition strongly believe that if the Government win the vote at the end of the debate they will create a problem and solve none. They should heed the voices of reason, and allow us a five-year breathing space, to allow all those involved to try to achieve a positive and more acceptable solution that will not create the problems that the Government's rejection of the Lords amendment will cause.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I have listened to the argument, which is highly sensitive. One wants to do the maximum that one can to assist the gipsies, but—the Minister has explained the point remarkably well—the Caravan Sites Act 1968 is out of date and has been proved to be so. We have had 26 years of experience of the Act, and during that time, if two of its main provisions—one of which was providing sufficient accommodation for gipsies and providing it in the most suitable places—were going to prove useful, they would have done so by now.

I shall cite one case from Bedford, involving the Cutthroat lane site. It was put in the wrong place, too near residents and next door to Sainsbury, and is causing the utmost commotion. One blames not the gipsies but the local authority for the decision. We are trying to change all the provisions. The Act has also failed to reduce the incidence of illegal camping; I shall say more about that in a moment.

Surely their lordships have not made the right decision. If they considered the matter carefully against the background of the past 25 or 26 years, and decided that they wanted another five years, what did they want the additional time for? The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has said that he wants another five years, at the end of which we should be able to review the position—but we should be no better off at the end of that period than we are now. The Minister's suggestion of new planning guidance, and the idea that the gipsies themselves should provide some of their own accommodation on their own sites under the planning system, appeal to me, and no doubt to many others in the House.

I shall state why I think that people are supporting some of the planning applications. It is not merely the granting of the planning permission that is important; it is the securing of a 100 per cent. grant for the local authorities. The local authorities know that for as many sites as they build, 100 per cent. grant will be granted. The result is that the authorities want money for those sites. But, having got the sites, they prove to be a liability, not merely to the local communities, but to the local gipsies themselves. There are two such sites in Bedford already, one of which has caused the utmost turmoil to the local residents. That was broken up over the years. The other site is a little outside Bedford where the gipsies destroyed their own accommodation, which has to be rehabilitated with the aid of Government money at great expense. I wonder whether the Opposition have considered that.

The other matter that I should like to stress is that in 1966 there were 3,500 illegally camped caravans in England. Today, after the provision of an extra 17,000 caravan pitches in the past 26 years, there are 7,000 illegal caravan encampments. If the local authorities have failed to provide enough caravan sites, are they likely to secure any great easement of the situation over the next five years, for which I understand their lordships are asking for modifications? No, I think that the Minister presented a good case. He put forward some of the arguments that I had in mind and I thank him for doing that. I hope that many hon. Members on both sides of the House will accept the view that there is no reason why the Lords amendments should be accepted.

9 pm

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): My Liberal Democrat colleagues and I are very sad about the Government's moves tonight. They appear to be trying to take the heart out of the excellent legislation which was first proposed, I understand, in the House by my noble Friend Lord Avebury. There has been some grudging acceptance on the Government Benches that that legislation has done much good.

There is a clear case to be made for the huge increase in authorised sites over the past few years having come about largely as a result of that legislation. The problem that the Government seem to be hitting is that that legislation has not increased the number of sites any faster than the increase in the gipsy population. That is not necessarily a reason for removing legislation altogether, which may make the situation even worse, because it looks likely that the increase in the number of sites in future will not even keep up with the gipsy population if the Government are determined to take that route.

The Government may be saying—some Opposition Members suspect that they are—that they simply do not want to see as many sites produced in future as would be produced if the legislation were left in place. If so, I regard that as very sad. But there are many reasons for supposing that we need a real increase in sites, and I hope that the Government will, as they claim to be doing, try to ensure that that increase occurs. It is, of course, also possible that the Government, while wishing to see an increase in sites, simply wish to decrease the average amount of money spent to set up each of those sites.

However, if we assume for a moment that the Government want to see an increase in sites, I think they are right, for the following reasons. First, there is all the human cost incurred in leaving a large number of the gipsy population on unauthorised sites. There is a human cost incurred by moving on the gipsies from site to site every few days—sometimes, perhaps, every few weeks, but often every few days.

There is a human cost in the stress on family life and the likelihood that families will break up as a result. There is a human cost among the children of those families—not only because the families themselves are stressed, but because of the difficulties children have in getting a reasonable education. At a time when, surely, we are all saying that the people of our country, our most valuable resource, need all the education and training that they can get to take up the jobs of the future, we should be saying that gipsy families should have the right, and the opportunity as well, to obtain a good education for themselves.

There is also the human cost in terms of the inaccessibility of health care to those who are constantly being moved from place to place. That is perhaps especially true of those mothers who are having children. We must recognise that human cost.

Even if the Government are not prepared to recognise the human cost, surely they should recognise the financial cost involved. I am referring to the farming community, which has already been mentioned. It is clear, as we were told earlier by the Labour Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), that the National Farmers Union is no friend of the Labour party.

[Mr. David Rendel]

I must tell the Government that although, when I first fought the Newbury seat, I was fairly certain that 90 per cent. of the farmers were voting against me—possibly more than that—by the time that I last fought the seat, I was pretty sure that 90 per cent. of the farmers were in favour of me. The reason is not least because the Government have shown themselves to be extremely farmer-unfriendly, and they are still showing themselves as such in their moves tonight.

We must also consider the cost to society as a whole. Can we really believe that it is right that the upbringing of children should be disrupted? Can it really be right that children should grow up without a proper education? Is that really the way to bring our social costs down? Even the Government should recognise the financial costs involved.

A possible reason for the Government introducing the measure is that they want the costs of each site reduced. If that is the case, will it actually happen? If there is a reduction in the increase in the number of authorised sites, the social and other costs to which I have just referred must greatly outweigh a reduction in the cost of the small number of extra sites set up by the gipsies.

If we are prepared to provide decent homes, as far as we can, for those who are homeless and in priority need, and such a provision still exists under the Government's new homelessness legislation, is it right that we should refuse to pay anything towards the homing costs of gipsy families when they have young children to look after? That seems to be gross discrimination against the gipsy population, and we should not put up with that.

If the Government assume that the number of sites will increase if there are to be only private sites in future, at least we should have an opportunity to put the policy into practice alongside the old legislation, so that we can see whether it really works.

The Caravan Sites Act 1968 has been in place for some time. It has not worked, because some local authorities have been allowed to get away with it. They have been allowed to get away with not fulfilling their obligations under the legislation. The Government should be enforcing that legislation properly. They should tell local authorities that they must fulfil their obligations to the community at large.

If the Government do not do that, the message sent to local authorities is that if they do not like legislation and do not want to fulfil their obligations, they can forget them for a while and let other authorities that are prepared to fulfil their obligations do that. The Government will not treat those local authorities fairly, because, in the end, they will tell them that, as they have not fulfilled their obligations for several years, they will drop those obligations entirely.

That is not a fair way to treat local authorities that have fulfilled their obligations, or the authorities that believe that they have an obligation to their local gipsy families. That is not a fair way to proceed, and the Government should not remove the amendment tonight.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel)—*[Interruption.]* Before the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) leaves the Chamber, he might like to know that I intend to ask him a question in a moment.

I was one of the Conservative Members who, some years ago, pressed the former Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), very strongly when he was introducing proposals on squatting, to take similar measures against what I described as the menace of rural squatting—the subject of this debate. I was therefore extremely pleased by the Government's proposals in the Bill, which were foreshadowed, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, in the consultation paper.

However, I was alarmed when the Lords passed this amendment. I was particularly alarmed because, at that precise time, the Liberal Democrat-controlled Cornwall county council was trying to force through a scheme to impose—there is no other word to describe it—sites for new age travellers on the six district councils in Cornwall. Naturally, that created uproar from one end of the county to another.

The scheme was ill thought out. The council broke practically every rule in the planning book. There was no consultation. Someone in my constituency who happened to own a site did not even know of the proposal until he left a local post office and someone said to him, "I hear that they are going to put a site on your land."

What a dreadful way to act! There was mayhem from one end of the county to another. Protest meetings were held. Together with my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), I played a leading role in opposing the plans, and I make no apology for that. I believed that they trampled on the rights of local people.

Of course, taken in isolation, the point made by the hon. Member for Newbury has some force. Of course we all want a humane society; but just as gipsies and new age travellers have rights, so, too, do local people, and their rights were being trampled on by the plans drawn up by the Liberal Democrat-controlled Cornwall county council—

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall) *rose*—

Mr. Harris: Before the hon. Gentleman gets to his feet, I want to ask him a question. He has never made this clear; nor did the Euro-MP who, in the election campaign, spoke about all sorts of domestic issues but not about European issues. Did the hon. Member for North Cornwall support the plan drawn up by Cornwall county council for the county in general and for his constituency in particular?

Mr. Tyler: I am in favour of authorised sites, not unauthorised ones. It is extremely irresponsible of the hon. Gentleman, who fought an effective nimby campaign on this issue, to ignore the fact that there was wide consultation with all six district councils two years ago to establish the principle that in each district a site should be set up. I do not get involved in planning decisions. I was not involved in identifying which sites should be set up where—but it is a fact that each district agreed to establish a site.

Secondly, in my village there is an authorised site on which for many years gipsies have played a responsible part in the local community. That was in line with what the county council sought to establish. The critical issue before the House this evening—I hope that, instead of merely attacking Liberal Democrats in Cornwall, the hon.

Gentleman will deal with this—is establishing how local communities may arrive at authorised sites to meet their obligations under current statute.

Mr. Harris: The hon. Gentleman has not replied to my question: did he or did he not support Cornwall county council's plan for the county and for his constituency?

Mr. Tyler: I neither supported nor opposed it, because I do not support or oppose any planning application. We have many responsibilities here as Members of Parliament, but we should not arrogate to ourselves the responsibilities of members of planning committees—that would be quite absurd.

Mr. Harris: Like the hon. Gentleman, I do not get involved in the merits or demerits of planning applications; but in this case I thought that the county council's actions defied all planning common sense and paid no regard to the wishes or well-being of local people. I therefore had no hesitation about deploring the council's way of trying to deal with an admittedly very difficult problem.

Mr. David Nicholson: Did I hear my hon. Friend say that the proposals in Cornwall were intended to include not just traditional gipsies but new age travellers? If so, that concerns us greatly. Secondly, will he bear in mind that this same issue has been rather more surreptitiously pursued by Liberal Democrat-controlled Somerset county council?

Mr. Harris: One of the problems that has bedevilled this whole subject is that of arriving at a reasonable definition of "gipsy". I do not accept that the huge increase in the scale of the problem has been caused by the sort of people whom I regard as genuine indigenous Romany people. Of course their population has not increased over the past 25 years by the numbers that have been given during the debate. We are talking about people who, for one reason or another—perhaps good reasons, perhaps bad reasons—have chosen to follow that way of life.

To return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), perhaps one of the cardinal mistakes by Cornwall county council when, out of the blue, it announced their scheme for the designation of sites, was to describe them as sites for travellers. A High Court case went some way to clarifying the difference between gipsies and travellers. That case, which related to South Hams, made it quite clear that travellers were not covered by the provisions of the 1968 Act.

9.15 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I do not wish to intrude too much on a Cornish debate, but clearly there are implications for everyone else. Has the hon. Gentleman ever supported the provision of caravan sites anywhere in the county of Cornwall for any travellers, or is he opposed to them all? Those of us not living in Cornwall should understand any prejudice that he may have employed in his argument.

Mr. Harris: I have always made it clear that I want the council to provides sites for indigenous local gipsies. Just as hon. Member for Cornwall, North said that there is one in or near his constituency, there is one near my constituency, and I have no objection to it; it is perfectly reasonable.

I parted company with the Liberal Democrat-controlled county council when it tried to use powers in the 1968 Act to provide sites for new age travellers. I hope that the hon. Member for Cornwall, North will agree that we do not have a responsibility to provide sites for people who choose on a whim to go anywhere in the country and then expect to be housed at the expense of the taxpayers or council tax payers. I do not buy that argument at all, and I hope that the hon. Member for Cornwall, North will agree.

I should say something else about the county council. Nothing much was done for 26 years, but when the Bill came before the House and went to the other place, suddenly the Liberal Democrats on the county council acted. Their publicly stated reason for moving so quickly was to secure a 100 per cent. grant. That was the main motivation.

Mr. Tyler: I know that the hon. Gentleman is a fair Member of the House. He has not responded yet, but I hope that he will now acknowledge that the consultation began on the appropriate sites per district two years ago—before the Bill came to the House and before the reduction of grant was mooted. While I am here, because I do not want to interrupt him again—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may not wish to interrupt again, but he is making an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Harris: There were proposals by the county council some time before the Bill appeared. I am not sure whether they preceded the consultation document; my recollection is that they did not, but it was about that time. Certainly they moved very quickly to the designation of the six sites, breaking virtually every rule in the planning book to secure the 100 per cent. grant.

I was approached indirectly by Liberal Democrats who said, "For goodness' sake get the Government to call in the sites, because we do not want them." That was what happened.

The Liberal Democrats on the county council faced uproar; they were clearly in an embarrassing position. They were given some succour by the passing of the Lords amendments, and they tried to make out that the Bill would be delayed and therefore their money would be secure. I am pleased to say that my hon. Friend the Minister of State made it perfectly clear that was not the case, and that, in all probability, they would not get the money they wanted.

I am sorry that I have gone on so long, but to sum up, I believe that it is absolutely essential that the Lords amendments are rejected by the House tonight. I hope they will be, I know they will be and I hope that even the Liberal Democrats will vote with the Government, despite the speech of the hon. Member for Newbury.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that access to the House has already been mentioned twice tonight, as a result of what is happening outside the House. I know that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is quite comfortably in his place in the House when perhaps he should be outside, speaking to his friends.

[Sir Jim Spicer]

Tonight, the House is under siege. There are 2,000 police who could be protecting all their communities in London, but who instead are hemmed in by a bunch of thugs who are intent on causing disruption to the proceedings of the House. All I wish to do is draw attention to that fact, and to say that the time has come when that must not be allowed to happen under any circumstances. Those people should be removed from outside Parliament as soon as possible.

Mr. John Greenway: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman means, "Further to that point of order."

Mr. Greenway: I do not believe that it would be in the interests of the House to delay proceedings on the Bill any longer, except to say that, having twice, in the 1960s, been a police officer on the receiving end of some of the violence being meted out to Metropolitan police officers tonight, I think that the House should record its gratitude to those 2,000 officers outside, who are ensuring that that mob is not allowed into the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Stephen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Unless these are new points of order, I intend to rule on the two that have—*[Interruption.]* Order. I shall rule on the two that have been raised. Hon. Members will know that, since I have been in the Chair, a matter was raised on a point of order in the Division. I said that I left it to the ingenuity of hon. Members to get here, and the numbers of hon. Members getting here were almost identical to those in the previous Division, which reinforces one's views that hon. Members show considerable ingenuity to get here.

At this point of time, the House has proceeded normally, and it is my intention that the House shall proceed normally. If hon. Members wish to table early-day motions, that is entirely their privilege.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I should like to get away from the undoubted party politics in Cornwall to the issue before us this evening.

The fundamental question is whether the Government proposals will lead to an improvement in what is, by common consent, a matter that causes serious worry—the provision of reasonable accommodation for the needs of the gipsy population in this country. Will the Government proposals do that?

I believe, having listened to the Minister and to the debates this evening and at other times, that the Government have manifestly failed to make convincing arguments that would lead us to conclude that their proposals overall will improve the position. I intend to make three or four arguments to illustrate that.

The first argument is that, once more, the Government are trotting out their dogma—a dogma that insists that the public sector has failed and that therefore the private sector must be the way of the future.

It is interesting that, not only did the Minister contradict himself, but the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) emphasised that contradiction. As I understood the Minister, he was saying that local authority provision has worked because 46 per cent. of the gipsy population is covered by local authority sites and therefore there is no need for the continuation of the duty laid on local authorities under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. However, in the next breath, to try to justify what was a very thin argument, the Minister said that local authority provision had failed.

I say to the Minister that one cannot have it both ways. Local authority provision has either worked or it has failed. The House deserves an answer to that contradiction this evening.

My own view is that local authority provision has worked. It has not worked as well as it should, but it has worked. Having been a member of Labour-controlled Stoke-on-Trent city council, which was one of the first authorities in the country to provide a caravan site, I speak from some experience. The Government talk about 100 per cent. grants, but, as I understand it, they are capital grants. They make no reference to revenue, but during the past 15 years under the Government local authorities have experienced savage cuts.

Therefore, it is not good enough for the Government to stand up and say that, despite the 100 per cent. grants, the provision has failed when it manifestly has not—according to the Government—without referring to the revenue consequences that fall on local authorities that have suffered severe cuts.

Secondly, the Government propose that gipsies should go on housing waiting lists. I do not know what the housing waiting list is like in other areas, but, as a direct result of Government policy, the waiting list in Stoke-on-Trent contains thousands and thousands more people than it did before the Government came to power. We have people sleeping on the streets as a result of the Government's policy.

Therefore, to suggest that gipsies need no longer worry about the removal of the duty on local authorities to provide authorised sites because they can go on the housing waiting list and be okay is pure balderdash. It is not only pure balderdash; it is an affront to gipsies. Their very tradition means that they do not want to go into houses. They want to live their traditional life. That proposal is not only impractical and does not stand up to examination, but it is an affront to the gipsy population.

My last point concerns the five-year provision in the Lords amendment. I do not know why the Government are so worried about that. I suppose that they think that it is an attempt by the other place, including many Conservative peers, to wreck the proposal. The Government, in their desire to push the measure through, must see it in that way. But that is a negative way of looking at it. There is a chance here to see whether the Government's proposals will work.

All of us understand how difficult it is to establish an authorised gipsy site in a particular area. The public react, sometimes quite strongly, to proposals for an authorised gipsy site. That is understandable. It is not always coherent or correct, but it is understandable. There are different arguments in different parts of the country. But where is the Government's evidence that things will be easier if the gipsies themselves establish the site rather than its being done through a local authority? The Government have not put forward any arguments to justify that proposal.

I hope that we can look at the matter positively. Let us see whether the Government's proposals work. Let us see whether private applications come through. Let us see whether there is a positive effect in terms of gipsies wanting to go on housing waiting lists. The five-year proposal is an opportunity to do that. Therefore, I hope that the Lords amendment will be accepted.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): I shall not weary the House with a long recitation of the principles that underlie the Government's proposals, except to say that I profoundly disagree with the views expressed by Opposition Members, as do the vast majority of my constituents. Nevertheless, I want to explain why I believe that delaying the repeal of certain powers in the Caravan Sites Act 1968 may, ironically, be an attractive proposition in my constituency.

Following intensive lobbying by me and my predecessor, now Lord Walker of Worcester, I am glad to say that both councils operating in my constituency, Worcester city council and Wychavon district council, have achieved designation under the Caravan Sites Act by providing an adequate number of sites. Therefore, I was disturbed to receive a letter from Wychavon district council stating:

> "Since the designation Order came into force, the Council has successfully used the new powers in a number of situations to move on unauthorised encampments. We are now very concerned that the proposed policy guidance relative to the new Act appears to make no allowance for the situation where an authority has already obtained designation . . . We find it very difficult to reconcile the tone of the proposed guidance with the tone of the legislation itself. On the one hand, authorities are being given new powers. On the other hand, they are being urged not to exercise them. If the new guidance is adopted as now proposed this Council will undoubtedly be in a weaker position in tackling unauthorised gypsy encampments after the new Act than before. We feel certain that this was not the Government's intention when the new legislation was announced."

I share the council's conviction that that was not the Government's intention.

My hon. Friend the Minister will understand why I am reluctant to see my constituents placed in a weaker position by the Bill than under the successful and hard-won designation that they already enjoy. I hope that he can reassure me that my council's interpretation of the guidance is mistaken and that it will be in at least an equally strong position. Otherwise, the prospect of five years of current effective protection looks quite attractive.

9.30 pm

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the proposals that the Minister has presented make it possible for someone to take responsibility for finding somewhere for travellers and gipsies in my constituency? We have a solution from the Home Office when the matter should be dealt with by the Department of the Environment. The Government's solution is no solution and will only make matters worse.

Stoke-on-Trent has already seen 33 illegal encampments this year. Local people did not want to live side by side with as many as 33 illegal sites. The council moved illegal camps from pillar to post. Travellers and gipsies moved from a children's playground to a piece of open space, with no provision for public health or waste disposal. That resulted in enormous problems for the local community.

Stoke-on-Trent is already designated, but does not have sufficient sites for the number of people who consistently, over six years, wanted to stay in the area. It is in everybody's interest that someone should grasp the nettle, take responsibility and ensure that where a known number of travellers or gipsies are in an area, a proper camp where they can pay their way is provided. That could be done under the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

If the Government's solution would make matters better, I would welcome it, but I see nothing in their proposals that would achieve that. Stoke-on-Trent has already seen 33 illegal encampments this year. The Government's proposals would double that number next year.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister's arguments were utterly illogical. Anyone outside the House listening would consider them complete nonsense. He spoke of a natural increase in the gipsy population and in the same breath said that he would deal with the problem—as he referred to it—by removing the requirement on local authorities to provide sites, saying that it should all be done by their private enterprise. Conservative Members also demonstrated with great clarity that they do not want caravan sites anywhere near their communities. What the Minister is doing in his silver-tongued way is presenting the worst face of intolerance of the Tory party; saying that we do not want these sites anywhere, that we do not want a travelling community, that we do not want or believe in a society that encompasses different ways of life from the ones that they understand.

The Minister should recognise that those people, the families, children and so on, who are pushed from illegal site to illegal site and are due to become criminals as a result under this disgusting piece of legislation, suffer a great deal. Their children suffer illnesses. Their infant mortality rate is higher—a large number of their babies die. They suffer educationally. They suffer a great deal of shunning and prejudice in our society. If we believe in a reasoned society, in respecting other ways of life, we should do something about it other than removing the Caravan Sites Act 1968. The man who introduced that Act, Norman Dodds, a former Member of the House, fought all his life for the rights of travelling communities. He was a very brave person. He stood up against a great deal of prejudice himself and got that piece of legislation through.

Conservative Members decry the Act as a complete failure. I am not so sure that it is. It meant that many people had somewhere safe to live and ended the horrible practice of people being driven off land and from one place to another. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) shared an experience with me. Both of us are former councillors. Both of us have been involved in the provision of sites. I was chair of the planning committee in the borough of Haringey and was asked to sign—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should listen.

I was asked, as chair of the planning committee, to sign a number of eviction orders for unauthorised campers on council land. I discovered that not only did the council not provide any authorised caravan sites, but that it had no plans to do so. I also detected that there was very

[Mr. Corbyn]

little wish to do so among certain officers of the authority, although that was not universal. It became clear to me that we had a moral obligation to fulfil sections of the Act. We were also facing, in the longer term, a legal obligation to do so under the 1984 High Court judgment, which came up some time later. Haringey provided sites—not while I was a member of the council, but shortly afterwards. Just to show its faith, it provided one of them in the car park alongside the civic centre, so nobody could say that councillors were running away from that issue.

The provision meant that there was a reduction in, if not an end to, unauthorised camping in the borough. It also meant that there was a sense of sanity. There were some possibilities of education and a higher standard of public health care for the people who were living on those sites. If we believe in living in a reasoned and decent society, we should accept the need for the provision of such sites. The Minister is sending out a very loud signal—no-go for travellers; no-go for Romanies; no-go for gipsies in our society: criminalise those who try to live that kind of life style.

The Minister should also be aware that the European Court has looked rather askance at the treatment of Lapps in other parts of Europe. Indeed, the blind prejudice that exists against travelling communities is a shame and should be treated as such. I believe that the provision of sites has been an important step forward. We should retain the Act. We should retain the 100 per cent. capital provision. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, who said that there are revenue implications that have not been met by the Department of the Environment, and that they should be. It is difficult for hon. Members to get up and say, "I support travellers", because people always come up with all sorts of reasons why they should not. I merely ask hon. Members to consider the implications of doing otherwise. Do we really want to move into the kind of society that sets the mob against those who choose to live a different life style? Do we really want to unleash the horrors of prejudice against those people? I believe that the signal from the Bill is an attempt to criminalise the people who lead that life style. There is enormous opposition to many sections of the Bill throughout society, because people recognise that the Bill is based on prejudice. This clause is the ultimate clause based on prejudice.

Mr. Stephen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Corbyn: No, because there is very little time.

I very much hope that, limited though the Lords amendments are in this respect, we could at least understand the motive behind them and perhaps agree with them as a way of preserving the continued provision by local authorities of sites for travellers, which would at least send a signal through our society that there is real tolerance of those who wish to lead different life styles, rather than the kind of intolerance that has been demonstrated, mainly by Conservative Members, in the debate.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): I agree with the Government that something had to be done about the kind of problem that has affected my constituents in the past two years, which is caused not by people whom I would term gipsies or travellers—new age or old age—but by people whom I would frankly call scavengers. They live in large caravans; they have large cars and large and expensive dogs. What they have done to the community of south Staffordshire has to be seen to be believed. I have seen it, and I believe it.

My constituents ask what they can do to ensure that this kind of thing does not happen. People have even occupied the bowling green surrounding the social welfare club belonging to a pit that the Government have just closed: having ruined the green, they burnt down the social club. Such serious problems need a serious solution, but I worry about the extent of the powers taken in this part of the Bill. I worry about their blanket nature, and about the absence of tests of nuisance.

I accept that there is a problem, which the Government had to tackle. As their lordships have said, however, the Government should think further. They have tackled half the problem—they have made it easier for local authorities to take the necessary action—but they have done nothing to provide sites for the people who are causing the problem.

Let me issue a warning. We have had a system of permissive designation: that is the root of the problem—not designation itself, but the limited, partial, fragmented take-up. It has been possible to say that the problem lies with local authorities that have not made provision for the people whom we are discussing, but from now on it will not be possible for the Government or anyone else to say that. The Government have now removed the obligation to provide sites of any kind, and have simply said that they will trust to the market and the planning system. We know that that has not worked in the past, and will not work in this instance.

The House of Lords has said, sensibly in my view, "We know that there is a problem, and we have taken action, quite properly, to make removal of unauthorised campers easier." That is good, but the House of Lords has done nothing to deal with the problem of unauthorised camping itself. The Government should take five years to think about the problem. They should approach it sensibly, or removal will be followed by endless shunting around my constituency and others like it. No longer will it be the fault of local authorities, if it is now; it will be the Government's fault.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: This has been an interesting debate, in which a variety of views have been expressed on a rather contentious subject. Some of those views have been contradictory, but important contributions have been made. It was a pleasure to hear the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) speak on behalf of the Opposition: as he said, we served together on the Select Committee for some years. I remind him that we spent a fair amount of time considering precisely this subject; indeed, I spent so much time on the subject of gipsies that, when we presented our report to the House, my then hon. Friend Sir Hugh Rossi asked me to lead for the Committee. I am therefore not unfamiliar with the subject, and with the problems that have arisen over many years.

The 1968 Act has failed. It has not been a complete failure, but it has failed to solve the problem of unauthorised caravans owned by Romanies. The Select Committee expressed that view strongly. Therefore, for me to come to the House and argue this point is entirely consistent with those anxieties.

9.45 pm

Having identified the problems that have arisen with the 1968 Act, it is absurd for the hon. Member for Burnley to argue for further delay. Further delay would simply add to the problem and we would be five years further down the line. Whether "five more years" is a slogan from the hon. Member for Burnley or from one of his hon. Friends, it does nothing to address the circularity of the argument. Local authorities have failed. We cannot simply turn round and say that they are likely to succeed if they have another five years. There is a structural fault in the legislation and in the approach of local authorities in general.

I agree with the hon. Member for Burnley on some of his specific points. I agree that smaller sites would be sensible because that would cause fewer problems internally among the Romanies as well as with the local community. I agree that we do not want to see sites in locations that would be bad for either the Romanies or the local community. I think that we sometimes forget that about 50 or 60 per cent of Romanies already live in houses. I repeat for the benefit of the hon. Gentleman and others that the Government have no intention of forcing into houses those who have opted for this life style. That is not realistic or desirable.

What underlies the Government's attitude is fundamentally our traditional approach of diversity and choice. We have diversity because we have some sites in the public sector and some in the private sector. Some 46 per cent. are on public sector sites and 24 per cent. on private sector sites and we wish to encourage the numbers on private sector sites through the planning system. That approach is endorsed by the National Gypsy Council, which has an interest in this.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) said that the Government do not want to see more sites. That is contrary to our view. We want to see more sites because we want to tackle the problem and not simply see the continuing backlog mount up. When Liberal Democrats are in opposition in local authorities they may well subscribe to the general principle that there should be more sites. However, as soon as it comes down to individual sites, they are on the other side campaigning against them. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) illustrated that extremely well.

The hon. Member for Newbury referred also to the problem of a lack of proper education for the children of such families. The point of trying to set up more permanent sites in the right locations is to increase the numbers receiving regular schooling. There is no difference of opinion between us on that. The sites are plainly not being delivered on a large enough scale under the present arrangements, and satisfactory provision is more likely in the future.

One or two Opposition Members said that because local authorities have not managed to come up with the right numbers, the Government should do something about it. The Government have used their best endeavours, but we have been advised that where local authorities are acting in good faith, even if they do not come up with the goods, we would not succeed in a mandamus order.

I agree with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) that the debate is about how best to provide the sites. I was not saying that the legislation under which we are currently operating has failed completely. It has achieved something, but it is not a long-term solution and that is perfectly obvious from the continuing number of unauthorised caravans. The hon. Gentleman may recall that when Cripps proposed 100 per cent. grants, he thought that that was needed to kick-start the provision of sites by local authorities. It does not seem to have achieved what he envisaged and we are now many years on.

The hon. Gentleman paid tribute to his local authority and to what it had done to provide a site, a point that I thought was undermined by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley), who went on to say that 33—I think that that was the number that she gave—caravans were occupying illegal pitches. As I understand it, Stoke-on-Trent city council has provided only one site in 24 years. In January 1994, 59 caravans occupied unauthorised sites in Stoke. If the Act has worked as well as the hon. Gentleman suggests, why has Stoke-on-Trent city council, which he praises, not been able to find a solution to the problems of that region?

Mr. Rendel: The Minister has not yet told us why, if the Act is not working fully, he does not understand the need to strengthen it rather than to remove it.

Mr. Jones: I thought that I had dealt with that point when I spoke about mandamus. The Select Committee made the point on a number of occasions that the Government should be more robust with local authorities that had not come up with the goods. The difficulty is that one can try to induce and to persuade in all sorts of ways, but if local authorities use their best endeavours, honestly go about their work, but still fail, the Government cannot do a lot about it. That is why we are approaching the matter in a different way.

I was in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) this weekend, so I can understand the view of Wychavon council, an extremely well-run local authority. He raised the point about the inconsistency, as he saw it, between giving local authorities wider powers and, at the same time, urging Wychavon council not to use them. That is a misunderstanding. We are guiding local authorities to use those powers reasonably and not unreasonably. A local authority such as Wychavon, which has done a great deal to ensure that there are authorised sites, stands a much greater chance of enforcing the new legislation than local authorities that have neglected to provide such sites. However, as my hon. Friend is an eloquent advocate of his constituency's interests, I will consider the guidance to see whether anything further needs to be done to deal with the good authorities that have designation.

Mr. Pike: The Minister is dealing with an extremely important point, which was raised by the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff). Those authorities that have designation believe that they will lose out as a result of what is being agreed today. They have provided authorised sites and they have designation. All that that entails will go if the Bill is passed in its current form.

Mr. Jones: No one can predict exactly what will happen in the courts, but those authorities will have a much surer defence in the courts than any authority that

[Mr. Jones]

has done nothing about providing sites. The existence of wider powers seems to be good, not only for those authorities that are not designated, but for those that are.

Ms Walley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jones: If the hon. Lady does not mind, I shall not give way because I want to deal with the points raised by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who expressed some pride that he had dealt with this issue when a councillor in the London borough of Haringey, whereas others had ducked it.

We all admire people who stand up for their beliefs in what can be a difficult situation. The hon. Member for Burnley will remember that one of the subjects that came up again and again in the Select Committee—hardly surprising given its chairmanship—was the failure of Haringey to get authorised sites off the ground. The hon. Member for Islington, North says that Haringey achieved that shortly after he left the council. I believe that he left the council in 1983 when he joined the House in the same year as me, but the grant was approved for Haringey sites six months ago. That seems to be rather a long time.

He made a valid general point about not wanting to play to prejudice. That is not what the Government are about, although I have noticed that that is what many local activists are about, particularly those in the Liberal party. We want not to incite prejudice but to achieve something that has eluded successive Governments for a long time—to get more caravans on to authorised public or private sector sites.

That is what the Bill will achieve and I urge the House to reject the Lords amendments.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 262.

Division No. 309] **[9.54 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset No[illegible])
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, [illegible] Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McCrea, Rev William
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard

Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smyth, Rev Martin (Belfast S)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. (Strgfd)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil (Belfast N)
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. Michael Bates

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet
(Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil (Islwyn)
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg

Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. John Cummings

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

New Clause

VIDEO RECORDINGS: INCREASE IN PENALTIES

Lords amendment: No. 80, after clause 82, to insert the following new clause—

("Video recordings

.—(1) The following provisions of the Video Recordings Act 1984 (which create offences for which section 15(1) and (3) prescribe maximum fines of, in the case of sections 9 and 10, £20,000 and, in the case of other offences, level 5) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 9 (supplying videos of unclassified work), after subsection (2), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both,

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding £20,000 or both."

(3) In section 10 (possessing videos of unclassified work for supply), after subsection (2), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both.

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding £20,000 or both."

(4) In section 11 (supplying videos in breach of classification), after subsection (2), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable, on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or both."

(5) In section 12 (supplying videos in places other than licensed sex shops), after subsection (4), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(4A) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) or (3) above shall be liable, on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or both."

(6) In section 14 (supplying videos with false indication as to classification), after subsection (4), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(5) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) or (3) above shall be liable, on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or both."

(7) The amendments made by this section shall not apply to offences committed before this section comes into force.")

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Nicholas Baker): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 81, Lords amendment No. 82, Government amendments (a) and (b) thereto and Lords amendments Nos. 161, 177, 296 and 333.

Mr. Baker: Amendment No. 80 is designed to increase the penalties for offences under the Video Recordings Act 1984. At the moment, the most serious offence—supplying unclassified videos or possessing unclassified videos for supply under sections 9 and 10 respectively—can be tried only in the magistrates court, where someone who is convicted may receive a maximum penalty of a £20,000 fine. There is no imprisonment for the offences.

In the Government's view, those are serious offences and imprisonment should be available to the courts to deter those who would deliberately break the law. The amendment will therefore make those offences triable either way. That means that they will be able to be tried in the Crown court, where the maximum penalty will be two years in prison, or an unlimited fine, or both. If they are tried in the magistrates court, the amendment means that as well as the £20,000 fine, there will be the possibility of imprisonment for six months. The maximum penalties for most other offences under the Act are also increased.

Amendment No. 81 will strengthen the Video Recordings Act 1984 by narrowing the categories of video works that are exempt from classification by the British Board of Film Classification. The amendment will therefore add techniques likely to be useful in the commission of criminal offences to the list of matters that cannot be depicted to any significant extent in an exempted work. That will mean that, in future, video works containing instructions on bomb making, on violent unarmed combat or methods of breaking into cars or houses, which have caused concern, will no longer be exempt. They will require classification by the board.

The amendment will also exclude from exempt status videos that do not illustrate criminal techniques, but which depict criminal activity that is likely to encourage the commission of criminal offences. The amendment will also change the current subjective test of whether a work is designed to stimulate or encourage certain activities that may not be shown to a new objective test of whether the video work was likely to do so.

Amendment No. 82 for the first time lays down criteria that the designated video classification authority, the British Board of Film Classification, must consider in determining whether a particular video work is suitable for classification and, if so, which category it should be placed in. The criteria are whether any harm may be caused to potential viewers, or, through their behaviour, to society, by the manner in which the work deals with criminal behaviour, illegal drugs, violent behaviour or incidents, horrific behaviour or incidents, or human sexual activity. The criteria mean that the BBFC must consider who is, in fact, likely to see a particular video, regardless of the classification. So, if it knows that a particular video is likely to appeal to children and be seen by them regardless of its classification, it must take them into account as potential viewers. It is very important to bear it in mind that those statutory criteria are not intended to be exhaustive and the amendment states only that the board is to consider them

"among the other relevant factors".

The board will, of course, remain free to take account of other factors such as bad taste, bad language or offensiveness towards particular groups. The amendment will also make a minor change to section 7 of the Video Recordings Act 1984, which describes the broad categories of video classification certificates that the British Board of Film Classification may issue.

10.15 pm

Amendment (b) to Lords amendment No. 82 flows originally from a commitment made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary when the Bill was last before the House. There was then a great deal of concern about the availability of unsuitable videos. In the light of that concern, the Home Secretary undertook to introduce an amendment in another place, which would set out in statute for the first time some of the criteria that the board would be required to take into account when determining whether a video work should be granted a classification certificate and, if so, what that certificate should be. *[Interruption.]* That is heartening news. Lords amendment No. 82 is what emerged as a result of that undertaking. It specifies in law the main criteria that the board should take into account when classifying videos.

Hon. Members will recall that there was also debate about whether it would be possible to provide for existing works to be reclassified in the light of the new statutory criteria. That point was also raised in the debate in the other place. The possibility of some limited review of classification decisions was also referred to by the Home Affairs Select Committee, under the chairmanship of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), in its recent report on video violence in young offenders, which was published in June. I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the careful consideration that the Home Affairs Select Committee gave in that study, and in its earlier report, to the challenges presented by rapidly developing technology.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has made plain from the beginning his sympathy with the idea that it should be possible to review the classification of works that have already been granted a certificate. However, he has been very anxious to avoid creating a system of wholesale review, which, for all sorts of practical reasons, would be unworkable. It was the Government's concern about the workability of a system which led my right hon. and learned Friend to move very cautiously in that area.

However, after consultation with the director of the board and the enforcement authorities, my right hon. and learned Friend now believes that it will be possible to meet the widely held concern that there should be some more limited system of review without at the same time creating unsurmountable problems. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend tabled amendment (b) to Lords amendment No. 82, which will enable him to lay an order establishing a system for reviewing works that have been classified before the introduction of the statutory criteria. The amendment creates an order-making power because there are points of detail that will need to be resolved following discussions with those most closely concerned.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Lady will excuse me, I shall finish my comments and then allow her an opportunity to speak.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Why?

Mr. Baker: Because time is short.

We propose a power for the BBFC to review any work classified before the introduction of the new mandatory criteria and, in the light of those criteria and other relevant considerations, to alter the classification decision if appropriate. Just as when a work is originally submitted for classification, there will be a right of appeal against the board's decision to the Video Appeals Committee.

I emphasise that nothing that is being proposed will create retrospective criminal liability. No one will be prosecuted for actions taken before the new provisions come into force and which were lawful at the time they were carried out. The proposals will mean only that if, for example, age classification of a work is changed, those who supply it unlawfully in future will be liable to criminal sanctions.

Mr. Michael: The Lords amendment results from undertakings given in this House and meets the requirements that were sensibly set out in debates both here and outside.

There would clearly be an anomaly if there were no way of reviewing classifications given before the measure came into effect. It is therefore helpful to provide a limited opportunity for such review. It would also be helpful if it were made clear that there will be consultation on the nature of the regulations under which the review will take place.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Like other hon. Members, I am extremely grateful to the Minister for the news that he has given us. I thank the Home Secretary

[Mr. David Alton]

for honouring the commitment that he gave the House when we discussed the matter earlier this year. The Lords amendment adequately reflects most of the concerns expressed then.

The House will recall that there had been considerable debate inside and outside this place in the course of which many people raised their misgivings about the amount of violence on television and on videos and the effect that that could have on young, impressionable minds. It is not that every child who sees a violent video will go out and commit a violent offence, but all who have worked with children, especially maladjusted or disturbed children or those with special needs, know that they can often be tipped over the edge if they have a predisposition towards violence by being exposed to continuous and gratuitous violence on the screen.

The House will also recall that, at Easter, Professor Elizabeth Newsome and other distinguished psychologists, psychiatrists and paediatricians honestly admitted that they had been naive and had underestimated the effect that videos might have on the minds of impressionable young people. We have all been on a learning curve, trying to examine the effects of the video culture and of television violence on the young people of our country.

Ms Eagle: A study published earlier this year by the Policy Studies Institute and carried out by Hagell and Newburn, entitled "Young Offenders and the Media", found that young offenders rarely stay home enough to watch video violence and that their patterns of watching videos are much the same as those of children who do not offend. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that that research is superior to the research that he mentioned because it involved a control group of youngsters who do not offend at the same age as those who do? Elizabeth Newsome's research did not have a control group and relied mainly on American research carried out in a very different context.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Lady must admit that we should not want to follow the American example here—American violence is far worse than ours. Of course, we can all call in aid research that appears to support our arguments, but the fact is that 75 per cent. of the evidence heard by the House of Lords Select Committee suggested a direct correlation between the violence continually transmitted on television and videos and real violence in the community.

It is a matter of common sense. Advertisers would not spend £1.6 billion a year trying to sell their goods and to cultivate the consumerism and materialism that have become part and parcel of life here if they did not think that it was having an effect on those who watch. There is no doubt in my mind that there is a direct link. Professor Newsome and other distinguished academics in many centres of learning have rightly come to the same conclusion.

Mr. Stephen: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is not just a question of people being exposed to video violence and then going on to offend? It is also a question of the general coarsening and degrading effect that videos have on us all, young and old alike.

Mr. Alton: I agree, but the hon. Gentleman will agree, in turn, that the people whom we most need to protect are the young and impressionable. That was what brought about the debate earlier this year when hon. Members from all political parties signed the amendment asking for that change. I welcome the fact that the Government acted upon it in the other place.

During the debates there, Lord Elton moved an amendment seeking that videos that are currently available, such as "Child's Play 3", should also be included in the general review, and that it ought to be possible to pull in videos that might have caused controversy to be examined as well as those that might come on to the market in future, such as a "Child's Play 4". That amendment was not accepted in the other place, but the Government agreed to look at the issue and I am pleased that in amendment (b) to Lords amendment No. 82 they have introduced a provision to allow the British Board of Film Classification to look again at videos that might become matters of public controversy if people felt that they were having a profoundly disturbing effect on those who watched them.

I welcome what the Government have done; it has been a satisfactory outcome. I have several questions to put to the Minister which I hope he will be able to answer before the debate concludes.

The amendment contains a trigger mechanism for referring videos to the British Board of Film Classification. Whom does the Minister have in mind to do the referring? Will the BBFC accept referrals by Members of Parliament? Would the Home Office consider making referrals if it were to receive considerable numbers of representations from the public?

No one has it in mind that all 24,000 or so videos that are currently in circulation should be re-examined. We are talking about a very small number of videos, but it would be useful if the Minister could say how he envisages the trigger mechanism working.

How long will the review period be? Will it be open-ended or limited to an initial 12-month period? Can the Minister say what the timetable will be for the statutory instrument to be placed before Parliament to bring the scheme into effect? I hope that it will be as soon as possible, but it will be useful for the Minister to place it on record for the House tonight.

What publicity will be given to the review arrangements, including the BBFC initial decision to review a work and the outcome of that review? If the legislation is to help change attitudes—presumably the Home Office accepts that this is partly about changing attitudes and helping parents to be more discerning about the material that goes into their homes—the publicity surrounding the review of a particular video would be helpful.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the hon. Members who signed the original motion, particularly the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and the Home Affairs Select Committee, which produced an extremely helpful report at a crucial moment in the progress of the Bill.

The issue will not end here this evening; we shall want to keep it under review, not least because hon. Members will be aware that last weekend in Norway a little five-year-old girl was killed by her playmates, who were just a little older than she was. The Norwegian authorities have withdrawn the television programme that they believe helped influence those children who carried out that killing. That same television programme is regularly broadcast in Britain. At least I hope that we shall try to discover what reasons led to the Norwegian authorities reaching that conclusion.

I hope that we shall continue to keep under review not just video violence, but the general level of violence on television transmissions that contributes to the culture of violence in Britain.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): First, I briefly congratulate my hon. Friend the new junior Minister at the Home Office on the very fluent, concise and grave way in which, in the best Home Office tradition, speaking as if he had been there for many a long year, he placed before us an extremely agreeable legislative dish for our late supper this evening.

At the same time, I extend my warm appreciation and congratulations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on the important pioneering role that he has played in bringing these important amendments before the House. My right hon. and learned Friend combines, unusually, an extremely acute analytical mind and head with a very responsive and warm political heart. The interaction of that rare combination of desirable attributes often leads him to the conclusion that a balance of reasonable possibility, as distinct from an absolute and proven demonstrable actuality, is good enough cause for taking an initiative, and sometimes a risk, in legislation. That is precisely what he has done in his decision, which is so highly commendable, to bring the amendments before the House.

The Home Affairs Committee, which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) chaired so powerfully and admirably, reached some markedly tentative conclusions. It is very much to the credit of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that, in the light of what the Home Affairs Committee said, he has given the benefit of the doubt to common sense and common concern. I believe that that is the result of the combination of his head and his heart. He has done extremely well by the House of Commons, and by the public at large, by the way in which he has advanced the cause of regulating and controlling that dreadful disease—that dreadful affliction—of unacceptable and damaging videos. We shall all stand in his debt for many long years ahead and I commend him and my hon. Friend the Minister for what they have done in the short debate this evening.

10.30 pm

Ms Eagle: I shall mainly refer to Lords amendment No. 82 and to Government amendment (b), which was tabled to add retrospection to the classification of videos.

I do not oppose the clause, but I wish to express scepticism about its efficacy and to express some worries that I had while I was reading it. I also wish, if possible, to gain reassurance from the Minister about aspects that are slightly unclear, and about the degree of subjectivity, which I believe damages the clause.

I recognise, as do many other people, the widespread support in the House for the toughening of the law on this issue. I prefer what is now before us to the amendment that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) tabled, which I thought was even more flawed; which threatened to censor seriously the 70 per cent. of households in this country that consist of adults only; and with which the Home Secretary had his own difficulties, as he said when he spoke to the original clause at an earlier stage in the Bill's proceedings.

Mr. Alton *rose*—

Ms Eagle: I wish to mention some other matters, but not before I have given way to the hon. Member for Mossley Hill.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her courtesy.

The hon. Lady will recall that her right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who probably knows more about the film industry than anyone in the House, wrote a compelling article in *The Daily Telegraph* when my amendment was before the House, saying that he would vote for it without any hesitation. He refuted the argument that the hon. Lady has made this evening, which the industry put around at the time, that all types of videos would be caught by my amendment. The industry's only reason for making those arguments was money: people were frightened that they would lose money. The hon. Lady, of all people, surely would not be on the side of people who would be willing to exploit the innocent to make profits.

Ms Eagle: Certainly not. I always read the articles that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) writes, as I respect him as a friend and an extremely good film critic.

I am sceptical about some of the practical effects of the amendments, and I wish to mention some of them, and also some of the difficulties of interpreting the wording. I am worried about the difficult task that we are setting the British Board of Film Classification. I also believe that if it takes too draconian a role in the statutory powers that it will be given when the clause becomes law, we may find that we have gone too far the other way. There may also be some detrimental effects on the British film industry, which I shall discuss later.

I want to ensure—and to receive some reassurance about it from the Minister if possible—that the provision that we are debating will not be applied in such a way as to narrow the availability to the general public of important films that are recognised as classics. Films that have such artistic merit should escape the rules that we are laying before Parliament now. I shall be much happier if I receive some of those reassurances tonight.

We must bear in mind the origin of the clause. There was undoubtedly a moral panic, fuelled by lurid tabloid stories in the aftermath of the horrific and inexplicably brutal murder of James Bulger, and the comments of Mr. Justice Morland when he made explicit reference to the possible impact of violent videos in his comments on that case.

In the light of that controversy, the Home Secretary rightly ordered that reports be made so that he could consider the evidence and what had happened in the trial. I understand that the reports that he received did not support the theory that that appalling a[illegible] horrific crime had been influenced by exposure to videos. Mr. Justice Morland subsequently clarified his comments by saying that they were not based on any evidence that he had heard in the trial of the Bulger case and that no such evidence was presented at the trial. We should remember

[Ms Eagle]

that there was a controversy and that the arguments put were emotive and not proved by logic when one looked at the details.

We should also remember that many of the tabloids that sensationalised the story are owned by companies that have interests in satellite television channels and other electronic media and entertainment provision which are unaffected by the video classification rules that we are debating. We should bear it in mind that it is possible to argue that the tabloids have a direct commercial interest in a tightening of the regulation of one of their competitors. Satellite television and other extra-terrestrial delivery of electronic entertainment are escaping regulation at the moment and certainly are not subject to the same stringent regulations that we are now suggesting for the video industry. We should bear that little vested interest in mind.

I am sceptical about the effectiveness of the clause because it will be useful or relevant only if we assume that there is a firm causal link between viewing habits and behaviour. I know that many in the House believe that that is the case. I have considered the evidence, but so far I am not convinced that there is sufficient evidence either way. At the moment, the evidence is inconclusive.

I would support the commissioning of further research so that we can try to establish whether there is a link, but if links and causal links exist, they are complex and to simplify them to a firm link between something seen on a video and some behaviour that is then indulged in is not a proper basis on which to legislate. We should be trying to commission further work in that area.

The concern about uncontrolled exposure of young children to violent imagery is entirely understandable. It is something about which I and the whole House are concerned. But we should not jump to easy conclusions or legislate in a knee-jerk manner and assume that we have solved a complex and difficult problem. Solutions in these difficult areas of social policy and the interaction between entertainment and people's behaviour are never as easy as a firm causal link.

It is easy, especially at a time of disgust and incredulity in the aftermath of a nasty and inexplicably brutal crime, to look for an easy answer. But we owe it to our constituents and the future health of our society to remember that the answers are not simple and that we should be serious and down to earth about what some of the questions are.

There is a long history of moral panics about the detrimental effects of the media and a long tradition of shifting blame for social breakdown on to the media. It is a pastime which has a long and venerable tradition, going back to the penny dreadfuls, the music hall and the time when films first became available. Then there was rock music. In the 1950s, Elvis Presley was meant to have caused much social breakdown with his new way of dancing. Then there came horror comics and television, and now it is video games. We need a reasonable assessment of the effects that the new technologies are having, not just a knee-jerk reaction.

Blaming those media for all our social ills is a bit like blaming witchcraft for crop failures. It conveniently apportions blame and allows some action to be taken which may make us feel better, but in reality it is all but irrelevant to the real causes.

Amendment No. 82 states that the British Board of Film Classification must pay special regard

> "to any harm that may be caused to potential viewers":

What is meant by the phrase "potential viewers"? Presumably, it could include all members of the sighted population who in any circumstance might see a video. How do the Government interpret that phrase? Amendment No. 82 also charges the board to consider young children as potential viewers even if the products available are so rated that young children would not under normal circumstances see them. If every person in the country is a potential viewer of everything, one wonders why we bother with a rating system. How does the board intend to observe that requirement?

How will the BBFC decide

> "who is likely to view the video work in question if a classification . . . were issued"?

The board will also have to consider, when considering a classification, the harm that might be done to society. What criteria will it apply? Perhaps the Minister will enlighten me.

How can we view in proper perspective legislation for potential harm to society perpetrated by the availability of videos when there is no statutory duty to consider the harm done to society by, for example, persistent mass unemployment? I am not sure that we have the right priorities.

I am concerned by the five categories of subject matter in amendment No. 82—criminal behaviour, illegal drugs, violent behaviour or incidents, horrific behaviour or incidents and, last of all, human sexual activity. I do not want to embarrass the Minister, but why is human sexual activity included as one classification? I assume that rape would be covered by the classifications of criminal or violent acts. It seems odd that human sexual activity should be bunged together with awful behaviour.

I welcome the fact that the BBFC is to retain discretion to interpret the new statutory rules and will bring its considerable influence to bear on such matters. However, I am concerned at the subjectivity inherent in the clause, which ranges too wide. It could be argued that "King Lear" would fail to receive a classification because it depicts criminal activity and violent or horrific behaviour and that Regan, Goneril and Edmund are partly motivated by human sexual activity. Why would not "King Lear" fall within the ambit of the proposed new clause?

The Government boasted in their 1992 election manifesto that this country's video classification rules are already the toughest in western Europe. My concern is that the proposed new clauses might allow the BBFC to take an unreasonably tough line. Will there be a way of keeping the situation under review, to ensure that there is no over-reaction?

The Government amendment would permit retrospective consideration of titles already released. In another place, Lord Ferrers said that the Home Secretary had considered the matter carefully and took the view that a system involving retrospection could not be made to work. My next question to the Minister echoes one put by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. How will such retrospective consideration be triggered? Who will decide which titles should be re-examined?

I am happy that we are discussing these matters, as they are extremely important. It is also important that we do not over-react or oversimplify some of the complex causes of difficulties and violence. If the Minister can give me some assurances on the points that I have raised, I should be happy to support the amendments.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I should like to support what was said by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). The Government's amendment is very essential. I think that everybody in public life knows the power of an "eye gate" before an "ear gate", and videos have an effect on young people. It is the duty of this House and of the Ministers concerned, to see that proper safeguards are in place. I do not think that we need worry about what will happen in this case. The amendment deals with something that needs to be dealt with. I am sure that the two Ministers, when they come to the end of their careers—I am not suggesting that they are about to do so—will be happy that they did this, because it will have an effect on the future men and women of our country.

10.45 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Everything possible that could be said about the matter has been said, but not everybody has said it. So I am grateful for a moment of the House's time to say thank you on behalf of the Home Affairs Select Committee for the way in which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has responded to our difficult recommendation that retrospection should be provided for in the Bill. That is the effect of Lords amendment No. 82, which gives effect to the Committee's sixth recommendation. In that regard, I give the thanks not only of the Committee and the House but I think of the whole country, and extend them to Mr. James Ferman and the BBFC, who told us, in the evidence that they gave, that this could be achieved without too much difficulty and trouble. The combination of what Mr. Ferman said and what the Committee recommended just tipped my right hon. and learned Friend over.

Mr. Howard *indicated assent.*

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I see that he is nodding in agreement. The amendment will receive widespread approval.

We decided to have an investigation, which lasted only one day in June, at the height of public concern about the effects of video recordings on children. We said:

> "Commonsense, and the existence of bodies like the BBFC, support the notion that videos can corrupt and, rather than engage in endless arguments about the precise way in which the videos damage children, it is obviously more profitable to consider what can be done to limit any such damage."

By the time that we had conducted our inquiry, the Government had already tabled their new clause to toughen up what the public considered to be the very weak state of our video classification laws.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to consider further the other recommendations of the Committee. We suggested that a warning notice should be given to adult purchasers or hirers of high-classification videos at the point of sale. We suggested that more work should be done on parental responsibility for the use of such videos and how the classification, if tightened, could be brought home to parents so that they could use their powers to stop this evil affecting the minds of their young children. We cast, as we went, a little straw in the wind and suggested that it might be helpful to have identity cards, because that would make it much easier for those who have the burden of selling videos in shops to identify precisely the ages of those to whom they were providing the equipment.

I think that the Government have shown themselves to be not only a listening Government but a responsive Government and a constructive Government. On behalf of the Home Affairs Select Committee, I hope that they might go one stage further and give effect to all our recommendations.

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): I do not wish to detain the House for too long. But you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be aware that this is the first and only opportunity that we have had in this House to debate the issue. Given the amount of heat that it has generated in the past few months, I think that it is right that it be properly aired. No one could argue with the aim of the proposed amendments. Film is an extremely powerful medium and, although there is not much research at the moment, common sense suggests that young people who watch scenes of explicit violence or sex are likely to be influenced by them. That is why it is clearly right for us to have some means of preventing children from seeing films that deal with subjects that they are not yet sufficiently mature to understand. That is why the BBFC was set up by the film industry in 1912.

Much criticism has been levelled at the BBFC in recent months, but I join my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) in paying tribute to its work and to its director, James Ferman. This country has a tougher regime of censorship of films and videos than any other country in Europe. I well remember attending a lecture by Michael Winner when I was a student, in which he complained bitterly about the cuts that he had been forced to implement in his latest film "Deathwish 2". Having visited the BBFC with one or two of my hon. Friends and seen examples of the scenes that it required to be cut, I can say that I believe that the BBFC was quite right to insist on their removal. It is interesting to note that in other countries they were shown.

Under the Video Recordings Act 1984, the BBFC is required to issue a certificate to any video before it can be sold or offered for rental. As a result, many videos have already been banned. After the passing of the Act, not only were so-called video nasties such as "Driller Killer" and "I Spit On Your Grave" outlawed; the BBFC also refused to issue certificates for films such as "Straw Dogs" and "The Exorcist" because of the risk of their being seen by children. Even now, the BBFC is debating whether to authorise the video release of "Reservoir Dogs", a film which has been so successful that two years after its first release it is still showing in commercial cinemas. Incidentally, I hope that the BBFC will decide to grant "Reservoir Dogs" a certificate. It is undeniably a violent film, but it is also a very powerful film which deserves to be seen by adult audiences.

I can understand the view of those who feel that more needs to be done, and the paper by Professor Newson is extremely worrying. I am therefore happy to support the provisions in the amendments that will increase the penalties for those breaking the Video Recordings Act, and tighten the exemptions from it. I am anxious, however, that the new criteria that the Bill sets out for the BBFC to use in judging the suitability of a video for

[Mr. John Whittingdale]

release, and the additional powers of retrospective review, should not lead to more than a tiny number of films being deemed unsuitable.

The British Film Institute has already warned that it believes that the amendment could mean that many internationally acclaimed films that gain a cinema release with an "18" certificate will not be certifiable for video release. I do not believe that films such as "The Godfather", "Raging Bull" and "Schindler's List", which have "15" or "18" certificates, will be affected—that would clearly be ludicrous—but I also hope that other films made specifically for adult audiences are not caught by the provision. Horror films such as "The Silence of the Lambs", "Nightmare on Elm Street" and Clive Barker's "Hellraiser" clearly should not be seen by children, but they are good films, and it would be entirely wrong to deprive the 70 per cent. of households that do not contain children of the chance of seeing them on video.

Finally, I want to say a brief word about "Child's Play 3"—a film which has received considerable media attention, most of it wholly uninformed. It was perhaps understandable that, in the wake of the murder of Jamie Bulger, attempts should be made to explain the horror of that tragedy. It is possible that exposure of the two boys responsible to violent videos played a part; but, as the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) has pointed out, the police reports did not support the theory that the crime had been influenced by exposure either to that video or to videos in general.

Unlike most people who have commented on the subject, I have seen "Child's Play 3". It was not a particularly enjoyable experience; it is not a very good film, but nor is it a particularly remarkable film. The scenes of violence in it are mild in comparison with those in hundreds of other films that are available today on the shelves in video shops. If the intention is to ban films such as that, it will also be necessary to ban hundreds of other films. I cannot believe that that is what the Government want.

The need to control young people's access to violent films is undeniable and that is why I strongly support the Video Recordings Act 1984 and the work of the BBFC. Used judiciously, I believe that the extra powers in the Bill could help to increase still further the protection available to children. However, at the end of the day, the responsibility for controlling our children's viewing habits must lie with their parents. There is no substitute for that. Just like alcohol and cigarettes, some videos will not be suitable for children. The way to stop children seeing them is not to ban them but for parents to exercise proper control.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary on his fluency, particularly since he has recently given up vows that would have been more appropriate for a Trappist monk. Before the debate concludes, I invite him to address the issue of the effective ban that will be imposed by amendment No 81 on all videos that depict or encourage criminal activity. My hon. Friend's example of bomb making was a good one.

Can my hon. Friend explain why the amendment was produced only in time for the Lords and was not the subject of a separate Bill? Does he agree that there have been numerous representations from the police and other authorities about a ban on the distribution of such material? Is not it strange that this should be tabled in the House of Lords rather than in this House, which would have given us a decent opportunity to debate the issue? Are not we in danger of falling into the trap—the Broadcasting Act 1990 was a classic example—of technology superseding the legislation passed by the House?

Instead of an amendment being tacked on to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, would not it have been more appropriate, particularly if there have been many representations from the police, for a separate Bill so as to provide the House with a proper opportunity to discuss the technology and the implications of a serious and important ban and an extension of criminal penalties into the video lending industry?

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I am afraid that I shall not reply now to all the points that have been raised in this very good debate. I shall write to my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and to the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle). I must say to people who feel as she does that there is no doubt in my mind—this has been echoed in many of the speeches—that something needs to be done.

The BBFC is based in the film industry. It has been classifying films for years. It has experience and it knows how to do it. We are talking about reclassification and I think that the hon. Lady failed to appreciate that in what she had to say. I shall write to her about the other points that she raised.

I must tell the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), even if he is not prepared to attend to me now, that a great deal of consultation with the industry will take place before we can go ahead. If the hon. Gentleman has any points to add, they will be listened to.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) made a number of detailed points and I will write to him as soon as I can. I welcome the support that has been given from both sides for what we propose.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with special entry.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 124, after clause 133, to insert the following new clause—*Amendment of law relating to homosexual acts in Scotland*—

". In section 80(6) of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (which defines "homosexual act" for the purposes of section 80), after "gross indecency" there is inserted "or shameless indecency"."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—[*Mr. Maclean.*]

11 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 13[illegible] to 140, 164, 166, 174, 183 to 185, 273, 312, 324, 327, 334, 337 and 338.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I rise to raise a point of clarification. The amendment appears to go beyond what was agreed in this place. I should be grateful for clarification from the Minister. The decriminalisation that was going to take place appears to have been muddled. Will the Minister give hon. Members an undertaking that the promises that were given by the then Minister, the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), to decriminalise these acts are still the position of the Government?

Will the Minister clarify the position of the Merchant Navy, which is governed by civilian employment law, and confirm that there is no question of criminality being extended to it or to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary?

Will the Minister confirm that these disciplinary offences will continue to be treated as such, that there is no suggestion of criminalisation and that the Government still favour decriminalisation?

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) for raising these matters and I am happy to give the assurances that she sought about the effect of [illegible] words that my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) used in another debate.

I am anxious to give her the assurances that she sought about the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Merchant Navy and I should be happy to have a further, more detailed conversation with her. If she would care to call on us, we should be happy to arrange it.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to refer you to a statement made by the Prime Minister yesterday at Question Time—

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): In answer to?

Mr. Bell: In answer to a question put to him. He said:

> "I am as concerned as any Member in the House"

about the highest standards in public life. He agreed that corruption was not something of which he would approve, in any circumstances. He further said:

> "Our public servants and public institutions are acknowledged to be among the best in the world. In order to maintain that reputation in administration and in politics, wrongdoing will have to be rooted out wherever it is, and I shall seek to ensure that it is."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 142.]

A statement will appear in *The Guardian* tomorrow, which I should draw to your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It says:

> "A top Westminster lobbying company were paid"

thousands of pounds

> "to give to two high flying Conservative MPs for asking Parliamentary Questions at £2,000 a time on behalf of Harrods during the height of the Lonrho and House of Fraser controversy."

The two Ministers referred to in the article are the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), the Minister now responsible for trade and industry, and the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), who is a junior Northern Ireland Minister. They were both named in the article

> "as recipients of payments passed to Ian Greer Associates, by Mohammed Al-Fayed, the owner of Harrods, on top of a £50,000 fee for a Parliamentary lobbying campaign."

Given the Prime Minister's statement that he would seek to ensure the highest standards of public probity, have you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, received any sign that he will make a statement to the House tonight or tomorrow?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I am not certain whether the hon. Gentleman is alleging privilege, but, if he is, he knows the procedures of the House— he must write to Madam Speaker.

Mr. Bell: I am asking whether you have received any indication that the Prime Minister—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have not received any sign from any hon. Member.

Mr. Garnier *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If this is a new and different point of order, I shall take it, but it had better be different. Is it a different point?

Mr. Garnier: Indeed so, Sir. Is it in order for a Member of the House to conspire with members of the press to introduce defamatory material under the cloak of privilege in order that tomorrow's newspaper may carry a report of that privileged occasion? Is it in order for Labour Front-Bench spokesmen to shoot the fox of the Liberal party, when the whole Liberal Front Bench, such as it is, has stayed up all night to make the same fatuous point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I had assumed that hon. Members had come to debate the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a new point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you ensure that the matter of Ministers taking bribes at £2,000 a time is not shoved upstairs to some secret Committee but is dealt with by the House? The Government are riddled with corruption—they are past their sell-by date and it is time that they went to the people.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Any further points of order had better be new ones.

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a new point of order? There seems to be some hesitation on the hon. and learned Gentleman's part.

Mr. Carlile: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may be aware that earlier this evening I and some hon. Friends tabled a motion relating to the probity of hon. Members and of the Government in the conduct of public business. The motion asks for an inquiry—not involving hon. Members—to examine the matter. Is there any way in which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can assist us in achieving that end?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. and learned Gentleman must be aware that I have spent most of this evening in the Chair. I have no idea what early-day motions have been tabled; nor do I wish to know their contents at this point.

Further consideration of Lords amendments adjourned.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

To be further considered tomorrow.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That Sir Nicholas Bonsor be discharged from the Select Committee on Broadcasting and Mr. Patrick McLoughlin be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

PETITIONS

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill

11.11 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I present a petition on behalf of hundreds of my constituents who oppose many of the provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. I share that opposition. It reads as follows:

> To the House of Commons
>
> The Petition of residents of York and neighbouring Parliamentary constituencies declares that the Criminal Justice Bill threatens to infringe basic civil liberties, which ordinary democratic citizens have fought for throughout history, and that the bill will remove the right to legitimate peaceful protest. It will give the police service unrestrained powers of arrest, without the need for any offence to have actually taken place, and it will deny the citizens' right to silence.
>
> The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons do not allow the Criminal Justice Bill to be enacted.
>
> And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, et cetera.

The petition is signed by my constituent, Mr. Dhara Thompson, and by 815 other residents of my constituency and neighbouring constituencies in North Yorkshire.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now that the House is silent and now that the occupant of the Chair has acquiesced in the Government Whip's application that consideration of the Lords amendments be adjourned in the middle of a series of points of order involving grave allegations, can you advise me whether it is right that the occupant of the Chair should acquiesce—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not raising the point of order on which I have already ruled.

Mr. Bermingham: No. I hope that you will accept that I say this with courtesy, but I am challenging the way in which business proceeded this evening. Some other hon. Members might have had something to say and perhaps sought to catch your eye, but the Government adjourned the proceedings, thus, in effect, ensuring that the purpose of raising the points of order was lost. Is it in accordance with the rules of the House that those of us who believe in the democratic process should have our remarks curtailed by a motion to adjourn the proceedings, leaving only the Adjournment debate, and thus denying us the opportunity to continue to debate the serious matters that were raised earlier?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With the greatest respect, we have not had the Adjournment debate yet. We have debated the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, dealt with motion No. 2 on the Order Paper and heard one of two petitions. We have not reached the Adjournment debate yet.

Mr. Bermingham: I did not say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is not the point that I am making.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman making his point now?

Mr. Bermingham: Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not mean to denigrate in any way the business yet to come, but I am saying that the serious business of the House has been adjourned, and that caused a stoppage of the points of order on matters raised by hon. Members earlier. When such a situation arises, is it right that Government Whips should seek to adjourn the House, and thus curtail debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All that I can advise the hon. Gentleman is that, as of this moment, no Adjournment of the House has been sought. I am not sure where the hon. Gentleman has been, but the only motion moved by the Government Whip was that we should adjourn further consideration of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, not that we should adjourn the House. Indeed, had the hon. Gentleman wished to raise a new point of order he could have caught my eye, but I never saw him move. I looked round the Chamber, nobody else moved, and I have now ruled.

Tingewick Bypass

11.15 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I wish to present a petition on behalf of the Tingewick action group. Its purpose is to press for the speedy building of a bypass for the village of Tingewick. To give some idea of the problem, I tell the House that the village lies on a major road, and that the width of the high street dwindles at one point to only 4.8 m. Therefore, my petitioners would like the bypass to be included in the Department of Transport transport policies and programme, and built. I therefore present the petition, which bears about 700 names from a village comprising a mere 359 dwellings.

To lie upon the Table.

Raymond Gilmour

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

11.16 pm

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I am grateful to Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity to raise this important matter on the Adjournment tonight. This is not a matter of party politics. It is, quite simply, a question of justice.

The case of my constituent, Raymond Gilmour, presents the real and strong possibility—I would assert, the probability—that there has been a gross miscarriage of justice. More than that, it raises questions that strike at the very heart of our Scottish legal system.

Of course, no system of criminal law can ever be perfect. In any system, there will be always be the chance of wrongful conviction. The health of any system of justice, therefore, must be judged on how it rights those wrongs. Against that measure, the Gilmour case places the credibility of the Scots legal system, as it stands, at some risk.

I hope that the Minister will recognise that my endeavours tonight are deeply considered, serious and sincere. I have provided him with a copy of my speech in advance of the debate, because I genuinely want his response to be well informed and well considered. I have also supplied him with a copy of a video recording of the recent "Trial and Error" programme on Gilmour's case.

On 4 November 1981, Johnstone schoolgirl Pamela Hastie was assaulted, raped and murdered in Rannoch woods in my home town of Johnstone. All murders are terrible, but this one was especially terrible. Pamela was young, bright and attractive. She was full of life, and full of hope. She had just been made a school prefect. She was proud of that, and her parents—good, honest, decent people, whom I know—were proud of her. She had everything to live for, and everything to look forward to.

Try to imagine the family's horror—only those who have lived through such an ordeal really can imagine it—when they learned not only that their daughter was dead, but how she had died in such evil circumstances. Their lives were shattered, and they remain shattered. I want to see justice every bit as much for the Hasties as I do for Gilmour. What they lost that day can never be replaced, but at least they deserve to know the truth.

Over the years since Gilmour's conviction, a number of people have sought to get at that truth. Although his claims of innocence had always been stoically supported by his family and his local minister, the Rev. Hamish MacColl, the campaign to have his case reconsidered was making little headway for some years. Then a Paisley solicitor, Gordon Ritchie, became interested, and he has since spent countless hundreds of hours doing unpaid and diligent research. He is a credit to the Scottish legal profession.

I also pay tribute to the objective research and reporting of journalists, especially Severin Carrell of *The Scotsman*, who has done much, much more than journalism demanded. Stephen Wilkie of the *Daily Record* has also shown a continued interest in the campaign, as have journalists from the *Paisley Daily Express*, *Renfrew and Erskine Gazette*, *Evening Times* and *The Guardian*. I am also grateful for the continued support that I have received from the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), and from my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), both of whom are present.

When the Secretary of State rejected Gilmour's application for the prerogative of mercy on 18 April, it was feared that it would prove difficult to keep the case in the public eye. However, the case was worrying enough to excite the attention of the Just Television company, which makes the "Trial and Error" programme for Channel 4. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House will have personal experience of the team who, until 1992, produced "Rough Justice" for the BBC.

The team brought forward evidence that re-established Gilmour's alibi on the day in question, suggesting that confusion in the evidence of a 16-year-old witness may have mistakenly placed him near the scene of the crime. More critically, they highlighted evidence from the eminent forensic pathologist, Dr. Iain West, that the victim could not have been hit in the way in which Gilmour is alleged to have claimed in his admissions. Indeed, it is Dr. West's view that the victim was not hit at all in that way.

Gilmour became a police suspect shortly after Pamela Hastie's body was found. He lived in the area, frequented Rannoch woods and had a previous conviction for indecent exposure. When he was questioned by the police, he readily admitted exposing himself on other occasions in the same vicinity. It is not in dispute that Gilmour committed such crimes, and it seems that he was, in some ways, an inadequate youth.

On 9 November 1981, Gilmour made the first of his two alleged admissions. He withdrew it almost immediately and claimed that he had made it only to appease his interrogators. He was interviewed by the police officer heading the investigation, Detective Superintendent James Brown, who concluded that Gilmour had no special knowledge of the murder, and was merely offering a second-hand account of what he had read in newspapers or heard from local gossip. Brown ruled him out as a suspect, and to this day, Brown believes that he was correct to do so.

I well remember the intense local feeling at the time. The police were under great pressure from the press and the public to get a conviction. Brown was taken off the inquiry, and was replaced by Detective Superintendent Charlie Craig—perhaps best described as a determined, if colourful and unorthodox, police officer—who resolved to get his man. But did he get the right man? That remains the question. Will the Minister detail the reasons why Brown was removed from the murder investigation? Why did Strathclyde police remove that detective superintendent from an inquiry that he had been conducting for months?

On 9 February 1982, three months after his first alleged and withdrawn confession, Gilmour was being held at Lo[illegible]gend remand centre on charges of indecent [illegible]ure to which I referred earlier. He was due to appear in Paisley sheriff court that day. The normal practice was for the prison bus to take prisoners to court. Instead, that day, two senior officers of the serious crime squad arrived to give him a special escort in a police car.

That journey should have taken 40 minutes. It took around three hours. During it, Gilmour is alleged to have made his second confession. He claims it was made involuntarily, under threat and duress. Why on earth did

[Mr. Gordon McMaster]

two such senior officers attend to escort a prisoner to the court where he was due to appear on charges in which they had no involvement? Why did the journey take so long? How, in those highly unusual circumstances, could Gilmour possibly have invoked his right to have a solicitor present?

More troubling still is the fact—and it is a fact—that those admissions bear little relationship to the truth of events at various salient points. Gilmour claimed, for instance, that he had committed the murder and left the body at a point very different from that where it was found. He was unable to provide specific details of the clothing of the victim. More specifically, and more significantly, he was totally mistaken about how the victim was murdered, claiming that he had hit her over the head with the branch of a tree and then strangled her with her school tie or the strap of her bag. She was, in fact, strangled with sisal string.

During his first alleged confession—which he later withdrew—Gilmour sketched a labelled map of the murder locus. There is now forensic suspicion that some words on that map may have been written under more than one hand. In any case, there are inconsistencies in the accuracy of the map, in terms both of location and of the simple shape of the path.

Most critically of all, "Trial and Error" discovered evidence that, to my mind, discredits any remaining reliability one might give to Gilmour's confessions. The victim had been attacked with a knife or similar object in such a way that classic defensive wounds resulted.

This fact—a fact so central and salient to the case—it is now established, was not known to the police investigating the murder, to the defending solicitor at the time, to the protecting and defending advocate, to the judge or to the jury. How could the worth of the case against Gilmour have been properly or comprehensively judged with the omission of a fact which was at the very centre of this terrible crime?

My understanding is that the advocate-depute, although responsible for the prosecution case, has a primary duty to make all the evidence available to the court in the public interest. It seems that at least one essential piece of evidence was not made known to the court. Why was it omitted? Was the evidence about the use of a knife known to the Advocate-Depute? If it was, why was it not led in evidence? If it was not, why not?

In light of this, I wish to formally request that the Minister places in the House of Commons Library a full transcript of the shorthand notes taken at the trial. I believe that the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates has now agreed to appoint leading and junior counsel to act on Gilmour's case. That news is extremely welcome. The availability of the trial transcripts is now more necessary than ever.

As I have said, my constituent has already submitted a petition to the Secretary of State, but that was before this latest evidence came to light. At the time of his decision, the Secretary of State provided me with detailed reasons for his decision. I do not wish, and do not have the time, to question all of them, but I must question his statement on the final page of his letter to me about Gilmour's petitions, in which he states that they

> "do not cast reasonable suspicion on any other person as regards the murder."

Will the Minister confirm that it is not the responsibility of Gilmour, or anyone acting on his behalf, to prove the guilt of another in order to establish his own innocence?

I must also ask why the Minister of State, Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, withdrew from consideration of the case after being involved for many months. He told me that he had recollections about an earlier involvement in the prosecution of the case which made that withdrawal proper and necessary. Exactly what did he recollect? Why did these recollections cause him to withdraw?

I was delighted to receive on Monday what I regard as a helpful and hopeful letter from the Secretary of State in which he said:

> "I note your continuing concern about your constituent's conviction and will of course give careful consideration to any further points which might be submitted on his behalf in the light of that programme, 'Trial & Error". I am ready to consider a further petition supported by relevant documentation, particularly with regard to any new statements on the part of witnesses or forensic experts."

Will the Minister confirm that the Secretary of State means what he says? Will he confirm that his right hon. Friend will now consider a petition based on new statements, which might include fresh information on evidence which was technically available at the time of the trial, even though it was not led at the trial or made known to the judge, jury, defence or police? Better still, will he now consider using his powers under section 263 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 to refer the case to the High Court?

The wealth of new evidence now available cries out for a reappraisal of this tragic case. It is now an open secret that the Gilmour case is discrediting the Scottish system of justice, a system on which we have prided ourselves for so long. Surely, a truly healthy system must confront the possibility of error: in this case, an error which may have locked an innocent man behind bars for more than 12 years.

11.28 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) has very kindly allowed me the opportunity of a moment or two to contribute to this debate. I do not need to delay the House for long, because the comprehensive and responsible way in which he presented his case this evening was, to an objective listener, extremely persuasive indeed.

My qualification for adding my support to what the hon. Gentleman has said arises first from the fact that I have read all the papers relating to the trial that are publicly available. I have not read the transcript, because it has not yet been made available. I have also had the advantage—if that is the right word—of defending on a number of occasions in murder trials in Scotland, on one famous occasion with the Minister as my junior. In addition, I spent some time in the Crown Office as an advocate-depute, and I have prosecuted in a number of murder trials.

Using this experience and the judgment that I hope I have reasonably formed as a result, I am left in considerable doubt as to the legitimacy of the conviction in this case. I am concerned, first, by the apparent inconsistency between the confession and other circumstances of the case. If special knowledge, so-called, is to be relied upon, there is certainly some scope for inconsistency; but a number of the inconsistencies seem to me so major as to raise a large amount of doubt.

I am also much concerned about the way in which this man was taken from Longriggend to what was supposed to be a routine court appearance, and about the fact that a journey of 40 minutes apparently took about three hours. I am particularly anxious about the fact that it now appears that there is evidence that, as part of the attack, a knife may have been used, and that that evidence formed no part of the consideration of the High Court when the matter was tried.

Under our system of law in Scotland, no man or woman has to prove his or her innocence. There has to be proof beyond reasonable doubt. Having given the matter the best consideration that I can, I believe that there is a substantial doubt in this case. That is why I have sought to lend such assistance as I can to what I regard as the responsible and assiduous efforts that the hon. Member has made on behalf of his constituent.

11.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) warmly on his success in securing this Adjournment debate, and on his obvious commitment to the cause of justice and to the interests of his constituent. I also congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). I vividly remember the case in which I was his junior counsel. It seems only yesterday, but it was a long time ago.

It is the sign of a civilised society to be constantly vigilant to ensure that our system of criminal justice does not tolerate miscarriages of justice, and complacency in such matters is never acceptable. The successful functioning of our criminal justice system does, of course, depend on an intricate balance being maintained between the need to ensure fairness for an accused person and at the same time to protect the public from crime.

I have seen and studied the video recording, which the hon. Gentleman kindly lent me yesterday, of the recent television programme, and I have listened to the hon. Member's concerns about his constituent's case with great attention.

I should make it clear to the House from the outset that the Secretary of State will be ready to consider any further representations which may be submitted on Mr. Gilmour's behalf. Indeed, I understand that a petition is at present being prepared. The House will understand, however, that, until such a petition has been considered, neither I nor my right hon. Friend is in a position to comment on any new matters which may have been raised by the television programme, or to review the decision taken in April.

It is important to remind the House, first, why the Secretary of State cannot usually intervene in a case on the basis of evidence which has already been before the courts. Constitutionally, it is for the courts to determine questions of innocence or guilt. Accordingly, the Secretary of State should not seek to intervene in their decisions or to second-guess the verdict of a jury purely on the basis of information already considered by the courts.

This is because the Secretary of State's opinion of a case can be based only on consideration of relevant papers, including reports of investigations, whereas the jury at the original trial will have been able to hear the evidence and assess the performance and demeanour of witnesses at first hand. It follows that the Secretary of State can normally consider the exercise of his power to refer a case to the Court of Appeal only when compelling new information is presented to him which was not before the court or could not reasonably have been made available at the trial.

The purpose of a referral to the Appeal Court is to enable some fresh issue to be considered by the court which the Secretary of State is satisfied it can properly and usefully consider. On that basis, any new petition which may be presented to the Secretary of State for Mr. Gilmour should seek to present new evidence or fresh considerations of substance; it should not seek simply to re-argue matters which are already before the court of trial.

The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of issues, many of which were raised in the recent television programme. If Mr. Gilmour's representatives consider that they are new issues of substance, they will no doubt raise them in the further petition, and my right hon. Friend will consider them carefully.

At this stage, however, I should note that the post mortem report, which made reference to the cuts on the victim's hands, and the photographs taken at the post mortem showing cuts on the left hand, were productions at the trial. Both pathologists who conducted the post mortem also gave evidence. If, none the less, the cuts on the victim's fingers are now considered to be significant, the matter can be raised in any further petition to the Secretary of State.

As regards the hon. Gentleman's request for a transcript of the shorthand notes taken at the trial, I have made inquiries, and I understand that the shorthand notes were transcribed, but it has not been possible to locate the transcript. I would otherwise have been willing to meet the request to have the transcript placed in the Library. I intend, however, to pursue the matter further with the Justiciary Office, but the judge's charge to the jury was transcribed for the appeal and is available, as is the opinion of the appeal court and the report thereon.

Mr. McMaster: Will the Minister confirm that the powers of the Secretary of State under section 263 are extensive, and if the Secretary of State chose to do so, he could refer the case to the High Court? Let us leave that aside for the moment and get to the nub of the case.

Will the Minister, to be absolutely crystal clear, give a cast-iron guarantee that the evidence which was shown in "Trial and Error"—the evidence to which I refer primarily—will be permissible as part of a new petition? We have to have that absolutely clarified, because the Minister has seen the video and knows that the evidence will corroborate it. I do not want to make any more interventions, so let me raise one more point with the Minister. I seek his assurance that he will instruct a genuine search for the transcript.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: First, the Secretary of State does have substantial powers, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, if there are grounds within the petition. As I

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

mentioned to the hon. Gentleman, the grounds are either fresh evidence or fresh issues of substance, and it is not appropriate for me to give a legal interpretation.

The appropriate course is for the facts to be presented in the petition which the lawyers advising the convicted person believes are of relevance as regards the matter as being either fresh evidence or new issues of substance.

I wish to mention particularly the reason why Detective Superintendent James Brown was removed from the murder investigation. That decision was an operational matter for the Strathclyde chief constable, but I understand that it is not unusual police practice to invite a senior investigating officer unconnected with the original investigation to review the case where a murder inquiry has failed to make significant progress. The advantage of having a fresh mind in charge in such circumstances can readily be appreciated, and it would, in my view, be unjustified to seek to draw sinister inferences.

The hon. Gentleman also asked why my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State withdrew from consideration of the case. My noble and learned Friend wrote to the hon. Member on 30 March this year explaining that, in his previous capacity as Solicitor-General, he had been aware of the Gilmour case, but had not had a substantial involvement. None the less, priorities dictated withdrawal from consideration of the petition submitted on Mr. Gilmour's behalf, as in his view complete detachment was necessary. I am sure that the House will agree that my noble and learned Friend's decision to withdraw was appropriate and honourable. I should also remind the House that decisions about such cases are taken by the Secretary of State.

I was asked to give my view to the Secretary of State on the evidence then available, and the Secretary of State took the final decision at that stage. The petitions submitted to him last year on Mr. Gilmour's behalf were the subject of detailed consideration and investigation.

Those petitions focused essentially on two of the key issues at Mr. Gilmour's trial. The first was whether his confession statements were made voluntarily or whether they were extracted from him by unfair police questioning, violence or threats of violence. The second key issue was whether there was sufficient correlation between the contents of his statements and the evidence of what was found in the wood as to constitute special knowledge on Mr. Gilmour's part which the murderer would have had.

The trial judge instructed the jury in his charge that, unless its members were satisfied both that the statements were fairly obtained by the police and that such correlation and special knowledge existed, there was otherwise insufficient evidence to convict Mr. Gilmour. The trial judge also advised the jury that the forensic evidence could not be regarded as a source of corroboration.

In convicting Mr. Gilmour, a majority of the jury clearly concluded that the confession statements had been fairly obtained by the police, and that they revealed sufficient special knowledge to provide corroboration. All the police officers who witnessed the confessions gave evidence in court, and were thus able to be cross-examined on whether undue pressure had been applied in the relevant interviews.

The main ground of Mr. Gilmour's appeal was that there was not sufficient evidence in law to corroborate the statements concerning the admissions that he had committed the offences. The Court of Appeal concluded that, where statements contained points of identity and points of discrepancy with facts found by the police, it was for the jury to decide whether they could accept the points of identity. In this case, the jury had accepted those points, and the Court of Appeal held that they had been sufficient in law.

The petitions submitted to the Secretary of State last year returned to the matter of discrepancies between the confession statements and what the police had found in the woods. Although the petitions raised matters that either were or could have been raised at the trial, interviews were conducted with witnesses who had provided statements to the petitioner's legal representatives.

As the police evidence was crucial in the case, six of the seven police officers involved in the original investigation were also interviewed last year, the seventh officer having died in the intervening period. The interviews were conducted by the regional procurator fiscal at Paisley, and by senior officers of Strathclyde police.

I can confirm to the House that the police statements did not reveal any indication of malpractice. Indeed, the police officers in question emphatically denied any unfair treatment on their part, or any physical or verbal abuse of Mr. Gilmour in the course of the murder inquiries.

Mr. McMaster: Is that surprising?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman asks whether that is surprising.

One of the great virtues of the Scottish legal system is that the regional procurator fiscal is entirely independent of the police and, as I mentioned, the interviews were conducted by the regional procurator fiscal and by senior officers of the Strathclyde police.

The petitions also alleged that a lorry driver had been seen acting in an unusual and suspicious manner on the day of the murder, and had tried to pick up a young girl in his lorry within half a mile of the locus. The lorry driver who was apparently the subject of those allegations was traced and interviewed on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Witnesses relevant to those allegations were also interviewed, but no grounds were revealed to regard the lorry driver as a suspect in relation to the murder. Several other witness statements submitted on Mr. Gilmour's behalf were also investigated and precognitions taken of the persons concerned. Those statements did not raise any issues of material significance.

The matter was investigated because it had been raised on Mr. Gilmour's petitions, but I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman that it is not the responsibility of Mr. Gilmour or his representative to prove the guilt of another person in order to establish his own innocence.

The very thorough investigation that was conducted on behalf of the Secretary of State did not identify any evidence of police malpractice; nor did it suggest an alternative suspect for the murder of Pamela Hastie.

Careful consideration of the petitions did not identify any grounds for concern about the case that were not before the jury at the original trial. It was therefore concluded that the representations last year did not reveal such new evidence or fresh considerations of substance as to indicate that a miscarriage of justice may have occurred.

As to the claim made in the recent television programme, if Mr. Gilmour's representatives consider that the programme identified new evidence or fresh considerations of substance, they should arrange to include all such matters in the forthcoming petition to the Secretary of State, supported as appropriate by statements from witnesses or forensic experts. We shall then arrange for those matters to receive close examination.

In conclusion, I repeat my initial statement, that we stand ready to consider further representations on the case. I assure the House and the hon. Gentleman that any new submission made on Mr. Gilmour's behalf will be carefully considered, and further investigations instructed if appropriate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Thursday 20 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

1. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for the further reform of the common agricultural policy.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. William Waldegrave): The Government have led the way in seeking reform of the common agricultural policy. I shall be continuing to press for further reform at the Agriculture Council in Luxembourg next week.

Sir Thomas Arnold: I welcome my right hon. Friend to his new post. What end result would he like to see from further reform of the common agricultural policy? Is there now a case for repatriation?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. I should like to see a common agricultural policy which moved nearer to world market prices; which was simpler to administer; and which, as a matter of priority, got rid of such idiocies as the wine regime, under which we pay for the conversion of low-grade Italian wine into industrial fuel which is then sent at a subsidised rate to Brazil to be put into motor cars. That is crazy.

On my hon. Friend's final point, repatriation is not necessarily the way forward. If we are to have a common market in agricultural products, we need a level playing field in terms of support systems. That is the purpose of having the right common agricultural policy.

Mr. Stevenson: Does the Minister recall his predecessor's statement in May 1992 to the effect that the CAP reforms were good for Britain, good for farmers and good for the taxpayer? Is he aware that, between 1992 and next week's estimates, the CAP budget will have increased by £6.3 billion? How can that be good for the taxpayer, the consumer or the average family, who are paying £20 a week more than they should for their food? Does not that mean that the CAP continues to be bad for Britain, bad for the taxpayer and bad for the consumer?

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The reforms relieved the British consumer of something like £1 billion of excess costs. I agree that we want prices to come down further, nearer to the real market prices. However, the reforms were a useful step forward and they have done better than many people predicted in getting rid of surpluses of, for example, cereals and beef. We now have much less beef in intervention than we used to.

Mr. Pickles: In considering reform of the common agricultural policy, will my right hon. Friend consider especially the effect of a proposed new directive on nitrates in broadleaf vegetables, which threatens many vegetables grown under glass in Britain? I thank him for taking the matter to the Council of Ministers. Will he assure the House that he will fight as hard as his predecessor for British horticulture?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. We have sent a powerful paper containing evidence from absolutely first-class epidemiologists such as Sir Richard Doll, which proves that there is absolutely no risk from nitrates in lettuce and that the directive is misconceived. I shall fight it. I remember the Leader of the Opposition saying that he will never be isolated in Europe. He says that he will always agree, which means that he will sign up to such directives. One has to be isolated sometimes if one is to fight.

Dr. Strang: May I congratulate the Minister on his appointment? I am sure that his family history, knowledge of agriculture and ministerial experience will be a help to him. Does the new CAP policy group mean that the Minister has spent some of the past three months studying the CAP? Did he note that less than two years ago one of his predecessors presented the latest reform as something of a triumph for Britain? Is not the truth of the matter that during the past 15 years the Government have not mounted a serious attempt to alter a policy that is misusing thousands of millions of pounds of British taxpayers' money?

Mr. Waldegrave: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words, and congratulate him on his election to the shadow Cabinet. The post-MacSharry reforms were indeed a great improvement on what was there before. Surpluses have been cut, and the level of overpricing has been brought back, but there is far more to do. The entry of central and eastern European countries—towards the end of the century, we hope—will provide not only an opportunity but the necessity for further major reform. We shall take that opportunity and I hope that we shall lead the way.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the problems with the common agricultural policy is the uneven nature of compliance and enforcement in the different states within the European Union? Will he consider suggesting to his colleagues in Europe that the officials responsible for inspection, enforcement and compliance might operate on an exchange basis between countries, so that ours could assist other European countries while we could enjoy the regime that those countries have had hitherto?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend makes a serious point, but I am not entirely sure that I should like to swap our inspectors for those from some other countries, even if it brought some benefits to our people. There is a real issue, and I shall certainly argue with the Commission that we need proper enforcement throughout the EU. Indeed, the subject will arise at the next Council, in relation to animal welfare.

Mr. Tyler: I, too, welcome the Minister; I also welcome his statement at the Conservative party conference that he is to set up a CAP policy group. Will he take advantage of the developing consensus in the

House on the need for reform, and on some of the directions that such reform might take? Will he comment on his predecessor's statement that

> "Set-aside is here and we must make the most of it"?

Should we take that to mean that set-aside is here to stay on the current scale?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome. Although there is great expertise within my Ministry, I believe that there is no harm in seeking to ensure that we use everybody who can contribute on that important subject, both in this country and more widely. As for set-aside, in the long term we do not like such production control, either through quotas or through set-aside. We would rather move the emphasis towards lower prices, and getting production into balance with consumption. But while we have set-aside, surely we should use it for beneficial purposes. That is why I shall argue, for example, that forestry should be possible on set-aside land.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government have a good record in emphasising the educational value of reducing tobacco consumption—that that is something to be commended—but that there is an inconsistency between that and the support for tobacco producers in the rest of the European Community?

Mr. Waldegrave: It will not surprise my hon. Friend to know that the tobacco regime is the part of the CAP that I, as a former Secretary of State for Health, like least. As well as its objectives being thoroughly unsatisfactory, it has been subject to considerable fraud. It seems entirely mad that we should spend money trying to persuade people not to smoke, while at the same time spending more money to subsidise the growing of tobacco.

Land Drainage

2. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what account he takes in the exercise of his responsibilities for land drainage of protecting the environment and the habitat of birds and other wild animals.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): The powers that MAFF exercises in the relationship between land drainage and environmental protection are fully detailed in the publication "Water Level Management Plans", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is the Minister aware of the widespread anxiety among conservation groups and interests that the announcement of a new environmental agency may mean that that agency would have fewer powers than those now residing with the National Rivers Authority? Will he give the House an undertaking that the new agency will have equally robust powers and a duty to promote conservation in water management, rather than merely having "regard to" it, as was spelt out in the publicity?

Mr. Jack: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that it is not directly in my province to comment on the Environmental Protection Agency. That is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, I am aware that concern has been expressed about the word "conservation" in the context of that agency, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the information, such as water level management plans and the other guidance given to all authorities with an interest in land drainage, will not change. Their obligations and requirements—as regards the new Land Drainage Act 1994, for example—will remain unaltered under the new arrangements.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my hon. Friend take an early opportunity to congratulate our right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, whose Bill last night will go a long way towards protecting the environment and habitat of birds and other wild animals, and will curtail the activities of people whose sole intent is to destroy that habitat and to destroy country life?

Mr. Jack: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the novelty of his question. I will certainly pass on his greetings to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. It is always important in countryside and conservation matters to get an appropriate balance between the intrusion of human beings and wildlife.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

3. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines he has for strengthening the control over BSE.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Angela Browning): All our controls on BSE are based on independent scientific advice, which is on-going.

Mr. Morgan: May I first congratulate the hon. Lady on her promotion? As the Government have been wrong on so many things about BSE—wrong on the numbers forecast, wrong on the time profile forecast, wrong on transmission between generations and wrong on transmission between species—is not it now time for them to close the remaining loophole by which BSE-infected products can get into the food chain, namely spinal cord and brain products from calves less than six months old?

Mrs. Browning: The hon. Gentleman is making allegations that are not supported either in this country or in Europe by any of the scientists who have investigated the matter. I suggest that if he has scientific evidence, on which our decision making is based, he puts it forward. Certainly the time scale in which the number of registered cases has fallen has been longer than originally anticipated. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in welcoming the fact that in the past year, we have seen a significant drop in reported cases—namely, 43 per cent.

Mr. Gale: In welcoming my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box, may I say how very much we appreciate the candour and openness with which her Department has faced the highly emotive problem of BSE? She will be aware of the very real concern that has been expressed by the British Veterinary Association, by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and by others about the potential for the importation of hitherto eradicated animal diseases from eastern Europe through the European Union. Can she reassure the House and those bodies that her Department will take every possible measure to ensure that those diseases are not reintroduced from eastern Europe through the Union by the back door?

Mrs. Browning: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks and I can reassure him. He will be aware of the decision and announcement by my right hon. Friend the former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who announced earlier this year that there would be a reinstatement of 100 per cent. inspection at all ports of entry.

Ms Eagle: Would the Minister care to comment on some of the theories now coming forward to the effect that the BSE problem may actually be caused by the use of pesticides and other chemicals in agriculture rather than by some of the factors that have been identified to date?

Mrs. Browning: I can certainly comment. All such allegations have been inspected by independent scientific advisers to the Department and none of them stands up to scientific investigation.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

4. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the take-up of the environmentally sensitive area scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: There has been a good response and more than 4,500 agreements have been signed.

Mr. Whittingdale: I welcome the success of the ESA scheme nationally—I understand that it now covers 10 per cent. of all land in England—but is my hon. Friend aware that, in the Essex coast ESA, which covers my constituency, farmers are unlikely to take up the scheme in large numbers to cover arable land as the payments available are so much lower than those for land put into set-aside?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is right to raise the issue. However, I must remind him that the objective of the Essex coast ESA is effectively to preserve the coastal marsh grazing areas from the River Stour to Canvey island. That is the principal objective and to the extent that such land is the principal objective, it is not in competition for payments from the arable area payment scheme. In terms of reversion from arable land to pasture, I can tell my hon. Friend that we have already achieved 23 per cent. of our target of 1,000 hectares for reversion.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: The Minister may be interested to hear that I visited such a scheme in my constituency—the Tir Cymen scheme—during the summer. It is very successful in upland areas in my constituency in sustaining the income of small farmers and in providing work in a rural area. Why is it that within agricultural support generally, only 1 per cent. or 2 per cent. of the agriculture budget is involved in environmental schemes?

Mr. Jack: I am delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman's commendation of the support that we are giving through environmentally sensitive areas to the role of preserving the important environmental features in the countryside. In talking about numbers, the hon. Gentleman perhaps omits to mention the fact that we hope that, by 1996, with the full range of environmental schemes—not only environmentally sensitive areas but countryside access, organic farming, marsh moorland and the whole range of other schemes—we will be spending around £100 million. That, by any standard of imagination, is a very large sum indeed.

Cereals

5. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the farming unions about individual base areas for cereal growers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have had no recent calls from farming unions for meetings on that subject.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am perfectly prepared to understand and accept that there are legal and perhaps even administrative difficulties in using individual base areas as a way in which to control quotas. There is no such thing as a pain-free quota system. But if the Minister is excluding individual base areas as a way of giving individual farmers the ability to control the penalties that they incur, what plans does he have for dealing with this very real problem, which certainly continues to occur in the cereal-growing areas of Scotland?

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question and for his honesty in acknowledging that there are significant problems in administration and farming practice relating to individual farmers having their own base areas. We are very aware of that.

We publish a great deal of information about crop yields—about yield by cereal type. That is backed up by information from the Home-grown Cereals Authority. That is important because farmers study it and make up their own minds in the light of trends in cereal cropping as they affect their individual enterprises. In the light of what the hon. Gentleman has said, I shall certainly have a discussion with the chairman of the Home-grown Cereals Authority to see if we can further improve the promulgation of that information for the better guidance of farmers.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is still a prevailing sense of injustice among cereal growers in Wales, especially in the less-favoured areas? Furthermore, the farming unions—in Wales and, I think, nationally—have expressed their concern to the Ministry, first, about the fact that there is not a joint England and Wales base region and, secondly, about the fact that, for the past two years, and until the recent welcome announcement made by the Ministry, severe losses have been incurred by Welsh cereal growers because of the previous base-area designations.

Mr. Jack: I am well aware of the situation that my hon. Friend describes to the House. In fairness to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, he has made sterling efforts to try to address the problem. The latest situation—certainly in relation to new yield areas that have been introduced—means that those in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales all gain. There is a marginal loss of 10 kg per hectare for the English growers but, all told, it is a much better scheme for determining the level of arable area payments made to specialist cereal growers to which my hon. Friend referred.

Forestry Commission Land

6. **Mr. Olner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of Forestry Commission land in England is accessible to the public.

Mrs. Browning: There is general access to Forestry Commission land subject only to legal constraints or considerations of safety.

Mr. Olner: Although I welcome that statement and although we are all grateful that the Government have been forced to do a U-turn on the privatisation of the Forestry Commission as a result of effective public pressure from all parts of the community, does the Minister agree that there is an awful lot of private forestry land that is inaccessible for public use, although all Forestry Commission land is open to public use? Will she therefore seek to prevent any further piecemeal sell-offs of Forestry Commission land and, indeed, ensure that public access is gained to the land which has been sold by the Forestry Commission?

Mrs. Browning: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that access to land—legitimate access to land—is very important. I hope that he will welcome the fact that, in their reforms, the Government have proposed a £0.9 million budget to enable the Forestry Commission to buy land to which, at the moment, it is difficult to gain public access. That will enable the commission to provide greater access so that people may legitimately use the land.

Mr. Marland: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is legitimate concern about access to woodland in many respects and that most people—I accept that there are a few exceptions on the Opposition Benches—would like that access to be arranged with co-operation rather than confrontation? My constituency contains the royal forest of Dean and other areas of woodland which could, in the fullness of time, be sold off. Will my hon. Friend ensure that, where Forestry Commission land is sold, there are discussions with the purchasers to ensure that, with their co-operation, access to those woods continues?

Mrs. Browning: I can assure my hon. Friend that that is part of the Government's proposal and we shall do all that we can to ensure that it is enforced. As a former chairman of the Rights of Way Review Committee, I can assure my hon. Friend that the way forward in relation to access to land is through co-operation and not just through opening the floodgates for people to roam wherever they wish.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister's answer mean that the Government admit that they made an historic blunder in privatising Forestry Commission land without providing for public access? In view of that concession, will the Government go further and restore access to many of the thousands of acres to which public access is no longer available?

Mrs. Browning: I have already identified the respects in which the Government are not only supporting the proposal to increase public access but putting money behind it. We shall continue to do that.

Mr. Matthew Banks: I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to the Dispatch Box. Does she agree with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who recently said that there should be a right to roam, or with the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), who suggested that there were obviously some parts of the countryside where one could not wander?

Mrs. Browning: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I would not wish to exacerbate the already widening gap on the Opposition Benches, but I certainly think that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) had it right.

Mr. Martyn Jones: Is not much of the land that has been sold by the Forestry Commission very accessible to local people in the sense that it comprises small woodlands which are near human habitation and useful for recreation? Is it not the case that most of those areas do not have access agreements? Access agreements can be drawn up with local authorities, but they need the money to do that. Authorities have many other things on which to spend their money. Will the Minister assure the House that the money will be available for those agreements?

Mrs. Browning: Access agreements are important. Giving local authorities the funds to co-operate in that regard and giving them the time to make the arrangements are part of the Government's plan.

Animal Transportation

7. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to improve the conditions of farm animals in transit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I announced on 14 September a new measure to improve protection of the welfare of animals in transit, in particular those for export. This would give us the capacity, if evidence was available, to prosecute in Britain hauliers who had not looked after their animals properly on journeys, even though those journeys were abroad.

Mr. Luff: I welcome that answer, but will my right hon. Friend continue to press for an effective Europe-wide animal transport licensing and enforcement system? Can he give us any assessment of when our European partners, particularly the French, are going to take the matter as seriously as he clearly does?

Mr. Waldegrave: The measures that I have proposed go as far as we can on a national basis within the treaty of Rome. Incidentally, they will enable us to prosecute some of those frightful cases which were investigated—for example, by ITN—if evidence is brought in this country. However, the real task is to obtain Europe-wide licensing of the kind that my hon. Friend mentioned. A group of countries—I am sorry to say a minority—in the Council is in favour and we are a firm part of that group. However, others, including France, have not taken that view. It would be most helpful if they would.

Mr. Beggs: I welcome the steps that the Ministry has already taken to improve the welfare of animals in transit but does the Minister agree that it is preferable that animals be transported to the nearest meat plant for processing and slaughter, but that a blanket ban on the export of livestock could seriously damage our successful trade in exporting pedigree breeding stock?

Mr. Waldegrave: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is right. The greater part of our trade is already in carcase meat. I believe that the steps that are now being taken to ensure that the trade expands are the right steps. They bring jobs, apart from anything else, to the United Kingdom. However, it would be very unfair to British farmers—who already, in most cases, have the highest standards in Europe—if unilateral action against them led to damage to them from pressure groups legitimately targeting standards in other parts of Europe which are very much lower. That is quite apart from the long-standing trade in thoroughbred exports and racehorses, for example, with which nobody is proposing to interfere.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: Is not it a fact that if, for whatever reason, customers are deprived of supplies of live animals from United Kingdom sources, they are likely to turn to other countries whose animal welfare standards are infinitely worse, and that there will be much more suffering for live animals?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend makes a perfectly fair point. It would be paradoxical if, in order to express anxiety about the subject here, steps were taken that led to a net loss in the standards of animal welfare because of the importation into our previous markets of animals from central Europe. I fear that the conditions in which such animals would have been reared and transported would be likely to be much lower.

Mr. Morley: I add my congratulations to the Minister on his new post. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there is widespread public concern about live animal exports for slaughter? Indeed, live animal exports are also exporting British jobs from the meat industry as well. Will the right hon. Gentleman look carefully at some of the more dodgy schemes to beat the ferry ban, such as flying live cows from a Humberside airport in old eastern bloc military transport planes? I hope that the Minister will make available to the House his vets' report on those trial flights.

Given that lamb and calf prices since the ferry ban demonstrate that we can have a viable trade in carcases, will the Minister do what he can to support the export of meat from this country, based on quality and price rather than on the misery of live animals?

Mr. Waldegrave: The greater part of our trade, as the hon. Gentleman acknowledges, is already in carcases. It is wise that that trade should expand. However, I have no power to ban live exports. I have power to ensure that any live exports take place under strict welfare conditions. As for the Hull flight to which the hon. Gentleman referred, I am very happy to send to him, or to place in the Library of the House, the account of the vets from my Department who travelled with it. It was, I am advised, satisfactory. I will not allow—not that I would be able to persuade them to do it—vets in my Department to cut any corners whatsoever in the maintenance of proper standards, but if they are proper standards, that is a legal trade.

Beef

8. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had with the EU Agriculture Commissioner in respect of beef.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have already had three meetings with Commissioner Steichen, the first one on 5 September at my request, at which those issues were raised.

Mr. Shepherd: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the beef sector is very important to the farmers of Herefordshire and the marches? What progress has my right hon. Friend been able to make towards relaxation of the rules on trade which were imposed by the European Commission, particularly as they relate to the younger animal?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend makes a very fair point. With the shape of the BSE epidemic now moving in the way in which it is, it would be fair to take action in relation to young animals. I have raised that matter with the Commissioner and I have some hopes of progress. I will report to my hon. Friend and to the House more widely on how the negotiations go.

Mr. Tony Banks: I add my welcome to the Minister. How appropriate it is to have a Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with his own herd of mad cows. Can he give an assurance that he has not been giving any of his home-made beef pies to Baroness Thatcher recently?

Mr. Waldegrave: Whether or not I have a herd of mad cows, that is much happier than being a Leader of the Opposition with a herd of mad Back Benchers behind me.

Dairy Farmers

9. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Waldegrave: I regularly meet representatives of all sides of the agriculture industry, including the president of the National Farmers Union, to discuss issues of importance to them, including the dairy sector.

Sir David Knox: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the arrangements for Milk Marque will not have an adverse effect on dairy farmers' incomes, particularly in the early stages if payments have to be reduced?

Mr. Waldegrave: The new arrangements put the industry in the proper position of negotiating price and supply between the producers and the manufacturers. That is much more satisfactory. If there were to be abuse by anybody within that market, it would be for the competition authorities to sort it out. I was pleased that the courts ruled that the system should be put in place and that there should be no further delay in the vesting day, because it would have thrown the industry into great confusion if there had been. I believe that the new system will bring benefits to the consumer and to producers, although undoubtedly it will take some time to settle down properly.

Dr. Strang: Surely the Minister is aware of the statement by his predecessor that Dairy Crest would definitely be floated before deregulation on 1 November. As we assume that that will not take place, can he give us some idea of when flotation will occur? Is it the case that the Director General of Fair Trading is likely to refer Milk Marque to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission before Christmas? What will the Minister do to prevent the new free market arrangements from damaging profitability, investment and jobs in the dairy industry?

Mr. Waldegrave: Any potential reference by the Director General of Fair Trading is entirely a matter for him. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a date for the flotation of Dairy Crest. However, he will have seen stories in the newspaper yesterday of various proposals. Many scare stories have been put about on this matter. The most obvious of them is that anything in these changes is likely to affect the price of a pint of milk on the doorstep. There is no reason for that at all. The price of liquid milk changes by less than half a penny. If we find companies—as some of them have said that they will do—putting up the price of a pint of milk on the doorstep by 3p or 4p, that is nothing to do with these changes.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend give an absolute assurance, with regard to the disgraceful fiddling of milk quotas by the Italians, that under no circumstances whatever will we agree to the retrospective legislation proposed by the European Commission, the effect of which would be to relieve the Italians of the penalties that they have incurred? Furthermore, can he ensure that we will not withdraw the legal action in the Court of Justice, especially as the issue on which it largely turns is the insistence by the Italians that in return for all this, they will withdraw their opposition to the veto on the own-resources legislation?

Mr. Waldegrave: What really matters is bringing home to the Italians in financial terms the fact that they abused their quota position for many years and they must be made to pay for it.

Common Agricultural Policy

10. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his European counterparts about the potential implications for the common agricultural policy of the enlargement of the EU.

Mr. Waldegrave: EFTAn enlargement is unlikely to have major implications for the common agricultural policy. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear to the House, however, fundamental changes to the CAP will be needed before the eastern European countries can join the European Union.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept the concerns of the NFU and many others that accession of eastern European and central European countries to the European Union will not enable the present common agricultural policy to survive? Does he believe that the policy review committee that he announced at the Tory party conference last week will be able to get a deal accepted by Europe which will give a fair deal to consumers and producers in the years ahead?

Mr. Waldegrave: That must be the objective, and there are beginning to be some signs of thinking in the European Commission which runs in the way that the House would like. For example, shortly, a report known as the Munk report will be published. If the *Financial Times* preview of that is correct, the report goes very much in the sort of direction that the hon. Gentleman and I would both like. However, we should not overestimate the difficulties on the way. We have a huge task in persuading the majority of other countries in the present Community of the need for radical reform. That is why it is unwise for Labour Members to talk so much in terms of consensus in the European Union; sometimes, we need to disagree and change attitudes. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Hon. Members may say "Hear, hear" but I wish that conversations were less noisy.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Can my right hon. Friend, to whom I extend a welcome to his new responsibilities, give us an assurance that the extension of the European Community will have no impact on milk quotas? He is aware that this country is not self-sufficient in liquid milk. Will he therefore ensure that we do not surrender any of our quota and that we continue to press for the cross-border transfer of quotas which would assist this country?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not think EFTAn accession will have much effect on that, but my hon. Friend makes a sensible and important point. The way forward must be to seek quotas that are tradeable across national boundaries. There is a long way to go to persuade some of our colleagues in Europe of the necessity of that, because some of them do not have tradeable quotas within their own countries, but that is my objective. Most hon. Members on both sides of the House who are interested in this matter will probably want to support me on that.

Set-aside Land

11. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new proposals he has in respect of arrangements for set-aside land.

Mr. Jack: New proposals to develop alternative non-food use crops which can be grown on set-aside land have been published, and we have launched the countryside access scheme.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister confirm that taxpayers subsidise farmers to grow less food, thus bringing up prices; subsidise farmers to grow food regardless of the yield; subsidise farmers with a guaranteed minimum price; subsidise farmers by their intervention stores; and then consumers—the taxpayers—have to pay increased prices in the shops? When will he stop the income support scheme for farmers, many of whom are millionaires? The set-aside scheme was designed to cut food production by 50 per cent., but it does not do that. When will the right hon. Gentleman act against the common agricultural policy, before it collapses under the weight of its own unfairness, futility and stupidity? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I asked for the co-operation of the House less than five minutes ago, but it would appear that I am not receiving it. I expect the support and co-operation of the House—not a lot of "Hear, hears" and continued conversations.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman has been exercising a certain right to roam away from the facts of what we have been up to. As my right hon. Friend has said, we have pressed forward in pursuit of realistic reforms of the common agricultural policy. We have pressed forward reforms of the set-aside scheme too. I am singularly disappointed by the fact that the hon. Gentleman fails to recognise the measures that we have taken to encourage set-aside for alternative, non-food uses. His failure to acknowledge, for instance, the short rotational coppice scheme is lamentable.

Mr. John Greenway: I warmly welcome the promise given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to set up a CAP policy review group—an important initiative taken by the Government for the future of agriculture. Will my hon. Friend ensure that part of the remit of that group will be to nail the lie, by means of proper research, about the link between agricultural price support and food prices—the sort of nonsense that we have heard talked about by the Labour party today?

Mr. Jack: I agree. The Opposition line is to end the common agricultural policy, pull the rug from under British farmers and not think about the consequences. They talk about a burden of £20 a week per family imposed by the CAP, but the figure is not valid because nobody knows what world prices would be in a world without the CAP. I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall adopt a realistic view of reform.

Mr. Tipping: When English farmers alone receive more than £140 million in set-aside payments, do not people have the right to expect better conservation measures, an improvement of the landscape and better access to the countryside in return for that money?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman must have been asleep when I was answering questions earlier. I said that, in the financial year 1995-96, we shall spend about £100 million on a range of environmental measures designed to achieve a better balance between farming and conservation.

Dairy Farmers

12. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will meet small farmers in Basildon to discuss problems of small dairy farms.

Mr. Jack: I am happy to have such a meeting the next time that I am in Basildon.

Mr. Amess: While I welcome the news that my hon. Friend will be visiting my constituency, will he kindly tell me how the new arrangements for marketing milk will benefit small dairy producers in Basildon?

Mr. Jack: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the basis for his question, which is clearly fighting for the safeguarding of the doorstep pinta. I understand that, under the new arrangements, farmers who bottle their own milk will be relieved of having to pay 1.5p a pint in levy to the milk marketing board, which will make those excellent doorstep deliveries so much more competitive under the new regime.

Madam Speaker: Time's up. Questions to the Prime Minister. I call Michael Clapham.

Mr. Skinner: Give him the money.

Madam Speaker: Order.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Clapham: When did the Prime Minister first become aware of the allegations against the hon. Members for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) and for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith)? What has he done about it, especially in relation to the Minister who has not resigned? Can he give the House an assurance that no other members of his Government are involved in corruption?

The Prime Minister: With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I shall reply in detail to each of those points, for I think that the House would wish me to do so.

The allegations were brought to me privately some three weeks ago. It was clear that the allegations reported to me originated, although they did not come to me directly, from Mr. Al Fayed. I made it absolutely clear at that time that I was not prepared to come to any arrangements with Mr. Al Fayed. I was not prepared—

Mr. Skinner: How much did he offer?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

The Prime Minister: I immediately made it perfectly clear that those matters would be fully investigated and asked the Cabinet Secretary to undertake an independent and full investigation. He has been doing so and he is continuing to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) wrote to me following that investigation and discussions with the Cabinet Secretary to say that he had a business relationship with Mr. Al Fayed and that he was paid fees. He did not, however, declare the necessary detail in the Register of Members' Interests during the consultancy. He has tendered his resignation and I have accepted it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) wrote to me explicitly refuting the allegations that he was paid any money to ask questions or to undertake any activity whatsoever on behalf of Mr. Al Fayed. My hon. Friend has announced that he will be instituting legal proceedings to seek damages for libel.

I have made it clear that I am determined to see the highest possible standards in public life and to see that they are maintained. It is right that such allegations should be investigated. They should be investigated—as they have been—by the Cabinet Secretary. Equally, if any further occasions arise, they will be investigated thoroughly and appropriate action taken.

Mr. Wilshire: Following on from that, will my right hon. Friend now arrange for the Audit Commission to conduct investigations into allegations made in the newspapers of corruption by Labour-controlled Birmingham city council—the allegations being that it corruptly used millions of pounds to buy votes in marginal wards?

The Prime Minister: There have been allegations of that sort against local authorities before and I believe that, as with hon. Members of this House, such allegations deserve to be properly investigated by the proper authorities.

Mr. Blair: While we note the resignation of one Minister and we await the outcome of the inquiry into the other, does the Prime Minister understand that today's allegations can no longer be seen as isolated incidents, but that his Government are becoming tainted? If he is serious about standards in British public life, will he now respond specifically to three proposals, which I shall put to him? First, that no Minister who has privatised a company should subsequently end up on its board; secondly, that he publish a list of all members of quangos, their payments, perks and any position with any political party; and thirdly, that the cash for questions inquiry now be broadened, made deeper, held in public and made fully independent so that the confidence of the British people in their Government can begin to be restored.

The Prime Minister: As I have said in the House on previous occasions and repeat now, I am determined to ensure high standards of probity right across government, and I will not tolerate anything less than the highest standards of behaviour. Special standards are required of those in public life and special sacrifices must be made by people when those standards in public life are not kept.

I am not prepared to take action against people on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations and against the background of concrete assurances from the person concerned that the charges laid against him are without foundation. I believe that the right hon. Gentleman would share my view about those points.

On the right hon. Gentleman's substantive questions, I shall deal first with quangos. Last May I established an independent working body across government to look at the system of appointments of such bodies, and I expect to receive the report of that body very shortly. In addition, the Treasury and the Office of Public Service and Science are preparing revised guidance on making appointments to issue to Departments. Last summer, I also asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to look right across the board at appointments to all public bodies and to make recommendations to me if he thought it necessary to change the system in any way. The purpose of that is to ensure that the system itself is seen, and is recognised, to be beyond criticism. When that work has been concluded, we shall announce our conclusions to the House. The right hon. Gentleman and I share the same objectives upon that point also.

As for the cash for questions issue, all traditions suggest that that should be dealt with by the Committee of Privileges, and there is no precedent for the Committee of Privileges not sitting in private. The reason for that is self-evidently understood by every Member of the House so that the matter may be fully dealt with. When the Committee has completed its report, the recommendations of that Committee of the House of Commons will be published and will then be debated here on the Floor of the House of Commons, where they should be.

On the first of the right hon. Gentleman's three questions, I am aware of no occasion where the question of the abuse of previous ministerial interests arises. If he wishes to give me details, I shall naturally look at what he has to say.

Sir Giles Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in pursuit of his clear commitment to deal with the issue, there is an extremely important role for the House of Commons Privileges Committee as set up by a motion agreed in the House? Will he confirm that it is not a matter of innuendo or allegation but one of thorough investigation, which the Privileges Committee can do, and that not only the Committee's report but the evidence, in full, which the Privileges Committee obtains, will be published? Is not that an objective to be proceeded with, rather than distorted by walk-outs by Opposition right hon. and hon. Members?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right about that. For a long time we have had our own method of dealing with such issues—the Privileges Committee. When it has taken evidence and reported, it is right for the House then to take decisions. I regret very much indeed that Opposition Members have decided not to continue with their work on that Committee, because I believe that if such Committees do not operate properly, with cross-party support, that will do great damage to the House of Commons as an institution.

My hon. Friend is entirely right in all else that he says. I reiterate the absolute necessity for high standards in public life. Let me make it clear once again that where any evidence of wrongdoing is brought to me, it will be investigated, and it will be punished if that is found to be justifiable. I must make a further point upon which I believe the House would wish to reflect: any investigation must be seen to be fair. It is a fundamental part of the way in which we conduct things in the House and in the country that people are innocent until they are shown to have been guilty. I regret that, occasionally, some in the House tend to forget that fundamental part of our constitution.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the right hon. Gentleman realise just how disappointed many people will be by the inadequate answers that he gave to the three specific questions put to him by the leader of the Labour party? Does not he realise that neither the House nor the people will be satisfied with the results of inquiries held in secret? Does not he understand that the interests of the country, his Government and the House would now be served by an independent and impartial re-examination of the standards that are required of those who hold public office in a modern democracy like ours?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman seems to fail to understand how the Committees of the House operate. I would have thought that he, as a Privy Councillor, would have understood that rather better. We have had a long tradition of cross-party Committees, like the Privileges Committee, dealing with such matters. The decision of some hon. Members not to serve on that Committee is unprecedented. They should serve on it. That Committee will take evidence. It will publish its report—there will be nothing secret about it—and it will be debated here, in the House. I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman did not hear what I said earlier about that. I hope that he now has heard and that he now understands. I hope that he will now continue the traditions that the House has long followed.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there would be widespread support throughout the country for a mandatory identity card scheme?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend will know, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has said that he proposes to consult about the possibility of an identity card scheme, either a voluntary or mandatory one. We shall wish to listen carefully to what people say in response to that consultation. There is a substantial case to be made for one, although practical difficulties must be overcome. If we have one on a smart card basis, it will allow Opposition Members to record their conservative principles on it.

Q2. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McAllion: Let me return the Prime Minister to the question of sleaze at the heart of government. Has he seen the astonishing report in today's press that his predecessor, Lady Thatcher, ordered GCHQ to pay foreign intelligence to spy on two members of her own Cabinet whom she suspected of disloyalty to her? *[Interruption.]* If only for the sake of her fellow travellers who are still members of the right hon. Gentleman's own Cabinet, will he give the House the assurance that he, at least, has discontinued that dishonourable practice? More importantly, will he give the House the assurance that he will order a full and independent investigation of that latest allegation so that those responsible for that perversion of the democratic ideal are brought to book before the British people?

The Prime Minister: The fact that, in the middle of his question, the hon. Gentleman could not even keep a straight face shows just how seriously everybody in the House regards the absolute absurdity of that allegation. Does not it show that the present frenzy of ludicrous rumours sweeping around deserve to be investigated and then cast aside because they are total nonsense? I am glad that the hon. Gentleman illustrated the sheer absurdity of many of the things that are currently being said and apparently being taken seriously by Opposition Members. I shall give him one answer to his question on that particular allegation: it is claptrap.

Q3. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: As my hon. Friend knows, I have always gone softly, softly in Prime Minister's questions, unlike the lot opposite.

Is my right hon. Friend sponsored by the TGWU? If not, perhaps he would like to tell me who is? Will he also confirm that clause 4 is not on our agenda and that, therefore, Babycham will not be nationalised and we shall not have to watch Bambi on the television every night?

The Prime Minister: The answer is, no I am not, but if anybody wishes to make any allegations, I am happy for the Committee of Privileges to investigate them. I trust that everyone will attend the Committee.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the forthcoming business of the House.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 24 OCTOBER—Debate on the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee relating to spending plans of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration, followed by a debate on the first report of the Science and Technology Committee relating to the science base and innovative and competitive technology on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 25 OCTOBER—Opposition Day (19th allotted day). There will be a debate entitled "Privatisation, Accountability and Bureaucracy in the National Health Service" on an Opposition motion.

WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Legal Aid (Scope) Regulations.

Motion on the Parental Orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) Regulations.

Motion on the Parental Orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) (Scotland) Regulations.

THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER—Debate on developments in Northern Ireland on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER—Debate on inward investment on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 31 OCTOBER—Opposition Day (20th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion on a subject to be announced.

The House may also be asked to consider any Lords messages which may be received.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet on Wednesday 26 October to consider European Community document No. 5934/94 relating to foodstuffs intended for particular nutritional uses.

[Wednesday 26 October:

European Standing Committee A—European Community document: 5934/94, Foodstuff: Particular Nutritional Uses. Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 48-xix (1993-94) and HC 48-xxiii (1993-94).]

MONDAY 24 OCTOBER—Debate on Foreign Affairs Committee report and debate on Science and Technology Committee report. The relevant reports are as follows:— 1)

Second Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee on "Public Expenditure: Spending Plans of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration 1994-95 to 1996-97". House of Commons Paper No. 372, Session 1993-94. CM2685 entitled "Second Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 1993-94, Expenditure Plans of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration, Observations by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs" is also relevant. 2)

First Report from the Science and Technology Committee on "The Routes Through which the Science Base is translated into Innovative and Competitive Technology", House of Commons Paper No. 74-I, Session 1993-94. CM2659 entitled "The Routes Through which the Science Base is translated into Innovative and Competitive Technology" Government response to the First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology, 1993-94, Session is also relevant.

WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied. The relevant reports are as follows:

Reports Session 1992–1993

No.	*Report Title*	*HC No.*	*Date of pub.*
55	MOD: The Costs and Receipts Arising from the Gulf Conflict	729	6 October
56	Forestry Commission: Timber Harvesting and Marketing	579	7 October
57	West Midlands Regional Health Authority: Regionally Managed Services Organisation	485	25 November
58	Department of Social Security and Benefits Agency: Combating Organised Fraud	672	24 November
59	MOD: Use of Simulators in Training	680	1 December
60	Inland Revenue Inheritance Tax	688	15 December
61	Health Services for Physically Disabled People Aged 16 to 64	538	16 December
62	The Administration of Student Loans	613	8 December
63	Wessex Regional Health Authority: Regional Information Systems Plan	658	9 December

Reports Session 1993–1994

No.	*Report Title*	*HC No.*	*Date of pub.*
1	Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland: Animal Health Measures	23	12 January
2	The Training and Employment of Disabled Persons in Northern Ireland	24	12 January
3	Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research	56	13 January
4	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: Management of Works Services	108	19 January
5	Export Credits Guarantee Department Trading Account 1991–92	122	20 January
6	Office of Telecommunications: Licence Compliance and Consumer Protection	123	26 January
7	The Department of Employment The Field System	153	9 February
8	The Proper Conduct of Public Business	154	27 January
9	Grant Maintained Schools: Financial Controls	165	2 February

[Mr. Tony Newton]

Reports Session 1993–1994

No.	*Report Title*	*HC No.*	*Date of pub.*
10	The Cost of Decommissioning Nuclear Facilities	166	3 February
11	Excess Votes	215	24 February
12	The Provision of Acute Hospital Services in Northern Ireland	25	2 March
13	Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland: Road Safety	26	3 March
14	Northern Ireland Audit Office Estimate 1994–95 and Supplementary Estimate 1993–94	58	17 March
15	University Purchasing in England	124	23 March
16	The British Council Account, 1992–93	109	31 March
17	Pergau Hydro-Electric Project	155	30 March
18	The Insolvency Service Executive Agency: Company Director Disqualification	167	27 April
19	HM Customs and Excise: Account Matters	216	28 April
20	Housing Corporation: Financial Management of Housing Associations	204	4 May
21	Sale of the Scottish Bus Group	97	5 May
22	English Estates: Disposal of Property	210	11 May
23	Development Board for Rural Wales: Allocation and Sale of Housing and Car Leasing Scheme	182	12 May
24	Welsh Office Appropriation Accounts, 1992–93	257	18 May
25	Financial Reporting to Parliament: Changes in the Format of Supply Estimates	386	19 May
26	Ministry of Defence: Movements of Personnel, Equipment and Stores to and from the Gulf	393	25 May
27	Disposal by Sale of Defence Surplus Equipment and Stores	194	26 May
28	Inland Revenue: Account Matters	229	29 June
29	Data Protection Controls and Safeguards	49	30 June
30	Ministry of Defence: The Award of the Contract for the Landing Platform for Helicopters	531	6 July
31	Department of Transport: The First Sales of Trust Ports	225	7 July
32	The Sale of the British Technology Group	273	13 July
33	Department of Social Security and Benefits Agency: Social Fund Account 1992–93	265	14 July
34	Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Quality of Service to Customers	279	20 July
35	Health and Safety Executive: Enforcing Health and Safety in the Workplace	292	21 July
36	Advances to Health Authorities 1992–93: South Birmingham Health Authority and Employment Termination Settlements within the National Health Service	241	27 July
37	Overseas Development Administration	287	28 July
38	National Audit Office Estimate 1994–95	57	19 July
39	Looking after the Financial Affairs of People with Mental Incapacity	308	3 August
41	The Cost to Business to Complying with VAT Requirements	361	4 August

Mr. Brown: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement. He will have heard the exchange at Prime Minister's Question Time. May I put it to him now that, regardless of whether Ministers resign, the allegations contained in *The Guardian* today are serious enough to warrant an investigation by the Committee on Privileges. While I am on the topic of the Committee on Privileges, may we expect a statement next week from the Leader of the House regarding progress on the "cash for questions" inquiry and related matters at which the Committee is looking? In particular, will the Leader of the House explain why the Committee must hear in private what we can all read for ourselves in *The Sunday Times*?

On a slightly more cross-party note, given the amicable discussions that have taken place between us during the summer recess, could the Leader of the House find time for the House to debate the Jopling report before the end of the Session?

Mr. Newton: Picking up the more emollient part of the hon. Gentleman's question—I am pleased to see him in his place on the Opposition Front Bench after the contribution that he has made to our discussions during the summer months—I cannot give an absolute undertaking because he and I have not had a chance to talk further since the events of yesterday. Obviously, there are some uncertainties about the precise pace at which we shall be able to proceed and precisely how long the present Session will go on. I am not in a position to resolve that uncertainty, either.

From the spirit of our discussions, the hon. Gentleman knows that we are both proceeding as constructively and speedily as we can. I think that he will accept that I have manifestly made it clear that I want to move as fast as possible. I think that that is all I can say on that matter.

On the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I cannot add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already said. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is the very strong convention of the House—although I appreciate that it does not appear to be universally followed, to put it mildly—that the proceedings of Select Committees are not usually discussed by members of them, let alone by Chairmen, outside the confines of a Committee until that Committee has reported.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Privileges Committee, I think it right to stick to that long-established convention. The appropriate time for debate will be when the Committee has brought a report to the House.

On the other matters raised today, the appropriate time for debate will be when a proper inquiry, of whatever kind, reaches a conclusion.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I want to add to what the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said about the Jopling report. Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is still considerable pressure from the

Back Benches to move forward on that report? That being so, even if there cannot be a debate, will my right hon. Friend consider whether it is possible, before the end of the Session, for a joint statement from both sides to be made on how we can proceed? I think that hon. Members deserve to know.

Mr. Newton: Again, I cannot make an absolute promise to be able to respond in the way that I should like to respond, for the reasons that I explained to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). I have not had the opportunity to talk to him and to repeat my point since developments in the Labour party yesterday, which leave some element of uncertainty. We both want to make progress as fast as possible. If we cannot have a debate, I shall consider my right hon. Friend's suggestion; he has certainly not been short in exerting pressure on this matter.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I recognise that these matters are not entirely under the right hon. Gentleman's control, but I want to press him for a date for the end of the Session. Is it right to assume that the working assumption is still 3 November?

Is not it time that the right hon. Gentleman had urgent words with the Foreign Secretary because of the urgent need to have a debate on the position in Hong Kong?

Mr. Newton: I will certainly bring the hon. Gentleman's latter point to my right hon. Friend's attention. On his first point, as on a number of occasions in this House there is some tension between the implicit wish to have an early date for prorogation and the pressure to put in more and more business before prorogation. I shall bear both in mind, but I cannot put the hon. Gentleman out of his misery at the moment.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that where the conduct of Members of the House is concerned, subsequent investigation has not always been characterised by calm detachment—something which can be discerned from the Marconi affair onwards? If the work of the Privileges Committee is to be vitiated by trench warfare of the most partisan character, will he keep his mind open to the suggestion made to him about possibly appointing a committee from outside the House to look at how we conduct ourselves?

Mr. Newton: The latter point goes well beyond my immediate responsibility as Leader of the House and Chairman of the Privileges Committee. To echo something said by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I continue to hope that those hon. Members who have indicated that they do not intend to attend the Committee for the time being will consider the position that will arise in the House, in almost any of our proceedings, if people who do not get their way in a decision properly taken under the procedures of the House then decide not to take part in those procedures.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does the Leader of the House recall that, at the end of July, many of us told him that the Privileges Committee was a rigged Committee that would collapse under the weight of its own—

Madam Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to ask a business question. As the Leader of the House correctly stated, the proceedings of the Committee at this stage are for the Committee itself, not for this Chamber. These are business questions and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do me the courtesy of asking a question relating to next week's business.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May we have a debate on these matters generally next week so that we can consider the membership of the Committee, which we know was rigged by the Government with a majority of people with substantial commercial interests? Does not the Leader of the House realise that Parliament is discredited while he insists on following that course? Why does he not return to the House with a new Committee or follow the recommendations made by the Liberals, who advocated an independent arrangement?

Mr. Newton: Of course I recall what the hon. Gentleman said in the debate that we had when the Committee was established and its membership settled. I also recall what I said in responding, both as Leader of the House and as the likely Chairman of the Committee. I shall not rehearse all those comments. The view expressed by the hon. Gentleman, however strongly felt, was not accepted.

The Committee was duly appointed by the House on a resolution on the basis of all the normal rules about the balance of membership according to the forces of the various parties in the House. The Members whose names were contained in the resolution accepted their appointments to the Committee without making conditions about what sort of decisions the Committee would make on how its work should be conducted.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Will there be an opportunity next week or possibly today to pay tribute to the remarkable efficiency and dedication of the police in defending our freedoms last night? I have an office overlooking St. Stephen's entrance and was most impressed at the unbelievable patience shown by the police when facing quite disgraceful provocation.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Newton: It is clear from the response to my hon. Friend that his sentiments are echoed in all parts of the House. Certainly, from what I observed, the police did an extremely good and effective job in controlling what could have become an even nastier situation.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): In courtesy to the House, will the right hon. Gentleman urgently correct, either now or early next week, what he said about his adherence to precedent in regarding what happens in the Select Committee on Privileges as confidential? How does he reconcile that with his decision, against all precedent, on Tuesday night to issue a press statement and hold a press briefing about the Committee's meeting on that day?

Mr. Newton: I indicated to the many journalists outside the room simply that the Committee had taken a decision to sit in private. I made no further comment about who had said what, what the voting was or anything else. It was clear that it was going to be necessary to

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communicate the simple fact, and I make no apology for that judgment. I have not thought it right beyond that to discuss either the arguments or the proceedings.

Sir Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on the case for socialism as set out in early-day motion 1582?

[That this House believes that the best policies for Britain both now, and in the twenty-first century, would be based upon the principles laid down in Clause Four of the Labour Party Constitution and recently re-affirmed by the Labour Conference, namely 'To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service. Generally to promote the political, social and economic emancipation of the people, and more particularly of those who depend directly upon their own exertions by hand or by brain for the means of life. To co-operate with the Labour and Socialist organisations in the Commonwealth overseas with a view to promoting the purposes of the Party, and to take common action for the promotion of a higher standard of social and economic life for the working population of the respective countries. To co-operate with the Labour and Socialist organisations in other countries and to support the United Nations Organisation . . . for the promotion of peace, the adjustment and settlement of international disputes by conciliation or judicial arbitration, the establishment and defence of human rights, and the improvement of the social and economic standards and conditions of work of the people of the world.'.]

A debate would enable the country and the constituents of Sheffield, Hallam to see that the old socialist leopard still lives and that its spots are beginning to show beneath the rushed, bodged, newly launched paint job.

Mr. Newton: It certainly seems to be an attempt, through the procedures of the House, to re-insert clause 4 of the Labour party's constitution even before the party has taken it out of the constitution at Brighton or Blackpool.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his decision not to have a debate about receiving money from companies next week, as it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a narrow dividing line between taking money for questions and becoming directors of firms? It is high time that we made a decision in the House that Members of Parliament should have one job and one job only, with no conflict of interest.

More than 200 Tory Members and a handful of Opposition Members make money on the side and cannot manage on £32,000 a year, while people outside have a job to live. It is time that Members of Parliament stopped the practice of moonlighting—only then will the Augean stables be cleaned up.

Mr. Newton: As some of my hon. Friends observed from a sedentary position during the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I presumed that the hon. Gentleman would also apply everything that he said to union sponsorships. As long as I am Chairman of the Committee on Privileges, I do not intend to engage in such a debate on the Floor of the House. There will be a debate after a report has been produced and, in case there is any doubt, I should perhaps add that the report will be accompanied by publication of the evidence taken by the Committee.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Before we take any more lectures from hon. Gentlemen who play no part in any of the Committee structures where the House does most of its work, perhaps we should take seriously the question of full-time Members of Parliament. Will my right hon. Friend allow time for a debate on this important issue because if we are not careful we shall find ourselves moving inexorably towards a category of full-time membership of the House, which would greatly change its nature—something which should not happen without a clear and conscious decision being made?

Mr. Newton: I certainly have no plans to propose such a change without a debate or, indeed, at all. I have noted my hon. Friend's words and the very thoughtful reflections that he has also offered to me in writing.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): The Leader of the House will be aware that this is National Asthma Week. There has been a 178 per cent. increase in childhood asthma in the south-west since 1979. From a survey of schools this summer in my constituency, I discovered that one in three children at the Rosemary nursery school, which is in an area of high traffic congestion, has asthma. At a recent summer camp organised by another school, 21 of the 43 children there had asthma or respiratory problems that needed medication. When can we have a debate to discuss the health, environmental and pollution aspects of what is a major epidemic among our children?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady might perhaps have suggested that some of the points that she has raised might have been more appropriate for a health debate than the title of the debate tabled for the Opposition day next Tuesday. Leaving that aside, however, having had some experience of asthma in my family, I certainly recognise the importance of the problem, its intractability and the concerns expressed about it. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will consider carefully what the hon. Lady said.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Can my right hon. Friend find time next week for an urgent debate on civil air transport in view of the grotesque subsidies to European state carriers such as Air France and Iberia which are blithely waved through by the European Commission, and for a debate on the urgent need for privatisation of the National Air Traffic Services?

Mr. Newton: On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, he will be aware of the vigorous stance taken by the Government, but I am afraid that I cannot promise a debate next week. As for National Air Traffic Services, he will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make a statement when he has considered the outcome of the consultation.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House press the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement next week on the transfer of the blood transfusion facility from Liverpool which is being met with almost universal opposition from people in the area? Is not it about time that the Secretary of State for Health was accountable to the House for her actions or non-actions?

Mr. Newton: I will draw the hon. Gentleman's latter remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention, but, in the face of his apparent suggestion that she is unaccountable to the House, I must say that it appears that she will be here nearly all day next Tuesday because health questions will be followed by the health debate to which I have already referred.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): My right hon. Friend will be aware that in 1996 Heads of Government will hold an inter-governmental conference on the future of the European Union and the effects of Maastricht. Is he also aware that it will affect institutions such as the Western European Union, the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Assembly and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and that there is real interest in their future among hon. Members of all parties? I know that my right hon. Friend cannot do so immediately, but I urge him to hold a debate on the subject in due course, as our continental partners will in their various Parliaments.

Mr. Newton: I should not want to undertake to provide time for a debate on European issues before we prorogue, but it is likely that an opportunity will arise not too long after that. I shall bear the idea in mind and, while noting my hon. Friend's request, I pay tribute to him for the work that he has done over many years for some of those institutions.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Perhaps the Leader of the House has noticed that today, not for the first time, fisheries questions were totally crowded out of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Question Time. That happens because of the relatively small number of Members with fisheries interests. In view of the importance of the industry in my constituency, and in the constituencies of my hon. Friends and many other hon. Members, will the Leader of the House consider allocating perhaps 15 minutes of questions to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to fisheries matters?

Mr. Newton: I am, of course, aware of one or two examples of that practice. For reasons that the House understands, it happens with the Overseas Development Administration. However—this is an entirely serious answer to the hon. Gentleman—I think that in general, trying to divide up the work of Departments into segments and allocating bits of time to bits of their responsibilities would be a path leading to endless argument, controversy and, in the end, dissatisfaction.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): May I ask my right hon. Friend to give consideration to an urgent debate on the maintenance of public order outside this place? As a London Member of Parliament, I draw his attention to the fact that, while several thousand Metropolitan policemen are employed to maintain what is certainly the important business of the House, my constituents, and people in many other London boroughs, are completely divested of the protection of the Metropolitan police, with the result that they fall prey to burglars, car thieves and muggers, and experience various other forms of public disorder. That cannot be right and it cannot be allowed to continue. Balance is essential in such matters.

Mr. Newton: Clearly it would be vain to expect my hon. Friend's words about the practical effects of demonstrations such as that which took place last night—manifestly those words have some force—to be heeded by those who brought about the demonstration. However, my hon. Friend's remarks should certainly be borne in mind by others in our society.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): In view of the Prime Minister's stated commitment to the national health service, does the Lord President agree that it is disgraceful that, having run down its own hospital services, making hundreds of staff redundant and closing wards, the South Birmingham health authority is spending public money flying heart patients to have their operations at an ailing private hospital in Glasgow? Will he ensure that when the Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box next Tuesday, she makes a statement on that matter and on the Government's responsibility for the lack of sensible planning for health care needs in south Birmingham?

Mr. Newton: I take it that the main point of the question was contained in the last sentence—and of course I will bring what the hon. Lady said to the attention of the Secretary of State for Health. As for the rest of her question, I should be reluctant to comment without knowing more about the circumstances. I imagine that the health authority was simply seeking to ensure that resources were used to the best possible effect in providing a speedy service for its patients.

Sir David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that during the summer recess the Child Support Agency has continued to make serious mistakes, causing real anguish to my constituents and no doubt to those of my hon. Friends and of Opposition Members? If there cannot be a statement next week about the necessary reform of the Child Support Agency, can my right hon. Friend see to it that the following sentence is put into the Queen's Speech: "Urgent early measures to reform the Child Support Agency will quickly be laid before you"?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend, who also spoke to me about this matter last night, will know that I cannot anticipate the Queen's Speech. On the other hand, I did, sort of, anticipate his question. I can assure him that action is being taken to address some of the administrative problems, although that may take time. Such action is certainly going on vigorously. My hon. Friend will know that the Select Committee on Social Security is expected to produce a further report shortly, which I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will look at extremely carefully.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): First, will the Leader of the House do his best to ensure that a statement is made, I hope next week, by the Prime Minister about the inquiry that is presently being conducted by the Cabinet Secretary? Secondly, will the Leader of the House

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ensure that whatever statement is made, it explains fully what arrangement was proposed, either directly or indirectly, by Mr. Al Fayed to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that it would be right for me to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said. I am sure that as soon as he has the report, he will act in whatever way he thinks appropriate in the light of his other assurances about his determination to ensure proper standards of conduct.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate in which we can discuss how a Member of Parliament can have £88,000 raised on his behalf and then not declare it in the Register of Members' Interests? Is not it scandalous that the Leader of the Opposition has not made a declaration in the Register of Members' Interests?

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make a personal attack of that nature, he knows full well that it should be done by means of a substantive motion. I think that he ought to be very careful in his use of words. If he has anything to say of that nature, he must put it on the Order Paper in a substantive motion so that we may all see it.

Mr. Shaw: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, if I did not get the rules right. I thought that by calling for a debate on the issue, we might have the opportunity to air fully the issue of why it has not been declared that £88,000—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not understand that complaints of that nature must be made to the Committee on Members' Interests. It is not for the Leader of the House to answer questions of that nature. A series of Committees has been set up to deal with all those matters and that is where the request must go. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will refer his request to the Committee.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): In view of the Prime Minister's lofty statement about standards in public life and his attempted whitewash with secret inquiries, why cannot we have a debate next week on a basic, central question? If it takes £2,000 to get a Tory Member to ask a parliamentary question, how much does it take to get a straight answer from a Tory Government about what exactly they are going to do about it?

Mr. Newton: May I, as quietly and calmly as I can, totally reject the use of the word "whitewash" in the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I thought and, I suspect, many thought—not only Conservative Members—that the Prime Minister was very straightforward in his answers this afternoon.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Can my right hon. Friend find time next week for a specific debate on family health matters so that we can discuss the wisdom of the new Liberal Democrat policy of putting 11-year-old girls on the pill without parental consent? That must undermine the family and parental influence, and it is making a laughing stock of the Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Newton: I have some sympathy with that. I say, with as kindly a smile as I can manage, to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) who is, I suspect, more sensible than some of the resolutions passed at his conference, that if I had to find time to debate every dotty resolution passed at Liberal Democrat conferences, we should be here from now until Christmas.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Further to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones), may I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the fact that the hospital in question, to which the West Midlands regional health authority is to shift patients, is a private hospital called Health Care International? It has already swallowed up substantial amounts of public money—

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman asking a question about business? I think that we have had enough statements. We must have brisk questions and answers.

Mr. Burden: May I ask the Leader of the House to ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health during next week's health debate to come to the House to make it clear that this is not a situation, which it appears to be, of the private sector gobbling up public resources and forcing my constituents and others to travel 300 miles for essential treatment?

Mr. Newton: I have made some comment on that, to which I am not going to add. It seems that the appropriate course would be for the hon. Gentleman to come to the House at the appropriate time and seek to put his question to my right hon. Friend or, for that matter, to the Secretary of State for Scotland if that is more appropriate.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Now that a public consultation has been announced into national ID cards, does my right hon. right Friend think that there should be an early opportunity for the House to debate the issues involved?

Mr. Newton: I note the request, but I am afraid that I cannot promise an early opportunity. It may be that it would be more appropriate when a Green Paper has been produced, but I will bear in mind my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): The Leader of the House will have seen early-day motion 1595, which relates to the conduct of Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare.

[*That this House believes that the public is entitled to a full explanation by Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare as to the circumstances surrounding the purchase by him of shares in Anglia Television; believes that Lord Archer should give such an explanation without further delay, further believes that his conduct and the handling of the investigation by the DTI has further undermined the effectiveness of the United Kingdom's insider dealing legislation; calls on the Government to introduce new legislation free from the taint of political interference; calls on the President of the Board of Trade to publish that part of the DTI report containing information provided in connection with this matter; and regrets that the facts and circumstances of this affair were not put before a jury.*]

Is not there a pressing case for an early debate on the law on insider dealing, which is clearly unsatisfactory? If someone such as Lord Archer cannot be convicted, no one can.

Mr. Newton: This matter was covered in a lengthy answer by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Tuesday and I shall not try to add to that now.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend consider acceding to the repeated request for a debate on the matter currently before the Select Committee on Privileges, if only so that the Labour party can explain to the House its peculiar and singular view that an inquiry, the evidence of which will be published in full, the report of which will be published in full; both of which will be subsequently debated in public on the Floor of the House is none the less "secret"?

Mr. Newton: No, I cannot explain that and I have not yet heard an explanation of it.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): The Leader of the House will be aware that I wrote to him and that we had a friendly conversation about extending the postage and telephone facilities of hon. Members to cover the European Union. The price of stamps is just the same—25p—and the calls are no more expensive. Given the great interest of constituents in the European questions coming up in the next two years, for hon. Members to be fully informed, that right should be extended. I should like an assurance that the matter will be considered seriously before the end of the Session.

Madam Speaker: That is a very good question indeed, but it is not a business question. It is a question which the hon. Gentleman might put to the Leader of the House when he answers questions on those matters. The hon. Gentleman should reserve the question for that time.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate for next week on the way in which local authorities, which now have responsibility for traffic management and parking, are managing those responsibilities, so that I can highlight the enormous inefficiency of the Labour-controlled Ealing council and its aggravation of the people of Ealing by the inept way in which it is discharging those responsibilities?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate, but I suppose that I look forward to learning week by week of the iniquities of the Ealing borough council, which my hon. Friend exposes with such assiduousness.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will there be an opportunity next week to clarify whether, officially or unofficially, by minute or by telephone, there was any approach from the then Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, Sir Clive Whitmore, to the then Prime Minister, expressing disquiet about the commercial activities of Mark Thatcher?

Mr. Newton: I think that I can only take note of that question and I shall obviously consider the point when I have an opportunity.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Could we perhaps have a debate next week on extravagance in local government expenditure, such as the expenditure of £169,000 on a new porch for the Gravesham civic centre, commissioned by the Labour party at the expense of scrapping a substantial part of its contribution to the Meopham sports hall and scrapping a refurbishment of shopping parades, where real people go?

Mr. Newton: It appears that it is trying to compete with Ealing.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): If there is to be a statement early next week, as I hope that there will be, on what is to happen on the Privileges Committee, will the Leader of the House bear in mind the fact that if we are to continue to regulate our own affairs—unlike the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who spoke earlier, I am very much in favour of our continuing to do so—it must be seen that we carry out our regulations and investigations in a public way? What may have happened in the past does not necessarily justify what should happen now and in the future. The public expect that a Parliament which is concerned, as we must be, with our own reputation in fighting corruption inside Westminster, should be willing to inquire into those matters in a public way and not simply wait for a report that is being drawn up and discussed in secret and then debate that on the Floor of the House. The reputation of the House is very much at stake.

Mr. Newton: That leads me to echo what I said earlier. It seems to me that a continuation of the practice of the House regulating its own affairs in the way that it has for many years, and which I think would be widely accepted, depends on people being willing to co-operate—without declining to co-operate if a decision goes in a way they do not like—with those procedures properly constituted by the House.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): My right hon. Friend will be aware that last night there was a serious attack on our parliamentary democracy by a howling mob which prevented elected Members from reaching the House to attend to their constituents' business. Can my right hon. Friend make time for a debate so that it can be made clear that the right to protest does not include the right to coerce or intimidate or the right to bring the life of a great city to a standstill and prevent ambulances, fire engines and police cars from attending emergencies? During that debate, perhaps we could consider whether mass demonstrations should be banned completely in urban areas.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is sitting beside me and he will no doubt have heard that suggestion. With regard to a debate, we are about to begin a second day of debate on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. I cannot promise an immediate opportunity for a further day's debate of that kind.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement or an early debate next week on the preferred bidders for the coal industry? I listened to the President of the Board of Trade two weeks ago when he announced at the Conservative party conference who was buying the pit in my constituency. To date, I have received no news about that in the House, I have not had a chance to question the matter in the House, and I have not received written confirmation of

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the matter from the President of the Board of Trade. I hope that we can have an early debate on the matter next week.

Mr. Newton: I will bring that complaint to the attention of my right hon. Friend. However, the fact that by January we expect around 30 of the former British Coal mines to have transferred to new private sector owners since the coal review in 1993 represents welcome progress.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Can the Leader of the House at least tell us whether there will be an early ministerial statement about the unfortunate events which took place outside the House last night? Is he aware that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) suffered a very serious injury when trying to enter the House merely to record his vote? What discussions have there been with the Metropolitan police to ensure that hon. Members have proper access to this place?

Mr. Newton: There are three points here. First, I would like to express on my behalf, and I am sure on behalf of others, our sympathy to the hon. Member for Caernarfon. Secondly, discussions between the authorities of the House, in particular the Serjeant at Arms, and the police are not something I would wish to enter into across the Floor of the House. Thirdly, I must say frankly that I think that in this context, as in some others, to give those who caused such disruption last night the additional satisfaction of diverting the proceedings of this Chamber by the publicity of ministerial statements would actually encourage them rather than the reverse.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): The Department of the Environment published a paper in August about the disposal of low-grade nuclear waste in municipal sites, many of which were in urban areas. I have two requests. First, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that that paper is available in the Vote Office because it is not available at the moment? Secondly, may we have a debate led by the Department of the Environment on the disposal of low-grade nuclear waste?

Mr. Newton: On the question of a debate, I must give my standard answer and say that I cannot give a promise of that at the moment. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's first point, I will certainly look into what he said.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I am sorry that I have to return to the events of last night, but is my right hon. Friend aware that in Germany the kind of demonstrations that occurred here last night are banned from within 1 km of the Bundestag? Will my right hon. Friend consider imposing such restrictions here?

Mr. Newton: I would not want to add off the cuff to what I have said, but I note my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): One of the biggest political scandals, which strikes at the heart of parliamentary democracy, is that millions of people are missing from electoral registers. The situation has become worse in recent years. When can we have a full debate in Government time to discuss that serious matter?

Mr. Newton: Again, I cannot promise a debate, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who I think I am right in saying would be responsible for electoral registration matters, has heard what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1586. <edm>[*That this House condemns the proposals of the National Blood Authority which would result in the closure of Liverpool's Blood Transfusion Unit with the loss of some 100 jobs; expresses its anxiety that the health of Liverpool citizens would be put at risk whenever there was an urgent need for a blood transfusion, and that it would also result in the loss of a training centre for the study of haematology; notes that over 100,000 Merseysiders have signed a petition objecting to the proposals; commends the Liverpool Echo for its part in opposition to these ill-thought out measures; rejects any diminution of blood transfusion services on Merseyside; and calls on the National Blood Authority to withdraw its proposals.*] I tabled the motion and it refers to the misconceived proposals of the National Blood Authority to close the Liverpool blood transfusion unit. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) is unsatisfactory? It is a matter of life or death for many people in Liverpool and in the north-west of England and, rather than being subsumed in a general debate on Tuesday, it requires a specific statement by the Secretary of State so that it can be debated.

Mr. Newton: This is the second time today that the matter has been raised in respect of Liverpool. As before, I will make sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health sees what is said.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the Floor of the House on the gathering and publication of unemployment statistics in this country? Has he seen today's report in *The Scotsman* analysing the Government's own statistics and showing that there has been a 500,000 increase in the number of people registering for income support as disabled and sick, that 2 million are denied the right to be on the unemployment register by being disabled and sick, and that there has been a 63 per cent. increase in such registration in the south-east of England, where the recession is biting deepest? It is important not only that the people have a lead from my right hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to be honest in Government, but that we be honest with the people. Is not it time to debate the real unemployment statistics so that, when we know and accept the problem, we can jointly try to solve it, instead of trying to deceive the people?

Mr. Newton: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. I have not seen the report in *The Scotsman*, but I will bring the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The hon. Gentleman had a substantial opportunity to make such points during debate on the Bill in respect of invalidity benefit that was discussed in the House earlier this Session.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Following the announcement this week by the Home Secretary that an additional £2 million is to be made available for closed-circuit television schemes in England and Wales and the failure of the Secretary of State for Scotland to say anything about an equivalent spend in Scotland, may we have a statement early next week by the Secretary of State for Scotland on whether money will be made available for such schemes in Scotland, so that Scottish Members can satisfy themselves that the Government regard tackling crime in Scotland just as seriously as they do in England and Wales?

Mr. Newton: That is a question which the hon. Gentleman could put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland next Wednesday.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Is the Leader of the House aware that, last week, his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said that it was a rule of the House that a Bill to set up a parliament for Scotland or Wales could not be guillotined? Can he confirm that the Secretary of State for Scotland got it wrong, or is it his intention to bring in such an amendment to our Standing Orders?

Mr. Newton: As there is no question of the Government's bringing in such a Bill, I do not think that the question arises.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Would it be possible to have a debate next week to examine the way in which early-day motions are tabled? In particular, I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 1616.

[*That this House notes the allegations made against the honourable Members for Tatton and Beaconsfield, respectively, in connection with the tabling of parliamentary questions referred to in The Guardian for Thursday 20th October; and, in the light of the allegations in that article, calls upon the Prime Minister to appoint an independent commission of Lords of Appeal in Ordinary with full powers to enquire into and report upon ethics and standards in British political life.*]

That motion was tabled by the Liberal Democrats last night, and it refers to the article in *The Guardian* today. One of the questions that I should like to ask in such a debate is whether the effect of that early-day motion was to confer parliamentary privilege on the article and, in the process, possibly deprive an hon. Member of effective action in the courts. If so, would not the House want to debate that matter? Is it right that a newspaper can be given such protection by hon. Members in what amounts to a sleazy deal?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position to say whether the motion was tabled before or after the earliest editions of *The Guardian* were available, and I would not want to speculate on that. Also, because of the subject matter of the early-day motion, again I would not want to add anything to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on such matters about an hour ago.

Points of Order

4.14 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware of the circumstances surrounding the injury to my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) when he attempted to come to the House last night to register his vote at about 10 pm. You will have the full circumstances surrounding that incident, and I do not wish to dwell on them; save to say that I am pleased to tell the House that although my hon. Friend suffered an injury, he was released from hospital last night. I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker, for making urgent inquiries about him, and he is grateful for your concern. I accompanied my hon. Friend last night, and we were accompanied by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands).

I want to look at the more general issue that arises out of the incident. Hon. Members who have offices in the Norman Shaw building have difficulty in coming to the House to vote, even forgetting the incident last night, because the underpass at Westminster is closed. That means that we must go into the main entrance of Westminster station, and that can be blocked by a considerable number of people even late at night.

We had to cross the road and we came through the normal entrance of the House along Parliament street. The difficulty that we encountered in Parliament street was that there was a cordon of police officers across the pavement which prevented access by hon. Members. Where police officers are on duty, clearly expecting a Division to take place at some time during the evening, I would expect them to clear a path for hon. Members to come in through the gates. That is the issue, Madam Speaker. How can we be absolutely assured that such an incident will not happen again—that a clear path will be made so that hon. Members can come safely to vote?

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I was with the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) when the worrying accident took place. Whatever other unacceptable incidents happened last night, the accident was not the direct result of the demonstrators. The development of both Millbank and the Norman Shaw building is creating problems. In this case, the problem was that the entrance to the Westminster subway was closed. The fact that we knew that the entrance was closed led us to come through the Carriage Gates. I support the point made by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) that it was impossible to get through the main Carriage Gates last night because of a large cordon of police.

Madam Speaker: I made inquiries and found that access to Westminster underground station was open yesterday evening. If hon. Members who were coming to the House had proceeded as though they were passengers to Westminster underground, they would have been able to use the subway to the House. As hon. Members know, the steps from Victoria Embankment to the subway are closed. That is the responsibility of London Underground and Members have been notified of that on the all-party Whip.

[Madam Speaker]

I very much regret the problems caused to the hon. Member for Caernarfon yesterday evening. I telephoned him today; he is in considerable pain, but I gave him the good wishes of the House. We wish that he will be back here soon. [Hon. Members: "Hear, hear."]

I will draw the attention of the Serjeant at Arms to what hon. Members have said on this matter. He will look at these matters, because what has been said is valuable. The objective last night was to see that the Sessional Orders were enforced, that public disorder was prevented and that any offenders were arrested. I have strong views that violence and vandalism will not be tolerated wherever they rear their ugly heads. I believe that last night, despite some of the problems that the police had, there was a high standard of policing. Perhaps we might leave the matter at that.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you know, I was one of those who were prevented from getting into the House from 7 Millbank. Happily, I came to no harm. However, one consequence of what happened to me was that I saw, for a long time and at close quarters, exactly what was taking place in Millbank which was the centre of the disturbance. One of the things that I saw was very great restraint by the police under enormous provocation. When you make further inquiries, Madam Speaker, perhaps you would tell the Commissioner that the majority of hon. Members admire what the police did last night and are grateful to them.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a separate point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sure that you will understand and accept that any allegation made against any Member of the House inevitably damages the reputations of all Members and of the whole House. You were elected by the whole House to protect and uphold the rights and reputation of the House.

I would ask you to reflect on a suggestion that I wish to make. We seem to be facing an impasse when it comes to the ability of the House properly and effectively to investigate complaints made against Members, so I wonder whether you would be willing to consider convening a meeting with representatives of all parties to discuss what can be done to find a resolution of this impasse.

I have been sceptical about the ability of the House to investigate complaints effectively ever since I served on the Committee that inquired into the relationships between the late John Poulson and Members of the House. I have considerable sympathy with suggestions that we need to find a new way of dealing with such matters. I ask you again to reflect on whether you, as Speaker, might convene such a committee or group—call it what you like—consisting of Members and non-Members, who could investigate complaints against Members of the House.

It would also be extremely useful if the group could draw up a list of principles governing standards in public life—we have no such principles at present, and I do not believe that there is time for a royal commission to consider them again.

I ask you, Madam Speaker, to consider these matters seriously, since I know of your deep and genuine concern for the reputation of the House, which I believe is in grave danger of doing itself considerable damage.

Madam Speaker: As the House knows, I have no authority to take the type of action suggested by the hon. Gentleman, but I do take these matters seriously and I will look at all that he has said this afternoon.

There is no problem about raising matters of complaint. In the statement that I made on 12 July, when I granted precedence to a motion relating to a complaint now before the Committee on Privileges, I made it very clear that the Committee

> "will have power to inquire not only into the matter of the particular complaint, but into the facts surrounding and reasonably connected with it".—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 829.]

I worded that statement carefully. So if there is evidence relating to the matters that are now being raised and which have been raised this afternoon, it can be submitted to the Privileges Committee, which is free to consider the evidence. There really is no need for any further action by the House to bring that about; but I take seriously everything that has been said this afternoon and the points that the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has just put to me.

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill

Lords amendments again considered.

Before Clause 134

Lords amendment: No. 125, insert the following new clause—*Criminal Injuries Compensation*—

(" . In section 171 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988—

(a) in subsection (2), for the words after "any provision" there shall be substituted the words "brought into force under subsection (1) above,"; and

(b) after subsection (2), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) Sections 108 to 117 above and Schedules 6 and 7 to this Act shall come into force at the end of the period of six months beginning with the date on which the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 is passed.".")

4.23 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 175.

Mr. Howard: The aim of the amendment is to require the Government to drop the tariff scheme for criminal injuries compensation, introduced on 1 April this year, which provides a simpler, faster and more easily understandable service for victims. The amendment would reinstate the old system by bringing into force the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which would make the old criminal injuries compensation scheme statutory. Hon. Members will recall that the House firmly rejected a similar amendment to the Bill on Report in March.

Let me remind the House briefly of the background to the scheme, and why we changed it in the way that we did. The criminal injuries compensation scheme was introduced in 1964, following public concern that something should be done for the innocent victims of violent crime. The scheme was a new and experimental venture and, after alternative options had been considered, it was decided that compensation should be assessed on the basis of common law damages, since that made use of existing legal expertise. The level of demand was unknown—although I suspect that it is fair to say that no one foresaw an operation on anything like the scale that we see today.

Madam Speaker: Order. It was remiss of me not to mention that this amendment involves privilege.

Mr. Howard: As the House knows, provision was made in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 for the old scheme to be made statutory, but those provisions were not brought into force. First, my right hon. and noble Friend, Lord Carlisle of Bucklow, who was and is the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, requested a postponement so that the board could concentrate its efforts on dealing with the large backlog of unresolved cases. Shortly afterwards, it became increasingly evident that the old scheme needed fundamental revision.

When the old scheme was introduced 30 years ago, the level of crime—not just in this country, of course—was much lower than it is today. In the first full year of the scheme, 1965-66, there were just 2,500 claims, 1,164 awards were made and a total of £400,000 was paid in compensation.

Since then, the increase in expenditure on compensation has been relentless. Twenty years ago, in 1973-74, the board received 12,000 claims, made 9,000 awards and paid out £4 million—still a modest amount by current standards. Ten years ago, in 1983-84, there were 32,000 new applications, 21,000 awards and a total of £33 million was paid out in compensation. By last year, however, there were 73,000 new applications, 41,000 awards and £165 million was paid in compensation.

That increase in expenditure was not merely a result of the increase in the number of claims. During the past 10 years, average awards have increased by 5 per cent. a year more than inflation, almost doubling in real terms since 1979.

If the old scheme had continued, by the turn of the century, the annual cost of compensation would have been in excess of £500 million. That rate of growth is simply not sustainable; nor do I think it appropriate for a state scheme funded by the taxpayer. Those rapidly escalating costs—

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): In the light of what the Home Secretary has just told the House, will he and the Government come absolutely clean with the public and admit what they have never admitted before— that the whole purpose of the changes to the scheme is to save money? The changes have absolutely nothing to do with offering a better service to the victims of crime.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Lady is wrong on at least two counts. First, it is not true that we denied that savings played an important part in the decision. They are not the only reason, because we have other important reasons, but savings are one reason and they are an important one, so the hon. Lady is wrong on that count. She is also wrong to suggest that savings are the only reason. Her protestations would carry a little more weight if those on the Opposition Front Bench had undertaken—when it was suggested to them on the last occasion that we discussed such matters on the Floor of the House—to reinstate the old scheme if they ever found themselves in government. They have consistently refused to give that undertaking, and without it the hon. Lady's protestations and those of her hon. Friends carry no weight.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Excuse me for intervening for the first time during the Bill. I have received representations on the question of criminal injuries from the Law Society of Scotland, where the law is a little different. I am not asking the Home Secretary to answer off the top of his head what are, frankly, complex representations. Because of the differences in Scottish law, all I ask is that the subject is dealt with. Can we tell the society that there will be reflections on its very real concerns?

Mr. Howard: I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has had the concerns of the Law Society of Scotland drawn to his attention, as I have had drawn to my attention the concerns of the Law

[Mr. Howard]

Society for England and Wales. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will address those concerns in what he regards as the most appropriate way.

The rapidly escalating costs highlight the stark fact that the old scheme offered no mechanism for exercising any control over costs. That was not the fault of the board. It was simply charged with administering the scheme—a job it has managed with considerable credit. Also, of course, in earlier years, when costs were relatively small, the need for control was not so apparent, but the rapid growth in expenditure on the scheme in recent years makes change imperative so that costs can be brought under control.

4.30 pm

Let me stress here just how generous our scheme is. It is by far the most generous anywhere in the world. In the most recent year for which comparative figures are available, Great Britain paid out £165 million in compensation; France paid out £27 million, and Germany just £7 million. In fact, we pay out far more compensation than all the other European countries added together. We even paid out more last year than the United States of America—not more per head, but more in total—despite the fact that the United States has, of course, a vastly greater population, a much higher gross national product, much more violent crime and a very active victim support lobby.

The tariff scheme will remain one of the most generous anywhere. Under the new scheme, 60 per cent. of beneficiaries will get as much as or more than they would have done under the old scheme.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Does my right hon. and learned Friend concede that one of the failures of the present scheme is the inordinate delay in making payments to the victims of crime? When I was in practice, a matter of two years' delay was in no sense an exception and, as a constituency Member of Parliament, a case was brought to my attention recently of a delay of seven years in making payments. Will not the move to a tariff system ensure that we produce sums of money for victims more quickly than now?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend raises an important point, to which I shall come in just a moment—indeed, even sooner than that.

Having pointed out that 60 per cent. or more of beneficiaries would get as much or more under the new scheme as under the old, I wish to add precisely the point made by hon. Friend; they will get their money more quickly. Of course it is true—I do not seek to hide the fact—that some people will get less. But most awards are comparatively small, and the vast majority are under £5,000.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I appreciate that, if 60 per cent. of beneficiaries will get the same, 40 per cent. will get less. That worries me, in the sense that they will be the headline cases. Will my right hon. and learned Friend address—either now or later in his speech—the proposal from the Law Society which would deal with smaller claims on a tariff basis, but which would perhaps avoid the dangers that I have mentioned with the big claims?

Mr. Howard: I shall deal with my hon. Friend's point now. If he will permit me to correct him, it is not true that 60 per cent. of claimants will get the same. Sixty per cent. of claimants will get the same or more, and many will indeed get more.

The scheme to which my hon. Friend refers and which was advanced by the Law Society is a hybrid one, which would provide a tariff for relatively small claims, and the same kind of scheme as we have at the moment for larger claims. It would involve endless difficulties at the demarcation line and endless challenges from those who felt that they were being hard done by because their claim was being dealt with under the tariff and not on the basis of compensation.

We have looked carefully at the possibility of such a hybrid scheme, but I must tell my hon. Friend that the practical difficulties which it would involve would be insurmountable.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I always understood that it was Conservative policy that we should aspire to the very best and not reach for the lowest common denominator. Why does that principle not apply in this case?

Mr. Howard: It does not apply for the reasons that I have given. There is no question of going for the lowest common denominator, and I am afraid that the hon. Lady's question bears no relationship to the realities of the issues before us.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): The report of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for the year ending 31 March 1992 referred to four cases in which people received payments in excess of £500,000—awards of £689,000, £645,000, £568,000 and £521,000. They obviously involved serious cases, and were perhaps exceptional.

Is my right hon. and learned Friend telling the House, however, that, with the introduction of the new tariff scheme, in that kind of case, where the individual has probably lost all opportunity ever to pursue his lawful occupation again, the person would have to rely on the tariff payment and the available state benefits to top up benefit received, rather than on the payments that he would have received under the old scheme? Can my right hon. and learned Friend clarify that point?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend has left out one important factor—there is, of course, the ceiling of £250,000 under the new scheme. In addition to that, a number of other payments and a number of other sources of help are available. For example, one of the elements that is taken into account when deciding compensation in serious cases is the provision of private health care for someone who suffered a serious injury, but the health care provided by the national health service is always available to that individual.

My hon. Friend also referred, quite correctly, to all the other state benefits that are available and which will continue to be available. It is also important to bear in mind occupational benefits, which now assume such an important significance and will, of course, continue to be available.

It is important to remember that, under the present scheme, an offset operates in relation to occupational benefits and the awards made. Some of the figures that are cited, which seem to demonstrate that large losses will be suffered as compared to the awards made under the old scheme, do not tell the whole story. All the factors I have listed must be taken into account.

It is also not entirely irrelevant to remember that some of the apparently worst cases would arise in respect of people who have high incomes, and therefore high loss of earnings claims. It is not unreasonable to suggest that someone with high earnings is in a position to make provision of his own for the kind of contingency that we are discussing. Additional help is available in a number of different ways, some of which were identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby).

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I should like to take up the right hon. and learned Gentleman's final point about the large sums of compensation that are often paid to people with high earnings. Such people often also have high liabilities. If a ceiling is put on the amount of compensation paid, does he accept that one will inevitably encounter cases where the amount of compensation paid will be much below the loss the person has suffered and possibly also below his commitments? Does he accept that that will cause grave financial hardship to that person? Such cases may be rare, but they will inevitably occur. If the Government stick to the tariff system, they are committing themselves to committing serious injustices to some people.

Mr. Howard: I simply do not accept that it will lead to injustice. In the rare cases of injury to people with high earnings, they will know that if they suffer some accident through no one's fault—so they are unable to establish a claim of negligence—and which is not the result of any criminal act, they could find themselves in a serious financial position. We could all have an accident at any time that stopped us from working for the rest of our lives. People with high earnings—the category that we are currently discussing—know that it is possible for them to make provision against such a contingency. Just as it is reasonable to expect them to make provision for such a contingency in respect of accidental injury, so it is reasonable also to expect them to make a provision in respect of an injury that results from a criminal attack, rather than expect the taxpayer to underwrite the consequences of that contingency.

That is what we are talking about. We are not talking about a situation in which everyone, whatever the source of their misfortune and whatever the source of the contingency that places him or her in that difficulty, is automatically entitled to compensation in every respect from the taxpayer. That is why, with all due respect to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), I do not accept that the change that we are making leads to injustice.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): The Home Secretary was saying that people on high incomes would have made provision, presumably through some sort of occupational scheme, for such a contingency. However, in this case we are discussing criminal injury, so the fact that someone could be injured through other mechanisms is not relevant in this case. Would not the age at which that injury occurs make a significant difference to the extent to which the provision is effective? Will not a significant number of people with serious problems be gravely affected and their resources gravely reduced by the changes which the Home Secretary is introducing?

Mr. Howard: In almost all cases, people in that position will have occupational benefits—usually substantial occupational benefits. Those are what they should look to in the first instance for compensation, and I believe that they will do so. If that factor is taken into account, the complaint about the provisions of the new scheme is seen, on examination, to have much less substance than seems to be the case at first sight.

I now turn to the other main reason for reform. Hon. Members may recall that the Home Affairs Committee, in its 1990 report on the administration of the board, was highly critical of delays in the processing of claims. Undoubtedly, one reason for that was the enormous increase in business, which swallowed up the considerable staff increases made at the board. Staff numbers had more than doubled between 1978-79 and 1988-89, to a total of 312. The figure has since increased to no less than 460, and that does not include the 44 members of the board.

Assuming that numbers of claims continue to grow, we could only expect further massive staff increases and corresponding increases in administrative costs to run the old scheme. The alternative would be ever-lengthening delays. I do not think that the House would regard either option as acceptable.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): I echo the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) concerning delays. When I was in practice, delays of two years were considered not to be delays but swiftly-dealt-with applications. Worse, the Opposition seem to think that the present scheme is not far short of perfection. It is not. It is exceedingly flawed, as my right hon. and learned Friend says.

One of the flaws is that the scheme was arbitrary in its application, so that someone with a previous conviction—I recall a case in which the person was convicted 15 years previously and had never reoffended—could still be ruled out of the scheme and receive nothing when, for 15 years, he or she had been a perfectly respectable member of the community. That effect needs to be remembered.

The scheme was not good and had to be changed, and I commend the changes.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The point that he raises is right.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): May I correct one inaccuracy in the intervention of the hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Butler), for the benefit of the Home Secretary? There is no suggestion from this side of the House that the present scheme cannot be improved. We have always argued for change, in respect both of speeding up judgments and of making them more consistent. Our argument is simply that the cut in the availability of compensation to victims of the most horrendous crimes does not have to come with that improvement in the scheme.

4.45 pm

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman failed to give the undertaking to which I referred in answering a question from his hon. Friend earlier in our proceedings.

[Mr. Howard]

Notwithstanding what I have just said about how the board deals with claims, its efficiency has improved considerably with increasing use of information technology and streamlined management procedures. But the very terms of the old scheme—being based on common law damages—militated against more speedy resolution of cases. As a result of its complexities, a small industry has grown up around the scheme, in which ever more subtle calculations and fine judgments about medical prognoses are produced by applicants' lawyers or other representatives, engaging the board in equally time-consuming labour.

I do not believe that that was the vision of the scheme's originators, or that it works to the general benefit of those the scheme is meant to help—the victims of crime. What is needed is a simple, user-friendly service that gets the money to the beneficiaries as quickly as possible and enables them to put the incident behind them and get on with their lives. That is exactly what the tariff scheme aims to do.

Our White Paper, which was published last December, explained that there is no objectively "right" sum of money which can compensate an individual for the pain and hurt suffered as a result of criminal injury. Under the tariff scheme, therefore, we are not aiming to provide finely judged "compensation", in the sense of trying, in some way, to put the victim back in the position that he or she would have been in had the attack not taken place. Instead, we are providing a lump sum payment—and a generous one—in tangible recognition of society's concern for the blameless victim of a crime of violence.

Under the tariff scheme, therefore, victims with comparable injuries will be treated in the same way. They will have a good idea in advance of how much compensation they are likely to get. That was far from the case under the old scheme. It gives the tariff scheme the advantages of simplicity and transparency. It will be easier for victims to understand, and simpler and less expensive to administer. Nevertheless, as the tariff levels have been based on nearly 20,000 recent awards made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, they reflect what actually happened in practice under the old common law damages scheme.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): The Home Secretary is explaining the simplicity of the scheme from his point of view. Will he explain how often and under what circumstances he expects the level of the tariffs to be uprated? Clearly, with inflation they will lose their value. What will be the basis for uprating the tariffs?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman asks a perfectly fair question, with which I shall deal towards the end of my remarks this afternoon. I accept that that matter has given rise to some concern.

We have left the basic rules for eligibility largely unchanged, so anyone who might have expected an award under the old scheme should be eligible under the new tariff scheme.

I must emphasise that we are not in the business of change for its own sake. We recognise what [illegible] valuable and do not lightly alter it. We have changed the scheme because it was essential to do so.

We are sure that our new tariff scheme is the right way forward, but, as we made clear on several occasions previously, we shall monitor its working very closely. Its terms are not immutable. We shall continue to listen to the views of responsible people and practitioners and, if the scheme can be refined or improved in the light of experience, we shall not hesitate to make the necessary changes.

I was just asked by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) what the arrangements are for reviewing the tariff bands. As I have said, we shall keep all aspects of the tariff scheme under review, but I can tell the House—this point has given rise to particular concern on the part of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby)—that our intention is to review the tariff bands every three years.

I also assure the House that, once the new scheme has settled down and any necessary adjustments or refinements have been made, we shall aim to put it on a statutory basis as soon as a suitable legislative opportunity occurs. But we must of course first be satisfied that the scheme is working as effectively as possible.

Finally, I stress again that reversion to the old scheme, which is what this amendment seeks to achieve, is simply not a viable option. No responsible Government can allow a situation to continue in which costs grow so rapidly and in a way that cannot be checked.

For all those reasons, I invite the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Michael: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before responding to the Home Secretary, I want to refer to something that arose after he had begun his speech. I was amazed to hear the suggestion that we are dealing with a matter of privilege. Surely that cannot be. It involves no change to spending under the existing scheme and under existing legislation, so there cannot be any question of additional spending. The Government want to cut spending without the support and scrutiny of the House.

There is a question whether the Government's action is legal. Permission has been given for judicial review of the Home Secretary's actions. I appreciate that it would be convenient for the Government if the matter were to be dealt with under privilege, but there has been no previous suggestion of that during our many months of debate and in the long period during which there has been notice of the likelihood of the matter being referred back by the House of Lords.

Obviously, it is impossible to deal with the matter fully and to challenge the ruling on the hoof. I simply give notice of our belief that the ruling that it is a matter of privilege should be set aside. We want to put forward reasoned arguments on that point at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The advice that I have received is that the House authorities advise that Lords amendment No. 125 raises questions of common privilege because the legal position under the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which activates the statutory scheme by order, is proposed to be changed so that the scheme comes directly into force. An option to spend money is replaced by an obligation. Perhaps the hon.

Gentleman would like to reflect on that. I am happy to give him a copy of that ruling. I hope that he will now respond to the Home Secretary's opening speech.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the first opportunity we have had to hear that explanation. I believe that the ruling is open to challenge and argument, and we shall seek to do that in the most appropriate way. We will seek guidance on how to do it outside the debate, so that we do not delay it further.

The motion illustrates better than anything else the deep hypocrisy at the heart of the Conservative party—a party led by a Prime Minister and a Home Secretary who are ready to pay lip service to the claims of victims and to cry crocodile tears, while being willing to conspire to slash the level of compensation available to the victims of the most vicious and disabling crimes of violence.

The Home Secretary claims that the Government are acting in the interests of victims. He says that the present system involves delay and that a tariff system will speed up the payment of cash to victims. That is a lame attempt to stave off criticism. It should not be beyond the wit of a half-competent Minister to devise a scheme that pays out quickly on simple cases but allows fair and generous settlements when the injury and loss are great. Ending delay gives no excuse for the cut.

Let us consider the scale of opposition from, and outrage felt by, those who have first-hand knowledge of the way in which the cut will damage those whose lives have already been devastated by violent crime, and then let us consider the impact on real people. The opposition to the cut includes the House of Lords, the Police Federation, the Royal College of Nursing, the Fire Brigades Union and the Law Society, not to mention Victim Support and the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Why will Ministers not listen to that mass of informed and authoritative opinion? Let us listen to the strength of that authoritative opinion. In the debate in the other place on 2 March, Lord Carlisle, the chairman of the CICB, said that, in the board's unanimous view, the proposed tariff scheme was fundamentally flawed, manifestly unfair and a retrograde step.

Victim Support described the changes as hasty and ill thought out. Its director said on 23 February:

> "We are shocked at what Government is proposing. Many people will lose out significantly in future. I find it amazing that the Government can introduce such sweeping changes having taken no external advice. We are calling on the Government to suspend their plans and instigate a proper review of the way in which victims are compensated for violent crime."

Did the Government listen? Did they institute a proper review? Did they open their proposals to objective scrutiny? No, they did not.

Let us consider the actual impact on real individuals. I ask hon. Members on both sides to remember that the pain of such incidents of violence—which often devastate a life for ever—is invisible and unreal until the victim is someone you know and love, or even yourself. The first case I shall cite is that of a London Underground booking clerk who was the victim of armed robbery twice in the space of seven days. In the first, a gun was pointed directly at him. In the second, five shotgun and pistol rounds were fired during the robbery. The man was unable to return to work and he lost his job. He is now in low-paid employment.

As a side issue, a complicating factor was that the man had been present at the King's Cross fire disaster, and was therefore already suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. However, it was the two armed robberies that caused his retirement. The claim was finalised a few weeks ago with an award of £73,000. Under the new tariff scheme, he would have been awarded £7,500—one tenth of the present award. Independent research shows that the changes proposed by the Government would involve many victims losing by many thousands of pounds.

I shall give two further examples. The first is a female psychiatric nursing sister aged 35 at the date of the hearing. She was assaulted by a patient and suffered extensive injury. She was assessed as 15 per cent. disabled for life and unfit for any work. The award, including an assessment for loss of future earnings and the future cost of home help, was £126,943. Under the Home Secretary's proposal, she would get just £5,000.

The second case is that of a male police officer aged 34 at the time of the award. He was assaulted and sustained serious back injuries. He was unable to sit, stand or walk for long periods, and he was unable to carry out heavy tasks involving lifting or carrying. He retired on a medical pension. He was awarded £121,000 to cover loss of future earnings. Under the Government's proposal, he would get just £7,500.

We are facing a treble whammy. We are hit by crime, which has doubled under this Government—

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Michael: I shall just finish the point, as I think it is one to which the Home Secretary might well wish to respond. As I said, we are hit by crime, which has doubled under this Government; we now have to pay VAT on home and car insurances, which have shot up to cover the cost of crime; and now the Government want to steal compensation from the victims of some of the most violent and horrific crimes. I am happy to allow the Home Secretary to intervene to respond to that point.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman must not convey a misleading impression. It is quite wrong to suggest, for example, that the police officer in the case that he quoted would be limited to £7,500 compensation under the scheme—assuming that to be the right figure. He would be entitled to his average pensionable pay plus a gratuity of five times the amount of his annual pensionable pay. Therefore, he would have a gratuity of five times his annual pensionable pay and a pension of 85 per cent. of his annual pensionable pay. It would be quite wrong to give the impression that the police officer would be left with £7,500 alone.

Similar points can be made about the other examples the hon. Gentleman cited. Serious issues are at stake relating to this change, and it would be wrong to deal with them on the basis of a wholly misleading impression, which is what the hon. Gentleman is trying to convey.

Mr. Michael: The Home Secretary well knows that I am not conveying a misleading impression. I am comparing the figures that are available under the current system with what would apply if the Home Secretary has his way.

[Mr. Michael]

I want to bring to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's attention the comments of a police officer who bravely agreed to join me to publicise the effect of the change on any of his colleagues who might share his experience—not because he wants to support us or to make a political point, but because he is concerned about his colleagues who will be damaged if they have experiences similar to his. He said that nothing could bring back his health or the job he loved or, indeed, the opportunity to participate in sport, which had been very important in his life; but he doubted whether he could have survived the last couple of years if he had not had the level of criminal injury compensation that was awarded to him under the present scheme. That is accurate, and it is the argument that we are advancing. I noticed that the Home Secretary did not seek to respond to my accusation that the Government had given us a treble whammy.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): My hon. Friend has spoken of the 40 per cent. of people who are likely to lose under the Government's scheme. That figure has not been challenged by the Home Secretary or anyone else. If anyone is dissatisfied with the tariff settlement that he or she is offered under the Government's scheme, is there any right of appeal to an independent organisation with a right to vary any tariff offer?

5 pm

Mr. Michael: That is the problem. As I said, it should not be beyond the wit of a half-competent Minister to come up with a system that includes the benefits of a tariff—preferably better calculated than the one offered—and also enables specific circumstances to be taken into account, either immediately or on appeal. My hon. Friend is right. The Home Secretary could hardly deny the extent to which people will lose. Within the 40 per cent. of people who would lose as a result of the Government's new scheme would be those victims of the most horrific attacks and those on whom the effect of the change would be the most devastating.

In view of the Home Secretary's intervention, I should say that, under the old scheme, in the case I mentioned, even after the victim's pension is deducted from his earnings loss, the total of past and future loss is more than ten times the award under the new scheme. That is the honest answer, and I hope that the Home Secretary will review his figures and the facts in the case.

The Lords amendment brings into force the criminal injuries compensation scheme contained in section 171 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. It ensures that the current scheme is made statutory, and it throws out the Government's proposed scheme.

The Government's proposal replaces a scheme based on individual assessment of the loss to the victim with one based on a crude tariff. Unlike the current system, the new scheme will make no allowance for the victim's loss of earnings, medical expenses or structural changes to his or her house necessitated by the injury—we should remember the horrendous nature of some of the injuries. But those elements are vital for a fair system of compensation.

Other examples abound. An attack left a victim with a brain injury requiring continuous care day and night. Under the present system, the compensation is £500,000; under the new proposals it would be just £40,000. The new scheme would remove the dependency award in fatal cases, which would result in greatly reduced compensation for some families who have suffered a bereavement. For example, the woman with two children who saw her husband dying on her doorstep after a stabbing received £137,000 in 1993; under the Government's proposals she would receive just £17,500, which is outrageous.

It is precisely those victims who suffer the worst injuries who will be most heavily penalised under the new proposals. The Government are letting down those victims and the public, and, in addition, they are letting down public servants such as police officers, nurses and firefighters, who risk so much in our service and who will be shoddily treated if the Government get their way.

The Home Secretary should recognise, even at this late stage, that the new scheme is misguided, and should withdraw his opposition to the Lords amendment. That would still allow him to bring forward changes, but would allow him to seek the approval of this House and the other place for changes, which might then constitute improvements rather than the undermining of an important element of the scheme.

Mr. Howard: I do not know how near the hon. Gentleman is to the end of his remarks, and I may have misjudged the timing of my intervention, but I hope that he will not sit down without saying whether or not his party is prepared to give an undertaking to restore the old scheme if it ever becomes the Government of this country.

Mr. Michael: The Home Secretary did not misjudge the timing of his intervention, but its nature, as well as the nature of the change that he is trying to introduce. The Home Secretary knows that it would be foolish for an Opposition Member to anticipate the state of legislation and the disastrous state of the economy that the Government will leave us. We look forward to that day with trepidation, but we shall also take on the challenge with pride when the Government finally leave office.

It comes as no surprise that the Government have proposed a scheme without consulting any agency that deals with victims, and that none of those agencies supports it. The Government did not even consult the chairman of the criminal injuries compensation scheme, Lord Carlisle, who stated in another place:

> "I turn to my other criticism"—

it was only one of his criticisms—

> "that it is being brought in without any attempt at consultation. I find that extraordinary. The board which has been responsible for running the scheme for 30 years was not consulted in any way before the decision of principle to change the basis of compensation was taken. I was asked to go and see the then Home Secretary"—

the current Chancellor—

> "and was informed that he would be announcing his decision to Parliament the following day."

It is a pity that the present Home Secretary did not allow his predecessor to take the proposal with him. Perhaps the reason for that is that his predecessor refuses to allow him enough money to run his Department—but that is a matter of misery within the Government, rather than a matter for us.

It is not surprising that, having omitted to consult anyone who works with victims, the Government have proposed a scheme that is so fundamentally misconceived. Their true reason for doing so is to save money. Of course we all want value for money, but it is not acceptable to save money at the expense of the most vulnerable victims of crime.

When we last discussed the matter, on 28 March, the Home Secretary quoted two figures. He said that, since 1987-88, there had been only a 50 per cent. increase in the number of applications, but a threefold increase in compensation. In a devastating analysis in another place, Lord Carlisle showed that, allowing for inflation, the average award in 1993-94 prices in 1988 was £3,486. In March this year, the average was £3,778—hardly a massive increase. Similarly revealing is Lord Carlisle's assessment of the Home Secretary's claim that, since 1965-66, applications under the scheme had risen by 27 per cent. but compensation had risen by 378 per cent.

Lord Carlisle said:

> "If instead of comparing applications we compare the number of cases, and if we take into account the tenfold reduction in the value of money in that period, we find that on their calculation the average award in 1965 was £3,458 and it is £3,778 today, which is something less than a 10 per cent. increase in a period of 29 years."

Not only is the proposed scheme misguided and mean-spirited: it is contrary to our international obligations. The Home Secretary made great play of international comparisons, but the European convention on compensation for victims of violent crime, to which Britain is a signatory, states:

> "Compensation shall cover . . . loss of earnings, medical and hospitalisation expenses and funeral expenses, and as regard dependants, loss of maintenance".

There are, in addition, profound concerns about the manner in which the Government have sought to change the scheme. As I said in a point of order, that matter is before the courts. Suffice it to say that the Government decided not to implement section 171 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which would have put the present scheme on a statutory basis. Instead, they sought to introduce the changes by prerogative power, which led Lord Ackner to say in another place:

> "Some may think that it bears the hallmark of elective dictatorship."

Lord Carlisle said:

> "What is Parliament's purpose if one can commend one action to Parliament and then decide to do something totally different without going back to Parliament for approval?"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 June 1994; Vol. 555, c. 1836, 1834, 1829, 1835.]

Whatever the arguments about the way that the scheme was introduced, the Government's proposals to change the scheme will drastically affect those who are most seriously injured in criminal attacks. Surely that cannot be right. Neither the Government nor the Conservative party will ever again be able to claim concern for the victims of crime in future when they are treating them so callously today. No Conservative Members of Parliament will be able to claim an interest in victims in their speeches or election material if they vote to disagree with the Lords amendment today.

No Conservative Member of Parliament who speaks of the sad case of a constituent who has a miserable life as a result of an inadequate level of compensation will have any credibility in the House if he or she votes to disagree with the Lords amendment today. I warn Conservative Members to bear that in mind if compassion and common sense fail alone fail to persuade them to join us in voting against the disgraceful motion to disagree.

Mr. Shersby: I wish to declare an interest, in that I am a parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales and also president of Uxbridge Victim Support.

I have taken a close interest in criminal injuries compensation and raised the matter in an Adjournment debate on 18 March 1993 when I first became aware, as a result of discussions with Lord Carlisle of Bucklow, that changes were afoot. I shall read a short extract from the reply given by the then Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). He said:

> "It is important to take some time to explain the conceptual change in the nature of the new scheme"—

the tariff scheme. He went on:

> "Many people will accept that no amount of money can fully or properly compensate people for criminal injury, and that it is perhaps unrealistic to believe otherwise. There is no such thing as an 'absolute' or 'right' figure for the hurt suffered. Awards under common law damages are necessarily subjective, not objective. Even the courts are sometimes accused of inconsistency in the awards they make."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1993; Vol. 221, c.506.]

That was an interesting statement which revealed the Minister's thinking on this important issue.

My concern is not only for police officers who are members of the Police Federation but for many other people who suffer criminal injuries and are left severely disabled. One of my concerns about changing the system is whether the tariff scheme would take account of an individual's loss of earnings if he or she were not able to work again. In my discussions with the present Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) and other Ministers at the Home Office, I have been given the impression that the tariff level established at the inception of the proposed new scheme took account of loss of earnings, but perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, or whoever winds up the debate, will confirm that. It is essential that any compensation scheme should take account of an individual's loss of earnings.

My second worry about the proposed change is that the level of payments under the tariff scheme would inevitably be whittled away by the effects of inflation, although inflation is very low at the moment, which is to be welcomed. I pressed my right hon. and learned Friend on this matter and was grateful that, in response to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), he announced today that the tariff bands would be reviewed every three years. That is at least a step in the right direction and it means that we shall not be saddled with a scheme under which the value of compensation is whittled away over time.

Any hon. Member reflecting on what the Home Secretary has said today and what he said on 28 March 1994 has to recognise the burden placed on the Exchequer by the costs of the present compensation scheme. My right hon. and learned Friend said:

> "We estimate that, without reform, the annual cost of the present arrangements could be in the region of £500 million by the end of the decade. Under the new tariff scheme, the cost is likely to be about £250 million—still a very large sum by the standards of any other state scheme."—[*Official Report*, 28 March 1994; Vol. 240, c. 686.]

Like any responsible hon. Member, I have to consider the cost of any scheme instituted to pay criminal injuries compensation. I and many others realise that a scheme

[Mr. Shersby]

instituted 30 years ago, in circumstances very different to those prevailing today, cannot necessarily remain unchanged. Were it to do so, the costs would rise enormously. If we are to stay with the existing scheme and make it statutory, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) suggests, it is incumbent on us to state how it is to be financed in the future. The only way that it could continue to be financed is by a reordering of priorities in terms of total Government expenditure. Anyone who wishes a scheme to continue without regard to cost must be prepared to propose changes in priorities. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth to mutter, but that is the truth.

5.15 pm

Mr. Michael *rose—*

Mr. Shersby: I shall give way a little later.

Mr. Michael *rose—*

Mr. Shersby: I shall give way if the hon. Gentleman wishes to make an important point that he believes cannot wait.

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman is trying to provoke a response. The Government have presided over massive increases in the levels of crime, just as they have presided over massive increases in unemployment which have had a great impact on Government expenditure. The hon. Gentleman should remember that he is a Tory Back Bencher and that it is his Government who have caused many of the problems.

Mr. Shersby: If I may say so, that was a rather poor intervention and not worthy of the hon. Gentleman. Crime—especially burglary—in the area that I represent has fallen substantially in the past year as a result of excellent policing of the area.

Mr. Michael *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Shersby: Yes, it has. It has fallen significantly because of Operation Bumblebee. Unemployment across the country is also falling steadily every month. That is my response to the hon. Gentleman's rather stupid intervention, which was hardly worthy of a Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): My hon. Friend and I have been here since April 1992. In that time, has my hon. Friend heard anything from the Opposition parties spokesmen that would lead him to suppose that their policies would result in a reduction in crime or in unemployment?

Mr. Shersby: I can answer my hon. Friend easily—I have not.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shersby: No, I shall not give way at the moment.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary referred to the ability of individuals, especially those with higher incomes, to insure against criminal injuries. It is an interesting point, but perhaps he will tell the House whether the average accident policy covers criminal injuries or whether it would be necessary for individuals to take out a special policy. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) would have been covered had he suffered an even more serious injury than that which he unhappily experienced as a result of what happened outside the House last night. If my right hon. and learned Friend is to rely on private accident insurance, it must be clear beyond all doubt that such insurance is available at a price that people can readily afford.

My response to the proposals are twofold. First, I should like to record my warm appreciation of what the Home Secretary said today about the triennial review of the present scheme. He has taken account of one of my key concerns and I am, as always, grateful for his attention.

Secondly, I do not believe that it is right or proper for any of us to demand that a scheme that has been in operation for a long time should continue, irrespective of the cost burden that it places on the taxpayer. One has to review such schemes from time to time and, although I and many people would have liked the current level of compensation to continue over a long period, I recognise the cogent arguments made by the Home Secretary on 28 March 1994.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The victims of crime rarely find that their sufferings and grief end with the direct effects of the crime itself, severe though those may be. Frequently, their suffering extends into a sense of frustration and anger at the way in which they have been treated by the system during and after the investigation and trial, a sense that continues when they feel that their problems have been forgotten and neglected afterwards. One of the few sources of relief from that frustration is the system of criminal injuries compensation. Maintaining that system and ensuring that it works effectively must be a priority for anybody in any party who wants to recognise and deal with the problems of victims of crime.

The Home Secretary cannot escape from the fact that the measures that he took to change the compensation scheme before the Bill came before the House involved saving money; that was what they were intended to do. Inevitably, they did so at the expense of victims of crime.

That was all done on the basis of figures that have been vigorously challenged by those who have the best claim to understand the situation, especially the chairman of the board, our former colleague, Lord Carlisle, who did not understand how the Government could have arrived at their projection of how rapidly the cost of the scheme would increase. He claimed, with some authority, that if the Government's assumptions were correct and there were a 19.5 per cent. increase in the year just ended, the body should already have spent an extra £180 million, whereas it had spent only an extra £165 million. Already, in the first year of the calculation, the assessment of how rapidly the cost of the scheme would increase is £15 million out. The basis of the Government's figures has been seriously challenged.

The victims charter—it is still remembered—encouraged the police to tell people to apply for compensation, but they would have been applying for it under a compensation scheme that has now been radically changed. The Home Secretary must realise that there are serious disadvantages to put alongside the supposed advantages of a tariff system.

Perhaps the most compelling instance of the disadvantage of a tariff system is the fact that it takes no account of the consequences of the injury for the livelihood of individuals, and their ability to earn their living and to maintain anything like their previous standard of living. Such considerations relate to the age of the people concerned and the extent to which the injury affects their livelihood.

Inevitably, those who will suffer most from the changes include some of those whose injuries are the worst and have the most disastrous effect on their future mobility. Some of those who suffer most will be the youngest people, who will suffer the consequences of crime over so many more years, and whose ability to earn their own living will have been destroyed or severely damaged by the crime.

Among those people will be injured police officers, often young men and women—both men and women have suffered criminal injury through service in the police force. That category will also include prison officers and people in civilian life who have to confront violence and criminality more often than many of us, because of the nature of their work. Examples are local authority staff, security guards and self-employed contractors, who, because of the nature of their work and where it takes place, come into contact with crime. Those people may be in a much less favourable position to make their own provision for insurance against crime than people on high earnings. I am talking about people running small one-man and one-woman businesses, who may be exposed to the danger of crime.

The figures quoted in the debate and the references to people on higher earnings have sometimes ignored the limitations already in the system. As I understand it, the scheme does not take into account earnings of more than one and a half times the national average, so there is no question of the old scheme doling out large sums of money to people simply because they had a huge earning capacity. Quite a modest limit on the level of earnings that can be taken into account is clearly built in.

The problems that will be faced under the new scheme have been vividly bought to light by Lord Carlisle, Lord Ackner and Martin Thomas QC, who, after serving on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for eight years, resigned in December 1993, with great regret, to protest against the changes and the serious consequences that he felt that they would have. The Home Secretary should not treat lightly the views of such people, or those of other organisations with considerable experience in dealing with victims of crime, who can see the reasoning behind the awards made, and who are deeply concerned about the consequences.

There is also a constitutional point underlying the amendment. The Government never implemented the statutory basis for criminal injuries compensation that this House and the other place intended should exist. The format of the amendment is designed to implement that statutory basis. We all realise that if the Government agreed to do that they would do it with modifications to the scheme. No doubt, for the reasons that they have advanced, they would seek to apply further financial restraints.

The framework of the Bill offered the Government an opportunity to put the new scheme on a statutory basis, and at the same time to listen to the concerns and objections of the people who understand how the old scheme has worked and the terrible suffering that it deals with, and who believe, as many of us do, that victims of serious crime will be severely damaged by the changes.

In making his projections for the possible cost of not changing the scheme, the Home Secretary seems to have little confidence in what he has said about reducing crime. He has stood before two Conservative conferences and told them that he would cut crime, but he does not show much confidence in the 27 measures that he announced last year if he thinks that there will still be spiralling costs because of increasing crime. The most effective way to reduce the future cost of the criminal injuries compensation scheme would be to reduce crime, and to introduce the measures involving policing in the community and changing attitudes in the community that many of us believe will bring that about.

The victims of crime must command sufficient attention from the Government to prevent them from being as seriously disadvantaged as I believe that many of them will be by the new scheme. Their lordships were right to seek, through the Bill, to bring the Government back to that issue. The Government made changes without any statutory authority or parliamentary basis. Here is an opportunity for us to put things back on a statutory basis and to have a modified scheme properly determined by statute. For that reason, I encourage my hon. Friends to vote for the Lords amendment.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I shall first deal with some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), the Opposition spokesman. The logic of his criticism would be to go back to the old system and spend even more than the £570 million that we should have expected to spend, if the system had been left in place, in order to reduce delays.

Will the hon. Gentleman give a commitment to that much more public spending if the Labour party ever takes power in this country? Of course he will not; nor was it to have been expected. What he says is just words. The Opposition always use the phrase "weasel words", but if people want weasel words and unconvincing words, there they are, without any commitment.

The hon. Gentleman cites bodies that want more money to be spent. Of course they do. Every spending body wants more money to be spent, especially if it can be raised from the taxpayer. If the Government gave way to every claim to spend more, the deficit would be not £40 billion but £400 billion, and the British economy, instead of being one of the safest in Europe, would be one of the sickest. It would be the laughing stock of Europe, as it was when the Labour Government were in power.

The hon. Gentleman said that it was not beyond the wit of a half-competent Home Secretary to come up with another scheme that combined the old and the new. But what about a half-competent Opposition spokesman? Where is his alternative scheme? He has all these groups and all these bodies closest to the question of criminal injuries compensation which support him. They have been thinking about the matter, agonising about the matter and worrying about the matter. Have they come up with the alternative scheme which would be an improvement on the scheme that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has introduced?

5.30 pm

Finally, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth attacks the Government's record on victims. At least this Government have a record of achievement for victims. The previous Labour Government had none at all. They spent less money on victims; they did not have a victims charter; they did not give victim support and victim counselling in the courts. If victim support is so poor, why are so many victims coming forward to complain, especially women who are the subject of rape and sexual offences? They never came forward in the days when we had a Labour Government and there was no concern about victims.

These criticisms are, again, just pathetic. They are just words and they have no content. It is the new-look Labour party, made for television, made for the sound bite and made for public consumption, which is actually meaningless and contentless.

We must support the Government in their stand on the criminal injuries compensation scheme because the Lords amendments would clearly wreck the scheme and because it is necessary to take action as the Government propose.

Mr. Bennett: If the hon. and learned Gentleman is so keen to criticise the Opposition, can he tell us the extent to which he expects the bill to be reduced over the next two or three years as a result of the Home Secretary getting tough on crime? Does he expect that policy to work? Does he expect the amount that has to be spent on victims to be reduced, or not?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: We know that there has been an increase in crime every year since the end of the war. We also know that the increase in crime in this country is consistent with increases in crime in all other countries in the western world except those that have far more repressive forms of punishment. We also know that there has been a reduction in crime in the past year. We have had little praise from the Labour party for having done what it has suggested that the Government should do—that is, to reduce crime. We are reducing crime at a rate of between 5 and 10 per cent. a year. If that means so little to the Labour party, perhaps Labour Members should get up on television more often and say, "We ought to have more crime, not less crime as the Government are achieving through their policies with the support of the police and the courts."

Mr. Michael: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that even if the fall in crime were at the level of 5 or 6 per cent., as he suggests—and that is not the case in terms of genuine crime or of crimes of violence—it would take 15 years to get back to the level under the previous Labour Government, at which time crime was actually going down?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We need to get back to the criminal injuries compensation scheme rather than discussing the wider scene.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should be happy to pursue the matter. No doubt we shall do so on other occasions. I should be more than happy to defend the Government's record.

I come back to the present criminal injuries compensation scheme, which I have said is necessary and which the Lords amendments would wreck. The reason why it is necessary is quite simply that the previous scheme was getting out of hand. The scheme before 1 April was getting too expensive. It was becoming too inefficient and too unfair. I do not say that as a criticism of the work of Lord Carlisle, who must be complimented on the great deal of effort that he, his team and his predecessors have put into the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board over so many years, with so many awards and such substantial increases. Therein, of course, lies part of the problem.

The scheme was getting too expensive because the cost was rising from an equivalent of £4 million in 1965 to £570 million in six years' time. That is totally unacceptable. If the figures are inaccurate—I am the first to concede that Government figures are often inaccurate, because the Treasury is famous for its inaccurate assessments, whether to the good or to the bad—to the extent of £16 million in one year, as the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, that would amount to an inaccuracy of about £100 million in six years' time. That is still an increase from the equivalent of £4 million when the scheme was set up to £470 million in six years' time, which is an enormous sum. It is an exponential increase which must be addressed by any responsible Government.

The scheme was getting too inefficient because of the delays, which were getting longer and longer. There were sometimes delays of years. We heard from my hon. Friends the Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) and for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler). Every hon. Member must have written to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board over the past year or two on behalf of constituents who complained that after a year, two years or even longer, they had still not received their money. I would much rather receive £1,000 next month than £1,500 in two or three years' time. Everywhere, we see that delays in payment are expensive and hurtful to those who will rely on the payments to achieve a certain standard of living after serious injury as a result of crime. The figures speak for themselves. We have gone from 2,500 claims 30 years ago to 73,000 claims now, with 41,000 awards.

The system was also getting unfair because there were too many examples of similar injuries attracting different amounts of compensation. Unfairness has arisen, which can be corrected to some extent by a tariff system.

As a result of those unfairnesses and inefficiencies and because of the exponential cost, the Government have proposed a new scheme which contains the cost, reduces the inefficiencies and the delay and is a bit fairer. It is not perfect. How could it be? In a perfect world, costs would be unlimited, delays would not exist, each case would be perfectly tailored and there would be no feelings of injustice caused by one person getting a different sum because his or her income was greater. Unfortunately, it is not a perfect world.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has outlined and reminded us of the scheme. It is there in the Bill for all of us to see. It is an attempt to provide, as broadly as we can, the current levels of award, based on an assessment of 20,000 cases, which does not sound to me an unreasonable cross-section. The question is not whether it is perfect, but whether it does more harm than good.

The scheme does do some harm; we have to accept that some people will suffer. We have to listen and we have to accept the fact that some of the hard cases that have been outlined by hon. Members in this debate may well be true. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said that 40 per cent. of cases might not be as well paid out as they are at present, but that 60 per cent. of cases will be as well, if not better, paid out.

I am concerned, as Opposition Members are, about police officers and prison officers. I have listened to what my right hon. and learned Friend has said about taking into consideration all the benefits that would accrue in the form of awards of one kind or another to police officers. We must ensure that police officers,through occupational pensions, receive benefits that are, perhaps, greater in future than they have been in the past.

When one looks at the alternative suggested by the Law Society and others, one must realise that if it will undermine the virtues of the new proposals, it must be unacceptable. The harm is not as great as some people are suggesting. We would still have the most generous scheme in the world. It is seven times more generous than the French, 20 times more generous than the Germans, and perhaps five or six times more generous than in the United States—where, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, there is an active victim lobby. Certainly, it is the most generous in the world if one includes Northern Ireland, which we always try to do in our proceedings in this place.

The new scheme is a tariff system, but one cannot complain about a tariff system. Even now, the criminal injuries compensation scheme, or the scheme that existed before 1 April, was a form of tariff system. All the judges apply a tariff system. So it is merely an extension and a variation of the tariff system.

Yes, loss of earnings will not be taken into consideration as a special damage. But that caused most of the delay. Fifty per cent. of the time spent on awards which, at the end, produced only about £100, was taken up by trying to assess with employers, sometimes with great difficulty, or with social security offices, when there was sometimes even greater difficulty, what the precise level of earnings loss had been. It is, in any event, somewhat doubtful whether a significant increase in payment ought to be due simply because one victim is earning more than the other, even though the injury is the same.

Mr. Stephen: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that under the old criminal injuries compensation scheme, the assessment of damages for loss of earnings amounted very often to no more than crystal gazing? It was a notoriously inexact science and was often no more than an educated guess.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: And often, it produced only something like £100, for which there had been a delay of perhaps a year or two in trying to assess the sum. Also, the system is not so harmful because it will be cheaper. If it brings down the increase in costs from £166 million this year to £243 million in six years' time—a saving of £327 million or, if the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed is right, a saving of only £227 million—that money can be better spent elsewhere. It can be spent on a wider form of victim support. It can be spent on more health or more legal aid, or even in a reduction of taxation. Those are important benefits, even if it is no longer necessary because of the way in which the economy is improving, further to reduce the deficit.

It is a fact that the scheme is estimated to provide an improved situation or a no-worse situation for 60 per cent. of cases and it is a fact that social welfare, private insurance and occupational benefit schemes can be added to the benefits that will accrue from criminal injuries compensation. It will be more efficient because it will no longer be necessary to have a highly staffed board. There will be fewer appeals; there will be speedier settlements. As I have said, most people would rather have a sum of money in their pocket quickly, for the purposes of helping themselves immediately back to health, than a slightly larger sum of money a long time later.

We have to strike a balance. There is no way in which we can try to be perfect. The scheme does not apply to people who are victims of other kinds of injury other than criminal injury. We do not make any pretence with special schemes to try to help those who are not falling foul of criminal injury, so there is an injustice in the existing system.

5.45 pm

On balance, there seems to be far more for the Government's scheme than against it. If we apply the Bentham rule of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the scheme should qualify. Furthermore, it is consistent with the view that the House has already expressed on an important occasion in March when we voted for the Government scheme. Now that the Home Secretary has given an undertaking that his mind is not closed to improvements in the scheme if it should be seen to be lacking, it is obvious that, on balance, there is more sense in supporting the Government's proposal and less sense in opposing it, for there is no alternative that could be seen to be workable. Therefore, in those circumstances, we should reject the Lords amendment.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): The Lords amendment gives us an opportunity to consider real anxieties about the conduct of the Government in relation to Parliament and also the unfairness of the tariff proposal. I find the attitude of the Government, on the face of it, to the future of the much-valued CICB incomprehensible and indefensible. It is, in fact, an affront to Parliament. Parliament gave of its time to consider the Government's proposals in 1988 and 10 clauses of the Criminal Justice Act in 1988 dealt with the statutory scheme. It was high time then that there was a statutory scheme, after a very long—far too long—trial period and it was being put in order as it should have been.

The Bill ignores the 1988 Act. There was no mention of it until the Opposition tabled amendments. It is not even repealed. It will lie idle on the statute book. Instead, we have a non-statutory scheme and the Government have played ducks and drakes with Parliament and the time that Parliament gave to passing the 1988 Act. Therefore, I am grateful for the opportunity that the Lords have given us.

The Home Secretary said today that the proposed scheme is generous. There is always a case for examining a scheme, especially a scheme that has been going for a long time. But if one changes a scheme that has brought benefit to hundreds of thousands of people, we should examine whether the change proposed is a fair change: whether there is fairness in what is now proposed. The scheme before us has no friends anywhere other than on the Conservative Benches.

[Mr. John Morris]

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) quoted a large number of important and knowledgeable organisations that oppose and have opposed what is proposed. Their lordships' House opposed it. The ink is hardly dry on the victims charter before the rug is pulled from under the very victims who the Government put themselves up as being their protectors. Those victims, the 40 per cent. who are the losers, will know that this Government do not care about them. The new scheme is Treasury led, it is a means of saving money and saving money in an unfair way. The argument is about the proposed unfair tariff system.

We are replacing a carefully considered scheme, which had been working well—too well, the Government say—over the years, trying to put the principles of the common law into practice, by trying to put the injured back so far as was possible, financially at least, to the way they were before the accident or the injury. The common law has developed sensitively over the centuries and taken account paymentsof varying circumstances and a range of considerations. Instead of retaining the sensitive scheme, which had been run by the CICB, the Government have imposed a flat tariff and we have heard the admission that 40 per cent. of people will be losers.

We have to go back to ancient Greece to find a parallel. Procrustes sought to harmonise his victims by putting them on one of his two beds. If they were too short for one bed, he extended the victims' legs by pulling on them and if they were too long for the other bed, he cut the legs off. That was bad government then and this new tariff is bad government now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth referred to several examples and I want to refer to one or two. The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) was concerned about the loss of earnings. As the Home Secretary has told us, there may well be an element of loss of earnings in the tariff, but it will be a fixed amount and will not take into account the variable circumstances. That is the essence of a flat tariff.

A young skilled steeplejack who fractures his leg obviously has a greater financial loss than a retired pensioner in his seventies. The common law has always recognised that. Anyone in physical employment has the potential of greater financial loss. A high earner's loss is bound to be higher than a low earner's loss. We should be very interested to discover how wide accident policies are, as indicated by the Home Secretary, to cover that kind of contingency. We should like to know how many people are covered by such policies.

The scarred face of a girl model cannot be compared to a similar scar on a middle-aged man. That is what the common law has always been about, that is what our courts have emulated and that is what the board was trying to do its best to achieve.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Will the right hon. and learned Member give way?

Mr. Morris: No, I do not have time. I am trying to close my comments.

All that I have described will be thrown out the window and in its place there will be a flat tariff which is fundamentally flawed in that it takes no account of age, sex or occupation.

I agree that the tariff figures are generally comparable to what is awarded at common law for pain and suffering. However, there is no proper means of effectively and fairly compensating for loss of wages or earning capacity. One cannot have that. I shall be fascinated by the Home Secretary's explanation of a flat tariff.

Lord Carlisle of Bucklow, an esteemed, distinguished and respected Member of our House over many years said:

> "In cases such as sexual abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder or scarring, the effects vary so enormously in different people that to use any form of tariff is meaningless."

The scheme will do a grave injustice to a large number of people. Never again will Conservative Members be able to say that they care for the victims of crime. If they do say that—and I am sure that they will—that will be sheer hypocrisy, because, plainly, they do not care. I wish that some Conservative Members who will troop into the Lobby in support of the Government had read carefully the knowledgeable and learned speeches made in the other House. Plainly, the plan has no friends and is patently unfair.

Mrs. Roche: In *The Independent* yesterday the Home Secretary said:

> "The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill has a common thread running through it: it protects the public and fights crime. A crucial element is the effect crime has on victims. We should all pay greater heed to victims' plight."

Given that statement, I was absolutely amazed when the Home Secretary sought to overturn the Lords amendment.

The Home Office has already indicated that about 6,600 victims a year will receive payments that are less than half of what might have been expected under the present scheme. Written replies from Home Office Ministers earlier this year confirmed that 11 per cent. of recipients under the new scheme would receive awards which were 50 per cent. less than at present. A further 8 per cent. would receive compensation payments which were between half and two thirds of current awards. As the Police Federation put it,

> "The changes mark a significant and indefensible retreat from the Government's own commitment to give the highest priority to the victims of crime."

From time to time in our surgeries, we all have the tragic experience of seeing constituents who have been the victims of crime, and sometimes the victims of very violent crime. Yet the Home Secretary and the Government are attacking a scheme that is doing its best under the present system—and any system to aid the victims of crime should of course be improved.

Many examples already cited here and in another place show how the Government's proposals would adversely affect the victims of serious crime. The driving force behind the new tariff scheme is clearly Treasury driven and it attempts to make the victims of crime pay for the Government's failure significantly to reduce the level of crime, despite Ministers' spurious claims that the system will be improved.

What is even worse is that those hit hardest by the proposals will be the families of victims of murder and manslaughter. They are the people in society who often face the most difficult task. The proposals will also hurt those with the most serious injuries and those whose injuries result in significant impairment of earning capacity and loss of employment.

Lord Carlisle said that his major concern throughout had been that he considered that the new scheme was unfair in that all the savings would be made at the cost of those with the worst injuries. I do not believe for a moment that Lord Carlisle reached that conclusion lightly or hastily. He obviously felt quite rightly that the new proposals and the new scheme were wrong morally and in principle.

In cases of injury of maximum severity, the tariff system is wholly inappropriate. By

"removing the subjective element of the assessment",

as the White Paper put it, no account would be taken of the widely differing consequences of such serious injury. That point was made so well and briefly by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris).

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does my hon. Friend agree that we must look at the issue in a wider context? What does my hon. Friend think about a situation relating to a case—about which I wrote to the Minister, but did not receive a satisfactory reply—involving police officers in my constituency who were severely assaulted by a criminal who was on licence from prison? I will not go into the details, but the assault was sickening. Those officers saw that man being granted bail when he was taken to court. Not for the first time in his criminal career, that man did not respond to bail when the case came before the court. The officers then found that the injuries that the man had inflicted on them were likely to attract less compensation than they would under the present system.

Mrs. Roche: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing that case to the attention of the House. There are many tragic cases like that and that explains why the Police Federation reached the conclusion that it reached.

The proposals have changed the scheme from being a finely tuned and flexible instrument designed to meet the individual needs of people who have suffered appalling injuries—many of whom are police officers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said—and have lumped those people together with people who have suffered other injuries without taking into consideration individual circumstances, age, future prospects or dependants.

Another aspect of the proposal is the way in which it has been introduced. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon has explained that the Lords amendment, and the Labour amendment supporting it, seek to put the current compensation scheme on a statutory basis, fulfilling the obligation made in the Criminal Justice Act 1988. Perhaps the Home Secretary can tell the House whether he thinks, as Earl Ferrers appeared to think in another place, that when Parliament enacted the 1988 Act and provided that the Secretary of State should bring that legislation into force on a day or days of his choosing, Parliament intended that he be allowed to ignore it altogether and introduce a completely different scheme without reference to Parliament. Clearly, the 1998 Act intended to ensure that the Executive were accountable to the House in this matter. That is a very important point of principle and I should be grateful if the Home Secretary would address it.

Reference has already been made to Mr. Martin Thomas QC, who was a member of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for nine years. Perhaps it would be salutary to note Mr. Thomas's article of 18 January, which states:

> "Conservative MPs, if no longer moved by justice and fairness, ought to be thinking about their skins. The voters will be out for Tory blood when they rumble what lies behind these alleged reforms. Perhaps it is time for Tories to plot a little political mugging of their Home Secretary. The board would sympathetically consider giving him an award."

6 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): I remind the House that I am a parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales. In that regard, I raise with the Home Secretary concern about his remark that an officer who is injured during the course of his service will receive his pension, plus a gratuity of five times his annual salary. That is incorrect. That occurs only when there is a violent death in service, as the Home Secretary should know. *[Interruption.]* The Home Secretary appears to ask from a sedentary position exactly what I said, so I repeat it: a violent death in service. Other than that, if he has, for example, 20 years' service entitlement, that officer will receive 27 60ths of his pensionable pay. The only gratuity will come from commuting up to a maximum of a quarter of the pension to which he is entitled. There is no gratuity of five times the annual salary in the case of Stonier, for example, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) referred. I hope that the Home Secretary will be good enough to correct that matter in due course.

I also remind the House that one in 12 applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board arise from assaults on officers. The Police Federation therefore strongly opposes the Government's attack on victims in the form of cutting compensation. Yesterday, the police protected parliamentary debate and risked assault in doing so. Is it not a rich irony that some Conservative MPs, who today praised officers of the Metropolitan police for risking assault in protecting Parliament, will vote to cut the compensation that would have been payable to officers who were the victims of such criminal assaults?

The Government's new criminal injuries compensation scheme is a betrayal of all victims of crime—the very victims for whom the Government have been trumpeting their support for months. The Government complain that the criminal injuries compensation scheme is becoming too expensive and that its costs have grown greatly during the past 15 years. Its costs have increased because the number of victims has increased during the Government's tenure. The Government's complaint is that the victims of crime—the victims of the failure of Tory law and order policies—are now becoming too expensive.

How can the Government justify saying to a victim of crime that, whereas for the past 15 years their policy was to pay, as in the Stonier case, £126,000 for a certain injury, now, because the scheme is becoming too expensive for the Government, the amount is only £7,500? What Tory message is that to the victims of crime? The scheme robs those who have suffered the worst and most serious injury of the relatively fair compensation that was payable under the old scheme, as part of a criminal justice system which otherwise does little or nothing for the victims of crime.

[Mr. Mike O'Brien]

Although it is fair to say that improving the speed of delivery of compensation is important, it should not be bought at the price of unfairness and injustice in the quality of what is delivered. Speeding up the process can be done without the Government's proposed system of arbitrary tariffs. The Government promise is that the new system will be much quicker. That is their main argument for it. I have my doubts. From long experience of such cases, I know that the main cause of delay has been and will remain awaiting medical and witness reports.

Perhaps there will be some small savings in time, but they will not be enough to justify the increased unfairness that the new system will create. Fairness in dealing with the widely differing circumstances of victims is important if the victims are not also to regard themselves as victims of the unfairness of the criminal injuries compensation system.

Each case is different; it has its own factors and consequences. Being blinded in a criminal attack does not have the same financial consequences for everyone. The consequences for a 24-year-old builder's labourer with a wife and two children are different from those for an 80-year-old who lives in an old folks' home. The law recognised that difference under the old scheme and it sought a certain level of fairness, despite some inadequacies. How can it be fair that the victim of a hit-and-run driver who breaks a leg will receive full compensation from the motor insurance bureau under common law principles and that the victim of a criminal attack with an iron bar will not receive such compensation under the Government's new scheme? That difference cannot be justified.

The Government's proposals are all about saving the Treasury money at the expense of the victims of crime. Compensation without compassion for victims is the Government's message. If the Government deny that, let the facts speak for themselves, especially when it comes to victims of the most serious crimes. Let us consider a few cases. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has already referred to the Stonier case, on which I have had to correct the Home Secretary. My hon. Friend referred also to the Holton case, in which compensation was reduced from £126,000 to £5,000.

In the Slater case, a woman aged 38 who witnessed her husband being stabbed to death would have received £137,000 under the old scheme but would receive £17,500 under the new one. In the case of Burrows, a 46-year-old social worker who was attacked at work would have received £55,000 under the old scheme but would receive £3,000 under the new one. Lady Tebbit, who was injured in the Brighton bombing, received £750,000 under the old scheme. She would receive a third of that amount under the new scheme. Quddus Ali, a 17-year-old who received serious head injuries when he was attacked, would have received £65,000 under the old scheme but would receive £40,000 under the new scheme. Colin Hickman, a Coventry solicitor specialising in civil litigation who was stabbed more than 10 times, would have received £100,000 under the old scheme. Under the new scheme because the offence resulted in a fatality, he would receive £10,000.

Those examples speak for themselves. In effect, the Home Secretary is mugging the victims of crime. The victims of crime are now becoming the victims of Government cuts.

Mr. Howard: With permission, I will try and deal briefly with some points that have been raised.

We are accustomed to hot air from the Opposition parties, but in this debate they have exceeded their normal performance by a large margin. It is simply no use at all protesting about the Government's proposals unless one is prepared to make a commitment that one will stick to the old scheme were one ever to form a Government. That would give some small credibility to the Opposition's points. In the absence of that commitment, what Opposition Members say signifies absolutely nothing.

Questions were raised about the extent to which the new scheme compensates people for loss of earnings. It is the case that the tariff reflects loss of earnings. The tariff award is based on awards made previously by the board. It includes an element for loss of earnings and the other heads of damage payable under the old scheme. However, it is true that these elements are no longer separately quantifiable. There is a difference, but the tariff reflects loss of earnings in that way. That is the answer to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby).

Mr. John Morris: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Howard: I want to make speedy progress. The tariff is not a flat rate; it represents an average of loss of earnings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge also raised a question about insurance policies. As far as we are aware, most insurance policies which cover such loss do not exclude injuries caused by crimes of violence, so that route is open.

Many of the examples that were cited by Labour Members, including the Front-Bench spokesman, leave out completely the extent to which people benefit from occupational schemes. There is one important respect in which the new arrangements are advantageous, compared to the old scheme. Under the old scheme, occupational and Department of Social Security benefits are taken into account by the board when making an assessment. Under the new scheme, such benefits will be disregarded. That is an important difference which is an advantage of the new scheme. It might well also be an advantage—I do not know whether it will be an advantage because that depends on the particular circumstances—in some of the examples cited by Labour Members.

My information about the entitlement of police officers who have been injured is not the same as that given to the House by the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien). Perhaps that is something which we can pursue in correspondence.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I am concerned that some of the Home Secretary's information about the sorts of levels is wrong; he may be relying on wrong information. I suggest that what I said was right. My source of information is well known both to him and to me and is well respected by us both—it is the general secretary of the Police Federation, whom I telephoned to check the facts.

Mr. Howard: I do not think that we will be able to resolve the matter across the Floor of the House this evening, but I am certainly prepared to pursue it with the hon. Gentleman.

The truth is that the new scheme has advantages of speed and bringing costs under control. It will remain one of the most generous schemes in the world. I commend the scheme to the House. On that basis, I invite the House to disagree with the amendment made in another place.

Mr. Michael: The Home Secretary has totally failed to answer the debate. Indeed, he changed his question. He asked whether Labour would stick to the old scheme—the answer is yes. He is the one who seeks to change the old scheme.

It is clear from the debate that Tory Members are no longer interested in justice or fairness. The Home Secretary is no longer interested in the victims of the most violent and horrific of injuries. If Tory Members vote to disagree with the Lords in the amendment, they will stand condemned by their own actions.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 291, Noes 264.

Division No. 310] **[6.12 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Soames, Nicholas

Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Dr. Liam Fox

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet
(Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Smyth, Rev Martin (Belfast S)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy

Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Jon Owen-Jones

Question accordingly agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

After Clause 136

Lords amendment: No. 131, to insert the following new clause—*Offence of selling confidential financial information*—

.—(1) It is an offence for a person ("the seller") to sell or offer to sell information as to the financial affairs of another person if—

(a) the seller knows that the information has been or will be obtained dishonestly or by deception; and

(b) the information is intended to be disclosed without the consent of such other person.

(2) An advertisement or circular indicating that information of that description is or may be for sale is an offer to sell within the meaning of subsection (1).

(3) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or a fine or both;

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.")

Read a Second time.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 3, at end insert 'or otherwise provide'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : With this, it will be convenient to take the following: Lords amendment No. 150, Government amendments (a), (b), (c), (aa), (bb), (cc), (d), (e) and (f) thereto, Lords amendments Nos. 163 and 180, and Government motions to disagree to Lords amendments 131 and 163.

Mr. Darling: I know that the House has many other amendments to deal with this evening. The point that needs dealing with here is a fairly short one, necessitating only a short debate.

The Lords amendment introduces a new clause to the Bill which would make it a criminal offence to disclose confidential financial information obtained by deception and disclosed without the consent of the person concerned. Our amendment would make it an offence to sell such information or otherwise to provide it—in other words, even if there were no consideration or sale involved, simply providing information obtained by deception and without consent would be a criminal offence.

There is an increasing problem, caused by the fact that banks and other financial institutions hold considerable amounts of financial information on all of us. Agencies have grown up and people have appeared all over the country who are willing to obtain this information by deception and then provide it to third parties. Indeed, it is possible to find out someone's bank balance for about £250, and to find out details of standing orders and other confidential information for payments of about £1,000.

During the summer, ITN, with my consent, instructed a firm of inquiry agents to see whether they could find out information about my bank account. I authorised them to do this because I believed it was possible to obtain the information: and so it transpired. A firm of inquiry agents in London was instructed, and managed to obtain details of my bank balance. It is quite easy to do that by deception, and as far as the inquiry agents knew there was no question of my consent having been given.

Most people want that practice stopped. When Lord Brightman moved the amendment that is now Lords amendment No. 131, there was widespread support in the other place for prohibition of that sort of behaviour. It is not easy to see on what grounds the Government want to remove that new clause from the Bill, other than that they believe that it might impede the activities of credit reference agencies.

The legitimate activities of such agencies would not be impeded because they do not need to obtain their information by deception. They might not have consent, but no element of deception is involved because they are, or they ought to be, straightforward about the business in which they are engaged.

6.30 pm

There can be no place for individuals obtaining confidential financial information by deception and without the consent of the person involved. If we respect an individual's right to privacy—a fundamental right—it is important that we accept the Lords amendment.

We broadly agree with what the Government are trying to achieve in Lords amendment No. 150. As I understand it, however, the Government amendment would not stop someone obtaining information, if the provider had registered that he or she was able to provide it under the Data Protection Acts. Most banks state on their data protection certificate that they are prepared to disclose information to inquiry agents, for example. The Government amendment does not go far enough, although I welcome the fact that it appears to make limited progress.

The fundamental argument is that the House should accept Lords amendment No. 131, with our amendment to it, because that is the only way in which we will stop people obtaining confidential financial information and making it available. If the Minister is going to reply that such affairs are covered by the law on confidentiality, I hope that the Government will refresh their memory and bear in mind the difficulties that they faced over the "Spycatcher" and Ponting cases. They will realise that the law on confidentiality is by no means straightforward. That law would not provide the protection that people are looking for.

In that spirit, I move our amendment and trust that the Government will think again and accept it.

Mr. Beith: The Lords amendment is most welcome—I shall summarise it and the amendment to it as though they were one, although it is a little more complicated than that. It is clearly necessary to attempt to extend some protection to financial information and the combined efforts of the Government and certain of their lordships have at last achieved some results.

[Mr. Beith]

One must be aware of the seriousness of the problem. I have seen newspaper reports of advertisements by companies that offer to obtain such information and charge tariffs. A company called ACT is reported to have a tariff for information from banks and building societies. For obtaining a balance, the charge is £245—in some of our cases, that might be more than the balance—and a statement can be obtained for £1,000, while confirmation of overdraft or loan facilities costs £300.

Those services are freely advertised by companies purporting to have access to information that can be obtained only by some form of deception, or by inviting a dereliction of duty by employees of banks, building societies and other financial institutions. Such institutions are extremely worried about the situation. The majority of their staff would not assist such an activity in any way, but the possibilities of deception on the part of the person obtaining the information, the failure of security systems and the fact that someone might occasionally be willing to pass such information in dereliction of his or her duty, combine to expose the security systems of financial institutions and individuals to such a danger. The fact that companies are able to offer a tariff for that information suggests that it is being obtained on an extremely wide scale.

I support the Lords amendment, which the Government are resisting, because I am anxious about information that is not obtained directly from a computer. I hope that the Minister can clarify the position. If we do not pass the amendment, although information held on computer will be protected, all sorts of similar information, which is in written form or is not necessarily obtained direct from a computer, including many of the things listed in the tariffs, will still be available to those organisations.

I do not know to what extent it will be possible to transfer information from a computer, write it down and pass it on. In many cases, the information will already exist in written form. Copies of statements, a passbook or a number of other things may be floating around the office.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): The right hon. Gentleman may know that I was a banking lawyer before entering the House, and that I helped to draft the codes of banking practice. Once material has been produced in computerised form, it is covered, even if it becomes part of a separate written document.

Mr. Beith: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that advice, for which I am pleased not to have had to pay any fee—the House is greatly advantaged. I would still like to hear the information from the Minister's mouth.

There must be some ambiguous cases. Information might be held in a computer as well as in written form, perhaps because a cashier has written something down for a customer, or because of some correspondence that is entirely separate from the computer records, which leads me to believe that the amendment's provisions must be bolstered. Their lordships were certainly persuaded that the amendment was appropriate. Despite the wish to dispatch the matter quickly, I hope that the Minister will realise that it is important, and that he needs to explain the position.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I shall, of course, support the Government, but there is some good sense in Lord Brightman's amendment. My hon. Friend the Minister might well be arguing that it would have all sorts of ramifications for press freedom, which we do not want to develop by imposing swingeing criminal offences when we have not yet sorted out what we are going to do about Calcutt. I must warn my hon. Friend that an awful lot of people are concerned about press freedom, and if we do not introduce some of the Calcutt proposals, we may well have to return to this element of the Bill.

The Minister knows that I believe that we must do something to contain abuses of press power, but I fear that the Government will not do anything—certainly not before the next election. There may be good political reasons for that. If they do not intend to do so, Lord Brightman's amendment should be reconsidered. I should be grateful to my hon. Friend for giving us some sign that he has not totally closed his mind to the viability of the amendment in due course.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) knows that I never have a closed mind on any subject, and he has touched on an important point. It is far from easy to determine how far the press should be allowed to go to expose stories about criminal activity or anti-social conduct in a democratic society. Sir David Calcutt dealt with the issue, suggesting, inter alia, new criminal offences in certain circumstances.

The Government will, before long, be announcing their reactions to those recommendations. At this stage, I cannot anticipate what line we will be taking, but I am clear that it would be wrong for the House to agree new criminal offences that would impinge on the press, in ways that go beyond anything suggested by Calcutt and which contain no form of defence on which the press could rely, in advance of the Government's proposed White Paper. That would be the wrong way to proceed, as I am sure that the House and my hon. and learned Friend would agree. Those are sensitive issues and we must consider them properly.

Mr. Beith: Surely any restraint on the press from the amendments applies to the amendment that the Government are accepting as much as it does to Lord Brightman's amendment. Is not the only circumstance in which the press would appear to be affected if a freelance reporter were involved, and that therefore there was a financial consideration to the passing of the information?

Mr. Maclean: I shall explain that we have concluded that Lord Brightman's amendments went further than was appropriate before we have the Government's conclusions to the Calcutt report. We are not dismissing his suggestions out of hand, and we have carefully considered them.

We have now concluded, in the light of Lords amendment No. 131, that we should go a stage further in regard to the Data Protection Act 1988. We cannot advise the House to keep Lords amendment No. 131, but we propose in an amendment that is now before the House to attach the key feature of that amendment—the offering for sale of improperly obtained information—to our own new data protection offence.

Accordingly, we propose to make it an offence for a person to sell, or offer for sale, data procured in contravention of the Data Protection Act. That is the effect of the new subsection (7) inserted into section 5 of the 1984 Act. The new subsection (8) covers the situation of the person who makes an offer for sale at one point in time, and carries out the illicit procuring subsequently. Such a person will be guilty of the new selling offence once data are actually procured.

I listened carefully to the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) for the amendment standing in his name and that of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). I think that I can see the intention behind them. If the person who sells data that he has procured in breach of the Data Protection Act 1988 is to be guilty of an offence, so ought a person who has given data away to a third party or might get his reward by devious means some considerable time later. If the words "or otherwise provides" were capable only of covering such a person, the Government would have no substantial objection to them.

The words are capable of being much wider in their application. They would, for example, cover the handing over of data to another person in the same organisation simply to be filed with a view to future use. It is unsatisfactory in principle that the scope of a criminal law should be so vague in its application that it is capable of covering acts that it is not intended to prohibit.

I must also say to the hon. Gentleman that the additional words are unnecessary. By virtue of Lords amendment No. 150, it is already an offence to procure disclosure of personal data, knowing or having reason to believe that the disclosure constitutes a contravention of subsection (2) or (3) of section 5 of the Data Protection Act. Accordingly, the person who has obtained personal data in this way is already guilty of an offence.

The additional amendments standing in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary are designed to catch the person who, in addition to procuring the data, sells and offers to sell the data. This is intended to cover some of the concerns that lay behind Lords amendment No. 131, which, as I have explained, is unacceptable in its width. Those concerns were principally to combat the advertising and sale of improperly obtained information—companies which specialise in commercial activities of the nature to which the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred.

6.45 pm

The Government's amendments to Lords amendment No. 150 are deliberately aimed at sales and advertisements offering to sell. We believe that they do not need the further extension that would be made in the amendments standing in the names of the hon. Members for Edinburgh, Central and for Cardiff, South and Penarth. Although I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central's point of view—I can understand the way in which he wants to widen the amendment—I must advise the House not to accept the amendment.

Mr. Darling: I shall reply to the debate briefly. First, it is important to realise that Lords amendment No. 131 deals with information obtained by deception and without consent, so those elements are necessary in order to constitute the offence. The amendment would therefore not cover information that was legitimately passed around in an organisation, because there would not be deception and there might well be consent.

The second point was the question of press freedom. The Opposition have no desire whatsoever to limit investigative journalism—would that there were more of it. The problem the law faces is that it cannot discriminate between a member of the public and a journalist, because a journalist is a member of the public who happens to be engaged in the business of writing. It is not possible within the framework of the law to put journalists in a privileged position.

The mischief that we now face, where people are willing to obtain financial information by deception and without the consent of the individuals concerned and then sell it, ought to be stopped. Every one of us has substantial amounts of information held by banks and financial institutions. As I have said, I welcome the fact that the Government are introducing additional protection so far as the Data Protection Act 1988 is concerned.

The point of Lords amendment No. 131 and our amendment would be to cover cases that are not covered by the Data Protection Act. A lot of information is held that is not covered by the Act, and the amendments would ensure that anyone who tried to obtain that information dishonestly, by deception or without the consent of the individual concerned would face a criminal offence.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the point made by Government Members, that the Government will have to consider these matters sooner or later. But frankly, to say that we must wait for the Government's consideration of the Calcutt report does not carry much weight.

If I remember rightly, the Calcutt report was prepared in 1990 or 1991, and we still have not had the Government's response. The matter raises some delicate political problems and Government Members may now take a different view on the freedom of the press from that which they took before the election, because the press have—for the moment, at any rate—turned their unwelcome attention on the Government.

It is not our function to try to curtail the legitimate activities of investigative journalism, but I am concerned that there are individuals in this country who are in the business of obtaining confidential financial information, and at the moment there is nothing to stop them. It has affected me and other hon. Members who have experienced people trying to get into their bank accounts and to get information, and members of the public generally look to Parliament to protect their privacy. I am sorry that the Government have taken the view that they have, and for that reason we will press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division:

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Several colleagues and I have come immediately from No. 7 Millbank. We took the same lift, and we got here as quickly as we could. We have just missed the Division because it was impossible to get here in the time allowed—I do not know how many minutes were allowed

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

for the Division. I wonder whether you could allow the Doors to the Lobby to be reopened to allow us to vote, as we came as quickly as we could.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): No, I am afraid that I cannot allow that. I have taken account of the fact that we recently had a Division in the House, so I think that hon. Members had warning that further Divisions were likely.

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood) (*seated and covered*): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. There was a Division about an hour ago, but those of us who have to work in our offices in Millbank have to return to them in order to do our job properly. We all know that we have to leave that building the minute the Division bell goes—we sometimes run down the stairs if necessary.

We left instantly the bell rang and ran across to the House—we did not delay. Earlier, we were given a clear undertaking from Madam Speaker that discretion would be exercised to allow the Doors to be reopened if a Division was not called at a fixed time, as happened just now. I appeal to you to reconsider your decision, Madam Deputy Speaker, because we were given a promise, and we all came here as fast as was physically possible.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but I was not in the Chamber previously, and I did not hear what Madam Speaker said. Obviously discretion may be used at a particular moment when a decision has to be made, but I am not aware of any suggestion that something will happen for ever more; otherwise, we would need to alter the normal arrangement whereby we have a set amount of time for a Division.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) (*seated and covered*): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In view of what has been said by you and other hon. Members, it is within your power to order a new Division to be called to enable those hon. Members who could not get here, through no fault of their own, to record their votes on this important matter. It would not delay business.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have considered the matter, but I am staying with my original decision, that I will not reopen the Doors and allow further time.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West) (*seated and covered*): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am one of the inhabitants of No. 7 Millbank. I always have to run over to vote. When I inquired, Madam Speaker said that, when it is a first vote, she does, as a matter of discretion, allow extra time before the doors are locked. If it is a matter of discretion, colleagues can be locked out, as has happened to hon. Members on both sides of the House on this occasion.

Would you be kind enough, please, to talk to Madam Speaker to see whether an extra two or three minutes can be added to the first Division of a series, so that colleagues can get over here? It is difficult even for the able-bodied to get to the House in time, but it is impossible for those who are not able-bodied. My only parliamentary win against the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr.Coe) occurred when I got here in time to vote and he did not, but he left Millbank much later than I did. Even that hon. Member has been locked out of the Lobby on occasion.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the fact that difficulties arise from time to time and I have, on occasion, exercised that discretion. But tonight, people had due warning that votes could be expected at various times. I shall draw this matter to the attention of the Speaker and further consideration may be given to the general principles involved. I think that that is what the hon. and learned Gentleman has in mind.

The House having divided: Ayes 246, Noes 279.

Division No. 311] **[6.46 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet
(Ros'dale)
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)°
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John°
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)

Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Eric Illsley and
Mr John Cummings

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg ' Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ruclif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan. Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John

MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond S.
Robinson, Mark
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smyth, Rev Martin (Belfast S)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Simon Burns.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment disagreed to.

After Clause 136

Lords amendment: No. 132, to insert the following new clause—*Offence of causing intentional harassment, alarm or distress*—

. In Part I of the Public Order Act 1986 (offences relating to public order), after section 4, there shall be inserted the following section—

"*Intentional harassment, alarm or distress.*

4A.—(1) A person is guilty of an offence if, with intent to cause a person harassment, alarm or distress, he—

(a) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or

(b) displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting,

thereby causing that or another person harassment, alarm or distress.

(2) An offence under this section may be committed in a public or a private place, except that no offence is committed where the words or behaviour are used, or the writing, sign or other visible representation is displayed, by a person inside a dwelling and the person who is harassed, alarmed or distressed is also inside that or another dwelling.

(3) It is a defence for the accused to prove—

(a) that he was inside a dwelling and had no reason to believe that the words or behaviour used, or the writing, sign or other visible representation displayed, would be heard or seen by a person outside that or any other dwelling, or

(b) that his conduct was reasonable.

(4) A constable may arrest without warrant anyone he reasonably suspects is committing an offence under this section.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or both.".")

Read a Second time.

7 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 5, after 'if', insert 'recklessly or'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take amendment (b) to the Lords amendment.

Mr. Hughes: The amendments are to a new clause that was introduced into the Bill in Committee in the other place. The new clause is entitled "Harassment, alarm or distress". It seeks to amend the Public Order Act 1986 to create a new offence. The original debate on the matter arose after much pressure and lobbying, and engaged a lot of interest. The new clause inserts a new section into the Public Order Act 1986, which states:

> "a person is guilty of an offence if, with intent to cause a person harassment, alarm or distress, he—
>
> (a) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or
>
> (b) displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting,
>
> thereby causing that or another person harassment, alarm or distress."

There follows a definition of where that offence can be committed. The section says:

> "An offence . . . may be committed in a public or a private place, except that no offence is committed where the words or behaviour are used, or the writing, sign or other visible representation is displayed, by a person inside a dwelling and the person who is harassed, alarmed or distressed is also inside that or another dwelling."

The mischief against which this new clause is intended to act is committed when one person is outside a dwelling and another person is also outside, or when one person is outside and another is inside. Put simply, if someone lives in a property in, say, Deptford, Bermondsey or Rotherhithe, and someone outside in the street acts in such a way as intentionally to alarm, harass or distress that person through the use of language, behaviour or writing, they commit the offence. That is absolutely acceptable to me. I am sure that it is acceptable to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) and I hope that it is acceptable to the House. There will be no dissent from the fact that we must act against people who behave in such a way that they interfere in the private lives of other people by harassing them or causing them alarm or distress.

Some people doubt whether the clause is tough enough. The general view held by the communities in urban constituencies is that it is not. The general view is that it is difficult to nail people for what the Prime Minister calls "the yob culture" and extreme anti-social behaviour. It is often difficult to pursue people to the courts and secure a conviction for such crimes. Although the clause is welcome and will improve matters, it will certainly not be the end of the story because it will not be tough enough.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way and I agree with what he has said thus far, but I am puzzled as to why the new clause does not specifically include a criminal act of racial harassment, racial violence or incitement to racial hatred. I cannot understand the thinking behind a clause of this importance not addressing specifically an issue of enormous concern and danger to many people, particularly in inner urban areas such as the hon. Gentleman and I represent.

Mr. Hughes: That is a matter of dispute around the House. The hon. Gentleman is right, and my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) has similar experiences, probably almost as regularly as we do. The hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) has introduced a Bill that has all-party support and seeks expressly to provide for an offence of racially motivated crime. We must not be mealy mouthed about the matter—racially motivated crime exists. Those of us who represent inner urban areas—actually, it applies throughout the country—know perfectly well that people are willing to express racist views and, when people are not looking, behave in a racist way, often egged on by others. The most undermining activity of which anyone can be a victim is that which singles one out for aggression, abuse or intimidation for something that one cannot change—something that concerns the victim, not how he or she behaves. The law must be tough on activity based on a discriminatory view of other people which in the mind of the perpetrator justifies that behaviour. Such behaviour happens in my constituency and I am ashamed about it. It also happens in many others, if not all others, represented in the House.

It can therefore be argued that we need an offence of racially motivated crime. The answer given by the Government is that a better way to deal with it is to increase the sentence if the crime is seen to be racially motivated. This issue will not go away and no matter whether the new clause is accepted by the House today and becomes law, as I believe that it will within the next few days, the matter will come back because many people will not feel that the law goes far enough.

Having understood the debate in another place and had perfectly courteous discussions with the Minister's predecessor about the issue, I anticipated that at this stage we would not move the Government on this issue. I have therefore chosen two much simpler amendments which, even at this stage, I hope to persuade the Minister to accept. I realise that Ministers come to these debates with briefs prepared by civil servants and give wonderful lists of arguments why such amendments should not be accepted. The Under-Secretary of State did a good job in his previous post and I welcome him to his new post. I hope that he will be brave and, once he has heard the arguments, say that the two amendments can be accepted because they deal with two specific but important points.

First, let us accept that the clause deals with harassment, alarm and distress generally, without singling out racism. I want the Minister to accept that there are two ways—intentionally or recklessly—in which someone could cause that harassment, alarm and distress.

I have been trained as a lawyer. Something that a criminal lawyer learns almost ad nauseam is the difference between the states of mind that people have to be in if there is to be a conviction. For a conviction of intent, ultimately a jury or the magistrates have to find not just that an activity happened, but that the accused intended it to happen. Often, that is difficult to prove. It is much easier to prove that someone has behaved in a way that was careless as to the consequence or that was not thinking as to the consequence, because we can then draw an inference that any reasonable person would have known what the consequence would be.

I want the Government to change the law so that it provides that if anyone uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, disorderly behaviour, writes graffiti, racist comments or whatever, or by using signs or other acts behaves in a way that is abusive, threatening or insulting, and he is aware that that might just cause harassment, alarm or distress, he should be found guilty.

For example, someone may approach a house in Peckham, Bermondsey, Rotherhithe, Deptford, Rochdale, Islington, Stalybridge or your constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker. He may not know whether anyone is in the house, but he knows that, for example, a black family, an Asian family, a mentally disordered person such as an adult with learning difficulties, someone who is physically disabled or other people in all sorts of circumstances used to live there. Perhaps somebody who was anti-social—a difficult and cantankerous individual—used to live there. He may not say, "I want to get the person in that house", but he is careless and mindless of the consequences of his action and should be guilty of an offence. That is the only way that we can be sure that we deal with such people effectively.

If intent has to be proved in a court, I can guarantee that many cases will not be proceeded with by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, so they will not get to court and people will not learn a lesson. They will get away with their behaviour when they should be convicted. I make this serious plea from my recollection of how the law works—I remember it all too well—and my understanding of how society works, which is something that we all have as Members of this House.

The second amendment is similarly simple and, I hope, persuasive. It would remove from line 19 the two simple words "or another". I want to make it possible for someone to be guilty of causing harassment, alarm or distress if he is in one building but is having a go at somebody in another building. The House held a debate last year on the question of neighbour noise and noise nuisance. The *Mail on Sunday* has run a good campaign and an increasing amount of publicity is being given to

[Mr. Hughes]

the issue. A fringe meeting at the Conservative party conference that debated it was very well attended. Neighbour noise is the bane of people's lives. It can literally drive people mad or to suicide.

Some weeks ago, I attended a press conference on the issue in the Jubilee Room. Spike Milligan and others were there on behalf of the campaign for peace and quiet. The hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) was there. Other colleagues, such as the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), support the campaign, the aim of which is to clamp down on rowdy, nuisance neighbours. There are plenty of them and they behave as though there was nobody else on God's planet. They yell out of windows, sometimes throw cans and rubbish out of windows, and have hi-fi's or stereos blasting out of windows, especially in summer.

It must be made absolutely clear to people that if they own or occupy a property and they behave not necessarily with intent, but in a careless and mindless way, are not bothered whether they keep their neighbours up all night, and blast the person on the other side of the estate, in the block opposite, or on the other side of the street, they should be nicked.

I take a tough view of such behaviour: not only should such people be nicked, but their property should be confiscated. We need to modify the law to make it tougher. There could be a first and a second warning, but then such people should be taken away and put overnight in a place that will remind them that blasting the living daylights out of their community is not acceptable.

7.15 pm

If the law is toughened in the way that the Government propose, all that it will allow is somebody to be nicked if he is in the street and the victim of the nuisance is in the house. However, that is not what usually happens. I accept that an offence is caused if noisy drunkards run up and down a street shouting. That happens occasionally in Bermondsey and other places. However, it is more often the case that somebody in a property is blasting his stereo or yelling out of the window and making life a nuisance. I want that person to be prosecuted. Tough legislation would signal our intent and we would make progress.

I know that the Government are consulting on the issue—that is always their defence. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) wanted to introduce legislation on payment of interest on debt, the Government said that they opposed that because they were consulting on the issue. They have been consulting for decades; yet everybody knows that it would be a good idea. The Government have issued a consultation paper on noise and I am grateful for that. However, we now have an opportunity to move in a way that I believe will unite the House, provide legislation that will work and not preclude debates on what else we do after that.

I want noisy neighbours to be aware that they are acting criminally, not just anti-socially. If such behaviour is clearly illegal, police, environmental health officers and others can act to make communities places worth living in again.

People have been driven to suicide, driven mental or driven to attacking others in their home by noisy neighbours and anti-social behaviour. I do not think that that applies to any particular part of the country—it is applicable to all areas. It is as applicable to Luton, where I have been many times, as to anywhere else. I see that the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) is in the Chamber.

I hope that the Minister will say, "It is not our idea; we would not have gone so far, so quickly, but it is a good point." I hope that the Minister will at least concede that the argument is valid. Even if he needs a minute or two to take advice, I hope that he will then say that the Government will accept the amendment. I advise him to be brave. He will then become the most popular Minister in the Government today—*[Interruption.]* I accept that on this day, of all days, that is not saying a lot. However, if he accepts both amendments he will be one step ahead and his future will be assured.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I thank the Government for their response to the Select Committee's report and its recommendations on racial harassment. I want to flag my concern on behalf of the Committee about the one element that the Government have not seen fit to support: what we said about intent. Through amendment No. 132, the Government have, as we asked, taken into account the seriousness of many of the actions that make up racial harassment. They have not called it racial harassment, but it comes under the same heading—the daubing on the wall, the swastika and other such appalling behaviour.

The Government have also created an arrestable offence, which is what the Committee recommended and they have increased the maximum penalty from a fine to imprisonment, again as we recommended. I am grateful for that.

But we also said that police officers at Plumstead considered that the requirement of an intent, which is present in Lords amendment No. 132, made it difficult for them to bring effective charges—few criminal charges for harassment of any sort have ever been brought or, if brought, have succeeded. That issue is relevant to the contribution of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The police told us that they considered it a drawback as it was so easy for an accused person to say, "I had no idea that my words were likely to or may have caused that offence." Such a line meant that magistrates often gave those accused of the offence the benefit of the doubt. More importantly, the Crown Prosecution Service would often think that there was not sufficient evidence to bring a prosecution.

We therefore suggested that it was not necessary to have a subjective test and that it was preferable to have an objective test as to whether a reasonable man would have considered his actions likely to have that effect. The police in Plumstead said that that would help them considerably. I understand that the Government have not been keen to adopt such a policy.

I have not had an opportunity to discuss the subject with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, but I understand that "recklessness" would provide a halfway house between dropping the necessity for intent, and intent. If I am right on that, I must say on behalf of the Select Committee on Home Affairs that I have some sympathy with the submission made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

One issue that I am sure about—as was the Select Committee on Home Affairs—is that the legislation on the subject needed to be toughened up. There will inevitably come a time when the pressures of immigration and asylum on these shores will be even greater because of what is happening in the rest of Europe. In those circumstances, from time to time, the reaction of the indigenous community will, alas, be to revert more frequently to racial hatred and the sort of response that follows. Now is the time to dig in our defences and prepare ourselves so that the law is adequate to the task of protecting people, whether black or white, against the sort of sickening harassment that now occurs in our society less frequently that it may do in future.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for the action that he has taken to support the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. But I ask him to take seriously the important need to strengthen this aspect of the law—if not now, in the future—so that it provides adequate protection for those whom it is our task and duty to protect.

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): We have some sympathy with the words and the amendments of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), and look forward to hearing the Minister's response. We have not been completely satisfied in any way and cannot echo the sentiments of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) who believed that we had been given an adequate response to the case involving the problems of racial violence made in the House and in the Select Committee.

In response to Opposition and all-party amendments, Government spokespeople, both in Parliament and outside, have repeatedly expressed concern about racially motivated crime. But the undertaking given in the House and acted on in another place has produced nothing more than a tougher version of the existing public order offence in section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986. Standing alone, that is totally inadequate to the task of dealing with the huge and rising tide of racial violence.

I cannot remind the House too often that there were an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 racial incidents in England and Wales last year. Those incidents range from daubing, spitting and graffiti to the most severe violence and, indeed, murder. Yet, by the Government's own admission, only one in 20 such incidents are reported to the police. Those that are reported must be recorded as racial incidents, but there is no requirement to record the clear-up rates, which makes it difficult to judge the effectiveness of existing law.

The one sector for which we have figures for prosecutions and convictions under public order legislation involves cases of incitement to racial hatred, where the figures are not impressive. In 1990, there were 45 prosecutions for incitement to racial hatred and only four convictions. In 1991, there were 65 prosecutions and only three convictions. Against that backdrop of inaction, the Minister will not be surprised to learn that the Lords amendment hardly inspires confidence.

The Government's failure to specify racial harassment and racial violence in any of their Lords amendments sends a more powerful signal to our ethnic minority communities than any crocodile tears of sympathy for victims.

Mr. Stephen: Does the hon. Lady accept that, where a criminal court is dealing with any criminal offence and racial motivation is proved, under existing law the court has the right to treat that as an aggravating factor and impose a more severe penalty than it would otherwise?

Ms Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, but I think that he will know that amendments were tabled in the House that would have made it mandatory to seek out any racial motivation and bring it to the courts. The problem is that often such motivation is not properly examined or researched, and the evidence is not brought to the courts. The procedure suggested by the hon. Gentleman can often not be applied in practice. Many examples of that have been cited in previous debates.

In another place Lord Ferrers sought to justify the omission of the issue of race. He said:

> "Proving motivation . . . is particularly difficult."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 June 1994; Vol. 555, c. 1864.]

As the hon. and learned Member for Burton has said, the amendment requires proof of intent. Does the Minister honestly believe that intent is less difficult to prove than racial motivation? Will he put his explanation on the record tonight, as it will be important to those who try to bring cases under the new legislation?

Lord Ferrers also sought to justify the exclusion of race on the ground that the same punishment should be available for behaviour causing the same distress. He illustrated his point by citing offensive behaviour directed at people in wheelchairs. In doing so, he was not comparing one individual with another individual, but citing a class of people. He implied that the legislation must apply equally where the victim is harassed because he or she belongs to a definable group. Will the Minister confirm that, by virtue of not containing the term "racial", the amendment applies equally to sexual harassment, harassment on the grounds of sexuality or disability, as well as to race? It is important that we have an explanation. Those organisations that represent the large numbers of victims of those various forms of harassment will take a keen interest in the Minister's response.

Finally, I should like further clarification of the Government's intentions. I recently received a report from the Lewisham racial equality council, which stated that in just eight months it had found 175 cases of racial harassment on local housing estates in that borough alone. The report cites examples that I shall read to the House. It states that one family received a total of 10 threatening notes, one of which included the words:

> "How many times do we have to say it. Leave as quick as you came, niggers are not welcome, especially when they drive fancy cars".

7.30 pm

The report continues:

> "Two maisonettes were daubed with racist graffiti; two eight year olds were chased by a boy with a knife; one youth estimated he was harassed every single week for 2 years; people were called "nigger", "black bitch" as a matter of routine; people had stones and eggs thrown at them; one woman had a lighted match thrown in her face, families had their windows were smashed; dog excrement was smeared over doors and cars."

Will the Minister reassure those victims that the amendment provides the means of ending their misery? Will he explain to us how we will know whether it has? He knows that although there are tens of thousands of incidents recorded under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986, there is no record or analysis of those that are deemed to be racially motivated offences. Therefore, I submit that the amendment, which takes the form of a new clause, has the great weakness that it is a "catch-all clause", although that might be regarded as a strength. The fact remains that the Government came to the House proposing to deal with racially motivated offences and offering us the amendment. How will we know how effective it is if, as at present, there is no mechanism for describing the different types of offences that occur under section 5? If there is to be no monitoring of the racially motivated nature of some offences, no one will be able to judge whether the Government's stated intentions have been realised. Will the Minister clarify that point?

The Government have chosen to ignore all the proposals to deal with racial harassment and racial violence made by the Opposition, most of those made by the Select Committee on Home Affairs and those from numerous expert organisations, including the Commission for Racial Equality, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Anti-Racist Alliance and other interested community groups.

We appreciate the fact that something has been done. We shall not oppose the amendment. The stronger powers of arrest and greater penalties are much to be welcomed, but experience leads us to doubt the Government's commitment and intention to deal with racism. Many hon. Members and many more people outside will not rest until the scourge of racism has been removed from our society. Legislation has a part to play, but much more needs to be done. However, legislation can send a powerful signal to victims and potential victims, to perpetrators and potential perpetrators. I have no doubt that the amendment will prove inadequate to the task. I have no doubt that we shall make further attempts to amend the law to make it more powerful in dealing with racial harassment and violence, but the Minister now has the opportunity to tell us how he believes that the amendment will deal with the misery, violence and cruelty inflicted on people of different colour and different race.

Mr. Corbyn: It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) who has spoken on this matter many times and who will no doubt continue to do so until we manage to change the law.

I find the amendment rather strange. It contains some truisms about harassment—no one is ever in favour of harassment—but it is weak in dealing with the crucial factor.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Deptford and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I represent a multi-racial, inner-city community where, tragically, although racial violence and harassment is not rife it does exist. Much of it goes unreported because, as in some areas outside London, there is either a lack of confidence that the police will investigate or a belief that nothing can be done.

Asian families are afraid to walk the streets at night; black people are afraid to go down certain streets or into certain areas; Indian families have excreta pushed through their letter boxes; people are sent firebombs and phone threats, abuse and hate mail but feel wholly unable to do anything about it. They feel constantly harassed throughout their lives and believe that there is no redress or support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Deptford said that there were more than 100,000 reported cases of racial harassment in Britain last year. I suspect that the figure is very much higher for cases that could be reported or in which action could be taken if there were a specific offence of racial violence rather than, as the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) said in an intervention, courts being able merely to consider race as an exacerbating factor once the case had gone to court. My point is that it is extremely difficult to get such cases to court in the first place.

Racial harassment is a Europe-wide phenomenon. It is increasing not only in this country but especially in France, Germany and Scandinavia. The introduction of a proper law to deal with racial violence would have two effects. The first is that all police stations would be forced to take racial cases seriously rather than simply recording them if that is the wish of those "either side of the counter", so to speak. Secondly, such a law would perhaps mean that a prosecution could be brought more quickly. At present, it is often difficult to acquire proof in, for example, cases of harassment of neighbours. I hope that the Minister will tell us exactly how the Government plan to deal with racism and racial violence.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey also mentioned problems between neighbours. There are many problems facing people who live in high-density, urban areas housing. They include harassment caused by noise, disturbance, differing life styles or—dare I say it—even by building design. Many flats and houses are ludicrously designed. Housing in my area is largely late Victorian and was built cheaply in the first place; often, conversions are done cheaply and, for that reason, there is no soundproofing or sound insulation. It means that what one family consider normal behaviour can be terrorism for the family above or below, even though such behaviour can simply be the problem of five or six-year-old children running around a flat.

People who live in detached or semi-detached houses might find it difficult to understand what it is like for people who live in the kind of environment that I have described. I have no truck whatsoever with people who play loud music out of their windows, who threaten violence or harassment or who attack their neighbours to such an extent that they are frightened to go near the police, Members of Parliament, councillors or clergymen, but we should also consider what causes the problems in the first place.

This particularly awful legislation could have provided us with an opportunity to do some good for one group of especially victimised people in our society—those who are racially attacked or harassed—but the opportunity appears to have been completely lost. However, people outside the House have noticed that fact and realised that something must be done. We cannot go on watching the daily toll of racial violence and harassment while nothing is done by those in positions of power. We cannot allow that to continue. It is wrong that anyone should feel fear when walking the streets of his or her own community, or should feel afraid of going out in the morning. It is wrong that children should feel afraid at school. That situation can turn into copycat racial violence.

The opportunity has been missed in the Bill, but I hope that we shall be able to return to it in the new Session. Opposition Members will keep returning to it until we can remove the scourge of racism and racial violence from our society.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Nicholas Baker): We have had a good debate, and I must say at once that the Government share the concern about racial harassment and the other forms of harassment mentioned in the debate. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, the clause is tough, and that toughness may have been underestimated in the debate. It closes a gap in the law and creates an offence of intentional harassment, which will enable the courts and the police to deal more effectively with serious forms of deliberate racial harassment. The new offence provides the police with an immediate power of arrest, thereby enabling them to take swift action against the perpetrators of those odious crimes. A maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment and/or a fine of £5,000 is also provided for.

In order to justify those increased powers and penalties, it will be necessary to prove that the action of the defendant was intentional and that someone was actually harassed. Although the offence is clearly aimed at combating racial harassment, race is not mentioned in the clause. The explicit inclusion of race would require that the racial motivation of the defendant be proved. In saying that, I believe that I am responding to two of the main concerns expressed in the debate.

Motivation is extremely difficult to prove. It is a subjective matter, far more difficult than intent. To prove racial motivation is difficult, too, and it is right that other forms of harassment are also covered by the clause—the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) mentioned that. For example, disabled people and homosexuals should be covered by the offence, and they are.

We examined the Select Committee's report carefully, and have accepted a good number of its recommendations, including the further action needed to alert the Crown Prosecution Service and other arms of the legal weaponry of the judiciary, so that they are aware of, and on the lookout for, racial harassment. We share the determination to do everything that we can to stop it.

I shall now deal with some specific points that were raised. I do not quite share the concern of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), the Chairman of the Select Committee, about intent being all that difficult to prove. Indeed, the police say to us that they do not regard it as such. Where conduct is deliberate, malicious and targeted, such as regular abuse, it displays clear intent, and should not be difficult to punish by using the new tough weapon provided by the clause.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baker: I should be grateful if I could go on, because I am about to answer the hon. Gentleman's question.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Before my hon. Friend goes on to answer the hon. Gentleman's question, may I ask one? It is obvious that some police officers—those whom the Select Committee saw—thought that intent was an obstacle to prosecution and conviction. Other police officers—those who have advised my hon. Friend and the other Ministers—think the contrary. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. Will my hon. Friend assure us that, should the number of prosecutions and convictions under the harassment provisions added to the Bill not be substantially larger than the number taking place now, the Government will undertake to reconsider the matter with a view to toughening the provision, perhaps by removing the requirement of intent? If my hon. Friend agreed to that, it would give some comfort to those of us who are slightly dissatisfied with the Government's response.

7.45 pm

Mr. Baker: I understand my hon. and learned Friend's concern, and although I cannot give an undertaking on future action, I can assure him that we shall keep the matter under close review, and will watch to see precisely what the new offence achieves. That undertaking also meets one of the concerns of the hon. Member for Deptford.

Ms Ruddock: May I clarify that point? The purpose of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) would be served if statistics were produced, and we could make a comparison between what is happening now and what happens in future. My argument adds to that the need to distinguish between different kinds of offence within the group. It is important to us to know whether it is racial incidents or other kinds of incident that are dealt with in that way.

Mr. Baker: I hope that, in examining how the offence works in practice, we shall consider all kinds of harassment. I cannot say how those will be categorised, but I hear the hon. Lady's request, and of course we shall consider the matter closely, because it is important.

Several hon. Members said that the offence should mention racial harassment in particular. I must tell the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and others that we believe that avoiding a specific reference to racial harassment will make it easier to secure prosecutions. As I have said, it would be very hard to prove racial motivation. I should not like, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman would not like, to see prosecutions fail for that reason.

Mr. Corbyn: Unfortunately, many attempts at prosecution and eviction by local authorities for racial violence and racial harassment have failed precisely because there is no specific law dealing with that. There is nothing on earth to stop a subsection saying, "and a motive based on racial hatred or incitement to racial hatred" being added to the clause. That would be an addition to the armoury of the law against such people. I fail to understand what point the Minister is making. Again, he seems to be trying to avoid the basic issue that we need a law that outlaws racial harassment and racial violence, and makes them a criminal offence, as they should be.

Mr. Baker: The clause covers that kind of harassment, as it does others. If one tries to prove racial motivation one makes it harder to get a prosecution, and that is not what the hon. Gentleman would want. I believe it right that there should be similar penalties for other forms of harassment, and I believe that the hon. Member for Deptford is with me on that.

[Mr. Baker]

My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) made a sensible point when he said, rightly, that in other crimes racial motivation is well recognised as an aggravating factor that the courts should take into account. That point has got rather left behind.

Now I shall speak briefly about the amendments, and the reason why I cannot accept them. Amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 132 would weaken the test of intent by including within the offence behaviour that was reckless, but not actually intended to cause harassment. The test of intent was included in the new offence in order to distinguish it from the existing offence under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986, and to justify a custodial sentence. Not just from having spent a great deal of my life in Peckham, but from living in London generally and having heard many examples of neighbourhood noise, I do not regard a custodial sentence as the right remedy for such neighbour problems. Indeed, there are remedies under the Public Order Act 1986.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I put it to the Minister that resisting the addition of the word "recklessly" does not meet the concern. The Minister knows my borough. In the past few weeks, I have had at my surgery a black family, a gay couple and some disabled people who have all been badly harassed. Let us imagine that somebody had attacked the homes of those people when they were not in them, careless as to whether they were in them or not and believing that that is where they might have been. Such attackers should be convicted if they were careless or reckless about whether someone was there or not. One could not convict them if one had to prove that they intended that the person who lived there should be the victim. That is the present weakness.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), supporting the argument, has sought to persuade the Minister—I still seek to persuade him—that such an action is deserving of custody, whether of a short or long period. A person deserves custody if he or she is not bothered about whether somebody is being harassed by his or her actions. That seems to be a perfectly reasonable consequence.

Mr. Baker: The word "recklessly" applies to a far lighter kind of behaviour than does the word "intent". Yet if conduct were deliberate, as I have said, malicious and targeted, which could certainly cover the type of conduct that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has described, it would, no doubt rightly, be caught by the new clause proposed in Lords amendment No. 132.

Amendment (b) would make the offence inconsistent with other public order offences by extending its scope to include private acts committed when the defendant and victim were in different dwellings. That is why we have to be careful before invading neighbourhood disputes with a new clause as heavyweight as this. If we accepted the amendments, the result would be legislation that was neither clearly designed to tackle a specific type of crime nor consistent with public order provisions. I am afraid that I cannot, therefore, recommend to the House that we should accept the amendments. I urge the House to reject both amendments and to agree with the Lords amendment, which would add the new clause.

Mr. Stephen: On the point of conduct in one dwelling affecting people in another dwelling, I have in my constituency many elderly people who live in flats or in semi-detached houses whose lives are made a misery by behaviour in the next-door flat or house. The behaviour may be shouting or screaming, playing loud music or banging on the wall. Those people are affected by the behaviour in the adjoining dwelling. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government to keep the matter under review because it causes serious distress to many people, particularly elderly people.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister has not dealt with many of the matters that have been brought to him. To start with the least important first, he has not said when the Government intend to do anything else about the general issue of nuisance, neighbours, noise and so on. I gave him the peg to hang that on because I put to him the fact that there was a consultation paper. We have not been told that there is a deadline or an end in sight.

Secondly, the one undertaking that the Minister has given is the mildest undertaking that Ministers can give—to keep things under review. There has not even been an undertaking—the debate in the House of Lords was clear about the need for it—that the Government will look at the issue, at what the Select Committee has proposed and at what all the organisations to which the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) referred have proposed, and that they will have the issue specifically on their agenda in the near future.

Thirdly, there have clearly been two concerns in the debate. One has been that under the general law—the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) made the point that we can all make perfectly properly, and in which we support him—many of our constituents, particularly the vulnerable, often elderly single people, are effectively powerless. They find themselves at a huge disadvantage relative to the person next door, the person across the road or the person above or below. They need much more support.

Sometimes, the only way in which the neighbours understand the position is if they are threatened with losing their liberty. Custody need not be for six months; it could be for six days or for one night. Just as on the football field a player is told that he will not play in the next match, the courts could say, "You will be locked up for the weekend." The Dutch do that regularly. Their gaols are not nearly as full as ours because they send loads of people away for short periods. They give people a short, sharp shock. That is one point that we should have heard from the Minister.

Fourthly, there is a huge concern that the law will not be tough enough in dealing with harassment against minority communities in our society. I have learnt a lesson in this place—[*Laughter*]. This is an important point. The only people who can judge—

The Lords Commissioner to the Treasury (Mr. Derek Conway): I am here all the time.

Mr. Hughes: I know that the hon. Gentleman is here all the time and some of the London Members seem to be here most of the time, too.

The only way in which one can judge whether people feel that they are harassed or that the law is not tough enough is to ask them. White people, for example, cannot speak for the feelings of the black community or of Asian people. If such people say to us that the law is not tough enough, we must accept that. That was the lesson that some of us learnt, and which others did not learn, from the debate over the age of consent. If people say, "We feel discriminated against," it is not for the rest of us to say, "Oh no you don't." We are not the 16, 17 or 18-year-olds protesting outside the House of Commons. We are talking about people saying to the House, "The law needs to be toughened."

The Government are moving the goalposts. We concede that the Government have come up with some legislation that is better. However, we are saying—the House of Lords debate was clear—that this legislation will not ensure that we clobber people as we should. I am strongly of the view that the matter should be left for the House to decide. Therefore, I will not seek to withdraw the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 55, Noes 183.

Division No. 312] [7.58 pm

AYES

Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don (Bath)
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Livingstone, Ken
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maddock, Diana
McFall, John
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
Olner, William
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Primarolo, Dawn
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Kirkwood and
Ms Liz Lynne.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel

Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Michael Bates.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 142

INCREASE IN CERTAIN PENALTIES

Lords amendment: No. 141, in page 114, line 9, at end insert—

("(2A) For the maximum term of imprisonment specified in column 3 of Part III of Schedule 8 to this Act that may be imposed under the enactments specified in column 2 of that Part of that Schedule on conviction on indictment, or on conviction on indictment or summary conviction, of the offences mentioned (and broadly described) in column 1 of that Part of that Schedule there shall be substituted the maximum term of imprisonment specified in column 4 of that Part of that Schedule.")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

8 pm

Mr. Michael: It is necessary to point out to the House that there has been a change since we last debated this proposal during the earlier stages of the Bill. As on a number of occasions recently, we see the Government reluctantly and belatedly accepting a case that was made by the Labour party at an earlier stage of the Bill but rejected by Ministers. There was nothing in the Bill about firearms, violence, drugs, drug-related crime or many other serious issues until those matters were raised and pressed by Labour Members. Indeed, when the Government rather belatedly accepted that there was a need for action, Ministers had to tack the proposals on to the amendments to the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967. That shows how reluctantly and late the Government came to recognise the importance of dealing with firearms penalties.

The amendment introduces a range of increased penalties for possessing, selling, repairing and supplying firearms, as we proposed. The amendment was tabled at 2 am in the House of Lords. Perhaps it would have been embarrassing for the Government to acknowledge such a volte face on the issue which we, of course, raised in detail in this House.

In Committee on 15 March, we proposed two new clauses—one to regulate the sale of weapons by mail order and the other to increase penalties for the possession of guns. The need for action is undisputed. Between 1986 and 1992, there was a 42 per cent. increase in crimes involving firearms in England and Wales. The link between drugs and guns is increasingly evident and it is frightening. There can be no excuse for illegally carrying guns and every reason to increase the penalty for so doing.

The Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Sir Paul Condon, has warned us that we are being pushed by events towards the arming of the police. That was not a prediction, but a warning which, as we said in earlier debates, should be heeded by the Government who should do all they can to reduce the availability and use of firearms and other weapons. However, when we proposed such a measure in Committee, the Minister refused to accept our amendment.

We tried again on Report on 12 April. The Government moved an amendment that dealt just with prohibited weapons such as machine guns and machine pistols. That was far more limited than our proposals which the Minister suggested were

"not on the right lines."—*[Official Report*, 12 April 1994; Vol. 241, c. 96.]

The Government voted against our amendments.

In the Lords, the Government moved the amendment under discussion which incorporated almost all our original proposals. In that debate, Earl Ferrers said:

"it is important that the courts should have power to deal more severely than they do at present with illegal possession of firearms by criminals and their associates."—*[Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 July 1994; Vol. 556, c. 1782.]

Yet again, the Government have been forced to act after pressure from the Opposition. That is yet another climb down, but in so far as it accepts the case that we have made, I welcome it. However, the Government have still not acted to tighten the regulations in relation to mail order. I ask the Minister to give us an undertaking that he will tackle that issue in the next Session.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I welcome the Minister's conversion on this issue. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) rightly said, the Minister opposed the increases in penalties in our debates in Committee.

In Committee, I pointed out to the Minister that there had been a case in which a person had been arrested for possessing a large quantity of weapons. He possessed those weapons not to use them himself, but as an armourer. He hired out weapons to criminals who wished to carry out offences.

I have never believed that we can deal with crime simply by increasing penalties. It is sometimes possible to do that, but more often it is not. However, there are cases such as the one to which I have referred, where it is important to deal with cases where armourers possess weapons. Those people must be dealt with not just as ordinary people unlawfully possessing weapons, but as people who are making a business out of being unlawfully in possession of weapons and who make profits from that. They must be dealt with much more severely. We therefore need laws that allow the courts to deal with worst issue cases.

When that point was put to the Minister, he did not accept it. He said:

"I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North said and I sympathise with the concerns that lie behind it. It is essential for us to ensure that proper penalties are available for unlawful possession of offensive weapons and unlawful dealing in and purchase of firearms. The Government's paramount concern . . . is public safety, but I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has the correct approach. The longer I listened to his speech, the more convinced I was that he was tackling the wrong problem. The existing maximum penalty for possession of an offensive weapon is already substantial and we feel that it adequately reflects the seriousness of the offence and provides the courts with the necessary powers to deal with the worst examples of the offence that come before them."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 15 March 1994; c. 1357.]

The Minister has undergone a great and welcome conversion. It is another example of his road-to-Damascus politics. We hope that he will be converted to other Labour party policies on law and order. Perhaps in due course, he will be saying in his sleep, "I'm tough on crime and the causes of crime." Perhaps that is the first step towards his doing a jig in his sleep to the tune of Die Tannenbaum.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

After Clause 145

Lords amendment: No. 150, insert the following new clause—*Procuring disclosure of computer-held personal information—*

(''Obtaining computer-held information

,—(1) In section 5 of the Data Protection Act 1984 (prohibitions in relation to personal data, including its disclosure), after subsection (5), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

''(6) A person who procures the disclosure to him of personal data the disclosure of which to him is in contravention of subsection (2) or (3) above knowing or having reason to believe that the disclosure constitutes such a contravention shall be guilty of an offence.''.

(2) In consequence of the amendment made by subsection (1) above—

- (a) in subsection (5) of that section, after the word ''other'' there shall be inserted the word ''foregoing''; and
- (b) in section 28 (exemptions: crime and taxation), in subsection (3)—
  - (i) after the word ''contravening'' there shall be inserted the words ''or in the case of section 5(2)(d) procuring the contravention of''; and
  - (ii) after the words ''to make'' there shall be inserted the words ''or (in the case of section 5(2)(d)) to procure''.'')

Read a Second time

Amendments made to the Lords amendment:

(a) in line 4, leave out 'its'

(b) in line 5, leave out 'subsection' and insert 'subsections'.

(c) in line 10, at end insert—

'(7) A person who sells personal data shall be guilty of an offence if (in contravention of subsection (6) above) he has procured the disclosure of the data to him.

(8) A person who offers to sell personal data shall be guilty of an offence if (in contravention of subsection (6) above) he has procured or subsequently procures the disclosure of the data to him.

(9) For the purposes of subsection (8) above, an advertisement indicating that personal data are or may be for sale is an offer to sell the data.

(10) For the purposes of subsections (7) and (8) above, ''selling'', or ''offering to sell'', in relation to personal data, includes selling, or offering to sell, information extracted from the data.

(11) In determining, for the purposes of subsection (6), (7) or (8) above, whether a disclosure is in contravention of subsection (2) or (3) above, section 34(6)(d) below shall be disregarded.''.'.

(d) in line 16, leave out 'word ''contravening''' and insert 'words ''section 26(3)(a) above''.'.

(e) in line 17, leave out from 'words' to 'and' in line 18 and insert

'''or for an offence under section 5(6) above'';'.

(f) in line 20, leave out '5(2)(d)' and insert '5(6)'.
—[*Mr. Maclean.*]

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

8.15 pm

Lords amendment: No. 152, to insert the following new clause—*Local authority powers to provide closed-circuit television—*

.—(1) Without prejudice to any power which they may exercise for those purposes under any other enactment, a local authority may take such of the following steps as they consider will, in relation to their area, promote the prevention of crime or the welfare of the victims of crime—

- (a) providing apparatus for recording visual images of events occurring on any land in their area;
- (b) providing within their area a telecommunications system which, under Part II of the Telecommunications Act 1984, may be run without a licence;
- (c) arranging for the provision of any other description of telecommunications system within their area or between any land in their area and any building occupied by a public authority.

(2) Any power to provide, or to arrange for the provision of, any apparatus includes power to maintain, or operate, or, as the case may be, to arrange for the maintenance or operation of, that apparatus.

(3) Before taking such a step under this section, a local authority shall consult the chief officer of police for the police area in which the step is to be taken.

(4) In this section—

"chief officer of police", in relation to a police area in Scotland, means the chief constable of a police force maintained for that area;

"local authority"—

(a) in England, means a county council or district council;

(b) in Wales, means a county council or county borough council; and

(c) in Scotland, has the meaning given by section 235(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973; and

"telecommunications system" has the meaning given in section 4 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 and "licence" means a licence under section 7 of that Act.

(5) Until 1st April 1996, in this section "local authority" means, in Wales, a county council or district council.")

Read a Second time.

Mr. Michael: I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 21, at end insert—

'(3A) The Secretary of State shall make regulations to control the use of any apparatus provided under subsection (1) above, and such regulation shall provide for—

- (a) restrictions on such apparatus to prevent, where practicable, the surveillance of private residential premises without the consent of the majority of the occupiers of those premises;
- (b) the provision for the display of notices to the public of the existence of any system using the apparatus;
- (c) the selection, training and supervision of the operators of the apparatus;
- (d) arrangements for the storage of, and access to, any recordings made;
- (e) arrangements for access to the recordings by the subjects of those recordings;
- (f) arrangements for the destruction of the recordings.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment (b) in line 27, leave out 'or district council' and insert

'district council, London borough council or the Common Council of the City of London.'.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Lords amendment No. 176.

Mr. Michael: I will be brief because the amendment offers me an opportunity to raise a point and I hope to have a positive response from the Minister. Amendment (a) is narrower in scope than we would have liked. It requires a code of conduct in relation to closed-circuit television systems that are introduced and operated by local authorities. We should like a code of conduct that goes much wider than that, because local authorities are much more likely to be responsible and accountable to public interest than are other bodies that operate such systems.

The amendment gives us an opportunity to point out the need for a code of conduct and I hope that the Minister will respond positively by accepting that there is a need for discussion on the issue and to achieve a code of conduct that would apply more widely than that proposed in our amendment. That is why we do not intend to press the amendment to a Division.

The reason for a code of conduct in relation to local government CCTV systems—I will not refer to systems outside local authority operations, but the same case would apply to them—is that organisations should learn from the experience that has been garnered by using systems in a variety of different circumstances. I say that, because some systems have been found to be unsuitable or inappropriate, either technically or in their location because lessons had not been learnt before they were installed.

We should learn from best practice because there is now a wealth of experience around the country—some positive and some not so positive. In other words, sometimes the investment has been cost effective and sometimes it has not. There is also a need to ensure that the public are properly protected against misuse such as inappropriate access to recordings or a failure to destroy them after a reasonable period.

The Lords amendment gives local authorities the power to provide CCTV. I understand that it has always been thought that that power existed and it is simply a matter of confirming that that is so and clearing up an anomaly following a query by a district auditor. It is reasonable that the point should be cleared up and that there should be no doubt. We therefore support the amendment in its attempt to achieve that.

My colleagues and I have encouraged that power. CCTV brings about greater protection of the public in city centres, for example. I argued for police access to the traffic television system in the centre of Cardiff for precisely that purpose—it helps in targeting police activity and it can discourage crime. Our concern is to make sure that that is done properly.

Of course, the greater infringement on liberty is to be the victim of a crime, which is why we support the use of such equipment in proper circumstances. At the same time, we must ensure that there is a proper system of regulation to prevent abuse. That becomes more necessary when the availability of such systems becomes wider and more comprehensive. Many local authorities and other organisations are using such systems. In general, the appropriate requirements are made by authorities when they set them up.

The Government should accept the need for such protection, whether it is by the police, local trusts, police authorities or large institutions such as health authorities in locations to which the public have access. As I have said, local authorities are more likely to observe a regulatory system—many that I have visited and inspected are doing so responsibly—than are other bodies, including some public bodies that are not as accountable to the electorate as local authorities are. The principle that is put forward is that there should be established a basic standard which should apply to CCTV schemes.

In May 1992, in the foreword to the Police Research Group publication, "Closed Circuit Television in Public Places", the then Under-Secretary of State wrote:

> "Further work is now under way looking at the actual effect CCTV systems have on crime and disorder in the streets."

The results of that work have not yet been published. They should be published. There should be an opportunity for discussion and a code of conduct, based on positive experience and on experience of cost effectiveness. I hope that the Minister will assure us that that will be his concern also and that it would be appropriate for the House to return to the issue not just in relation to local authorities but in the wider context at the earliest possible opportunity. I hope that he will respond positively to those suggestions.

Mr. Bennett: I support the plea of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) for a code of practice. I have always had considerable reservations about people being under television surveillance, but, having seen in the Stockport area in my constituency the use of closed-circuit television in big tower blocks, having noted how it has greatly improved the environment for the people who live in them, and having seen such equipment in Ashton town centre, I am prepared to accept that, provided there is a proper code of practice, the benefits might outweigh the disadvantages. However, it is very important that we have a proper code of practice and proper standards.

There are housing blocks in the Stockport part of my constituency. The housing authority has been tempted to increase the number of cameras, but not the number of staff who supervise them. If someone watches screens for a long time, their concentration tends to wander. If we are not careful, some systems might be undermined because they are not effective and people might not realise that if they misbehave on camera action will be taken. It is important that standards are set, that people are not expected to watch screens for long periods without proper breaks and that they have to watch only a reasonable number of screens.

As for the Tameside part of my constituency, I pay tribute to Tameside council, which took the trouble to operate a town centre scheme. That involved the council putting up money. It was a major initiative by the council to defend and enhance Ashton town centre. Councillors also took the trouble to look at other places in the country where such schemes are in operation. They saw that the best systems involved police co-operation and supervision. Having looked at the system in operation in Ashton, the police understand the civil liberties issues involved. I wish that the installers of the equipment had shown the same efficiency, and I hope that some of the teething troubles have now been overcome.

As a member of the Environment Select Committee, I have also looked at one or two other town centre schemes. Standards vary considerably according to who has supervision, whether it is private security people or the police, and particularly according to who has access to areas in which cameras are located. Having seen the amusement of young security officers following a group of young girls on camera, I can understand that there is considerable scope for misuse. Now that the best cameras can zoom in on a car and enable us not only to read its number plate but to determine whether a tax disc is present, there is considerable scope for misuse.

I plead with the Government not only to make it necessary for local authority schemes to have a clear code of practice but to make sure that all schemes are subject to an enforceable code of practice to ensure that we benefit from closed-circuit television rather than infringe individuals' civil rights.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I welcome the amendment and support the plea for a code of practice. I have been trying for some time in the town of Bedworth in my constituency, with the local chamber of commerce which was recently set up through the good offices of a number of local traders, the police and the local authority, to raise funding for a CCTV system in the town centre. We have had increasing problems with crime in Bedworth. One of the senior security officers for Boots the Chemists said that many of her workers refused to work in the town because of their fear of people coming into the shop and causing difficulties when stopped for shoplifting.

The police, the local authority and I thought that CCTV might be one way to approach the issue. The police have also adopted a policy of community policing, which is very welcome, but we think that CCTV might provide an added incentive for criminals to stay away from the town.

The problem, as always, is finance. The local authority has problems in finding the necessary money and the traders are hard-pressed after a very difficult recession. We need more Government funding. The Government have now come forward with a proposal involving about £40 million for a bidding system for local authorities. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that. Newspaper reports this week suggest that that figure is singularly inadequate. There is great demand among local authorities for such systems because of increased crime. The Government need to recognise the importance of CCTV and put more resources behind a bidding system, if that is the way they wish to operate it. CCTV is an important way of reducing crime. It is certainly supported by the police, and I very much hope that we will see more such Government action.

Mr. Beith: Closed-circuit television has proved to be a very useful tool in combating crime, particularly in town centres and on sites where there are considerable areas to watch. The way to regard CCTV is not, as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) feared, as the surveillance of people, but as the surveillance of places to ensure that they remain safe.

It is only when people do wrong that they have anything to fear from CCTV. That has been the experience of police-operated systems in Northumbria. Police in Newcastle and Berwick are soon to use CCTV. When trained and accountable police officers are in charge of the operation, one has confidence that abuse can be avoided. There is no doubt about its value. It has led to many prosecutions in the force area. None of the prosecutions in the Northumbria force area has been contested because the evidence on the film is so clear that guilty pleas are forthcoming immediately, which is a useful indication.

Obviously, there has been some misplacement of crime from areas served by closed-circuit television to other areas, which has been a bit of a spur to other places to set up systems. One of the features of the use of closed-circuit television is that it has been necessarily, until now, a crime prevention initiative involving the business community and others simply to finance the operation. It is good that businesses and other organisations have got together to set up such systems. I hope that we can continue to have a partnership through Government funding, business funding and community funding of various sorts so that everyone is involved in making a success of the scheme.

There will be an increasing need for codes of practice, not least because of the operation of closed-circuit television by people other than the police. The line between the proper use of closed-circuit television to protect the public and surveillance could easily be crossed, and we must build up a satisfactory means of preventing that. The operation is still in its infancy.

The Government can build up the kind of practice to which the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) referred, but they should be actively doing so in consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers. I hope that the Minister can give us a commitment that he intends to keep a close eye on both the valuable development of closed-circuit television crime fighting and the safeguards that it will need.

8.30 pm

Mr. Maclean: The Government have always backed, and consistently and enthusiastically welcome, the development of closed-circuit television schemes. There are dozens of highly successful schemes around the country. Most work with some Government safer cities funding or with money from the single regeneration budget in partnership with the police, local councils and, importantly, the business community.

The schemes have been successful, and the initiative that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced this week will build on that success and get the schemes into some of the smaller towns and cities because some of the large centres are already covered by many hundred-thousand-pound schemes. Recently, I opened a scheme in Warwickshire, and a scheme in Liverpool which I opened cost about £350,000. We should now like to see the initiative get down into smaller towns.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) was not generous in his remarks about the initiative that we have announced. We expect dozens more smaller towns and cities to take some of the money and use it as pump priming for their partnerships.

Opposition Members claim that they invented the concept of partnership, admittedly years after the Government had been involved in such partnership initiatives. We will not hand over wadges of money to towns and tell them that it is the complete sum for CCTV and that they should get on with it. We will invite towns to get together with the private sector and the council in

[Mr. Maclean]

their area, together with the police and any other people, and come to us with an initiative. They should then go into the partnership bidding round to get some of the millions of pounds that we are making available. That is how the partnerships already work; that is how we intend them to work.

Of course, the Government accept the need for close consultation between the police, local councils and the community when CCTV systems are being planned and developed. We are not convinced, however, that statutory regulations to control the use of CCTV are necessary or, indeed, desirable. Regulations setting out a statutory code of practice would inevitably be prescriptive and would not allow for flexible local responses, and that is where the tremendous success of CCTV has been.

Shortly, we will issue a good practice guidance booklet on the way in which CCTV can contribute to combating crime. The guidance is aimed at town centre managers, crime prevention partnerships and other groups that may be considering setting up CCTV schemes. The guide will recommend that a local code of practice should be developed for each scheme. As schemes vary widely in their nature and extent, with different operating requirements and different aims and objectives, each scheme will need an individually tailored code of practice to meet its local needs.

Our good practice guide will include advice about the main issues that a code of practice should address. It includes issues such as staffing, control room procedures, video tape handling and storage, spot checks and liaison with the police—in essence, the issues covered in the amendment.

The Association of Chief Police Officers has issued a policy statement on CCTV which supports that approach and offers the advice and guidance of the police service in developing effective schemes and codes of practice. Therefore, in view of the advice offered by ACPO, and in view of the Government's good practice guide which will be issued shortly, there is no need to establish a bureaucratic statutory framework to enforce the adoption of the codes of practice.

Mr. Michael: With the permission of the House, I shall reply. I see that the Minister could not resist noting the references in the debate to the partnership approach. I cannot resist reminding him yet again that the Morgan report lies gathering dust on the shelf and that the Government have voted down the necessary statutory support for the partnership approach on a number of occasions in debates on both the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill and the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill. The Minister's recognition of our claim of having pushed forward the partnership approach both in the House and through the actions of many excellent Labour local authorities is well placed.

What we should have heard from the Minister is a promise to publish the research—presumably, it is the research on which his guidance will be based. We do not want more pontification by Ministers; we want a debate and advice which will be helpful for those operating such schemes. Policy statements and advice notes, whether from the Government or the Association of Chief Police Officers, do not deal with the maverick users of CCTV, and that is what is required to provide protection for the public.

As I said before, we are well aware that local authorities in particular and many police forces have worked together in a positive way and, indeed, have placed sensible limitations and requirements on their schemes. The Minister again fails to recognise that there is a need to regulate those who do not voluntarily restrict themselves in a sensible way. Indeed, there is a wider need for regulation of the private security industry, especially in view of recent developments that threaten, in some cases, the safety and good order of local communities. I hope that that will be recognised by the Minister. I regret that it was not recognised in his response to this short debate. However, as I said earlier, because of the nature of the amendment, which is necessarily narrower than the one that we wished to table, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lords amendment agreed to.[Special Entry.]

Lords amendment No. 153 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Clause 147

SALE OF TICKETS FOR DESIGNATED FOOTBALL MATCHES BY UNAUTHORISED PERSONS

Lords amendment: No. 154, in page 120, line 6 at end insert—

("(6) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument amend the provisions of this section so that they apply to any sporting event for which 6,000 or more tickets are issued for sale.")

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendment (a), in line 3, leave out from 'instrument' to 'sporting' in line 4 and insert

'apply this section, with such modifications as he thinks fit, to such sporting event or category of'

Government amendment (b), in line 4, after 'sale' insert 'as he thinks fit'

Government amendment (c), in line 4, at end insert—

'(7) An order under subsection (6) above may provide that—

(a) a certificate (a "ticket sale certificate") signed by a duly authorised officer certifying that 6,000 or more tickets were issued for sale for a sporting event is conclusive evidence of that fact;

(b) an officer is duly authorised if he is authorised in writing to sign a ticket sale certificate by the home club or the organisers of the sporting event; and

(c) a document purporting to be a ticket sale certificate shall be received in evidence and deemed to be such a certificate unless the contrary is proved.

(8) Where an order has been made under subsection (6) above, this section also applies, with any modifications made by the order, to any part of the sporting event specified or described in the order, provided that 6,000 or more tickets are issued for sale for the day on which that part of the event takes place.'

Lords amendment No. 170.

Mr. Pendry: Clearly, we welcome the fact that Lord Donoughue's amendment was carried in another place with considerable cross-party support. I am glad that the Government have listened and accepted the amendment.

However, what we want from the Government tonight is acceptance that the principles that lie behind it are with them as well.

Following the Home Secretary's speech in Bournemouth, I am sure that the Minister will wish to heed the calls from the Police Federation to outlaw ticket touting at all major sporting events by supporting the Lords amendment, as well as enacting it. That is what many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to hear from the Minister tonight.

I understand that the All England lawn tennis club at Wimbledon, the Test and County Cricket Board, the Rugby Football Union and the Professional Golfers Association figure among those bodies which have written to hon. Members on both sides of the House with sporting interests—*[Interruption.]* If the Minister for Transport in London would be quiet for a moment, perhaps he might join us in supporting the amendment. Those bodies have written to Members on both sides of the House who entertain sporting interests. As I said on Report, this is a criminal justice Bill as well as a public order Bill. That is why we urge the Minister further to consider his position. There is clearly a criminal aspect, as well as a public order aspect, to ticket touting.

Similarly, we would urge the Minister to act on the overwhelming evidence pointing to the harm that ticket touting is doing to sports other than football, a point that the Government accepted earlier in the Bill's passage. According to the chief executive of the All England club at Wimbledon, ticket touting creates

> "a market for criminally obtained goods".

Two years ago at Wimbledon, tickets were stolen from the offices of the legitimate holder— *[Interruption.]* If the Minister for Transport in London and the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) will listen to me, they may learn something. Within 24 hours, the tickets in question had been sold through a number of different outlets, all ticket touts, to unsuspecting victims who lost their money.

In another place, my noble Friend Lord Donoughue eloquently described the illegal activities of touts at Wimbledon, before the Lords gave the Bill its Third Reading. The Minister will also recall similar examples that I gave on Report—the German gentleman who was ripped off to the tune of £50,000 buying tickets for Wimbledon. I and others will be happy to supply the Minister with many more such examples— *[Interruption.]* There are not many Tory Members in the Chamber, but they are certainly an unruly bunch, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We should remember that Lord Justice Taylor made his recommendations more than four years ago. Only a few months ago, I was sent a letter by an official of a major premier league football club stating:

> "In our view the typical ticket tout has changed significantly over recent years. Nowadays they appear much more aggressive when they approach our staff, and threats of physical violence or damage to their cars are common place. Customers approaching the box office are often intimidated into purchasing tickets on behalf of touts."

If the Minister needs further proof that touting gives rise to real crimes in a number of sports, I and others can supply him with evidence that fraud, theft and intimidation are all commonplace in ticket touting.

In the past, the Government have maintained that they do not see the activities of ticket touts as criminal. Over the years, I have received many letters from Ministers claiming that the aspects of criminality so clearly associated with ticket touting can be dealt with under existing law. The Minister himself repeated that argument on Report. So why, in his report, did Lord Chief Justice Taylor say, in justification of creating a new offence after the Hillsborough disaster:

> "Police should not have to stretch the law to deal with a public mischief. There should be a specific prohibition which the police can then enforce"?

That is what the police want; it is what the sporting bodies want; and it is what many in this House want, as the Minister must by now have realised.

The soundness of the principle behind my noble Friend's amendment caused Lord Ferrers to admit in the course of opposing it, on 19 July, that the Government were "in some difficulty". That difficulty can be avoided tonight by a clear-cut commitment on the part of the Minister to the effect that criminality in ticket touting will be carefully monitored with a view to enacting the new powers. We shall not oppose the Home Secretary's measure tonight, as we agree that there is likely to be a need for a discriminatory use of the powers. After all, the Home Secretary's modifications mean that he will be left to act as he sees fit. If he wants to add to his long list of duties and responsibilities, who am I to disagree? I hope that when he does act, his actions will be based on the real situation, not on the situation that he wishes existed.

We should also appreciate clarification from the Minister of how the clause will be implemented. How will he protect the ordinary, honest fan from possible prosecution if he buys a ticket for a friend? As the Bill stands, the fan who asks a friend to buy him a ticket in advance and then pays for it at face value on the train to a match or in another public place will be asking his friend to commit an offence. I am sure that that is not the Minister's intention, but what direction will he give the police and courts for such circumstances? These measures are designed to protect genuine sports fans; there should be no possibility, therefore, of their suffering as a result of the measures.

I trust that the Minister will be able to clarify the matter and to assure us that the wider powers will be enacted. I should add that we do appreciate the Government's movement on this issue since last we debated ticket touting. All we now ask is that the Government show rather more determination in future to eradicate the growing menace of ticket touts.

8.45 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Originally the clause was intended to deal specifically with football, but the amendment seeks to extend its powers. If we agree to the amendment, as the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) says, the powers will extend to all sporting activities for which 6,000 or more tickets are issued for sale. That covers practically every large sporting event in the country.

In the hon. Gentleman's remarks just now we heard a great deal of envy and all the old stuff about hard cases making bad law. We always hear that when the subject of ticket touts comes up. As I have often said in this House, ticket touts are street traders. They are not necessarily especially nice people; they may be reprobates, but what

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

they are doing is not illegal and by and large it causes no offence—except to people who seem to object to touts making extra profits. That is pure envy.

My objection to the amendment is that it will widen the scope of the original intention far more than anybody anticipated. The clause was drawn up specifically with the Hillsborough tragedy in mind, when it was suspected that the sale of tickets on the day to opposing teams' supporters, who then got mixed up in the ground, might have been a contributory factor in the disaster. In fact, as I understand it, the tragedy was largely due to late entrants to the game and to crushing, not to internecine warfare between the two groups of supporters.

The point is that there has been a huge growth in the perfectly legitimate business of the sale and resale of sporting event tickets through agents. The amendments, however, will require all agents to be licensed or authorised in writing by a home club or by the organisers of a match. That virtually gives the people running a match control over the whole sale process. We do not accept that for other industries or businesses. Someone making socks in a factory does not control everyone who sells the socks on or distributes them—so why should we apply such rules to this industry?

A lot of hospitality entertaining goes on at football matches and at Wimbledon, and I imagine that some of our colleagues in this place have benefited from it on occasion. Unfortunately I have never had that privilege, but I still believe that the original wording was too loose, and that the measure should surely be restricted to the sale of tickets on the day, to enable those trading in tickets legitimately before a match to continue to do so. We should certainly not extend the idea to other sports. There is no evidence of the sort of disorder that the clause was intended to deal with being caused by the resale of tickets by street traders.

I believe that we have given the Home Secretary a dangerous extension of his powers. He will be able to make decisions by order and by statutory instrument. We all know that that means that he can more or less do what he likes on the nod without having to come back to this place. We know, too, that there are plenty of hon. Members who will always speak against street traders and touts, but very few who will stand up for their rights. But the point about a democratic system is the fact that even those of whom we do not necessarily approve still have the right to do what is legitimate, lawful and harmless. I disagree with the legislation and with the amendments, which would massively increase the powers that I have described. I urge the Government, who are dedicated to reducing restrictions, licensing and controls, not to go down that path and to reject the amendment.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) spoke with her usual eloquence and clarity. She is absolutely right, as it seems remarkable that the Government, who have rightly been set on the path of deregulation, have seen fit to bring before the House—as they have done on a previous occasion—an amendment and a clause which will regulate the sales of tickets for sporting events. Frankly, such sales have nothing to do with us and for that, among other reasons, I regret that this debate had to take place.

May I address some remarks to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) who is an old foe but has been promoted to what is known as shadow Minister for Sport. He showed tonight that he is the shadow Minister for Spoil-sport. He intended to try and stop those poor souls who—unlike him and me—do not have the privilege of access to tickets to sporting events. We have shared in attending notable sporting events at the behest and gratuitous request of other honourable bodies. I shall not say which commercial interests they might have represented. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to state which sporting events we have attended and who has been our host on those occasions—be they possibly tobacco companies—that is entirely up to him, but I shall not press that point.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde and I have enjoyed such events, but he is seeking to spoil other people's enjoyment and to tell them that they cannot get a ticket because those available are not legitimate and they cannot go to an authorised agent. The rugby fan from Wales who uses his life savings, or sells the tiles off his house, for the chance of buying a ticket in a public house outside Twickenham to see his beloved team soundly beaten by the English side—as they usually are—would be denied that opportunity by the Bill, and more particularly by the provisions of the amendment.

I must briefly declare an interest, as I am a member of the Marylebone cricket club and also of a rugby club. I suppose that some might say that in sporting terms I am the Stan Flashman of the House of Commons. Several hon. Members—I see one has just arrived in the Chamber—have asked me if I could, quite legitimately, obtain for them tickets for certain sporting events. I confess that I have not declared that interest in the Register of Members' Interests because I gained no financial advantage for so doing. I did it on the basis that I felt sporting interest should spread throughout colleagues on both sides of the House. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay said that she had missed out on my generosity and will certainly try to put that right.

On the basis of the amendment and the clause before the House I fear that my activities will not merely be curtailed but may cease altogether and many hon. Members would be extremely disappointed if they were no longer able to obtain tickets for such events.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay said, there is a worry that, as a result of the Government amendment, the Secretary of State will be able to take powers to extend the provision beyond the range of football. That is a great worry. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State would not even consider that such powers might be necessary during the lifetime of this or any Conservative Government. Should the shadow Minister, the spoil-sport, ever be in a position of power, however, and see some disorder at a boxing match—perhaps like the disorder that the chairman of the Conservative party described so eloquently a few weeks ago as a minor difficulty within the crowd—he would immediately say that tickets could be sold only by authorised agents.

I am not totally against tickets being sold through authorised agents. The Rugby Football Union, which the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde mentioned, has a good system whereby it sells tickets through clubs and has virtually cut out the chance of criminal activity through ticket touting.

I object to our having to pass legislation to ensure that only authorised agents can sell tickets. If the sports wish to sell tickets in that way, that is up to them. It is not for us to direct them in that way. That is why my hon. Friend the Minister of State is right to reject the Lords amendment. He knows that several of us do not like the clause in any way. If he can say anything to mitigate the damage to many companies, especially corporate hospitality companies—my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay was right about that—and the fact that genuine sportsmen will not be able to watch the events, I hope he will respond.

This is an ill-thought-out proposal, prompted by the Opposition in jealousy and envy because they cannot get the tickets that we legitimate sports fans can get hold of and it should have been rejected before now.

Mr. Maclean: I much enjoyed the speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). How spot on they were on so many issues. I have often had to disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay—whether on salmonella, when I was an environment Minister or, at times, on law and order issues—but I agreed with almost every word that she said tonight.

In the Lords, we accepted the amendment that powers to deal with ticket touting be extended to other sporting events for which 6,000 or more tickets are issued for sale. We accepted it purely on the basis that it did not undermine Government policy on ticket touting per se, since any decision to extend the offence by means of the order-making power would be taken only should those public order and public safety considerations, which we all agree apply to football, become a feature in other sporting areas. The Government's position in that respect was made clear during debate on the amendment.

I want to make the position clear. The essential feature of the clause is not to deal with ticket touting per se, or with some of the problems that sporting organisations should be controlling. They are not going to pass the buck to the Government and order police resources to be used to control tickets for their matches when they should be doing that job themselves. The Government will become involved and will use the powers when we witness public disorder, or when public disorder begins to increase at any other sporting matches which necessitates action in the same way that it necessitated action at football matches. I hope that I can reassure my hon. Friends on that point.

9 pm

I must inform the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde that we shall not be telling the police what they should do in this matter. The law is perfectly clear. It does not penalise the individual who plans to go to a match, discovers that he cannot go and passes his ticket to a friend. The law does not catch such people. So I hope that on that basis I have been able to reassure my hon. Friends that we are not introducing measures that we intend to use merely to clobber ticket touting, out of some anti-market feeling or spite. We are introducing powers that I will advise the Secretary of State to use only if we should witness public disorder at sporting events similar to the disorder that we have witnessed at football matches.

On that basis, I hope that my hon. Friends will not vote against the amendment and that they will be happy to agree with their lordships in the said amendment.

Government amendments (a) to (c) made to the Lords amendment.

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 155, after clause 147, to insert the following new clause—*Touting for hire car services*—

" .—(1) Subject to the following provisions, it is an offence, in a public place, to solicit persons to hire vehicles to carry them as passengers.

(2) Subsection (1) above does not imply that the soliciting must refer to any particular vehicle nor is the mere display of a sign on a vehicle that the vehicle is for hire soliciting within that subsection.

(3) No offence is committed under this section where soliciting persons to hire licensed taxis is permitted by a scheme under section 10 of the Transport Act 1985 (schemes for shared taxis) whether or not supplemented by provision made under section 13 of that Act (modifications of the taxi code).

(4) It is a defence for the accused to show that he was soliciting for passengers for public service vehicles on behalf of the holder of a PSV operator's licence for those vehicles whose authority he had at the time of the alleged offence.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.

(6) In this section—

"public place" includes any highway and any other premises or place to which at the material time the public have or are permitted to have access (whether on payment or otherwise); and

"public service vehicle" and "PSV operator's licence" have the same meaning as in Part II of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981.

(7) In section 24(2) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (arrestable offences), after the paragraph (i) inserted by section 137 of this Act there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(j) an offence under section (*Touting for hire car services*) (touting for hire car services) of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994;"."

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—[*Dr. Liam Fox.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 167.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I shall say a supportive word on the introduction of the clause. I expected to see other hon. Members standing up to protest against the illiberal proposition that one clamps down on people who are breaking the law. In London in particular—it may apply elsewhere—touting by vehicles for hire has become a pest in many public places, most commonly at railway stations and pubs and clubs late at night. It is not just a pest—or illegal—but it often puts together poor drivers, who do not know what they are doing and are out to rip people off, and people who have just arrived or who are not as capable as they might have been at other times of the day and who are most able to be ripped off. That is the real mischief. It is also important—this is a less frequently-argued point—that such touting adds to the nuisance and noise disturbance in an area. A load of minicabs queuing up around a block or station to take people away does not add to the general orderliness and civility of an environment.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

I welcome the fact that the Government—and in particular the Minister for Transport in London, whom I welcome to the debate—listened to the pleas which came in this case mainly from respectable taxi drivers and reputable minicab firms. Both have parts to play, and the Minister will be deliberating further on exactly what parts. He will not tell us tonight, but he and I know that his proposals are awaited with keen interest outside this place.

If we manage to clobber those who have been touting illegally, we will be making progress. I hope that, as soon as the measure is law, there will be a noticeable clampdown on the people responsible. I hope that the Minister will talk with his colleagues, to the Home Secretary in his role as the police authority for London and to the Commissioner and make it clear that the law will now be enforced. I ask the Minister to make sure that we have a tough few months so we deal with a problem that has been a plague, particularly in London, for months. These people must be put out of business, and they must be nicked on the occasions when they break the law. I welcome the law, and the public will be better served by it.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 157 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 160 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 163 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 169 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 175 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 188 and 189 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to [some with Special Entry].

Lords amendments Nos.315 and 316 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to [some with Special Entry].

Lords amendments Nos. 335 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Committee appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments Nos. 1, 2 to 5, 7, 8, 10 to 18, 21, 79, 125, 131, 157, 160, 163, 169, 175, 188, 189, 315, 316 and 335 to the Bill: Mr. Nicholas Baker; Mr. Derek Conway; Mr. John Fraser; Mr. David Maclean and Mr. Alun Michael; Three to be the quorum.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

To withdraw immediately.

Community Care, Herefordshire

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

9.11 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Usually at this time of night an hon. Member is on his or her feet complaining about something. Indeed, the Adjournment debate came about to enable grievances to be aired. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for coming to the House to respond. My purpose in airing this subject tonight is not to gripe but to share with him and the House some good news. I am particularly grateful to Madam Speaker for selecting this topic from the many bids that are submitted for debate at this time of night.

The formal title that appears on the Order Paper, "Community care for physical disability in Herefordshire," conceals the real reason for the debate. A charitable organisation known as Herefordshire Lifestyles, which has been in existence for some nine years, is making a major impact on the lives of those disabled people in Herefordshire fortunate enough to have been referred to it or to have found it.

Herefordshire Lifestyles is about enabling disabled people to pioneer their own integration into the community. The organisation came about as a result of the fortuitous confluence of the ideas of five senior people in the caring services who realised that there was a missing dimension. That was back in 1985, when Ray Brown, the assistant general manager of the health authority in Hereford, Eric Beatty, the area director of social services for Hereford, Wendy Francis, the district physiotherapist, Micheline Robson-Ward, the occupational therapist, and Len Gale, the specialist careers officer, put their heads together and came up with that approach to the needs of the disabled. In effect, it turned how the services had been delivered in the past on its head. Their way recognises that disabled people want to be regarded as equal members of society. It enables disabled individuals to be in the driving seat of their destiny and to marshal the various agencies from there, which is precisely the opposite of what usually takes place.

Given the assistance of a volunteer, a disabled person is in a position to say, "OK, I have seven days in a week. What do I want to do with that time so as to meet my needs and personal objectives? What about work? What about going to college to obtain new skills? I lost mine when I became disabled. What about mobility? What about the need for company? What are my personal ambitions?" In that way, people come up with constructive proposals and plans for their future. The Lifestyles input and expertise helps disabled people to make things happen.

The developed package worked out with the client is reviewed every six months. In that way, disabled people make tremendous progress and develop in terms of both their work and their residence, with many of them able to continue living in their own homes, out of residential care or hospitals, in a variety of ways.

The outstanding feature of Lifestyles is the involvement of the disabled themselves in helping other disabled people. Indeed, the involvement of disabled people in all aspects of the organisation, work and structure, singles it out as being different from anything else that I have experienced. The point that I want to emphasise as much as possible is that the work that these people are doing on behalf of their clients does not duplicate other agencies; it is complementary and helpful.

A wealth of information, in many forms, is available to the disabled, but if one does not speak or understand the jargon it is difficult to comprehend or to put in context. The help given by a Lifestyles volunteer is, as it was put to me, rather like having somebody to read the telephone directory when one is in a strange country and does not understand the language. Then, it all comes into place. The Lifestyles volunteers provide the necessary help for people to get around in the system. For Herefordshire Lifestyles, what started from very small beginnings is now an organisation with 55 volunteers who each give an average of 100 hours a year, which is a substantial voluntary input into the important work it does for its clients.

Of course, there is a financial dimension. I pay tribute to Mr. Len Gale, who abandoned what might be described as a safe haven within the careers service for the precarious position of executive director of Herefordshire Lifestyles. He has dedicated himself to the project. The financial future of Herefordshire Lifestyles is not secure; it is precarious. Until 1987, it had no budget at all. The Spastics Society—or Scope, as it is now called—gave it its first break with a commitment to cover a year on behalf of some of its clients. That enabled the provision of a small operating base.

It would be unkind to say that, since then, the project has staggered on, because it has in fact progressed very smoothly. However, financially it has staggered on on a month-to-month, hand-to-mouth basis with never more than a short-term view of its future. Over the years, it has been aided in its work by such eminent charities as the Nuffield Provincial Hospital Trust, Comic Relief, the Hereford and Worcester training and enterprise council—for which it has done valuable work—and social services, not to mention the Rowntree Trust and the King Edward VII Fund. I am pleased to say that the Eveson Trust has enabled the retention of a fundraiser for a year—an addition that is very much appreciated and needed in the light of its £100,000 budget for 1994-95.

At present, about 100 people are benefiting, but there are many, many more who could benefit, not only in Herefordshire but across the country. That is one reason why I wanted to raise the matter tonight. Herefordshire Lifestyles would like to be able to develop what it is already doing on behalf of a resident who is the responsibility of Suffolk county council—a referee of the Spastics Society for whom the county council has long-term responsibility. It provides the money necessary for the care of that individual and that money is ring fenced. Lifestyles then works out the appropriate package. In effect, it is working as a broker on behalf of its participants and procuring the best and most suitable package for each individual as an individual. The project is highly tailored to the needs of the recipients and a reflection of the Government's policy of community care. Lifestyles would like to be the recipient of finance, ring fenced on behalf of the client, so that it can work out a package that enables the community care objectives to be met.

I have mentioned the "people benefit", but there is also a cost benefit. In practical terms, the benefit is very much in the form of a stitch in time that saves nine. Lifestyles' contacts mean that social services can be alerted before a crisis happens, such as a carer collapsing under the strain or a major problem developing. Action can be taken in a measured way before matters develop into an emergency.

For many other people, the project offers an alternative to using social services departments and provides a useful tool for social services to achieve goals that they would otherwise be stretched to achieve, given their own financial limitations, as obliged by law. In addition, it becomes possible for disabled people to use the ordinary facilities of the community rather than special ones. I am told by those involved in the Herefordshire Lifestyles project that that is an important objective for a disabled person. The scheme meets both society's objectives and those of disabled people. It is possible to see Lifestyles as the missing component of the community care model, acting at the interface between purchasers and providers, and enabling the client to obtain the best and most effective value from the system.

The project provides a good gearing mechanism. The concept needs to be developed on a far wider basis than that of Herefordshire. The efforts of Len Gale and others have resulted in 10 nascent Lifestyles organisations in other parts of the country— north Dorset, Salisbury, Swindon, Trowbridge, Cirencester, Stroud, Worcester, Sandwell and Exeter. But Herefordshire is the most advanced and developed; it is the pioneer. All the projects are staggering from one financial uncertainty to another and existing from hand to mouth.

My hon. Friend the Minister will know that sections 1 and 2 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 have not yet been implemented. The development of the concept that underlines Herefordshire Lifestyles provides a value-for-money way forward as it can put in place those two important elements of that legislation. For my hon. Friend the Minister, who has to deal with realities, there is a distinct cost benefit involved in developing the concept.

I should like my hon. Friend to work out how the Lifestyles concept can be spread nationwide to the benefit of all physically disabled people. I want disabled people throughout the country to have what some of the disabled people in Herefordshire have. Herefordshire Lifestyles has put much effort into spreading the word, and not without success. But effort spent in that direction is effort not spent on Herefordshire Lifestyles' intended objective, which is to work to the benefit of Herefordshire's disabled.

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can set up what might loosely be described as a task force or working party or study group which can look at the Herefordshire Lifestyles experience, see how it can be extended and report to my hon. Friend with its recommendations. Perhaps he can use his good offices to promulgate awareness of the concept and can give specific advice to social services departments on how they can help the project along. I am sure that a push from him could enable an enormous number of disabled persons to benefit as so many of those in Herefordshire have done. For my part, I want to preserve and develop something good that is already up and running.

I give the last word to some participants in Herefordshire Lifestyles. One said:

> "Lifestyles has made me think that there is more to life than just my disability."

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

Another said:

> "Lifestyles has got me up and doing things",

while yet another said:

> "They help disabled people get a grip on their life and make something of it."

Finally, one participant said:

> "Lifestyles has given my life a real rocket."

Herefordshire Lifestyles has started something good; I want it to expand and I look to my hon. Friend the Minister for help in that.

9.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I was going to say that it was a double pleasure to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), but I think that it may be a triple pleasure. It is indeed a pleasure to respond to my hon. Friend; it is a pleasure to hear what he describes as a good news story; and it is also a pleasure to both of us, and perhaps to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), that this debate is taking place at a reasonable hour, and earlier than some had expected.

I was delighted to hear of the work being done by Herefordshire Lifestyles, and I greatly welcome initiatives that seek to enable disabled people to achieve greater independence and choice in their daily lives. I certainly recognise the important role of advocacy in helping people who, for whatever reason, may have difficulty in making known their views and wishes. The local availability of advocacy and self-advocacy services is an essential part of community care, and Lifestyles seems to be a prime example of the type of scheme that we are actively encouraging local authorities to use and support.

My hon. Friend's success in securing this Adjournment debate means that I have had the opportunity to read some of Herefordshire Lifestyles annual reports and the case studies contained in the 1993 report. They bear witness to the practical help that Lifestyles workers and volunteers have been giving disabled people, giving them the confidence to maximise their opportunities for education, employment and training and trying out new social activities.

My hon. Friend referred to the experience of one participant and I have seen the testimony of another beneficiary of Lifestyles—Jonathan Wood—from a different part of the country, who said:

> "My experience of the Lifestyles project has given me a state of mind which I have not had the opportunity to experience before. Also, a sense of control, and essentially, direction of mine and subsequently others' thoughts and actions. Unlike the majority of forms of provision for disabled people, the advantage with Lifestyles projects is that the client, i.e. the disabled man or woman, is accepted for themselves . . . Lifestyles should continue and thrive. The freedom of choice must not be taken in the form of charity, but a disabled person's fundamental human right . . . they must be given the ability to choose".

I can respond immediately to my hon. Friend's request by saying that I intend to examine more closely the work done in Herefordshire. I shall ask the social services inspectorate to provide me with a detailed report on Lifestyles activities.

This project for the physically disabled in Herefordshire sits well with our overall community care philosophy of putting the needs of users and their carers first and involving them in decisions about the care that they receive. Community care is a complex and long-term undertaking, involving partnerships between public, private and voluntary agencies. None the less, the new arrangements have already brought us the beginnings of care which is better tailored to individual users' needs, for day, domiciliary, residential and nursing care.

We are listening carefully to users and their carers, and increasing numbers of them are beginning to benefit from the improved choices in care options available. People now have a better chance of being offered the help and support that they need to remain in their own homes—as my hon. Friend said, they should have the option of doing that. It is, after all, what most people want.

My hon. Friend mentioned the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, and suggested that what he described could be one way of fulfilling the intentions of that Act. He may well be right. In some ways, the community care reforms have overtaken the remaining provisions of the Act, and the reforms demonstrate our commitment to high-quality community care, responsive to the needs and wishes of service users and carers.

The whole thrust of that policy is towards enablement. We are supporting advocacy projects that aim to help those with particular needs. So, as my hon. Friend said, schemes such as the one that he has highlighted may be the way to develop that aspect of the intentions behind the 1986 Act.

We have made sure that the new community care arrangements have been properly funded, and we shall continue to do so. This year, a further special transitional grant of £736 million is being made available to English local authorities solely for community care. That takes the total over two years to more than £1.2 billion. The grant this year includes an extra £20 million to encourage further development of respite care and other services that give carers a well earned break.

Joint working between local authorities and the NHS is generally good. The agreements that we required to be made on hospital discharge arrangements have had a positive effect in furthering the co-operative working that is so essential if users and their carers are to receive care that is both comprehensive and seamless.

The independent sector has played an important part in community care to date, and I am sure that it will have an important role to play in the future. There is a challenge here for local authorities, the independent sector, and users and carers to work together to shape the future.

I believe that there is still much greater potential for the independent sector to move into day and domiciliary care provision. We have a great opportunity to cultivate and nurture it now—one which I am not prepared to see wasted. Users and carers would not forgive us if we were to miss the opportunity to extend the range of services available to them. They can play a full part in helping us to design the pattern of future provision.

So often, the independent sector brings a freshness of ideas, and a willingness to innovate and be flexible. Built on the solid foundations of their experience and quality, that gives new opportunities for users and carers—and, indeed, for social services and health planners.

We have a continuing commitment to the mixed economy of care. That is how we can secure a full range of services to meet the many diverse needs of vulnerable people all over the country. There is no question of preferring one sector at the expense of others; we simply want good care to be favoured over poor, the cost-effective over the wasteful, the imaginative over the dull, and the best over the adequate, so as to bring about effective, efficient provision for all users, whatever the sector.

From the beginning of our new arrangements, we have had a full monitoring programme so that we can keep a check on progress, and also so that we can see and disseminate best practice and innovation—ideas such as Lifestyles. This year, we shall want local authorities to report on, for example, how assessment is working, how users and carers are being involved and what new services are being bought to extend the range available. That, too, is relevant to Lifestyles.

Earlier this year, we announced our plans to extend the benefits of the citizens charter to community care. That will help us to ensure that users and carers are in a position to make informed choices about the kind of care that they receive. Again, schemes such as Lifestyles can have an increasing role to play.

The Government fully recognise the important role played by carers, and the dedicated and often arduous work involved in caring for a loved one. That is why the community care reforms aim to promote the development of domiciliary, day and respite services for those receiving community care in their own homes.

Our community care reforms make it clear that the voices of users and carers must be heard and listened to by those responsible for purchasing and providing services. To ensure that I as the Minister responsible was also hearing and listening, we set up the National User and Carer Group to give us its experience of community care and to help us monitor its implementation.

However, as my hon. Friend has said, it is locally that advocacy comes into its own. That is true, whether it is advocacy or self-advocacy. It is perhaps the former that we have had the chance to consider tonight—the helping hand and the helping voice enabling people with disabilities to achieve and to enjoy the fullest and highest possible quality of life. In the example given by my hon. Friend this evening, he has shown how there can be the added dimension of disabled people themselves providing the hand and the voice to help others with disabilities. That is real added value.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: I am most grateful for what my hon. Friend has said, and for his commitment. It would be a matter of enormous pleasure if, in his busy schedule, he could find time to come to Hereford and to see what we are doing as part of that visit.

Mr. Bowis: I close by thanking my hon. Friend for taking the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the work of Herefordshire Lifestyles. Yes, I should very much like to visit the scheme and to see it in action when I am next in his area. Meanwhile, I join him in wishing success to all working in the area of Lifestyles and advocacy, and to all who need their services.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 21 October 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

National Health Service (London)

9.34 am

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move,

That this House expresses its anxiety at the current state, and future prospects, of the National Health Service in London; considers that claims made by Health Ministers that there are too many hospital beds in the capital and an over-allocation of health resources, are not proven; notes that many of London's health authorities and trusts face chronic levels of debt due to Government underfunding of the National Health Service, and this along with the 'internal market' is having a devastating impact on London's health service; notes that accident and emergency units work under increasing crisis conditions; notes that the London Ambulance Service has been reduced to the worst ambulance service in the country; notes that general practitioners in many parts of London receive less than the national average to treat their patients and that they face an increasing workload due to the impact of hospital closures; considers that Outer London's health service is also suffering from the Government's health policies resulting in large debts, large waiting lists and repeated cuts in treatment provision; notes that there are 100,000 on waiting lists for treatment in the capital but that the number of people affected is much higher; and so calls upon the Government to heed the voice of the vast majority of Londoners, and to introduce an immediate moratorium on further bed reductions and hospital closures in the capital, whilst work is urgently undertaken to shift the system toward the health care Londoners need.

I am pleased to have won this debate. I have chosen the subject of the national health service in London because it is of great importance to most Londoners. There is considerable concern over its current state and its prospects, if being run down can be called a prospect. For many people, it is a life-and-death issue.

First, I pay tribute to nurses, doctors and other health workers who provide magnificent care, increasingly against the odds and against current trends. I pay tribute to those doctors, nurses and health workers in my local hospital, Whipps Cross, especially those in ward B3, who, for the past four weeks, have been providing excellent care for my mother.

As I said, health workers, in their important caring role, are having to endure increasingly arduous, testing and demoralising conditions. Many of them are exploited and underpaid. Many of the auxiliary nurses and care assistants, for example, work very long hours—13-hour days are not uncommon. One nurse told me that her job description was to assist, but, actually, she and the other nurses ended up doing the full nursing job.

In many ways, it is a cheap labour force in our hospitals, yet the Government are resisting the nurses' pay claim. Ministers have said that they will not allow any claims beyond 2 per cent. That is from a Government who themselves have been tainted with greed and sleaze, and who have allowed the NHS managerial salaries bill to rise by 211 per cent. in the three years between 1989-1990 and 1992-93, while £95 million was spent on redundancy payments for, among others, nurses. Nurses do a tremendous job under increasing pressures, and they should get a pay rise that reflects their productivity and worth.

I could fill a speech such as this about the health service with many examples of individual cases, but I shall cite only a few current cases from my mailbag. There was the case of a man who was discharged from hospital far too early—in this instance, following a vasectomy. He awoke at 11.30 am and was discharged at 12.40. On being discharged, he collapsed and bled internally. His genitals turned black and distended and he was unable to return to work for weeks.

There was the case of one of my constituents who had a tonsillectomy after waiting for two years. He then got a wound infection and a re-growth of the disease tissue and had to begin the whole process of waiting again—three months' wait just to get an out-patient appointment, and he still has a long wait for a second operation. He tells me that he has been suffering pain and side effects for three and a half years.

Then there is the case of the young man with a lump and pain in his groin, who was told that it would take two years to receive an operation on the national health service. He struggled and took out a £1,800 loan for a private operation. It was a good job he did so, because a ruptured hernia was discovered. There was the case of the man in the accident and emergency unit with severe chest pains, who spent eight hours on a trolley waiting for a bed. A pensioner whom I saw last month at Leytonstone station told me that her appointment to see a consultant was for August 1995. All that time, of course, she is not counted as being on the official waiting list.

As I said, citing such cases could take up the entire debate, but I want to move on to the issues and the arguments. It is worth remembering, however, that many thousands of individuals are behind those issues and arguments, and that they are affected by the cuts in our health service.

First, I want to concentrate on the proof that London is not over-bedded. Reports have claimed that London is over-bedded, and Health Ministers have leaned on that claim very heavily for the implementation of their policies. I believe that some, like the Tomlinson report, were set up by the Government deliberately to reach that conclusion.

Tomlinson estimated that between 2,000 and 7,000 beds could become "surplus" before the end of the decade. The Government's document "Making London Better", which was published in February 1993, refers to a rationalisation of acute hospital services involving a reduction in requirement for hospital beds of 15 to 20 per cent.—2,000 to 2,500 beds—over the next four or five years.

Thousands of bed cuts have already taken place, and many more are in the pipeline as a result of the assumption that London is over-bedded. London lost 28 per cent. of its hospital beds between 1986 and 1991. The assumption has been increasingly challenged and discredited. It is challenged on anecdotal evidence that people face long delays before a bed becomes available and that patients have to wait on trolleys. That may be anecdotal, but it is real for many people. Perhaps the

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

Government can explain that contradiction. If that is not caused by a shortage of beds, presumably the cause is the system of management.

Waiting lists continue to rise. That does not imply surplus beds. Perhaps the Government can explain that contradiction. We must also consider cancelled operations. North East Thames regional health authority recently said:

> "Between April and June"

of this year,

> "hospitals across the region recorded 2,408 patients who had their operations were cancelled; 558 of whom were not readmitted within a month."

If there are surplus beds, why are there such levels of cancellations? The Government should explain that.

In its 1992 working paper entitled "Acute Health Services in London", the King's Fund started the more recent academic challenge to the assumption that London is over-bedded. It divided London into three categories: high status, urban and inner deprived. It stated that there were more beds in the deprived sector than the average. However, that was also the case in similar areas such as central Birmingham and Liverpool. That is historic, but the higher than average bed provision matches the pattern of poor health status. Therefore, the higher level of beds corresponds to the higher level of need.

Professor Jarman, a respected academic in the field, has joined the attack on Tomlinson. He said that Tomlinson failed to include geriatric and non-acute beds, and that, when the results are standardised for age, there is only a 0.2 per cent. difference. Professor Jarman continued:

> "Hospital use in London is comparable to national norms, contrary to the claim that Londoners use more hospital services than they should."

Professor Jarman extrapolates that both acute beds and all beds per resident in London are now at the national average.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I congratulate my neighbour, the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), on securing the debate and on being first on the list. That is something I have yet to achieve.

However, I want to question the supposed differences in the Tomlinson and Jarman figures, because there has been some dispute about them. It is clear that Tomlinson had a much tighter focus than Jarman. He considered acute beds specifically, and that led to the original report. However, Jarman widened the issue to all beds in London. There has never been an argument that there are not enough beds in London in all areas. However, the question is, are there too many acute beds and not enough in other areas of necessary treatment? That is where the argument lies.

Mr. Cohen: I believe that Tomlinson has been increasingly discredited. The Government claim that there were too many beds in London overall. That is why the number of beds is being reduced and hospitals are being closed right across London.

Professor Jarman is supported by the King's Fund in its report entitled "London: The Key Facts" which was published in April 1994. The report states that there are the same number of beds in inner London as in other conurbations.

As well as the centres of excellence which are renowned worldwide, London has special health needs. It has higher than average numbers of elderly and housebound people, HIV and AIDS patients, alcoholics, substance abusers, people with severe mental health problems, homeless people, single homeless and refugees. In addition, there are the tourists and commuters, who do not always show up in the official figures.

Professor Jarman has said:

> "Bed closures should take account of London's relatively poorer health and primary care circumstances, longer hospital waiting lists, poorer provision of residential homes and evidence from the Emergency Beds Service of increasing pressure on beds."

In its August report "What's Next for London's Health Care?" the King's Fund called for

> "no more acute reductions overall and great care about A&E Departments, while the pressure on both remain as intense as they are now."

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would have been more helpful if the King's Fund had carried out more original research, rather than simply relying on the research of Professor Brian Jarman? The earlier report in 1992 was excellent, and Tomlinson drew on it. Unfortunately, the latest report is nothing more than a rehash of Jarman's discredited work.

Mr. Cohen: The Conservatives were happy to quote the King's Fund when it led them to close hospitals and beds. However, now that the King's Fund is saying that there should be no more acute closures, it is being renounced by the Conservatives. That argument simply will not do.

London has fewer acute beds per head of population than Newcastle, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield and Leeds. The United Kingdom has fewer acute beds per head of population than Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland and Spain. Paris and Rome have 50 per cent. more beds per head of population than London, and Berlin has twice as many. However, the Government are absolutely obsessed by their false assumption that there are too many beds. As a result, 16 hospitals face a serious risk of closure. They include Guy's, Bart's, the Queen Elizabeth in Hackney, Oldchurch and many others.

There are no longer continuing care beds for the elderly in areas such as Bromley. There are just six in Kingston, and virtually no provision in Greenwich, Harrow, Hounslow and many other parts of London. The choice for many of those elderly Londoners is to struggle alone at home or be forced into private nursing homes, some of which are unmonitored and might well be dangerous. What a way to treat the generation which won the war for this country.

It is not just a question of over-bedding. I want now to consider the allocation of health resources.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I note the hon. Gentleman's admiration for the Italian health service in Rome. I hope that he will not take us in that direction. I speak for an Essex constituency. The hon. Gentleman has compared the number of beds per head of population, but Essex also has big social problems, such as a heavy preponderance of elderly people. We are miles behind because of the London effect, which displaces resources to the centre away from the surrounding home counties. What is the hon. Gentleman's solution to that?

Mr. Cohen: That is not true. I do not really want to jump ahead of my speech, but I will do so now, to inform the hon. Gentleman that waiting lists in Essex have increased by 30 per cent. under this Government. That gives the lie to the hon. Gentleman's argument.

The Government have the false assumption that there are too many beds in London. As I have explained, that simply is not true, and the Government should reverse their attitude in that respect. There is also not an over-allocation of health resources to London.

London has 15 per cent. of the English population, but its share of NHS hospital spending is a fraction over 15 per cent. this year. However, within that is the provision for special needs to which I have referred, London weighting and the higher cost of the teaching hospitals. London is not overfunded. The King's Fund Research Institute, which Conservative Members do not like now that it is producing this kind of information, has said:

"instead of losing £17 million, London should gain an extra £200 million."

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): The hon. Gentleman referred to underfunding in London. I would be interested to know whether he is arguing that resources should be transferred from other regions, or for an increase in health service expenditure. If that is the case, would he share my interest in hearing the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman's response to what he has just said?

Mr. Cohen: The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) is jumping ahead of my speech. There should be increased resources for the national health service in London and throughout the country. One thing that can be done first is stop the chronic wastage in spending. I have some examples. The King's Fund, in "London: The Key Facts", states:

"newly emerging evidence suggests that these weighted capitation targets underestimate the needs of inner city areas."

The Department of Health itself commissioned a York university report, which it received in April, but, in its jargon, it is still being evaluated. The Government are sitting on that report. It is deliberate procrastination. I understand that the report states that, taking account of social deprivation, money would come to many areas of London. It is a scandal that the Government are sitting on those facts while they push ahead with financial cuts and closures.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am sure that my hon. Friend joins me in deploring the Secretary of State's absence, in view of her part in London hospital closures. Does my hon. Friend agree that allocations to health services are important in regard to the new trusts? I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that, in east London, there are applications for trusts on a borough basis for community health services. There is a very good case for them, and they are being applied for, but the Secretary of State has not yet decided. There must be an overriding reason for such trusts as against a three-borough trust, which would tend to be more bureaucratic.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Borough trusts are wanted in his area of Newham. Of course, the financial squeeze is leading to trusts merging in ever larger conglomerations.

Under the weighted capitation formula, it has been estimated that £119 million will be siphoned off from London's annual health spending by the end of the century. Outer London is the worst affected. It will lose £96 million out of £119 million. Many boroughs are big losers under the capitation formula.

The internal market is having an appalling effect. In 1992, the King's Fund forecast that 15 major acute hospitals and postgraduate specialist hospitals would close before the year 2000 because of the internal market. That is an underestimate. There is very little effective planning and no stability for London's health services because those values conflict with the internal market, and the internal market takes precedence every time.

Purchasers and providers, as well as increasing bureaucracy in the NHS, are driven by their own monetary considerations rather than by the treatment that patients need. Nurses and other essential health workers have been squeezed out while managers and accountants have proliferated.

There is precious little co-ordination of overall health services. For example, I have written to the Minister and the regional health authority about children's beds in London. Trusts are announcing closures without concern for implications elsewhere.

In July last year, a well-established right-wing medical figure, Dr. James Le Fanu, wrote an article in *The Daily Telegraph* referring to

"the anarchy of a free market in health which is based on ideas of 'what ought to work', rather than what actually does work."

The anarchy of the internal market in health is having a devastating and destructive impact in London.

Similarly, with the internal market, trust and health authority debt, which is caused by Government underfunding, is driving down London's health service. My own health authority, Redbridge and Waltham Forest, has a deficit for the current year of £7.2 million. Its recently published purchasing intentions show that the deficit for 1995-96 could be £9 million on top of the £7.2 million. That has serious implications, which could lead to trust mergers.

Following trust mergers always comes so-called rationalisation, with much health care being scrapped. Perhaps even the newly built King George hospital, which is already running at under-capacity despite local waiting lists because of its own debt problems, could be closed, or—horror of horrors—even Whipps Cross hospital in my area could be on a future agenda if the debt keeps recurring. I promise Ministers that, if Whipps Cross is threatened with closure, there will be a bitter battle which will make the recent M11 protest in my constituency seem like a tea party.

It is not just district health authority debt. My local community health council says:

"Forest health care trust will lose £1 million yet it is expected to increase activity by 7.5 per cent. We are very aware of the increasing pressure on Whipps Cross hospital and other FHT services due to previous rounds of 'efficiency savings'. We consider that these have

[Mr. Cohen]

> already led to a decline in the quality of service and would vehemently reject the suggestion that more cuts can be made without seriously damaging services."

Debt drives costs right across London. Brent and Harrow has budget cuts of between £5 million and £15 million. Camden and Islington faces a possible £27 million cut in its annual budget. Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth faces an estimated £17 million budget cut. The debt problem is chronic, but it is the Government's tool to run down our health service and close hospitals.

Since 1990, a fifth of the capital's accident and emergency units have closed—12 in the past four years. There have been closures in surrounding areas also. That has increased the burden on existing A and E units, including at Whipps Cross in my constituency. A dozen more could close. Harold Wood hospital in Havering has already been closed, they say to be refurbished, but when it is reopened, the busier A and E at Romford's Oldchurch will close.

Bart's is due to close in January, despite massive objection. There are plans to take in Central Middlesex, Edgware, Mount Vernon, Hammersmith, Ealing or West Middlesex, Queen Mary's at Roehampton, Chase Farm or North Middlesex, Queen Elizabeth at Hackney, Whittington or the Royal Free, and Guy's. Between them, those units handle 500,000 casualties per annum.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I know that the hon. Gentleman would not wish the record to be incorrect, and that he will come to this matter. Whipps Cross, which is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and which serves my constituency, has a spending programme of between £23 million and £27 million, which includes improvements to A and E and new theatres, new treatments and specialisms. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will want to make that point absolutely clear.

Mr. Cohen: The hon. Gentleman is jumping ahead of my speech. Spending money on hospitals does not stop the Government closing them down later.

There has been no specialty review of casualty services, and no London-wide plan. Piecemeal cuts and closures which are proposed by a dozen health authorities and trusts could decimate London's already depleted casualty services. A and E units need to be in close proximity to the populations they serve. If people have to travel further for emergency treatment—units that are open are more heavily burdened—lives will be lost. The Government should halt all further A and E closures in London, including the closure of Bart's.

I shall say a word about Casualty Watch. I saw its press release earlier this year, entitled

> "Londoners left lying on trolleys in capital's casualty crisis."

It mentioned that 58 patients had been lying on trolleys for more than three hours in 13 hospitals. One man had been on a trolley for 24 hours. A 92-year-old man had been on a trolley for seven hours. The press release quotes Ross Levinson of the Greater London Association of Community Health Councils as saying:

> "If London's A and E departments cannot cope on a mild April day, they certainly could not cope if there was a disaster in London, or even on an ordinary winter's day."

We need to stop A and E closures.

The London ambulance service, in its current form the creation of the Government, is probably the worst ambulance service in the country, and among the worst in Europe. The LAS achieves its target of attendance within eight minutes of an emergency call in only 11 per cent. of cases. It answers only 68 per cent. of 999 calls within the target time of 14 minutes. It has never recovered from the computer crash in November 1992. The chairman had to resign after an independent inquiry blamed management, talking about

> "failures for trying to introduce an untried system against an impossible timetable."

I recall the Secretary of State blaming the workers at that time. Of course, the Government have done so again in the tragic case of 11-year-old Nasima Begum. The first call for the ambulance in her case was at 10.41 pm. The ambulance eventually arrived, after four calls, at 11.34 pm. She was in hospital at 11.38 pm. Fifty-seven minutes had elapsed, and the doctor said that they were 37 minutes too late to save her life. Only seven manned ambulances were available, instead of the 13 that should have been on standby that night, and in the confusion one available ambulance in Newham was overlooked.

Even worse than that, an LAS spokesman said:

> "We are not in a position to say that this won't happen again".

That is shocking. The Minister has promised more money for staff and ambulances. Let us hear of that in detail today.

Morale is a problem. Staff levels have been cut by 20 per cent. in the past decade. The Government should work with the trade union UNISON on the basis of its submission to the Health Select Committee of June this year to get the LAS back on its feet.

The Government place the emphasis on general practitioners, but they have done far too little in that area. They have given nowhere near the £250 million recommended by the King's Fund in 1992. The amount that they have given is a drop in the ocean when set against the impact of hospital closures. The Tomlinson report said that £140 million was needed just to bring all GP surgeries up to minimum standards. The way in which, and the extent to which, the Government are switching resources from hospitals to GP services received the thumbs down at the British Medical Association conference earlier this year.

The Guardian said that there were

> "1,000 substandard GP practices in the capital—some are even without hot running water, let alone a practice and there are probably tens of thousands of people the GPs fail to reach—including students, squatters, the homeless and those in temporary accommodation."

A lot needs to be done to improve GP services, without the added burden imposed upon them by hospital closures.

The Government have spent some money, but its impact has been ineffectual. In its submission to this debate, the Royal College of Nursing said:

> "The Government announced that it would invest £40 million in 1993/94 and an additional £85 million in 1994/95. However, there has been little tangible evidence of where money has been spent and what changes have been effected in London. Beyond the updating of some GP premises, evidence is lacking on the real improvements to primary care services."

The number of GPs per head of population is low. What are the Government doing to train and recruit more GPs? Not very much. The GP fundholder system creates a two-tier system that is unfair. Under that system, going for the "cheapest option" has a tendency to force out "clinical objectivity".

Far from tackling the serious problems that GPs face, the Government are just about to alienate GPs again with their performance-related pay proposal, which is irrelevant in London in the circumstances that I have described. Outer London has suffered under the Government. Both Tomlinson and Secretaries of State have said that outer London would benefit from inner-London reductions, but it has not. It has suffered huge debts, large waiting lists and repeated cuts in treatment provision. There is a real danger of hospital closures spreading out to outer London.

In my area, covering Redbridge and Waltham Forest, there is no surgery other than for emergency treatment, and urgent cases of people having babies and patients who have waited for more than 18 months. There is no elective surgery. People on the waiting list must wait 18 months, perhaps in pain and anxiety, before they can receive treatment.

The crisis is spreading. It is not just in inner London; it is outside London as well. Essex's waiting lists grew by 30 per cent. in the 15 months to November 1993. Waiting lists grew by 20 per cent. in the home counties over that period, despite London's hospital closures. The Government NHS policies overall are to blame for the cuts throughout London and outside it.

Waiting lists are soaring; 100,000 is the official figure, but the number of people who are affected is much higher. Many people are on the pre-waiting lists, which I referred to earlier. My local GPs are calling for an independent inquiry into waiting times and rising waiting lists. In Waltham Forest and Redbridge, there was a 52 per cent. rise last year. Figures in the latest district health authority papers of 31 July show that 15,289 people are waiting for treatment.

That is the position across London. Waiting lists for the New River health authority area, covering Enfield and Haringey, were up 45 per cent. in the eight months to May 1994. In Barnet, they were up 8 per cent. in that period. Since Northwich Park hospital, located in Barnet, achieved trust status, waiting lists are up by 48 per cent. In Camden and Islington, waiting lists are up by 16 per cent. In East London and City, which has followed the Government's guidelines and has extra cash under capitation, 13,000 people are permanently on waiting lists. Of course, there is no wait for people going into private hospitals.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): The hon. Gentleman keeps talking about the number of people on waiting lists, but what about waiting times? They have fallen, have they not?

Mr. Cohen: The pre-waiting list time is still extremely high. The Government have fiddled the figures. In the past, we had clear figures because they were made up of deaths and discharges—people coming out of hospitals; now we have finished consultant episodes. A patient could be shuffled around between lots of consultants before he receives treatment and the Government can say that a lot more treatment is being carried out, but that is not the case.

The Government have wasted money on the internal market and on managers. For example, £140 million has been spent on the Philip Harris House hospital wing at Guy's. Since then, the Government have announced that Guy's is up for closure. At Chelsea and Westminster, there is a £200 million showpiece hospital. The beds there were left deliberately empty, despite high waiting lists.

In July this year, the *Evening Standard* talked of the Government being prepared to spend £200 million to speed up the closure of Bart's. The London Implementation Group, set up by the Government to enforce the changes and closures, has a £200 million annual budget, with a former Tory Member of Parliament as its chairman. All its meetings implementing the closures are held in secret. There are other issues that I have no time to go into.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cohen: No, because I want to finish my speech.

The nation's medical research and development is at risk. The Brentwood blood transfusion centre is to close. I have written to the Government about that. They say that a new computer system is to be installed. I hope that it is not another London ambulance service.

Through the crisis, the Government have ploughed ahead in a blind dogmatic way. The views of patients, doctors, nurses and Londoners have been ignored. Far from making London better, the Government's policies are leading to an extremely sick service for London. A large majority of Londoners are extremely worried about the rundown of their NHS and the Government should heed their voice and alter course. The chief executive of the King's Fund said:

"there should be no more acute bed reductions overall, and great care about A and E Departments."

At the very least, the Government should introduce a moratorium on all further bed reductions and hospital and casualty closures. There should be an independent inquiry into the position in London. The system should be moved away from its cuts and market mentality to one that provides proper health care, which Londoners need and deserve.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. No fewer than 29 right hon. and hon. Members hope to take part in the debate. It is a tall order to get everyone in, but it would be helpful if hon. Members would bear it in mind that brief speeches would be of some assistance.

10.8 am

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): I must immediately express appreciation to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) for having provided so uncontroversial a vehicle for me to work my passage back as a Back-Bench contributor. In the diarrhoea of language that is contained in his motion, there was no reference to an independent inquiry. For a moment, I had hoped that sanity had overtaken Opposition Members, but I notice that, in his closing paragraph, he said that, although such a reference had been omitted from the motion, he still wanted to have an inquiry. I shall come to that at the end of my speech.

[Mr. Peter Brooke]

Although I welcome the breadth of subject that the hon. Gentleman has afforded us in this debate, I hope that the House will forgive me if, after nearly 15 years of Trappism on constituency matters, my speech has a constituency bias, particularly in the direction of Bart's. However, I hope that I can frame it within the London-wide perspective.

I doubt that Kremlinologists will crawl over my speech for evidence of disenchantment with the Administration that I have just left, but if any such is detected, I hope that it will be correctly imputed to constituency concern rather than to any general bile, which I do not remotely feel. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister of Health will respond to the debate, and I welcome him to the Dispatch Box.

I stress that I support the overall thrust of the policy which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in February 1993 under the title "Making London Better", which was substantially derived from the analysis of the Tomlinson report. I am not a blind admirer of that document, especially of its detail, but I support the central pillar and principle of my right hon. Friend's policy. I would do so even more enthusiastically in the light of evidence that the Government were prepared tactically to modify the application of the policy to reflect practical developments in the two years since Tomlinson reported.

Secondly, I am profoundly sympathetic to my right hon. Friend for the damnosa hereditas that she was bequeathed in London by decades of Ministers, although I accept that her immediate predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, had set his hand to the London plough. Perhaps I may illustrate my right hon. Friend's inheritance anecdotally.

In my first month in the House, I was invited, with characteristic enterprise, by a surgical team at Bart's to spend 24 hours with it as a proxy member of the team, so that I could understand the NHS from the inside. Towards the end of that day, when we knew each other better, we discussed the over-provision of specialties across what I think were at that time 14 teaching hospitals in Greater London.

That was in 1977, and the members of the surgical team were quite adamant about that over-provision, and equally adamant that we could not expect the profession to rationalise it, but that that would have to be done by a sensible alliance of administrators and politicians working in conjunction with the profession.

Ironically, 1977 was the year in which the London Health Planning Consortium was set up to examine just such subjects, and the House will recall the studies from 1978 to 1980 on radiotherapy, cardiology and cardio-thoracic surgery and the neuro-sciences. The kindest epitaph on the consortium's work is that the quality of the analysis was superior to the results that were achieved. Therefore, I genuinely sympathise with my right hon. Friend on the scale of the problem that she inherited, which, if anything, had been compounded by the previous inertia, whatever its motivation. That stricture applies to Governments of all colours.

I also start from a position of support for the NHS reforms. Like, I dare say, many London colleagues, I winced at that unlyrical acronym RAWP, but tolerated it because of the deficiencies outside London that it was intended to resolve. Perhaps we in London sometimes underestimate the scale of improvement outside London that it has secured.

In a similar vein, I think that the Department of Health sometimes looks at London through roseate spectacles. The briefing issued to Conservative Back Benchers for this debate, which presumably emanates ultimately from the Department of Health, is written in places as if Professor Jarman and the recent analysis by the King's Fund did not exist.

I was much less happy about the quality of the NHS trans-authority accounting. Authorities in London which were treating extra-London patients were generally doing so because more sophisticated operations were required, but were being compensated for them at average rather than actual cost, and often up to two years late. That meant that our constituents in London were effectively doubly subsidising the constituents of colleagues from outside London. In principle, the NHS reforms correct that unfairness, although I acknowledge that it is contingent upon the thoroughness of our accounting.

That was the background against which developments at Bart's have taken place. This remarkable hospital, derived from and still underpinned by an inspirational Christian tradition, responded to the challenge set for it by Tomlinson—and, in due course, by the Secretary of State—in a spirit of genuine collaboration. The impressive recent financial figures which Bart's has provided give the lie to the financial pessimism expressed by Tomlinson. I note that my neighbour, the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), nods his assent. I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that, while recognising that the game has moved on. *[Interruption.]*

The game has moved on in the sense that Bart's has had discussions with its partners in the Royal Hospitals trust about the best way to merge their combined strengths, although historians may well wish to comment on whether cutting the umbilical cord between Bart's and the Homerton was in the best interests of patients in Hackney. Historians will no doubt also evaluate the comparative strengths of Bart's and its partners as they approach the merger.

Before I entered the House, I made my living from the interaction of human beings in organisations, and I would have predicted a greater chance of success, especially when so historic a site as Bart's is involved, if significant disengagement from the Bart's site had been accompanied by a proportionate generosity elsewhere towards those who were joining them from Bart's. I say that especially in the light of the talent that will be coming, and I express a general doubt as to whether that magnanimity has so far been greatly in evidence.

Critical both to the merger and to my right hon. Friend's place in NHS history is that it should be carried through successfully. That in turn depends upon excessive attention to morale rather than to a seemingly casual neglect of it. Leadership of an army in temporary retreat calls for skills and character of a high order. I mean no personal disparagement when I say that I doubt that leadership of that quality is currently being deployed. The test of history will be how many of the great strengths of Bart's will survive to infuse and enthuse the new body. The departure of clinicians, academics and leaders of teams of the highest quality will be a vivid and morbid verdict on the outcome.

Of course buildings, traditions and ambiences contribute to the morale of organisations, but in the end human beings working together in a common endeavour are the true glory.

It was in that somewhat queasy atmosphere that the announcement in late July that the period of transition would be foreshortened from the previous estimates of between eight and 15 years to six years—I have seen five years quoted—struck such a further body blow. I hope that the Minister will devote an adequate amount of his speech to why this most deleterious abbreviation was suddenly imposed, and by whom. It is difficult to imagine a shock more calculated to depress morale at precisely the moment when morale needed to be built up.

Given the present public expenditure pressures and the huge backlog of repairs at the Royal London, which I have seen put at £37 million before the capital demands of enlargement are even tackled, foreshortening of the programme necessarily—or perhaps more correctly, unnecessarily—exacerbates apprehensions. Despite my right hon. Friend's uncharacteristic levity about the hospital's heritage, she belongs to a party which on the whole venerates institutions that have been 800 years in the making.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I am following my right hon. Friend's theme. In my area and in most others, there is tremendous sentiment about Bart's, which is considered to be a local hospital. Some of the decisions about the ending of some of its services and moves to the London work against the grain, and there is a feeling that the rationalisation might have been better at Bart's than at the London.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Those apprehensions are that a great hospital is being surrendered into a structure that will not even be the sum of the constituent parts, let alone something greater. The capital figures which I have heard quoted by the Department seem to allow nothing for the extra medical education costs.

I shall not dwell on the accident and emergency decision at Bart's, except to say that the heart of London has a concentration of employment which makes me regret that the City's willingness to make a private sector contribution towards a unique opportunity in a working population in my constituency which exceeds the national average by a factor of 17 was not encouraged.

Secondly, I hope that those notorious isochrones about which the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) may well speak in the context of the ambulance service have again been tested since the City erected its ring of plastic, the difficulties of whose recent penetration are familiar to all those who travel to and from the City.

It was moving, earlier this week, to meet the most desperately wounded and injured of the Baltic Exchange victims and to know that he owed his life to Bart's being open. We cite Timothy Evans in capital punishment debates—nothing I know of Aesculapius suggests that he would have regarded a single life as immaterial.

I have said enough about this constituency matter, provided that my hon. Friend the Minister speaks about it at decent length in his reply. I am confident that he will reassure me. If he does not, I can only say that I have sat in this House long enough to remember the disruption of business achieved by my former parliamentary neighbour George Cunningham in support of St Mark's hospital in his constituency.

But those are the thoughts of a pessimist. I am an optimist, given what, at this juncture, a little imagination by the Department of Health can achieve. Fairness is a British characteristic that would serve my hon. Friend well as a watchword in these matters.

I said earlier that I would come back to the speech of the hon. Member for Leyton. On the wider issues and Labour's demands, I hope that my hon. Friend will resist the specious demand for another independent inquiry, which is a predictable recipe for paralysis—but that, acknowledging the maldistribution of beds in London at this time, both geographically and by character, and allowing for reallocations between categories, he will see virtue overall in halting the loss of beds in London until we are confident that we have reached equilibrium. It is difficult to provide a regional health service, let alone a national one, if there are not enough beds with which to do it.

For myself, I found persuasive the sober language of the King's Fund report during the recess on the subject of bed closures, although I can tell my hon. Friends that it does not unreservedly apply Professor Jarman's analysis. I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say about it.

10.21 am

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) made an interesting speech. His concluding remarks, in which he called for a halt to the closures in London, were quite remarkable and not at all consistent with the line being taken by Ministers at the Department of Health. His remarks were supportive of my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who has given us the opportunity to debate this important subject.

We are trying to be honest about what is happening. The original King Edward VII Trust report in 1992 and the Tomlinson inquiry, which was greatly influenced by the report, seemed to show that there was first, an excess of beds, and secondly, an excess of expenditure in London compared with the rest of the country. However, since then the statistics on which those conclusions were based have been eroded and undermined to the point where they lack any credibility.

I am not forgetting Professor Jarman, but the last two King Edward VII Trust reports are far from the original starting point in the whole miserable procedure of closing and rationalising London hospitals. Indeed, the last report says that London, far from having £80 million of excess resources that it should not have had, is £200 million short of what it should have were its needs to be properly assessed. It is no accident that the whole basis of allocation—weighted capitation money—throughout the country is now being re-examined. From what I hear, that is likely to produce very different results and an increased weighting in favour not just of London, but of inner-city areas generally.

What the Government forget about entirely is the whole underlying philosophy and thought behind an inner-city policy and the whole problem of inner cities, which is not just confined to London but occurs in many of our conurbations.

[Mr. Peter Shore]

I do not want to speak at great length about the general problems of London; instead, I want to concentrate on the London ambulance service, which is a particular problem that affects 7 million Londoners. I have a special interest and concern because two of my constituents—11-year-old Nasima Begum and Abdul Barik, a pensioner, the first suffering from renal failure and the second from a heart attack—had to wait 53 minutes and 45 minutes respectively for an ambulance to reach them. I do not know whether they would have survived had the ambulances reached them sooner and transferred them to the Royal London hospital in Whitechapel. However, I do know that the waiting times for both of them were far too long and far above the guidelines published by the Government in their patients charter.

As the House knows, the charter requires that 50 per cent. of emergency calls should be answered within eight minutes and 95 per cent. within 14 minutes. It is a matter of regret that for the past five years only 63 per cent. of emergency calls—not 95 per cent.—have been answered within 14 minutes by the London ambulance service. The service has not just failed to improve: its performance has declined quite markedly from what it was as recently as the mid-1980s.

Many warnings have been given to Ministers during recent years, both from Labour's Front-Bench spokesmen and from many Back Benchers, including my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who has frequently raised the matter. There is little doubt that the LAS has been seriously underfunded during recent years. In our previous debate on 28 April, the Secretary of State acknowledged the shortfall by pledging an additional £14.8 million expenditure in the current year. Looking further ahead, she said that the number of paramedics now in place—400—would rise to 1,000 in 1996 and that the ambulance fleet would be enhanced and renewed. If those measures are thought to be necessary for 1996, it is a fairly obvious admission that the service is seriously underfunded and under-resourced now.

The 53-minute wait that poor Nasima Begum had to endure has moved the Secretary of State sufficiently for her to announce an inquiry. In her letter to Mr. William Wells, the chairman of the South Thames region, which was published on 10 October, the right hon. Lady asked him urgently to inquire into the particular facts behind the tragic death of young Nasima Begum and to report before Christmas.

I am much in favour of an inquiry, but it would be far better were it to be conducted not by the man who was at least formally responsible for the LAS, but by an outside independent person. I am not sure that it is a task that should have been entrusted to one person anyway. Nor do I like the strong steer that the terms of reference in the Secretary of State's letter has given to Mr. Wells. It says that he is

> "to look at action needed to improve the deployment of LAS staff, rostering and the timing of annual leave, the incidence of absence for sickness and any other matters you consider to be relevant."

There are some other matters, one being the role of management. I do not think that even the most biased person would attribute the service's most disastrous experience, when its computer system blew up two years ago, to the ambulance men who staff the LAS.

Then there is the role of the Department of Health. It will be interesting to know how many representations were made to Ministers about the state of the vehicles employed by the London ambulance service, and the lack of paramedics, in the years before the Secretary of State's statement to the House on 28 April. Will Mr. Wells be inquiring into those matters, too? I put that question directly to the Minister, and hope that he can give some assurance concerning the scope and nature of the inquiry that I have described. I must tell him that, unless he can give some assurances, there will be considerable and justified scepticism about the findings of Mr. Wells's report.

Mr. Spearing: I wonder whether my right hon. Friend will allow me, before he sits down—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Has the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) given way?

Mr. Shore: I have just sat down.

10.29 am

Mr. Nicholas Scott (Chelsea): This is not—although I must say that it slightly seems like it—a maiden speech. I look on it rather more, after 13 years, as breaking my duck in my second innings as a Back Bencher in this House. It has been an immense privilege to serve as a Minister for the past 13 years. Life in Government is demanding, but also very rewarding. It is, however, with some sense of relief that I return to the Back Benches and acquire an independence to speak—I hope on a range of issues—and can look forward to spending rather more time than I have over the past 13 years dealing with the interests of my constituents.

Those who leave office do not always do so without some feelings, perhaps, of not being quite so happy about what has happened to them. I certainly intend to give my unremitting support to the Prime Minister in the work that he has undertaken on behalf of this country. Like a former Minister of Health, Mr. Iain Macleod, who happened also to be a great hero of mine in my early days in politics, I believe that the present Prime Minister understands profoundly what the British people want but also tries to persuade them to want something a bit better for the quality of their own lives and those of their families. He is to be much admired for that.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), I shall spend a lot of my time on matters concerning my constituency, where we have three very important hospitals: the Chelsea and Westminster, the Royal Marsden and the Royal Brompton. Of course, those are all central London hospitals. I believe that, in central London, we are making much progress in the improvement of health care, at GP practitioner level—in family doctor and community health service provision—as well as in the hospitals themselves. It was a great experience for me recently to be able to open a new health centre in my constituency; it has five GPs and a range of community nurses and other nursing support, providing the highest quality of general practice health care to my constituents and others.

I acknowledge that there is a problem over the figuring, if I may put it that way, of health needs in central London. Of course, we all have the health care of our constituents to look after, but in calculating the level of health care that is necessary in central London, we cannot forget some of the extra pressures, which, inevitably, are put on those services. We all know that the policy of care in the community—admirable though it is in many respects to enable people to live in the community rather than in institutions—has put on the services of central London some very considerable extra pressures.

Although I understand from my hon. Friends that that policy has been altered and considerably tightened, the number of people being discharged from institutions for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped has inevitably led to a considerable number of them ending up on the streets of central London. They inevitably place extra burdens on health provision in the capital itself, not just in terms of their regular needs, but as a result of the accidents that sometimes happen to them because of their lack of understanding and comprehension and their tendency to drift to alcohol and drug abuse. All have placed considerable extra burdens on the hospitals in central London.

In addition, central London has a large number of overseas visitors who from time to time will need extra health care. I believe that all those factors have perhaps not attracted the consideration that they deserve as we do the figuring for health needs in central London.

The Chelsea and Westminster hospital was and is an expensive hospital. It is, however, a marvellous hospital. I must have visited it 10 times since it was opened, and I believe that the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff and the quality of provision there will ensure it a glittering and important future. I must underline and emphasise the tremendous contribution made to it by those who came from the former Westminster hospital in terms of their commitment to their new hospital and in terms of the ethos and tremendous traditions that they have brought into the new institution. I commend all those who are playing their part in developing the contribution that they can make to health care, not just in my constituency, but in central London more generally.

I am particularly concerned about the pressures that exist at the moment in relation to the future of London's health services provision to relocate both the Royal Marsden and the Royal Brompton hospitals, which are an important part of my constituency. The latter, for personal reasons, has a particular place in my heart. Both became self-governing trusts in April this year. They have shown themselves capable of rising to the challenge of proving themselves to the internal market which we now have, and are seizing the opportunities provided to them to shape their own future and respond to patient choice.

Both of those hospitals are leading international centres of excellence. The Royal Marsden, in collaboration with its associated institute, the Institute of Cancer Research, plays a world-leading role in combating cancer, developing new anti-cancer drugs, surgical techniques and new approaches to radiotherapy treatments. The Royal Brompton, with its associated body, the National Heart and Lung Institute, is the United Kingdom's premier hospital for the research, diagnosis and management of heart and lung disease in adults and children. Its research in those fields positions it as a leader in Europe and further afield.

I very much hope that the region and the Department will look carefully and sympathetically at the plans that the Royal Brompton is now putting forward for the construction of a new clinic on its present site, to help it to continue its ground-breaking work in the fight against the nation's biggest killer, heart disease. I am convinced that the concept behind the clinic represents the next logical step for the hospital, and, of course, it is supported not just by those concerned directly with the hospital but by the major purchasers of its services. Rapid advances in new technology and treatments now mean that the clinic will not involve provision for additional in-patient beds—which may be of concern to some hon. Members—but they will meet patient choice increasingly with the provision of ambulatory care and day-case treatment.

The Royal Brompton, like other hospitals in London, has been the subject of intensive reviews by various agencies over the past few years. The 1993 cardiac specialty review recognised that the hospital should be the leading centre in west London. Its clinical research has a high reputation. The research assessment exercise by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, in December 1992, gave the Royal Brompton's sister organisation, the National Heart and Lung Institute, the highest possible rating for research of national and international calibre.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has characterised the 1990s as a decade in which to harness the energies of private enterprise to the good of our great public services, not least the national health service. That is an exciting and innovatory approach, and the public and private sectors are keen to support the Government in taking that step forward.

The Brompton clinic has the potential to be a first-class contributor to that concept. The intention is that it would be built at little or no additional cost to the taxpayer through the use of the private finance initiative. That would be a new departure for the NHS, but I emphasise that the clinic would be part of the health service. It would be one of the first health care projects of such a size to be funded using the private finance initiative. Private developers would provide the new clinic in return for the opportunity to develop certain other properties on the Royal Brompton site.

In the past, the private sector has sometimes been critical of NHS managers and officials for what is perceived to be their overly cautious approach to such joint ventures. Now, an innovative hospital trust has developed the basis for a sound partnership with the private sector. We cannot afford to see that falter because of old-style bureaucratic controls, which would be wholly contrary to the concept of the reforms that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State introduced. Approval of the scheme, which has attracted considerable interest from the private sector, would send a clear signal from the Government that they are committed to expanding opportunities for partnership between the public and private sectors in the future national health service.

The Royal Brompton hospital trust is an international centre of leading-edge treatment for heart and lung disease for patients throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. As I said, its research makes it a leader in Europe and wider afield, and its future should be considered in that international context. The Royal Brompton is not simply another west London hospital. Although it is located there, its services are essential for national and international use.

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister, whom I welcome to his new responsibilities, examines the pattern of central London hospitals, he will feel able to support the Royal Brompton's plans for its clinic and to reject the rather grandiose alternative plans for health care provision in west London. The Royal Brompton has won its right to stay on merit and on merit alone.

I reiterate the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South: the last thing that London's health care services need is yet another independent inquiry. That would be a recipe for further delay and uncertainty, whereas London's health service needs certainty and clarity about its future. My constituents are lucky to have outstanding health care, with the Chelsea and Westminster, Royal Brompton and Royal Marsden hospitals on their doorstep. I do not want the development of the future contribution that they can make to the quality of health care, far beyond the boundaries of my constituency, inhibited in any way by shortsightedness on the part of the region or Department of Health. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister, who takes a notably robust approach to bureaucratic meddling and delay, will employ those skills in the present circumstances.

10.43 am

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Nye Bevan's book "In Place of Fear", published in 1952, included the statement:

> "'No society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid because of lack of means."

By the time that Nye Bevan had written those words, he and the 1945 Labour Government had established the national health service to provide health care and the reassurance of health care to all. The present Government claim to have reformed the NHS to make it more efficient, so that it will provide a better service, but nothing could be further from the truth. They have produced a national health service that serves the bureaucrat, not the patient. This morning, I will describe the state of health care in my constituency and examine exactly who has benefited from the Government's reforms—who are the winners and who are the losers.

The post of chief executive of North Middlesex hospital, which serves my constituents, was recently filled by a contract with a management consultancy, Ernst and Young, under which one of its partners will perform that important role four days a week. For the services of that partner four days a week, Ernst and Young is paid in the region of £150,000 a year. Hon. Members in all parts of the House may like to ask themselves to whom that chief executive owes allegiance—to Ernst and Young or to the local people who use the hospital and rely on it for their health care?

Ernst and Young's entry in the 1994 directory of management consultants states that one of their main specialist activities is privatisation. How appropriate—and what a great basis on which to select a firm of private consultants to play a part in our national health service. I put those points to the Secretary of State for Health in a letter dated 29 September, to which I have yet to receive a reply. Perhaps the Minister will say whether he considers it appropriate for a health authority to pay a private firm for the services of one of its partners in the role of chief executive of a hospital trust. The public might think that the head of a hospital should be accountable to them as the local users of the service—and the losers in these so-called health reforms.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): Does the hon. Lady agree that such consultants could improve the health service by introducing outside skills and experience?

Mrs. Roche: They are certainly making a great deal of money and adding a lot of bureaucracy. I would much rather see some of that £150,000 a year spent on patient care, on doctors, nurses and auxiliaries, than on unnecessary bureaucracy.

Ernst and Young is not the only management consultancy to benefit from the current local NHS climate. Price Waterhouse has just been paid £28,000 to conduct an investigation into whether one of the two accident and emergency departments covering Haringey and my neighbouring borough of Enfield should be closed. It is not necessary to spend £28,000, which could have been spent on patient care, to ascertain whether one of two well-used casualty departments should close, particularly when one of the health priorities in the local health strategy of the New River health authority is:

> "Services should be local and accessible, as close as possible to people's home, family and friends."

That is tremendous, but what will it mean in reality if one of the two accident and emergency units is closed?

When I wrote to the Secretary of State for Health about the matter, Baroness Cumberlege replied:

> "clearly this study has to be paid for but this will be seen to have been well worthwhile if the review leads to improvement".

What arrant nonsense that is—and what a complete waste of taxpayers' money, which could have been well used and well spent elsewhere. The noble Lady did not explain how closing an accident and emergency department could lead to an improvement. Perhaps the Minister will deal with that issue today. I recently received a letter from a very busy general practitioner group practice on the issue. It said:

> "Any decision to close either casualty is gambling with human lives. We ask that you do all you can to prevent such an occurrence from taking place."

Who are the winners and who are the losers? Undoubtedly, some private hospitals and the private sector have been among the winners. One of my local health authorities has admitted that almost £500,000 of taxpayers' money was spent between April and August this year on providing private beds for mental health patients. Once again the winners are the private hospitals. The health authority also admitted that the figure will probably rise to £1 million by the end of this year and that the beds are at a considerable distance from St. Ann's, which is the hospital where mental health in-patients were treated before the health reforms. Apart from the cost to the taxpayer, it is wholly inappropriate to place patients in hospitals that have no links with the local community in which they will live when they are discharged. Once again, it is the patients who lose.

Other private firms also benefit. When the New River health authority—my local authority—issues press releases on its various initiatives, the contact number at the bottom of the release is not that of the health authority but a public relations firm in St. Albans. I wrote to the chief executive of that health authority asking him about its contract with the firm and how much taxpayers' money it costs. He replied to my letter, but for some unaccountable reason omitted to give me the figure. I wrote again asking him to remedy that omission, but to date he has not replied.

Once again it is the public, as taxpayers, who lose. What guidelines has the Minister's Department issued to health authorities about the amount of public money that they can spend on buying in public relations? My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) recently established that management costs in the national health service have risen by 1,800 per cent. in five years and that this summer at least £37 million was spent by 143 trusts on logos and image building.

I was delighted to hear that the new Minister of State is renowned for his attacks on bureaucracy and his abhorrence of bureaucracy and waste. I trust that when he addresses the House today, he will respond to my arguments.

When I visited one of my local hospitals recently, I was interested to be introduced to its new director of marketing. I wonder how many other such directors there are in the country. It is obviously a growth industry—people moving from the private sector to the NHS to be directors of marketing. How much of that contributes to the battle against bureaucracy and waste and to the improvement of our national health service?

How absurd for the Secretary of State to say at her party conference last week:

> "While I'm Secretary of State, bureaucracy will have no hiding place".

Yet our national health service is the place where bureaucracy and waste flourish. Meanwhile, patients are suffering because the simple truth is that in our health service, under the uncontrollable monster of the internal market, the money is certainly not following the patients.

One of my constituents had been on a waiting list for a hip replacement operation at a central London hospital for three years. She came to my surgery, walking with sticks and in obvious pain and distress, to tell me that because the New River health authority did not have a contract with the central London hospital she had had to start again on a waiting list at another hospital. Fortunately, because of lengthy representations that I and others made, the health authority agreed to make an exception in her case. How many other patients who have not managed to contact their Members of Parliament—I am sure that many of my hon. Friends who speak later will give other examples—have been placed in such an appalling situation simply because the needs of patients did not fit in with the internal market system?

Let us take another example. Between 1990 and 1992, another constituent was treated at the Middlesex hospital for severe neck and shoulder pain. During her treatment her condition was carefully assessed and, thanks to the excellent consultant with whom my constituent built up a good and trusting relationship, the condition became manageable and she was able to stop attending the hospital. When things went wrong again this year, her GP wanted to refer her to the same consultant who had helped her last time, but found that he was no longer allowed to send patients to that department. In the words of my constituent:

> "Instead of being seen in a clinic where I have built up a relationship with the doctor and which knows my history I must start all over again from the beginning at a new hospital. Some choice! . . . This would not be worth writing to you about if it was a lone case. Sadly I suspect that there are thousands like me who have lost their 'patient choice' with the NHS changes".

That is some choice and some situation when the Secretary of State says that money follows the patient, but clearly it does not. That is the reality of the national health service in London today. In the words of a former member of the NHS executive, it is a "total shambles".

Today's national health service is like a national lottery. Ordinary people, patients, taxpayers and the long-suffering public know that they are the losers in the reforms and that the Government's friends—private firms, private hospitals and highly paid consultants—are the winners.

Mr. Duncan Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am aware that time is short and I will not detain you. My point of order arises from an answer during Agriculture questions yesterday. The matter is critical. There has been a report today that the Government are indicating that they may not pursue a court case against the Italians, which involves about £2.3 billion in fines. Yesterday, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said clearly in answer to a question on the subject that the Government had no such intention; yet today we hear that report. Have you heard from the Government that they intend to make a statement about a change in their policy on that matter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have not been notified of any intended statement.

10.59 am

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): I should first declare my interests in health care: I act as adviser to the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and to the British Surgical Trades Association. Neither body has given me any advice about today's debate; I speak purely as an outer London Member of Parliament.

Conservative Members are grateful to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) for raising this subject. As he can see, there is a wide range of interest in the health service in London.

I sometimes sit through these debates and listen to Opposition Members commenting on the same regions, hospitals and health service as us. They appear to see nothing but evil and harm in London's health service, whereas Conservative Members can see not only the problems, which we are tackling, but the great achievements. It would have been nice to hear not only criticism but some praise for the health service from Opposition Members.

Throughout the country, the Government have achieved their prime objective for the health service of putting patients first. The health service in London and elsewhere must be about providing the best possible health care within the resources of our nation and not about working for the entrenched interests of various bodies in the health service. The health service does not exist to serve the interests of those who work for it, although as a responsible employer it must take into account best employment practices.

I therefore approach reform of the health service in London rather differently from Opposition Members, but I am glad that they at least appear to accept that there is a case for doing something about the health service in

[Dr. Ian Twinn]

London and that reforms are necessary. We can all agree that the state of the health service is not acceptable and that we wish to see improvements and changes made.

Change in itself can be disturbing. For example, it can result in the loss of facilities that people have grown used to. Sometimes decisions will have to be taken that will result in the loss of institutions that we have grown used to. I recognise the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) made—that our venerable institutions of health care in central London have served the nation well for 800 years, but that population patterns change and so the health service must not be too attached to buildings or to patterns of health care that were relevant in the last century and up until the second world war, when the population density of central London was very high.

People have moved out to Wood Green, Edmonton, Chingford, Bromley and Croydon, where the population density is now much higher yet the provision of health care has not followed that population. As an outer London Member of Parliament, I am concerned to ensure that we get our fair share of resources and I was excited about the reforms, which proposed moving resources to where people live.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Further to the point that my hon. Friend is developing, which applied mainly to acute services, does he agree that one of the problems in inner London, which has been identified in many reports over decades, is that inner Londoners have been suffering from an absence of community services of any quality and that GP services do not match those that outer Londoners have taken for granted?

Dr. Twinn: Indeed. I sometimes have difficulty with the distinction between inner and outer London. I have never accepted that there is such a concept as the inner city, which is deprived, and the suburbs, which are not deprived. As a planner who formerly lectured in town planning, I knocked my head against the brick wall of Government and fellow planners who grasped simple ideas of the inner city and consequently built their policies around a misguided concept. My constituency is part of the industrial Lea valley, but inner-city factors extend out beyond my constituency into the Enfield, North constituency, areas of which are, in effect, inner-city areas.

One of the reforms in London has increased spending. The Government considered where resources should be put, and money is being put into primary care. I want much better primary care for my constituents, and investment is beginning to be made in GP practices and community health facilities. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) mentioned the accident and emergency department at North Middlesex hospital, which has been under threat, but I am pleased that the health authority is funding a GP for the department so that people who, perhaps wrongly, have looked to their general hospitals for primary health care can now see a GP and not take up the scarce resources of specialists in accident and emergency, which are needed for people who are genuinely suffering trauma from accidents or emergencies.

I should like those facilities to be expanded. At present, they are available only during the day. I recently visited North Middlesex hospital late on a Saturday night to see how it was working. Many of the patients to whom I spoke were waiting to be seen by specialists, but they could have been seen by a practice nurse or a GP working late at night, rather than wasting the time of people who are highly trained in dealing with accidents on the M25, the A10 or the north circular road, all of which the hospital serves.

I am pleased that as a result of our reforms money is beginning to follow the patient. In London, Bart's is regarded as a local hospital as well as a national teaching and specialist hospital. I was pleased recently to accept an invitation from Bart's to attend the North Middlesex hospital, where it has opened a clinic for renal treatment. Patients who previously had to troop down to central London for dialysis can now be treated at the North Middlesex. That is a welcome move. I hope that soon clinicians will follow and Bart's patients will be able to see their consultants at the North Middlesex. There is a great future for Bart's in moving out to the community, serving people who used to look naturally to it as their first choice but who can now look to hospitals such as North Middlesex, where the expertise of Bart's can be provided without losing the specialist nature of the Bart's team who, working together, make a special contribution to health care in London.

Teaching hospitals are not always on the side of the angels in these matters. A few years ago, I came to the House of Commons to argue for the protection of our local radiotherapy department at North Middlesex hospital. It was under threat because one of the large teaching hospitals in London believed that it should have all the money spent on itself. I am pleased to say that the Department of Health and Ministers listened to our arguments, so instead of my constituents and those of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green being dragged daily on hazardous ambulance trips to London they can have their radiotherapy at the North Middlesex, where facilities have been invested in and expanded. I am grateful to the Department for doing that.

Money is going to where patients live, but perhaps the House will forgive me if I deal with the point that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green made about accident and emergency provision in north London. Two accident and emergency departments cover my constituency. Chase Farm hospital, on the green belt borders in north Enfield, covers a large area of north London, extending out into Hertfordshire. The other department is at the North Middlesex, which is in my constituency but on the border with Tottenham. It serves the population of Tottenham, Wood Green, and Palmers Green, which is in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Employment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo). It also covers areas of east London and Essex, where the north circular road provides speedy access to the accident and emergency department, and it will be even speedier when investment in the north circular road improvements is complete and my constituency is again open for business.

I was worried when I heard that the New River health authority, which is a monopoly purchaser—there is no other choice for hospitals—decided that two accident and emergency units were unnecessary and that one would suffice. I must say that I am not critical of reports in general. It is important to examine the provision of health care objectively and to see the facts and figures, although we have not been able to do so in this case. I look forward with interest to seeing the report. I suspect that, had the report been conducted in-house by the national health service, it would have cost a great deal more than has been charged by the private sector. The specialist knowledge of the firms involved means that they can make a useful contribution to the health service. However, I do not believe that the two accident and emergency departments cover the same area.

One of the problems that has bedevilled the national health service for many years has been the regional, district and area boundaries. Some of the more ludicrous locational decisions about hospitals in the London region have been made because there were four Thames regions whose boundaries have been treated as though they were international divides. Investment was sometimes made in hospitals close to regional borders, and it seems that the Department of Health has not exercised due care and attention in relation to the planning of hospitals in the London region for many years. That has been true under Governments of both parties. We now have only two Thames regions, so the problems may diminish. However, I am not convinced that the north-south divide in London will not lead to some unfortunate decisions about which teaching hospitals should or should not survive. I hope that the Minister will be able to clarify that point.

I believe that we are about to see the same mistakes being made by purchasers as were made by the regions. The New River health authority, which covers the two London boroughs of Haringey and Enfield, is treating its boundaries as all-important and is behaving as though its hospitals did not provide services to people from elsewhere. If the Minister is to allow the New River health authority to make decisions about accident and emergency provision in my constituency, without reference to the services that can and should be provided to a much wider area, we shall lose the services of an accident and emergency department which should not be lost.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister of State to his new post and ask him to give an undertaking that no purchaser—let alone the New River health authority—will be allowed to make such decisions without a strategic review being made of services throughout the entire London region. I am talking not only about Greater London but about a much wider area. Sick people do not recognise health authority boundaries, although sick minds may sometimes do so when taking planning decisions. However, I cannot ignore my training as a planner, the interests of my constituents or my common sense, which all tell me that the care of London is being planned in a nonsensical way.

Although I broadly welcome the reforms in London—I am not against the Government moving money and resources to outer London hospitals, and I am very much in favour of co-operation between outer London hospitals and centres of excellence such as Bart's—I want the Government to exercise restraint and ensure the sensible planning of facilities in outer London.

11.13 am

Mr. Alan Keen (Feltham and Heston): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on securing this debate. However, bearing in mind the Government's record on listening, I could not help thinking that he might as well have been speaking in an obscure language from the "Orient" for all the notice that the Minister will take of his well-crafted speech.

I shall speak a little about my local hospitals in west London, make a few points about the very important hospitals in central London, and then make one or two general points.

My constituency contains no hospitals, but it is very well served by Ashford hospital, which is about half a mile to the west. I compliment the staff and management of that hospital on the service that they provide for the public.

I should like to remind the House how trust hospitals were formed. Ashford hospital, which I presume was following Government guidelines, held consultative meetings to ask the public whether they wished it to become a trust. At those three meetings, the vote was overwhelmingly against trust status, but the hospital proceeded to form a trust board.

I made several points at all of those meetings, and asked whether, before the issue was decided, we could see the business plan that was being drawn up. I was told that we could not, because businesses did not allow competitors to see plans. Although I could understand why ICI would not show its business plans to Du Pont, I pointed out that the shareholders in the health service were the general public, who were paying for it and were entitled to see those plans.

Co-operation and partnership between hospitals is surely more productive than drawing up secret plans and they have to be more productive than one local hospital seeing how it can best damage another in order to keep itself to the fore.

I asked several other questions to which I received no satisfactory answer. At the final meeting held at Ashford hospital, there were only 20 votes for trust status, and about 90 against. One of those who voted in favour was the chairman of the local health authority. She was sitting with a group of other people, who I presume were also managers in the local health authority. I calculate that probably only three members of the public voted for trust status, and that all the 90 who voted against were members of the public. However, that fact was not taken into account, and Ashford became a trust hospital.

We thank goodness that the hospital is still going strong, and credit for that is in some measure due to the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire). When the Government were trying to stop the hospital signing a contract for building work, after it had sold part of the land for a Tesco development, he told the hospital to go ahead and sign the contract, and not take too much notice of the Government. We thank him for that.

Ashford was not a strong hospital and we feared that competition would reduce its status and set it on a slippery downward slope. Our fears were strengthened when the health authority later laughingly undertook consultation to ask whether Ashford should be transferred from North West Thames health authority to Surrey. Of course, the answer was an overwhelming no. We felt that the North West Thames authority purchasers' loyalties to Ashford would diminish, and that Ashford would not enjoy any loyalty from Surrey.

[Mr. Alan Keen]

It was not long before we discovered that Ashford hospital was under great threat from St. Peter's hospital in Surrey. My son was born there 24 years ago. I lived in Surrey at that time, but I did not know where St. Peter's was until I had to make my first visit.

My constituents who do not have their own transport would find it impossible to get to St. Peter's. Thanks to a marvellous campaign by people in Surrey and in my area, both hospitals are now to be kept open. It is vital that people have accident and emergency services, but it is just as important that they have a local hospital, because one of the main factors in patients' recovery—especially that of older people—is visits from partners and relatives. Hospitals must be based where the patients are, not where the money goes.

The hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) says that he has found that money follows the patients. From at least half a dozen letters in the past two years, I know that that is not, unfortunately, always the case. Often the patient has to follow the money. I have had letters explaining that relatives who have a serious illness desperately want to be treated in a hospital in my area because that is where their family reside. Their specialists want them to be treated in the area and are happy to take them on, but the money is not available from their home base for them to transfer. Too often it is a case of patients having to follow money rather than the other way round.

I have been extremely disappointed to find that not one of the directors on the board of the Ashford hospital trust lives in my constituency, despite the fact that at least one third of the patients at the hospital come from the constituency. Not one director lives in the borough of Hounslow, an even wider area. If a public limited company appoints a non-executive director to its board, it appoints him or her to represent the shareholders. If the Prudential appoints somebody, his or her role is to look after the Prudential shareholders. I remind the Minister that the shareholders in the national health service are the public and the potential patients at the hospital.

When non-executive directors are appointed to a trust board, the people concerned should be the representatives of the patients and the people in the area, not people with specialist knowledge in some aspect of management. That flaw must be corrected, and I hope that it is being corrected.

I have some slight hope. I was recently contacted by the board because there is a vacancy and the board is allowing me at least to make a recommendation. We shall find out whether any notice is taken of it.

The non-executive directors should represent patients. There is now no democracy in the health service and we desperately need representation for patients rather than the provision of extra expertise. ICI does not employ non-executive directors for its personnel and marketing needs: it employs specialists full time. That is what we want to see.

The right hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) said how expensive Chelsea and Westminster hospital was. It was and is expensive. It is especially expensive for the other hospital that serves my constituents—the West Middlesex hospital. A good few years ago, we were promised that, when the South Middlesex site was sold—again, to Tesco—the money would go into the revamping of the West Middlesex. The hospital used to be a workhouse and some of the original buildings still remain today.

I ask the Minister to undertake, when he sums up, to hurry up the rebuilding of the West Middlesex. The hospital has raised £10 million itself by selling land. It is important that the rebuilding is pressed on with as quickly as possible, not only for the patients, but to try to recover some of the staff morale which has taken a fair dip recently as the delay has gone on and on. Following Government guidelines, the hospital raised the £10 million itself. I ask the Minister please to see whether he can hurry along the rebuilding.

The Chelsea and Westminster hospital is expensive. I have heard—I hope that the Minister can confirm this later—that the Charing Cross hospital, which serves my constituents to an extent, is being plundered for equipment which is then being moved to the Chelsea and Westminster hospital, which should never have been built, as most people recognise.

The West Middlesex hospital rebuilding programme again shows the Government's short-termism. If the £10 million can be spent, £2.5 million will be saved on running costs. At the moment, there is a need to duplicate services in different parts of the hospital because it is on such a large site. We want the rebuilding to be pressed ahead with as quickly as possible.

We all know that, in many of its specialties, Hammersmith hospital is a world leader. We have seen damage to the research teams at Hammersmith because of the uncertainty of the past four or five years. We were all glad when no decision was taken to close either Charing Cross or Hammersmith; we were pleased when it was decided that they were both to be kept open. However, that has not really solved the problem.

We want a definite statement that both hospitals will remain open. We need accident and emergency facilities at both hospitals; that is vital. We must take action as quickly as possible to preserve the research teams who do work that serves the whole world, not just Britain.

I have some simple, basic points to put to the Minister in the form of questions. Why do we have to sell every piece of grass and every bit of shrubbery to raise money for further building at hospitals? Why do people at a time of greatest need have to visit hospitals where there is only concrete and brick? The hospitals could have retained some of the decent surroundings. It is a scandal that we have to sell off so much land.

What will be done to put some democracy back into the health service? What in the world is the purpose of a system that allows a health service trust—Premier Health, based in Staffordshire—to tender for the provision of community care throughout Britain? There is no doubt that, with community care, which is labour-intensive, the only savings one can make are by getting district nurses to run faster and to drive their cars faster. Community care is labour-intensive, and the labour involved is skilled labour.

The district nursing sisters have years of experience. They are often the only people who visit those in community care. General practitioners do not visit many of those patients. It is up to the community nurses to notice signs of deterioration in their patients' health or to see that things are going okay. We cannot afford to de-skill by getting rid of those experienced sisters, yet that is happening throughout the country, and it will happen where Premier Health is quoting.

We cannot afford to replace those community nurses by newly qualified nurses coming out of hospitals. We need those skilled district nurses. I ask the Minister to give us a quick answer to those questions when he replies.

11.27 am

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): The speeches this morning by my right hon. Friends the Members for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) and for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) show what an access of strength and influence has come to central London as a result of my right hon. Friends' return to these Benches. I am indebted to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity, as an outer London Member, to contribute to this important debate.

There is no doubt that the health service is of prime concern to my constituents in Romford, second only to their economic well-being. It is no surprise that, in consequence, we have a very full attendance of London Members for this debate initiated by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), to whom we must be grateful for providing this relatively rare opportunity to discuss London strategy.

My contribution relates to Oldchurch. For most of my constituents, the national health service is represented and embodied by Oldchurch hospital. There is generally a high degree of satisfaction with the health service in my part of London. It is just as well there is. I have to tell my hon. Friend the Minister, whom I also welcome to his new responsibilities this morning, that for many people the health service is the criterion by which they judge the Government.

My constituents generally have few complaints about the treatment they receive under the NHS. The complaints I receive are in the main about their failure to get treatment sufficiently soon. There are still two or three specialties in which there are unacceptably long waiting lists in my part of the world.

Unhappily, I have to report that Oldchurch is, once again, under threat, as it has been for many years. Oldchurch is the district general hospital which serves not only my constituency, but the constituency of Hornchurch next door and the London borough of Barking and Dagenham, as well as other parts of Havering. There is no question but that its future has been under challenge for some considerable time.

The most recent evidence was that, after the Tomlinson report, when surveys were initiated with regard to some of the major specialties, especially cancer and neuro-science, both working parties proceeded on the assumption that Oldchurch hospital was to close. I do not know where that information came from—I have not been able to pin it down—but it seems likely to be true, because some people in the higher reaches of the hospital administration, perhaps at regional level, have been dead set against Oldchurch hospital for decades and are trying to plant that uncertainty in the minds of those who are adjudicating on how the future health service of London should be arranged.

As a consequence, it is proposed that Oldchurch is to lose both the cancer and the neuro-science services, as well as—now—its accident and emergency unit. It is on that point that I wish to make my relatively brief speech.

I can be brief because I had the good fortune to initiate an Adjournment debate on 18 July, which, in parliamentary terms, is only a few days' sittings ago. I also had the opportunity to meet the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) two days later. As a result of that, and in deference to your wishes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can be brief. I shall also be narrow, because it is a matter that affects our part of London. It is one more piece in the jigsaw of the whole picture of London, and I am glad to be able to talk about it.

When one examines the issue of casualty services, one can see that there is a general strategy, which had not, as far as I know, been announced, but which was put in place by a series of decisions and pending decisions. An article in the *Evening Standard* on 23 August revealed:

> "Managers have already closed 23 London casualty units over the last eight years,".

It is therefore no wonder that this morning one of the recurrent themes is the future of accident and emergency services in London.

It concerns me that, apparently, the strategy is determined by a recommendation, made in 1988 by the Royal College of Surgeons in England, that there should be only one hospital with an accident and emergency unit in each NHS district. Whatever the technical, medical or professional reasons for that proposition, it is obviously ultimately arbitrary, because health districts vary in size, in character, in population density and in health need.

In our case, in Havering, we were part of the Barking, Havering and Brentwood health district. That was one of the largest in the country, certainly the largest district in London. Even now, with the excision of Brentwood, which has gone into Essex, the Havering hospitals trust claims to serve 500,000 people. It seems arbitrary to suggest that that figure should warrant only one accident and emergency unit. I warn the Minister against that sort of academic calculation, because it militates against the best interests of patients at local level.

If I talk about the distribution of health need, it is quite clear, from examination of the Barking and Havering health district, that the health need is greatly concentrated in the west, and not in the east where it is proposed that there should now be one accident and emergency unit in our district. Of course it is true that there are the considerations of casualty services being provided at King George hospital in Ilford, but that will take people well out of their way in many cases of accident and emergency.

The professional arguments are well understood, and can be seen from a professional point of view. It is to have the highest standards of equipment and the greatest number of staff of different skills available in one place, but in accident and emergency, above all, time is of the essence. The crux of the matter lies in ease of access by road and proximity to the main centres of population. That should be the overriding consideration when deciding on the location of a casualty unit.

To date, the community health council has reluctantly agreed that there should be one accident and emergency unit only in our district. The current argument, which is fierce and controversial, is about where that unit should

[Sir Michael Neubert]

be—whether at Harold Wood in the east of the district, on the periphery of the area of population, or at Oldchurch hospital, which has traditionally served the main bulk of the population and, certainly, has been closest to the health need of the district for so many years.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister and our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to pay heed to the recent letter from the chairman of the CHC, who pointed out the future prospects for demographic change in our area.

I see that the hon. Members for Barking (Ms Hodge) and for Dagenham (Ms Church) are present this morning. Perhaps they will be seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they may be able to speak more knowledgably about this matter, but I am advised that the Barking Reach development, which is part of the Thames Gate development, will result in an increase of 18,000 residents in that part of our health district. Furthermore, there is massive industrial development planned for Rainham.

It is therefore important that, when making a decision—we understand that a decision on that particular issue is imminent—those factors are taken into account as well as the access. Harold Wood is ill served by the network of roads approaching it, and it would be necessary for better access to be provided. That cannot, apparently, be taken for granted, because I learned this morning from representatives of the London borough of Havering, which would be the planning authority concerned, that the council would have technical objections to what is proposed for Harold Wood hospital, which may need to be tested at a public inquiry.

In consequence, the borough has sought an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State, at which Members of Parliament representing the district would be present, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), whose ministerial role prohibits him from taking part in the debate, but whose support for the retention of Oldchurch is well known and highly publicised. I hope that that request for a meeting may be considered favourably, because the matters concerned are of the utmost importance to us and our constituents.

I return to the point about the strategy being based on an academic calculation. It seems quite wrong that it should be so formulaic an approach. To come up with the idea that there should be one accident and emergency unit for each district is a transparently artificial, desk-based exercise with a nice, neat conclusion reached by vested interest. The vast majority of the public, the CHC, the local authorities, even the medical staff at Oldchurch hospital itself are in favour—strongly in favour—of those services being retained at Oldchurch hospital.

I hope that that will weigh heavily in the balance. One thing is quite clear about such proposals to reduce the number of units: they do not put on the balance sheet the cost, effort and time involved in making people travel further to receive their services. That is a weakness in the system, because it does not up show up in the figures, yet it is a reality to people, because especially with accident and emergency services—it is a cliché—we are talking literally about life and death. It surely would be regrettable, not to say irresponsible, if, as a result of placing casualty services further away from people whom they are meant to serve, some people should suffer the ultimate penalty and die.

I hope that my remarks will be added to those which have already been made as representations to Ministers on this issue and that the decision may be favourable to Oldchurch. On the merits of location, if location is given its high priority in the consideration, there can be no doubt that Oldchurch it must be.

11.38 am

Ms Margaret Hodge (Barking): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for enabling me to participate at this stage in the debate as I currently feel in need of the services of the national health service.

I want to address the specific problems about which the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) talked in relation to my constituency. But first, as a relatively new hon. Member, I should like to reflect a little on my recent experience of the London health service, as a non-executive director of University College hospital. The chaos and the absurdity of the Government's health reforms were a nightmare for any of us involved in trying to keep the services on the ground going in spite of those reforms.

We all know that an unregulated market in health is crazy. We know that it is particularly crazy in London. When I was a non-executive director at UCH, I had to live with the essential contradiction in the Government's policy and at the heart of the Conservative approach to the national health service: we had a market in theory and Tomlinson in practice.

For UCH, that meant that we lived from crisis to crisis. We were subjected to constant indecision, constant changing of the goalposts and instant planning on the back of an envelope by weak and inconsistent Ministers. The last thing I was able to do as a non-executive director was examine the quality of the health care provided for the patients in the hospital and the value for money provided by the resources expended there.

We lived under crisis management. Was the hospital going to survive? Was it going to be merged with the Royal Free? What was going to happen to Great Ormond Street and UCH? Which specialties, if any, were we going to be left with after the specialties review? When Camden and Islington district health authority threatened to withdraw its contract, we again wondered whether we were going to survive.

The crises did not serve the interests of the patients or the Treasury. They were simply manufactured from the absurd reforms, and they had no purpose. In theory, the reforms are supposed to improve transparency and accountability for the public expenditure on health. In practice, our health service is forced by the reforms to work behind a veil of secrecy, and the reforms have failed in terms of their own objectives.

The first item on the agenda at my first meeting as a member of the UCH board was whether we should have our meetings in public or in private. I felt somewhat inhibited about contributing, as it was my first meeting. At the end of a lengthy debate on the matter, the chairperson asked me for my views. I said that, as we were spending about £20 million, it seemed to me that it might be a good idea to be accountable for that, and to hold the meetings in public. At that point, the other members of the committee said, "We can't do that, because the Royal Free would know what we were doing." That shows the absurdity of the situation.

In theory, the reforms are supposed to put patients at the centre. In practice, the patients' interests were pushed to the bottom of the agenda in the way in which we were forced to manage UCH. Our customer was not the patient but the district health authority. Our prime concern was either the district health authority or the Audit Commission. Nowhere in the provider-purchaser split were the interests of the patients properly reflected. That appalling part of the strategy leaves the user—the consumer—of services out on a limb.

As a representative of the customer on the UCH board, I constantly had to remind my colleagues that the district health authority did not necessarily reflect the views of local residents and users. I also had to say that the Audit Commission's indicators were not always the most appropriate for people in my locality.

Let me give an example to show how absurd the system was. When Camden and Islington district health authority threatened to withdraw the contract for accident and emergency provision at UCH, the chief executive decided to hold several consultative meetings. She went to a consultative meeting in Finsbury and began to talk about the needs of Finsbury Park down there in Finsbury. That was the extent of her knowledge and understanding of the local community whose interests she was supposed to represent.

My next criticism as a non-executive director of UCH relates to value for money. The last thing we were able to achieve in our capacity as non-executive directors was value for money for the resources over which we had control. Let me give examples. A very good day surgery unit has been established at what used to be Middlesex hospital. We had to staff it fully, but it was used at only 50 per cent. capacity, because there were insufficient purchasers around with the resources to take advantage of that brand new facility. University College hospital was spending money on the unit, the beds were lying empty, and the need was out there in the community. The last thing that reflected was value for money.

The reforms also failed to address issues such as how to ensure appropriate staffing for the hospital one is running. Those are the issues that Ministers should address. University College hospital, Middlesex was the result of a merger between Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the Middlesex and UCH. We therefore had one gynaecological unit merged from three. However, because of the absurdity of the system under which we had to operate, we were unable to ensure that we could rid ourselves of the 15 consultants who worked in the merged hospital, although there was a need for only three consultants, given the number of beds that were finally available.

If Ministers addressed the real issues which constrain decent value for money, we might obtain better value instead of concentrating on the absurd reforms which achieve very little in respect of putting value at the heart of the system in London and patients first.

I thought that things could not be as bad elsewhere in London until I came to Barking. As the Member for Barking, I know that the state of the national health service in my locality is the issue of greatest concern to the greatest number of my constituents, and it is a terrible verdict on the Government's lack of care for the people whom the Government are supposed to represent. Bluntly, as they have become prisoners of their own dogma, the Government are betraying thousands of my constituents. My first duty as Member for Barking was to try to come to terms with the issues around what I gather from the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) is a long threat to the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch hospital. The absurdity of the situation is that I still cannot discover whom I should really be talking to, to establish who is responsible for the decision.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Ms Church) and I have tried—I believe we have probably managed it now—to meet all the components of the health service in our area. We have been to the district health authority, the hospital trusts, the regional health authorities, Ministers and the family health services authorities. However, it is unclear who is really driving the decision process.

Is it the hospital trust or the district health authority? Is it the regional health authority or is it the Minister? Responsibility is unclear, and accountability non-existent. The complex web of bureaucracy through which I have had to wade in trying to tackle that constituency issue is absurd. The reforms have created fragmentation, which in turn is creating chaos.

Before I refer further to the specifics of the Oldchurch accident and emergency unit, I want to refer to another issue which arose from the case load in my surgery. This issue again shows how absurd it is to proclaim that the health service reforms ensure that the money follows the patient.

I was surprised when people came to my constituency surgery and told me that they could no longer attend the London Homeopathic hospital, when they had been attending it for treatment for 20 years. When I inquired into this, it emerged that an individual in the district health authority—I believe I got to the bottom of this one—simply did not believe that homeopathy worked.

That is fine for that individual. However, for my constituents who believed that the homeopathic treatment was helping them to deal with long-term problems and illnesses to have access to that service constrained by the prejudice of a person whom Ministers have put in charge of taking decisions on their behalf is just nuts.

I ask the Minister to intervene in that instance, because he must have some responsibility somewhere along the line. He should instruct the district health authority to reinstate choice for my constituents in Barking, so that they can take advantage of the services offered by the London Homeopathic hospital.

In July, the hon. Member for Romford initiated a debate on the threatened closure of the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch hospital. In that debate and in subsequent meetings with Ministers and the regional health authority, we were assured that no action would be taken to prejudge the decision, first, on whether there should be only one accident and emergency unit in that area and, secondly, on whether it should be located at Oldchurch. At a meeting, the regional health authority said that it was not satisfied that it could decide because it was not satisfied that there had been a proper audit of usage in the area. It was not satisfied that the proposed minor injuries unit would have capacity to deal with sufficiently serious cases to complement the existence of only one accident and emergency unit. It was not satisfied that traffic management facilities would enable the hospital accident and emergency unit to be located at Harold Wood hospital.

[Ms Margaret Hodge]

I went away on my summer holiday thinking that we had bought a period when there could be rational debate, first, on whether one accident and emergency unit would be sufficient for the area and, secondly, on whether it would be appropriate to close the unit at Oldchurch. Suddenly, in August, the local hospital trust closed the accident and emergency unit at Harold Wood and started to spend a cool £6 million on improving facilities, one assumes subsequently to close the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch. Somewhere, someone along the line made the decision that we thought that we could debate: it was pre-empted, and public money—our money—is being spent on improvements at Harold Wood, one assumes with the sole purpose of closing the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch. My postbag and my surgery are inundated with cases relating not to the quality of health care in the health service but to access to such health care.

I agree with the hon. Member for Romford, who said that the allocation of one hospital for 500,000 people is completely arbitrary. Again, someone has secretly decided, one assumes in ministerial meetings, that we in London need only one hospital for every 500,000 people. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) refer to a similar set of proposals being discussed by the New River authority. Where is the justification for allocating one district hospital for 500,000 people? How can that meet the health needs of people in London?

If there is such justification, why can we not see it and debate it in public so that London Members can play their part in determining appropriate hospital provision for the health care of Londoners? For my part of London, one hospital for 500,000 people is not appropriate. The proposal is to close the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch, despite the view that it does not mean the end of Oldchurch hospital, and I am convinced that, in five years' time, hon. Members will discuss the death of Oldchurch hospital.

The proposed closure of the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch hospital comes after the death of other hospitals in the area. In my constituency, we have no hospital at all—Barking hospital has been closed. My predecessor, Jo Richardson, fought hard to save that hospital. It was built out of the voluntary effort of local people. It is unacceptable that they should face the closure, in 10 years, of yet another hospital in the area, involving them in travelling greater distances and having worse facilities.

I agree with the hon. Member for Romford on another point. If, as it appears, Ministers have decided to locate the accident and emergency unit at Harold Wood, they will implement Dr. Hart's inverse care law. We will have the hospital located where it is least needed, and where need is greatest there will be no hospital provision.

I am very keen to improve primary health facilities in my constituency. At present, they are appalling. For example, we have three times the national average of single-handed practices—32 per cent. Also, 25 per cent. of our GPs have lists of more than 2,000 patients, which is more than twice the national average, and 67 per cent. of our local practices are classified as poor. Only five are classified as good, and none fits the category of best. Despite those poor primary care facilities and despite the long time that it will take to improve them, even if the investment is available, we will face the immediate closure of one alternative to primary health care, which is an accident and emergency unit in our area.

The proposed minor injuries unit will not be an appropriate substitute. At the meetings which my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham and I attended, it was interesting to note that different bits of the health service had different views of what role the minor injuries unit would fulfil. After we talked to the regional health authority, I thought that a broken leg could be treated at the minor injuries unit. When I talked to the district health authority, it told me, "No way. The only thing that could happen is that a plaster could be put on a scratch." They are two different facilities. If those bits of the health service that are charged with making the decision cannot agree what purposes the minor injuries unit should fulfil, how can they decide to close the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch without being secure in the knowledge that there is proper alternative provision?

People involved in health care in the area have placed King George's hospital on the agenda to treat my constituents who go to Oldchurch hospital. On 19 September, the Secretary of State for Health visited Ilford Conservatives. She spoke about King George's hospital being a shining example of excellence. That night, patients were turned away and ambulances were diverted. Patients had to wait 10 hours at the accident and emergency unit at King George's hospital. In her embarrassment, the Secretary of State has since ordered an inquiry into what is happening. She would do well to start by considering the weekend of 15 and 16 October. Again, the accident and emergency unit was closed, and again a patient had to wait 22 hours before being seen. That has occurred in the context of the Havering hospitals trust having the worst performance in respect of seeing people within the terms of the patients charter, that is, within five minutes of their arriving at an accident and emergency unit.

We also know of the chaos in the London ambulance service. The ambulance service could not cope with the greater distances that it would have to cover if we closed that hospital. The ambulance service has said that the time taken to reach hospital, if Oldchurch A and E is closed, will increase by 72 per cent., from 11 minutes to 19 minutes.

It is difficult to choose one case out of my case load to highlight the crises in east London, but there is the terrible case of an elderly man who has lung cancer and is bedridden. The ambulance arrived at 8 o'clock in the morning to take him to hospital for treatment. It was decided that he could not be taken because the ambulance had a one-person crew and two people were needed to get the wheelchair into the ambulance. Eventually, he was picked up at 11.30 am, having waited from 8 o'clock in the morning. After he had had an X-ray, he was ready to go back home at about 1.50 pm. He waited for seven and a half hours to be taken home in his wheelchair. His feet were bleeding from resting on the footplate for so long. At 9.30 pm, a St. John ambulance with a one-person crew took him home. In the end, neighbours had to assist in getting the gentleman out of the ambulance and into his bed.

The proposals for our part of east London are a disaster for my constituents. My constituency has a preponderance of elderly people. They are just the people who require hospital treatment more than any other sector of the population. I represent a preponderance of people who are less well off. They do not have cars to take them to hospitals and the ambulances are not there to provide the service. As I go around the constituency, I find that they are giving up on the health service. They cannot afford to buy privately. They are giving up on health care because they cannot gain access to it. Sadly, they are not as vocal as people elsewhere in London; but the fact that they are not vocal does not make their need any less.

The Government's approach is blinkered and short term. It is failing Londoners and it is failing my constituents. I urge the Minister to call a halt to all these absurd proposals, particularly those on the closure of the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch hospital, and to institute a commonsense review of health provision in the capital so that we provide value for money and properly meet the needs of Londoners.

12.1 pm

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): Unlike the hon. Members who have spoken so far in the debate, I am not a London Member. My constituency lies about 60 miles from London on the Essex coast. However, I make no apology for speaking. Despite the distance from London, my constituency still lies in the North Thames regional health authority area. As a result, the developments affecting health care in London have a direct bearing on the resources and facilities that are available to my constituents in north Essex.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) said that one of the reasons why we are having to discuss changes in London's health care is the steady migration of population out of London. In the past 30 years, London's population has fallen by 1 million. Many people have decided to move out of the inner cities and have gone into the outer London suburbs, as represented by my hon. Friends the Members for Edmonton and for Romford (Sir M. Neubert).

Later in life, however, those people have often decided to move out further still and they have come to settle in constituencies such as mine in north Essex. The result of that has been that the population has grown in my area. A large proportion of the people coming into it are elderly people. They have come to retire in places such as Mersea and Maldon. That has put additional strain on the local health authority, which has had to cope with both a growing population and an increasingly elderly population. It should be borne in mind that the average health care cost of someone over 75 years of age is four times the average health care cost of someone over 45.

Unfortunately, the allocation of resources in the national health service has not followed the movement of patients. In the Thames regional health authorities, there has been a historical bias towards London at the expense of outer areas. Despite its falling population, London has received a disproportionate amount of resources. That has led to persistent underfunding in outer areas such as mine in north Essex. As a result, we have excessive waiting lists in north Essex for many treatments, particularly orthopaedic treatment and the treatment of cataracts.

After a lengthy wait to see a consultant, a further wait of 15 to 18 months has been all too common. Having taken evidence in the Health Select Committee, I know that that is not the case elsewhere. Hon. Members were told that Dorset has a maximum waiting period from the point of general practitioner referral of about 35 weeks. However, a GP practising in Wimbledon and Tooting told us that, as a result of competitive contracting, his patients do not have to wait for elective surgery and no patient waits for more than six weeks to see a consultant.

Mr. Jenkin: Speaking for a constituency that neighbours that of my hon. Friend and that is in the same health authority, I very much share the concerns that he has expressed. Is it not the case that, because we are in a Thames region, before the introduction of capitation funding, which has gone some way to help us, our allocation per head was about 10 per cent. below that of the neighbouring authority in south Southwark, which is not in the Thames region and does not suffer from the same London effect?

Mr. Whittingdale: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) He is right. Indeed, he has anticipated a point that I was going to make later on and so saved me from having to do so.

As my hon. Friend said, the move towards capitation funding as a result of NHS reforms has helped. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns)—both of whom I am pleased to see here today—joined me in going to see the Secretary of State for Health to raise the need to divert more resources towards areas such as our own. She gave us an assurance that we would move to 98 per cent. of capitation target within three years. We have already reached that target as set by the health region's formula. That meant that we also received an extra £1.2 million last year and £1.4 million this year to reduce waiting lists, which is extremely welcome.

North Essex, however, has in the past continued to suffer as a result of the variation of the national formula employed by North-East Thames regional health authority. Although the formula employed to distribute resources between regional health authorities has only a small factor to take account of social deprivation, North-East Thames has added its own weighting factors to distribute in the region. Those factors have strengthened the social deprivation allowance and an additional homeless factor has skewed the distribution of resources still further towards London.

I do not dispute the need to take account of social deprivation in allocating resources in the health service. The former North-East Thames health authority included Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham, some of the most deprived areas in the country. I know from evidence that the Health Select Committee heard when examining mental health that increased social deprivation increases demand on health resources, particularly for the mental health service. However, the effect of that formula has been that outlying areas such as north Essex have, in effect, lost out twice. North-East Thames regional health authority does not receive the increased allocation of funds to reflect the fact that it contains deprived areas. In allocating its own funds, however, it does take account of that. As a result, outlying regions are penalised twice over.

If the national formula were used to distribute resources in the region, or if a regional formula were used to allocate funds nationally, north Essex would gain. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North said, that is most dramatically shown by comparing our region's level of resources with that of our neighbour, which is not in the Thames region. The position has improved as a

[Mr. Whittingdale]

result of the move to capitation funding, which has allowed waiting lists to fall, but it would be improved still further if we could move away from the current arrangements.

I believe that the Department of Health is considering a national single formula for capitation funding across the country. I welcome that and I urge the Minister to ensure that it is introduced as soon as possible.

Understandably, the specialty reviews have occupied most of the time today. As has happened, I suspect, to many hon. Members, several constituents came to see me on Monday to ask me about the future of Bart's hospital. They had all received excellent treatment at Bart's and I understand the loyalty that they feel to that hospital and their wish to see it continue. Similarly, I have had contacts from other constituents who have received treatment at the London chest hospital, the Hammersmith hospital and Royal Marsden hospital. All of them feel the same degree of loyalty towards those hospitals. I had to say to them, however, that I believed that it was wrong for them to have to come in the first place to inner-London hospitals to receive treatment.

I recently visited Bart's with members of the Select Committee and on arrival I saw an ambulance from the Essex ambulance service delivering a patient for treatment. Why do my constituents have to travel more than 60 miles into London to receive specialist treatment? The answer is that for cancer treatment inner London has 13 centres while Essex has two. Inner London has 14 cardiac treatment centres but there is none in Essex. London has 11 centres for renal treatment and Essex has one and for plastic surgery London has nine centres while there is only one in Essex. There are 13 centres in inner London for neuro-sciences and none at all in Essex.

One of the reasons for the shortage of beds in London, despite the decline in the population, is that my constituents and those in areas similar to mine have to travel to London to obtain specialist treatment. But it is often far more expensive to provide treatment in London than outside it. I strongly welcome the publication of the specialty reviews. They will result in streamlining London's specialist services and I hope that they will also release resources to allow the provision of specialist services in Essex where many of London's patients live.

It has been suggested that a new cancer centre and possibly a cardiac centre should be established in Essex where both are badly needed. In the case of Bart's, it must make sense to consolidate on one or two sites the services that are currently provided on three. I welcome the formation of the joint trust covering the three hospitals and it must also be right that the management of those hospitals and the people who work in them should be asked to come up with recommendations about how the consolidation is to be achieved.

Another recommendation of the specialist reviews on the future of neuro-sciences at Oldchurch hospital has been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Romford and by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge). I recently visited that hospital to see the neuro-sciences department there and I pay tribute to its highly skilled team. However, the report of the specialist reviews recommends that the unit should be closed and the service relocated to the Royal London hospital at Whitechapel. That would move it even further away from my constituents and that would be contrary to the whole thrust of the Tomlinson proposals and what I thought we were trying to achieve. It would be ludicrous to move the centre further still into inner London. If Oldchurch is unsuitable in the long term for a neuro-sciences unit, it would be make far more sense to move it out to an area such as Broomfield which is rapidly developing as a centre of excellence for health care and serves the whole of north and mid-Essex.

Mr. Jenkin: I should like to deal with the issue of cancer. Has my hon. Friend digested the Cameron report, which vindicates the principle of moving centres of excellence away from conurbations such as London and into the regions so that people such as those in Colchester could continue to be served by a cancer unit that provides radiation treatment and would not have to travel to London?

Mr. Whittingdale: I agree with my hon. Friend. We both hope to see a new cancer centre in Colchester as soon as possible.

The London reforms cannot be viewed in isolation. For too long, people in constituencies such as mine have been paying the price for the over-allocation of resources and hospital beds in London. I urge the Minister to press ahead with the reorganisation of London's health services because they will benefit both Londoners and people in outlying areas in the Thames region.

12.14 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The debate is timely and the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has done us a service by giving us a debate on the second anniversary of the Tomlinson report.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): He also provides us with many other services.

Mr. Hughes: I agree. It is three years since that report was commissioned and two years since it reported and now we must face what it implies. I welcome the contributions by the right hon. Members for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) and for Chelsea (Mr. Scott). Their speeches showed that when people cease to be Ministers they can speak out for their constituents much more strongly. I am sure the Minister has noted what they said about the needs of their parts of inner London. My final tribute is to another former Minister, the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert), who made many important points about the way in which we go about planning the process of health service decisions. He spoke mainly about his part of east London, which was also mentioned by other hon. Members.

We welcome the new Minister and I hope that today's speeches will give him the flavour of the difficult issue that he has inherited and must deal with. I certainly understand the difficulties, which were highlighted by the hon. Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale). As he said, one of the key debates is about the fair and proper allocation of resources across the country. The other must deal with the total allocation of resources to the health service.

If the Minister looks at opinion poll evidence, whether from the Tory party research department or the general public opinion polls, he will see that the public are most preoccupied with two issues: the funding, resourcing and future of the health service and the general economic well-being of themselves and the country. People are saying very strongly that the health service needs more support and funding. We are soon coming to the second integrated Budget with its public expenditure announcements and the Minister should bat as hard as possible to ensure that health service funding is not reined back. NHS requests for funding must be supported.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, because I want to ensure that everyone who wants to speak has a chance to do so.

I agree that there is waste. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) gave good examples of the way in which the newly structured health service produces waste rather than reduces it. But above all, the NHS must have the resources that it requires. Those resources are determined by need—that is to say, by the number of people waiting to be dealt with, whether they can be dealt with at the time when they need treatment, as the NHS intended, and whether there is capacity to deal with them properly in the GP's surgery, the local clinic or the hospital.

I hope that we can all agree that one of the lessons from the debate is that the health service, however big its budget, is still not adequately meeting the needs of an ever-aging community which obviously will make increasingly more demands.

The other difficulty that I mentioned relates to the allocation of resources. I have one general and one specific comment on those. If we all look at the figures honestly, there should not be significant dispute between those who represent London constituencies and other hon. Members. London receives more resources per capita for services such as policing and social services, as inner-city areas always do. There are all sorts of reasons for that, sometimes because of salaries and costs which are obviously higher in cities. I could quote from several parts of the Tomlinson report which make it clear that London as yet does not have the same standard of care for its patients as many other parts of the country.

Mr. Jenkin *rose—*

Mr. Hughes: As I have said, I shall not give way because many hon. Members want to speak in the debate.

No one argues that there should not be adequate health care in Essex, Sussex, Surrey or Lancashire. The argument is that the people of London and those who will inevitably continue to come to London to work or to visit or because they are referred here—not because there is no alternative, but because for them London is the better alternative—should have the correct proportionate share of the cake. There are also the extra burdens that fall on the inner capital city—the homeless, rootless people on the streets, the number of people with problems of poor mental health, and other deprivation factors.

If we look at the problems honestly and use agreed facts and figures, rather than working on prejudices, there should not be tension. It is not impossible to say that London needs more resources, but also to accept that more resources are needed elsewhere. We must not have an artificial debate.

We cannot come to a proper conclusion about this until we have a fair outcome of the review of weighted capitation which is sitting in the Department. I understand that it is complicated—I have been round this course many times since I came into the House and many of us understand the range of issues involved—but we cannot fairly calculate adequate provision and the appropriate figures unless a common formula is generally agreed and endorsed as valid, to which we can all work.

That is especially important in relation to London. It is nonsensical that my constituents and our local health authority have to pay more to buy services from our local district general hospital—which happens to be Guy's—than to buy them elsewhere, simply because they happen to have been born, brought up or settled in a part of London where the land costs are higher. It is nonsense to say, "We will charge you out of existence and ship you further away, because the land costs for a hospital in outer London, the midlands or wherever are cheaper." Without dealing with that unfairness, we will not solve some of the other issues.

Tomlinson recommended the setting up of the London Implementation Group

> "to secure effective pan-London co-ordination of a restructured NHS."

Without such co-ordination, we cannot make sensible decisions. We have already moved from four regions to two. However, people seem unable to debate the London health service as a whole except in this place. In addition, all the other people who make London's health decisions are appointees of the Secretary of State. If the debate is on a health authority, the debate is sometimes in public and sometimes in private; if it is by a trust, it is always in private.

One reason why the Government are in such trouble with the health service, including in London, is that they have no co-ordinating body, with consequent absence of accountability and meetings in public. If health authorities met openly and discussed these matters strategically, there could be a consensus whereby budget parameters could be set, but accountable, and local people chosen or elected to make decisions. That would cause the Government far less political difficulty and it would be a far more democratic process.

Tomlinson made three other salient introductory points. First, he envisaged that there would have to be fine tuning of his proposals. On page 1 of his report he said:

> "The mechanism we propose will allow for fine tuning as events unfold."

What the Minister is hearing is, "Please don't just go by the original proposals without modification after listening to the arguments and hearing the debate."

Secondly, Tomlinson said:

> "We have taken it as a fundamental that the population of London must have as high a standard of general practitioner, hospital and community-based health care as the rest of the country."

That is one of tests. The second is:

> "Subject to this overriding requirement, we aim to preserve and enhance the national and international role of medical research in London and in the many other centres of the UK."

That cannot be done by saying that some of the greatest institutions—in terms not of age but of excellence—should be taken out of NHS provision.

Tomlinson's third salient point, which again came in the early introductory statements, was that he was seeking

> "to build upon consensus rather than merely devising our own blueprint for action."

[Mr. Hughes]

I say to the Minister, for heaven's sake build on consensus and do not proceed with a Government blueprint for action that does not have the consensus of patients, those who work in the health service and those whom we serve.

When considering resources and making decisions about hospitals such as Oldchurch, Bart's and Guy's, we must look not only at the pan-London picture but at the local picture. In the Guy's case, we must look at resources in south London, south-east London and inner south-east London, which have far fewer beds than the national average in terms of population. It is no good applying to a local area a principle that is, first, questionable, and secondly, does not work within the relevant immediate community. As the hon. Member for Leyton made clear, figures and facts have changed and the evidence is different. The Treasury does not base its decisions on facts that are three years old—and heaven knows, it still does not get it right often enough. I am not claiming that we shall always need the same number of beds from now until eternity, but the decisions on bed numbers must be based on accurate facts about bed numbers.

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) and I attended the annual general meeting of the Guy's and St. Thomas's hospital trust recently. Its first annual report was produced on the day of the meeting, so no one had the opportunity to read it before then. It contained not a mention of bed figures. When I asked how many beds the trust had now, and on 1 April this year and on 1 April last year, nobody knew the answer. The trust did not know how many beds it had. That is nonsense. There must be agreed facts because we cannot make decisions about beds and expenditure in London on the basis of fallacious and outdated information or on no official information at all.

An increase in primary care in London is clearly needed. The Government have accepted that, and the London implementation zone has been set up. Many general practitioners' surgeries are poor and the quality of some general practitioners is poor. However, it is fallacious to believe that increasing expenditure and quality in primary care reduces the demand for secondary care. The evidence shows that the opposite is true. If there is better primary care, diagnosis is made earlier. More preventive health care means that more needs are identified, which then have to be referred for secondary action. It is not justified to say, "We are taking money out of the acute sector to put into the primary sector, so that means a reduction in the secondary sector."

In relation to accident and emergency provision, I hope that the Minister will please not confuse, "These are cases that could be dealt with by GPs", and "These are cases that could be better dealt with by GPs". All sorts of things can done by GPs, but that does not mean that they are things that GPs are happy to do, comfortable to do, have the equipment to do or are the best people to do. Many people will continue to need to go to accident and emergency departments for treatment and we must judge the need on that basis.

Surely the test for the Minister is whether the health service in London is working. The answer that he is hearing from hon. Members on both sides of the House is that the NHS in London is not working. The ambulance service is not working. Youngsters and old people from Tower Hamlets and elsewhere die because the ambulance does not come to collect them. The elective services are not working. People are still waiting for years to have operations such as hip replacements—ordinary things which hugely improve their quality of life. The emergency services are not working. People are waiting on trolleys, as the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) illustrated, and then do not get home. Primary care often is not working; there are still grim GP surgeries. Community care certainly is not working. People are often discharged into totally inadequate care. The answer is that the London health service often is not working. Our job must be to try to ensure that it does.

My last point relates to Guy's. The hon. Members for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), to whom I pay tribute, are seeking to work with me and with the wider community to persuade the Government that the argument for Guy's to be run down is flawed. We think that we have a case which, on a rational, non-prejudiced, non-partisan basis, if the Government are reasonable and honest, will win the argument.

I know that the debate will follow and that we are about to have three months' consultation, but I will tell the Minister why we believe that we can make a case that he and his colleagues should find appealing. First, things have moved on from Tomlinson. In effect, Tomlinson proposed that it would be possible to rationalise Guy's and St. Thomas's on one site. The trust board was asked by the Secretary of State to consider that. It did not agree, and proposed that both sites were needed. On 10 February, the Secretary of State announced a strategic direction: in effect, the running down of Guy's. Eventually, three months later, we discovered that it was only a proposal, not a decision. The Chessells committee was set up and put a proposal to the trust board in September this year, but that, too, was rejected.

There is now a further modified proposal. The modified proposal that is likely to be put out for consultation—the trust's latest proposal—has already accepted that it is impossible to run everything on one site. It has accepted that we need beds on both and specialist treatment on both. It has accepted that we will need to use Philip Harris house. The only thing that it has not yet accepted as a principle is that we will need a casualty unit on both. The clinicians never said that they wanted only one site. They said only that of course they would prefer one site if everything could be provided on one site. But it cannot be and will not be, so we are now looking at only a two-site option. We believe that for the avoidance of risk and not putting the lives of patients at greater risk, the sustaining of at least the level of care currently provided, and the most clinically and academically coherent provision, which will of course mean some rationalisation and avoidance of duplication across both sites, there is a proposal that can achieve that. Coincidentally, it can achieve it at a lower capital cost than the proposal coming from the trust and at no greater revenue cost. If I were a Minister I would say, "Thank you, and thank goodness for that."

As in the case of Bart's, some 1 million people are saying that there is a need for Guy's—not just local street traders, schoolteachers and children, but Nobel prize winners from around the world, Japanese business people, and leaders of opinion such as the United States academic community are all saying that Guy's is needed. Bishops and actresses are saying that Guy's is needed. Tory, Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians are saying that

Guy's is needed. Ministers and former Health Ministers from both sides of the House are saying that Guy's is needed.

If everybody who has looked at the issue and understands it is telling the Government that a hospital such as Guy's is needed, I hope that the new Minister will realise that the wise thing might be to follow the advice and evidence, and not to apply the prejudice which suggests that a blueprint proposing that Guy's should be run down must be applied. I believe that the Minister can do that. He will make himself and the Government hugely popular if he understands that, and today's debate will have been a seminal influence in ensuring that the Government implement health service reforms in London in a way that is much more understanding of the level of still unmet need.

12.33 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): I thank hon. Members who were kind enough to welcome me to the Dispatch Box for the first time, in an extremely important debate.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) was doing rather well until he gave it all away at the end. As my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) said, the hon. Gentleman called for yet another review, yet more delay. I want to set my remarks in the context of the fact that I do not believe that we can delay further. We must press ahead with the structural changes that are now in the pipeline and going out for consultation. There is no possibility of going back to square one.

If we were to hold such a debate in 2020, some things would have changed. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be an even more august presence than you are today. I do not know where the rest of us would be. I imagine that the hon. Member for Leyton would have his beard restored, and that it could be snowy white. He might refer to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), seated behind him, for advice on that aspect. I am sure that the hon. Member for Leyton will still be calling for yet another review.

I wanted to delay my intervention until the House had a chance to hear the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). We were not disappointed. I am tempted to hand over the whole service to the bishops and actresses, who have such a detailed and concise view of it and have expressed their opinions.

I met the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey when he was canvassing in the rather unlikely circumstances of the Conservative party conference in Bournemouth. Looking like a lost soul, he was walking up and down the pavement with his "Save Guy's" balloons in front of a "Kill the Bill" demonstration. The hon. Gentleman cut a relatively lonely figure, so I gave him succour and promised to listen to the important points that he made about Guy's, St. Thomas's and the future. I and my colleagues in the Department have considered the arguments with great care.

As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said, we are entering a period of consultation. I am determined that it will proceed and be well informed, and that all views will seriously be borne in mind when Ministers consider the matter. I give the hon. Gentleman that guarantee. If he wants to bring his balloons to the Department to press any further points on me, he is more than welcome.

London's health care problems are extremely well known. They have been debated not just since Tomlinson—which made an important contribution—but following the publication of report after report over many years. Government strategy was clearly set out in "Making London Better", published in February 1993. It is easy to agree across the Floor of the House on the motherhood principle—that we want the best health care for all and higher standards of care and, particularly in respect of primary care in London, that substantial improvements need to be made.

At times, however, we must take hard decisions. I will make the point, including to my right hon. and hon. Friends who have contributed to the debate, that, while we are given many views about that which must remain and what is best, everyone also agrees that things must change. The two are logically incompatible. There cannot be change with everything remaining the same. We must face that, and take decisions that will often be difficult and uncomfortable.

Nobody—least of all in government, and certainly not me—approaches London's problems lightly. None of us fails to appreciate that any major programme of change, particularly that involving famous and well-loved and respected institutions, causes anxiety and attracts attention. Equally understandably, the reaction of many people is to shrink from the need for change and not to take difficult decisions. The instinct is to retain the status quo, but that is not an option.

I was interested in remarks about funding and capitation, and I will deal with them in detail later. However, in the context of London in particular, it is clear that the capital's population has reduced significantly over the past three decades, by 1.3 million between 1961 and 1991.

One cannot have such a change in population pattern without it necessitating a change in structure. In addition, there have been many changes in practice. Some hon. Members referred to the fact that beds are the only important criterion. Everyone seems to measure the service by bed numbers, but perhaps such a measure is far too narrow. It is a little like a restaurateur deciding that his restaurant is successful simply by counting the number of seats, and not bothering about the number of satisfied customers.

The truth is that it is not only the population changes that are driving the need for the number of acute beds in London to be questioned. That is happening not merely in Britain but throughout the world. Some of the figures for acute bed reductions in other developed countries are remarkable. For example, Ireland has lost more than 40 per cent. of its hospital beds in recent years, and the same is true in the United States, where 20 per cent. have been lost in the past decade. In any developed economy with a developed health care system, much the same can be seen. There are simple reasons, and many are medically driven.

People are no longer required to remain in hospital for as long after an acute episode. They go to day centres, and hospital-at-home services are being introduced. Intermediate facilities are springing up, which I very much welcome. People move from acute beds to the intermediate service before they are finally discharged.

[Mr. Gerald Malone]

The bed test is simply no longer valid as the most important element in deciding what should happen to health care and whether the reforms that have been put forward and on which we are consulting are right, well informed and likely to be successful.

Several hon. Members mentioned capitation, and asked about the Government's intentions. As hon. Members on both sides of the House know, the capitation formula is intended to ensure fairness. My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) mentioned that fact, and urged us to consider the best available information when informing our decisions about future funding. I am delighted to be able to respond and to tell him that of course that is what the Government will do.

Anyone who cares to consult this morning's *British Medical Journal* will discover that the York report is published there. The equations are there, as well as the logic behind York. That formula will be used to inform Government in decisions taken about capitation in future. Of course it will be—it is sensible. Guidance is being published and circulated to the national health service to that effect.

That reinforces the Government's policy that money must be distributed fairly and transparently to the health service. Allocations will continue to reflect local population characteristics and health needs. Where change is seen to be necessary it will be made certain that any transition is smooth and that it is put in place without dislocation, which is extremely important.

Mr. Soley: Many hon. Members remember that one of the failings of the Tomlinson report was that he was told to consider the situation in London, and did not take into account the fact that many of our hospitals draw in patients from areas outside London. The Minister seems now to be saying that we will take that into account. The contradiction in the Government's position is that they are not clear whether they are considering the hospitals' entire catchment area, in which case the Minister is throwing out many of the figures in Tomlinson, or whether they will stick to Tomlinson, in which case he must ignore the outer London influence.

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the position. When taking decisions and distributing cash throughout the country at regional level, the Government look at the formula that influences those decisions. The system also has many other drivers. Thereafter, when the regions distribute at a more local level, they take the needs very much into account and inform themselves on that basis. It is a complex process, and one that cannot simply be driven by a straightforward equation. One cannot merely press the button and get out an answer. It is an informed, well-established process, and it fundamentally underpins the fairness of the distribution of resources across the country. A number of my hon. Friends have rightly mentioned that matter.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I am interested in the Minister's statement that there will be a fair distribution of health service resources. In the light of the story in today's *The Guardian* that the Secretary of State for Health has admitted that she does not know how much GP fundholding is costing the health service budget, how can the Government proceed on this basis?

Mr. Malone: The hon. Lady gives a partial account of an inaccurate story, which I read with some interest this morning. Of course we seek to identify the cost of providing services, and I shall return to that later, but I now wish to deal with the point about management costs that was raised earlier.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Malone: I must make some progress, as I do not want to occupy too much of the House's time. I wish to deal specifically with a number of the points that have been made.

New money is being spent in London, and much is happening. The development of new day centres is important, because it changes the pattern of need, moves us away from the idea that care must always be in the hospital, and underpins the fact that there should be no fiat from the Department or from me as a Minister.

I was flattered to gain the feeling from the House that it would be better to get rid of the NHS so that hon. Members could ask me what to do. We must change the perception of where we are in the health service, and understand that reforms are driven by patients through primary care. Through the contracting and purchaser-provider relationship, patients now determine the pattern of care.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Malone: If the hon. Gentleman does not mind, I shall not, as I wish to deal with a number of hon. Members' points.

Let me turn to the important question of consultation. In the next few weeks and months, there will be public consultation on changes in north-east London, and in the north central sector early in the new year. I expect to hear proposals from west London as soon as possible.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) mentioned the Royal Brompton hospital. I listened to what he said and—although this may not reassure him, it will at least show the attention that we have paid to these matters—I have a visit scheduled to that hospital. I shall consider the proposals to which he referred, which will be borne very much in mind.

The south-east London commissioning agency expects to consult on its proposal for change from the middle of November. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said, we are proceeding on the Guy's/St Thomas's proposal. I hope that consultation will get under way quickly and that, once it is concluded, we shall be able to achieve a stable result as quickly as we possibly can.

My right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South mentioned Bart's. The Royal London hospital trust has embarked on an important plan, which we believe will improve hospital services for all people in that part of London. I visited Whitechapel hospital yesterday, where I saw what is being done. I say to hon. Members who have mentioned its future that £8 million of refurbishment expenses were authorised yesterday. The hospital will now redevelop four wards, improve the accident and emergency unit and put in place an emergency ward next to the casualty department. Those are all extremely important improvements.

We recognise that change is difficult, but we need strong and determined leadership. As my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South clearly recognised, we need to proceed: we do not need delay, uncertainty and continuing paralysis. When I talked to the clinicians yesterday—not only those from the Whitechapel hospital but from Bart's—the message that came through loud and clear was that no one should stand in the way of change, some of which they may not like but which they regard as necessary if services are to be put on a stable footing and if the teams of clinical excellence are to be kept together.

Mr. Corbyn: While the Minister is talking about nurse-managed beds, does he realise that, in many parts of inner London, people leaving acute beds, who are elderly, often have no one at home to support them, and only very limited social services support? Is he prepared to listen to proposals to convert the Royal Northern hospital in the Holloway road into a nurse-managed bed centre for people leaving acute wards, instead of selling the building?

Mr. Malone: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has asked me to listen, and not to decide as others have done. I do not wish to palm him off with the motherhood answer—"Of course we will listen". We do listen, but we do more. I like to inform myself of precisely what is happening. As I go around London, I ask precisely what is being done about the community care packages that are being put together—especially the primary care packages, with which I shall deal shortly and which cover hospital-at-home services and ensure that the boundaries that used to exist between primary carers of all types are being broken down.

I concede that the hon. Gentleman has a point, but it is being dealt with. He will be aware that substantial improvements are being made. I now revert to the motherhood answer, and can tell him that I will examine seriously any suggestion that he cares to make.

I deal again with the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South. I should like to read a letter that we received from a professor of medicine at Bart's, which states:

> "We are in no doubt that making no change in the current environment would result in severe damage to the working of all three institutions. We are confident that the proposed plan, if approved after consultation, and if appropriately funded, for the development of a modern hospital on a single site at Whitechapel over the coming years, will provide all the stability and facilities required to look after our local population and provide outstanding specialist services for others from far away."

That letter highlights the fact that there are opinions among the professionals who work at the institutions involved which are much at variance with what is often perceived to be the public view.

Mr. Brooke: The hazard in quoting individual documents and individual observations is ascertaining whether they are genuinely representative of the institutions from which they come. Some people might say that the particular letter cited by my hon. Friend is not representative of the institution from which it comes.

Mr. Malone: I concede that there are many opinions, and that they must all be taken into account. My point is that some people believe that restructuring is necessary. I hope that we can draw up a co-ordinated plan in order to ensure certainty and end any further delay.

My right hon. Friend asked me specifically about the services that would be moved, and whether there would be sufficient investment to provide replacement facilities. Such matters are informed not only by the decisions taken by the Department but by other matters. It is, for example, rather premature at this stage in the public expenditure survey to give details of any decisions. I know that my right hon. Friend will understand that well enough.

I give this undertaking to the House: the Government are committed to making resources available to fund rationalisation wherever necessary. It was brought home to me vigorously yesterday that it is important to convince clinicians who were being asked to move that the new facilities would be on all fours with the facilities that they were leaving. That would certainly be an objective. For the reasons that I have stated, I cannot give my right hon. Friend an undertaking as such on that point, but I hope that he understands that that is the objective, and that our deliberations are cast in that way and in the light of all that.

We are rightly proud of the history of much of London's medicine, not least of all science and research, and I now turn to that point. Unless we adapt to the very different reality that we face now, there is a great danger of condemning London's research to the second division instead of it being in the premier league, where more people suggest it should belong. The risk of inaction now is that London's teaching and research institutions would lose their range and flexibility and would become marginalised. Doing nothing in that sense is not an option.

Research thrives where expertise is concentrated—the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey made that point. It thrives where different disciplines can form a critical mass of teaching, research and clinical practice, where biochemists can work side by side with cancer specialists. If we allow London's research to remain fragmented, the slide that is now perceptible will simply continue. Planned changes will address the problem.

All the undergraduate medical schools proposed for merger are now committed to merge, and are developing their plans. Progress in linking postgraduate medical schools to multi-faculty colleges has been faster even than we had hoped. Funding is available to do all this. The Higher Education Funding Council for England has announced a £50 million fund for capital projects between 1995 and 1997, and has invited bids from merger groups. The Department of Health has supported with funds some of the developments that have been triggered by the service changes, and I welcome all that.

It is important to make those who write, along with the bishops and actresses from abroad who were, perhaps, better acquainted with all the institutions some decades ago, understand that, if the institutions are to survive, playing in the premier league, change is now essential, and we must now move on.

I turn now to some of the points raised in the debate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea not only welcomed the success of the Brompton and its record of excellence in delivering specialist clinical services and supporting high-quality medical research, but talked much

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about the pattern of provision that he wanted to see in the area that he represents. Of course we shall listen to all he has said, and I can promise him this.

My right hon. Friend asked, as many other hon. Members have done, that uncertainty be kept to a minimum. I can promise him that, once consultation processes have been gone through and looked at thoroughly, within the context of that thoroughness Ministers will, of course, act promptly to ensure that there is the least possible delay. My right hon. Friend asked me to reassure him on that point, and I am extremely happy to give him that reassurance.

The hon. Member for Leyton made a number of points, referring specifically to improvements in the family doctor and community health services throughout the capital, which he said were not there. I tell him that these matters are proceeding.

Primary care is one of the first things that I looked at on becoming a Minister late in July. I take the improvement of primary health care in London extremely seriously. I was amazed to discover the state it was in when I came to office, and I was disappointed that a number of obstacles were still clearly in the way, driven by the health service before it was reformed. Only now, through the actions of clinicians, has the health service been able to make improvements. Anybody going round London now, who looks at the surgeries of the future rather than having to examine those of the past, will know precisely what I mean.

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I am sure that the House shares the Minister's view that improvements in primary care are urgently needed and are a precondition for any subsequent changes. Does he accept, however, the point already made, that improvements in the quality of primary care do not necessarily lead to a reduction in the demand for secondary care? Indeed, the evidence points in quite the opposite direction. Does he accept that point?

Mr. Malone: No, I do not accept that point in the way that the hon. Lady puts it because, in the primary sector, quite a lot of care is now provided which used to be provided in the acute sector, in the ways that I have already outlined. I do not think that there is any logical connection at all in suggesting that improving primary care will either automatically increase in a dramatic way the calls on the acute sector.

Much of what is being done in the reshaping of primary care is taking care away from the acute sector and into the community where it properly belongs, may I say, and in an excellent way. I have seen a number of examples of how the funding made through the Government, and particularly through local health services, in primary health care in London has worked.

As I was saying, I was in the constituency recently of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey in the rather curious location of a surgery by the name of The Dun Cow. It was an old pub. There was a happy photograph on the wall of the hon. Gentleman opening the surgery—at that stage not with balloons in his hand, but with a pint of beer. I did not know that he tippled to that extent. I shall have to have a word with the chief medical officer about that.

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): It is in moderation only.

Mr. Malone: I may need to take the advice of the hon. Lady on that. But there it was—a £400,000 development. I was keen to look not simply at the new premises, but at the old as well.

Frankly, such premises are still all too common in London. When I look at new premises, I always insist on asking the question, "Where have you come from?" Often, they have come from facilities which are outdated, where proper medical practice cannot take place. It is important that many of the facilities which can now be brought to bear in primary care, even through pressure of size of accommodation, cannot be sorted out. How does one, in what is often a single room with partitions, bring in either a physiotherapist, a practice nurse and all of the things that primary care packages, especially when they are organised by GP fundholders, are able to provide?

I have also been extremely impressed by a number of other developments. The point that I wish to make bears directly on the issue of accident and emergency departments. I do not want to go through a list of yesses, noes or perhapses and all the representations that have been made in the debate, but there are examples in London of accident and emergency departments being successfully replaced by minor injuries units.

The first one that I visited was at the St. Charles hospital. It is a first-class unit run by a combination of nurses and general practitioners in alliance with consultants from the local general hospital. It was asked earlier whether such units were effective or not. Where it is agreed that protocols can be sorted out between the nurse who runs the unit and the local consultants, they are enormously successful. They can deliver health care in an excellent way. The unit at St. Charles was putting through 15,000 patients a year.

I hope that all our debates on the future of accident and emergency units will be informed by the fact that perhaps, there too, medicine has moved on; needs have changed. It is rather important to recognise that, and to look not only at the old institutions.

The hon. Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Keen) made a specific point about a plan in a local hospital in his constituency. I shall certainly consider all that when it eventually comes to Ministers. I cannot give him any undertaking to do more than that, but as that is the undertaking he sought, I hope that, when he hears of it, he will take it in the good will in which it is given.

The hon. Gentleman also raised an important point, on which the House reflected, about trust board membership. I am rather looking forward to the opportunity that the Opposition have given us to debate the point at some length next Tuesday, because up and down the land many people—professionals—are doing what is almost voluntary work for the health service. It is conducted in a first-class way, and I believe that they serve the service well.

I do not share the view of Opposition Members, who think that that is not a proper way to run affairs. I think that it is an excellent way in which to run those trusts. They make a marvellous contribution. The hon. Member for Feltham and Heston does not do a service to anybody who does that work to decry them constantly and say that their service is not worth very much. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) also made that point. She referred to the management costs of the NHS.

It is remarkable that no Opposition Member referred to the fact that yesterday we published the management statistics in the health service. They show that management comprises only 2.6 per cent. of the service. I can never understand how Opposition can expect a modern health service, with a budget of £32 billion, to be run properly and to deliver health care in a complex way unless it is properly managed. I look forward to the debate next Tuesday, when we will go into those matters in more detail than we should today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) raised a specific constituency point. He is aware that the regional health authority has approved plans to close the Oldchurch accident and emergency unit and to centralise at Harold Wood hospital. As my hon. Friend will be aware, the Secretary of State will take the final decision shortly. We will listen to what has been said and consider what has been written by hon. Members, especially in this debate, and a decision will be informed by that.

In response to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge), I reiterate the importance of minor injuries units. She referred to the fact that it may not be possible to replace A and E units satisfactorily with minor injuries units. With regard to my earlier point, where protocols are sorted out properly, it is feasible to do that.

I do not wish to detain the House too long, but I want to deal with several points before I allow other hon. Members to speak. In particular, I want to deal with a point raised by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore).

We do take the position of the London ambulance service extremely seriously. However, when it is being criticised, we should recall that it is the one ambulance service in the country which does not have trust status and is not managed in the same way as ambulance trusts. I firmly believe that one of the reasons for that is that the work practices within the service are not conducive to delivering the best service.

I want now to consider the terms of reference of the inquiry set up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It will be a rapid inquiry, so that we can produce quantifiable benefits quickly. The inquiry will do several things. It will consider working practices, including staff deployment, rostering, crewing policies and timing of annual leave.

The specific problems identified in the tragic case which has attracted so much recent publicity must be addressed. The inquiry will consider systems and the use of resources. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney suggested that it should consider management, and it will do that. One of the inquiry's criteria is to examine management and staff training.

It is very easy for politicians—on occasion, I am as guilty of this as anyone—to use the buzz words and call for a full-scale public inquiry—I accept that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney has not done that in this context, but others have—but we must make some rapid progress to find a quick way to solve the problems. We agree with the right hon. Gentleman that what is happening is not satisfactory and must be changed.

The statistics of the London ambulance service show that the cost per patient transported is higher than nearly any other ambulance service in the country. There could be indicative reasons why that should be the case only in London, but on the outskirts of London the costs are less, and decently managed services can produce far better response times. The purpose of promoting the inquiry is to raise the London ambulance service at least to average standard, and I hope beyond, in hitting targets.

We recognise also the special problem of mental health services in the capital. The matter attracts intense media attention. In 1991, we introduced the mental illness specific grant to encourage local authorities to increase social care for people with severe mental illness. The mental illness specific grant was increased to £36 million for 1994-95, supporting expenditure of £50 million and funding 800 projects. This year, we have made an extra £10 million available to be spent on community mental health services in areas of greatest need in London.

I take this opportunity to underpin the principles of care in the community. Anybody who visits a Victorian institution in which people were almost locked up and the keys thrown away, will understand that a Government who had not embarked on the humane policy of introducing care in the community for the mentally ill would have been seriously at fault.

Everywhere I go around the country I see two things happening in common: better services, but concern from the public. Concerns must and will be addressed, particularly in respect of patients who are a special risk, and they will be taken seriously by the Government whenever problems arise. I hope that the basic tenet of the policy, which is broadly accepted by both sides, is not undermined by specific instances, no matter how much publicity they might attract.

I shall say a word or two about the future of the London Implementation Group. I expect the LIG to transfer its functions during 1994 and the beginning of 1995 to other parts of the NHS executive, including the relevant regional offices. I shall say a special word about the primary care support force, which I launched two to three weeks ago. Its work will continue specifically, because Ministers have identified the improvement of primary care as a specific need in the city.

What will the future of London be? If it were to be left to yet more commissions, yet more full-scale inquiries, "let's wait" and "let's see", the future would be the spiral of decline that Tomlinson predicted. We must act. The Government must support the plans that need to be put in place to bring about the reconstructions in the broadest sense that we are able to. That support will be available.

I inform hon. Members who take an understandably keen and direct interest in such matters that we are keen to proceed so that we can reach the conclusion of the problem. But to suggest that all we may do is sit back, have further inquiries and further delay, would be the worst possible thing for health care in London.

I am pleased to make this ministerial debut on such a matter of great importance. I assure the House that Ministers will continue seriously to consider what is happening in London health care and will ensure that the improvements that we are beginning to see with the

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projects that are coming on stream around the capital are given every impetus from the Government. I look forward to performing that duty in the coming months and years in the interests not only of those who practise in the service and who do such a great job but of those who are probably mentioned least of all, and that is the patients, who need to benefit from the changes.

1.13 pm

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on initiating today's debate two years after publication of the Tomlinson report. I also congratulate other hon. Members who have participated in the debate. I welcome the Minister to his new post. I assure him that it will be exciting, stimulating and challenging. We intend to continue to place before him the difficulties that the NHS is experiencing. Hon. Members raise with the Minister constituency health care issues and problems because he is responsible for the national health service.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) said, detective work in the NHS is necessary to try to find out who is responsible for taking decisions. That leaves with us no option but to bring the matter straight to the Minister's attention. The Government's new approach to so-called accountability in the health service—the "light touch" as I think they like to call it—consists of the Government taking the credit when something goes right but ensuring that they do not take responsibility when it goes wrong.

Two very powerful themes have continued to emerge in all the speeches today. The first is the Government reforms and the impact of those reforms and of the internal market not just on London's health care but on a wider region. I, too, look forward to Tuesday's debate when we shall be able to broaden the issues covered. We shall also consider the Tomlinson report and its proposals, the reason and justification for what is happening in London.

I say to Conservative Members that it does not matter what we say or do: they will not allow the facts to speak loudly or change their commitment to dogma and faith in a market system that is destroying our health service. Many myths on health care—and particularly funding—continue to be pushed by the Government. I should like to pick up on the one on funding given that the Minister paid some attention to it himself.

The Government have always advanced the argument that London receives a disproportionate amount of funding for the NHS. They said that the population of London was not large enough to justify the resources that it was given. That is not the case. The Department of Health admits that that is not the case—or certainly that it does not know whether it is the case.

When we tabled questions to the Department asking specifically for the share of resources allocated to London as compared with the rest of the country, the answer was that

> "It is not possible to apportion . . . spending geographically."—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1994; Vol. 245, c. *300*.]

If it is impossible to apportion spending geographically in working out where money is going, what is all this rubbish about London receiving too much money? Where do the facts come from for that assertion? Did every Conservative Member who advanced that myth contact every district health authority in London and ask it how much it receives? Did they then compare that with the percentage of national spending on health? I do not think that they can have done that. Had they done so, they would have found that London has approximately 15 per cent. of the population of this country and that it receives about 15.4 per cent. of the total allocation, so where is this rubbish about London receiving too much money coming from? It simply is not the case.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Primarolo: The hon. Gentleman has intervened a number of times. It is a long debate and I should like to make some progress.

The Government claim that they want a non-partisan debate on health and that they want to consider the serious issues. When that is offered to them, however, they continue to ridicule. They should make up their minds whether they want a full ideological battle or whether they are prepared to discuss what is best for London and what is not.

Mr. Jenkin *rose*—

Ms Primarolo: I have told the hon. Gentleman that I do not intend to give way at this stage. I hope that he has now understood that.

The issue of who is responsible is important. The Minister is clearly surprised about the state of the health service, in London or anywhere else, and that is stunning. The Government have had 15 years in power and three years of reforms to make the health service better but they have only just noticed that it is not working. That is a measure of their competence and understanding of what is going on.

Let us look at what Tomlinson proposed. Some of the data that he was given were subsequently shown to be inaccurate. He was asked not to assess the health needs of London and to find out what it needed but to assume the working of an internal market. He was to assume that there was too much money in London, which is incorrect, and that there were too many beds, which is also incorrect.

Tomlinson's mistake was to look only at acute beds and not at medical and acute beds, which in every other part of the country are put together. He said that 2,000 London beds should be closed but since the report was published, 2,500 have been closed. Why is there so much talk about the need to press ahead with a plan whose aims have already been achieved?

We are told that we need rationalisation of specialties, and of course it makes sense to have the best resources in the best locations. But why interfere with that at Guy's and at Bart's? Why destroy those services instead of allowing the local community to make known what it needs? The Government told us that they wanted to develop primary care. We agree that we need such development, but so far no resources have found their way into the delivery of primary care. Many great schemes have been started but there has been no measurable improvement.There are fewer GPs in London than there were three years ago. That shows the extent of the investment in primary care in that sector—let alone in the other health professions.

A Conservative Member who is not a London Member said that he wanted to speak for his area. My constituency is not in one of the four London regions but when fighting for resources for it I am not prepared to engage in a divide-and-rule policy by saying that London should be cheated of its resources so that other areas can have them. I know from my experience in Bristol and from that of my colleagues in Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Edinburgh that exactly the same case is now being used to cut services in those areas.

It is about time that the Government looked at the facts and reassessed what is going on. We have asked for that a number of times, and countless reports with which we have not necessarily agreed have requested it, but the Government are not prepared to budge. They will not listen to Londoners or academics and they will not look at the facts and consider the views of the Opposition. In a desperate effort to achieve some sort of progress to protect London's health we have offered another way of finding common ground.

If Conservative Members do not like the idea of another review of available information with a moratorium while it is being held, why do they not at least listen to the evidence that is around? Two years ago the Government published their document "Making London Better" but the policy contained in that has become a sick joke. Access for patients and the quality of care have disappeared in sloganising about the internal market and the jargon of GP fundholding. That has happened because of the Government's constant need to think about privatisation and competition instead of collective provision.

On the question of the London ambulance service, perhaps the Minister would consider reassessing his response to a written question from my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 17 October. My hon. Friend received details from the Department of the number of times that emergency responses exceeded either 34 minutes or 45 minutes. For example, in London on 19 June 1994, 330 emergency calls took more than 34 minutes and 131 more than 45 minutes. The Minister would not agree to investigate the reasons for that or give categories of reasons why that happened. When he undertakes the wider consideration of the LAS, will he ensure that those issues are also dealt with?

Mr. Spearing: The figures to which my hon. Friend referred were for the week ending on 19 June. Nevertheless, is the Minister aware that when ambulance services were run by borough councils and the GLC, local councillors could find out the reasons for any delay? It is not right that the Government should deny that information to Members of Parliament.

Just for good measure, is the Minister aware that last Monday a call was made at the Finchley Tesco—appropriately enough, about a man with a heart attack—and the ambulance arrived half an hour after the call? However, a fire engine that had been called in desperation because it had oxygen on board arrived first. The fire service is run by a London borough council; the ambulance service is run by the Secretary of State. She has had five years' warning of what has been happening.

Ms Primarolo: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's correction. I am sure that the Minister will study his points in *Hansard* and consider whether they can be dealt with in the inquiry.

The Secretary of State has shown scant regard for public opinion. Even the London Implementation Group, the body that she set up 18 months ago to enforce her changes, has not held one meeting in public. It meets in secret to decide the future of London's services. It has 30 staff and an annual budget of £2 million. It is chaired by a former Conservative Member—what a surprise. Why do the Government continue to invest money in quangos in an attempt to justify the lack of strategic planning and accountability in London? Why do not they invest in a regional health authority that can strategically plan London's health services?

Mr. Malone: I would not usually intervene on a minor point, but it has been mentioned twice today. I was unaware that the chairman of the London Implementation Group is a former Conservative Member. I am sure that the hon. Lady wants to set the record straight on that.

Ms Primarolo: Is Sir Tim Chessels not a former Conservative Member? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I stand corrected—

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Lady should get her facts right.

Ms Primarolo: When it is pointed out to me that I am wrong, at least I am prepared to note it. I am grateful to the Minister for correcting me. However, I am sure that he would not deny that the chairman is a Tory. We must not go further into this matter; I should not have started it.

The people's lack of faith in the Department of Health is clear, as we hear at every public engagement in London. That is not surprising, given that "Making London Better" has become a policy under which operating theatres close so that the curtain on the theatre of the absurd can rise.

How absurd to waste the £140 million that was spent on Philip Harris house at Guy's just so that the Government can get their own way. How absurd that the Chelsea and Westminster hospital—a £200 million showpiece hospital—has beds empty while waiting lists rise. It then announces that it plans to open a new ward but—what a surprise—it is for private patients only. How absurd that, if one lives in Barking, one will be seen within weeks at King George's hospital, but in Redbridge, if one lives locally in Barkingside, one must wait 18 months. How absurd that there are fewer GPs in London, but a 57 per cent. increase in the number of managers running the system. How absurd that the Royal Brompton hospital, the national heart and lung hospital, can survive financially in the internal market only if it goes into a £20 million partnership which involves a private company building a 28-bed patient unit and running the NHS catering, domestic and laboratory services.

How absurd that Bart's should be scheduled for closure on a financial package that is so appalling that the current figures demonstrate that there is no financial gain to the taxpayer for 30 years at least. Then the Government have the cheek to tell us about effective use of resources, about making sure that patients get what they need. How absurd that a Health Minister, in justifying the closure of Bart's casualty, can say that the 10,000 extra attendances that the accident and emergency unit at University College hospital will have to deal with will be perfectly all right and that they will be able to be absorbed by the additional and existing facilities that UCH already has. That hospital is struggling to restructure itself under a lack of finance and constant criticism from the Government.

[Ms Primarolo]

Today's debate has been about trying to persuade the Government that their facts are wrong. If they do not agree with all our interpretations, we ask them to look at the reports and responses—indeed, we ask them to listen to members of the public and what they have to say about the health services that they want to see in London.

Alan Langlands recently told *The Guardian*:

> "I find it very difficult to judge what the population of London thinks about the changes."

What utter nonsense. Where is he living—on the moon? How could he possibly not know? He has only to read the *Evening Standard*, which is not known to be a socialist rag—as yet anyway—to see the fantastic campaign that it has been running. He has only to listen to the three Conservative Members of Parliament who speak with one voice against the proposals for their local hospital in Edgware. He would have only to go to a few of the community health councils in London to find out what was going on, or perhaps attend some of the local authority meetings at which the difficulties that are being experienced because of the rundown of the health service and the provision of continuing care are being discussed. He has only to ask what the people think in the area of North Middlesex hospital. When he finds out that an employee acting as chief executive is paid £12,500 a month for a four-day week, he will know what people in London think about their health service.

Action must be taken now. The Minister should take this opportunity to announce an immediate end to hospital and bed closure programmes. He should publish in full the York report.

Mr. Malone: It has appeared.

Ms Primarolo: It is not published in full.

The Minister should allow a proper debate about the funding of the health service—about how much we are prepared to pay and how the funding formulae should be calculated. We must ensure that health funding is apportioned according to need.

All that must be done if there is to be real hope of long-term improvement. Aspirations must be tempered by analysis, research and strategic thinking. The Conservatives' ideological commitment to the internal market and to setting one health authority against another and one hospital against another prevents sensible planning and stops patients receiving the excellent services that they expect and deserve. Unless the issue is resolved, the people of London and the Government will face not only a winter of discontent but a winter of desperate disappointment.

Yet again we ask the Government to establish a strategic planning authority for London—elected, accountable and responsible for delivering the capital's health service—and to call a halt to further bed closures. We make it clear in respect of Bart's, Guy's or any other hospital that when we are elected as the Government, we will have the guts to review the present Government's decisions on the basis of information and research, not prejudice.

Mr. Malone: Before the hon. Lady sits down, perhaps I may point out that the York report was published in full by the university. The hon. Lady can have the abstract that I obtained from the *British Medical Journal* this morning. There is no question of the report being suppressed. It was not for the Government to publish that report, which was the work of York university. It has been published in full and is available.

Ms Primarolo: The report was prepared for the Government in considering their funding formula. The Government have had that report a long time. Everyone agreed, when this point was made in the House, that any funding formula must be fair and understandable and must work in terms of supplying a strategic base for the health service. If the Minister is so confident that the new formula can be succinctly explained—although I understand that nobody in the Department of Health can manage to do that—I trust that he will present the shorter version in next Tuesday's debate, so that we may be clear as to what is on offer.

Again we ask the Government to consider the best needs of London's health service based on information and listening to the public, and to plan strategically for the future. We ask the Government to stop putting up Aunt Sallys which are irrelevant to this debate, which confuse and which help the Government to avoid answering the real questions. The people of London want quality care and access to it when they need it, as do people in the rest of the country.

1.37 pm

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): One disappointing feature of the debate has been the failure of Opposition Members to face up to the real difficulties that are confronting London and to the need to rationalise services. Those difficulties have been recognised in more than 20 reports on London's health care published over 100 years. The problems were recognised before the establishment of the NHS in 1948.

Everyone is clear that a key problem is over-concentration of resources in central London, particularly of specialist hospitals. Many people are prepared, however reluctantly, to accept the need for rationalisation, but when it comes to their local hospitals, they can inevitably find 1,001 reasons why they should not be affected. It is easy to support a strategy but much harder to support specific proposals.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) spoke of establishing a strategic planning authority, as if that would avoid the need to take action now. That is simply a device for avoiding difficult decisions, which the Opposition want to do all the time.

I will not go into all the reasons—outlined in the original 1992 King's Fund report—why change had to occur, but I must emphasise some of the additional pressures in London at this time. We know that the pressures of the funding formulae have led to resources moving away from London and I will certainly welcome a positive response from the Government to the York university research. My experiences in Croydon and the work done by the director of public health there lead me to conclude that the formulae do not give sufficient emphasis or weight to social deprivation factors.

There has been much criticism of the internal market, but critics have failed to recognise that it is leading to patients being treated nearer to where they live, rather than having to come to central London simply because it is the only place where the facilities exist. Also, resources have rightly been transferred from primary to secondary care and everyone seems to support such a change. Many people are being treated for minor ailments in their doctors' surgeries, rather than having to go to hospital.

Another additional pressure is community care and the problems that some authorities, especially those in inner London, seem to be having in avoiding bed blocking. Those social services authorities experiencing difficulties should get on with it and use the transitional funding that they have received from the Department of Health to ensure that they stimulate the private sector in their areas, rather than doing everything that they can to impede change.

On the number of beds in London, much misinformation has been spread around about the situation and about Government policy in that respect. In 1992, the King's Fund report, "London Health Care 2010", used 1989-90 figures to argue that the number of beds should be reduced by 10,000 in Greater London as a whole—I stress that the figures were for Greater London. When Tomlinson reported in October of that year, he concentrated on inner London, which is important because certain recent commentators have forgotten that key fact. Tomlinson was talking about inner London and suggested a loss of between 4,000 and 5,000 beds over a period that could be five years, although he was not precise about the exact time scale.

In 1993, the Government published "Making London Better" and recognised the difficulties involved in bringing about some of the changes. They aimed, therefore, for a much more modest target—a reduction of between 2,000 and 2,500 beds, based on the more up-to-date 1990-91 figures.

We moved away from the original base figures in the King's Fund report and had more modest targets. Many of those targets were due to a revision in the number of patients who would come into inner London because of the implementation of the internal market and the fact that people were being treated closer to home, to the changes in the funding formulae that I mentioned and, perhaps more significantly, to the increased efficiency that hospitals throughout the country have achieved.

Despite what has been said this morning, it is important that all hon. Members realise that London is overbedded in comparison with other parts of the country. The average inner London district health authority uses 19.7 beds per 1,000 episodes of acute care, which compares with 1989-90 figures for the rest of the country of 14 beds per 1,000. I mention that because even if London achieved only the latter figure, which is already being bettered elsewhere because of improved efficiency, it could reduce the number of beds by 2,700. If that factor alone were taken into account, the targets laid down in "Making London Better" would be achieved.

I understand people's concern that, despite all that and all the talk of bed numbers, there does not seem to be a surplus of beds in inner London hospitals. We have heard stories of people left on trolleys in accident and emergency departments. Sometimes that is undoubtedly due to pressure on beds, but it might also be due to bad management of services. That does not mean that the strategy is wrong, but I accept that it means that we must be cautious of the pace of change, and aware of it.

Professor Jarman, who has been quoted at length today, argued that we should look at Greater London as a whole. As a Greater London Member, I have some sympathy with that, but the real problem of overbedding and over-resourcing is in inner London. Croydon has never been overfunded. Whenever a formula has shown that we are underfunded and we have begun to get a bit more money, the formula has changed and we have had money taken away. We must look primarily not at Greater London but inner London.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South quoted Jarman to suggest that we have achieved 2,500 bed reductions since Tomlinson reported. That is not correct. Jarman based his figures on a large drop experienced in the late 1980s, but since Tomlinson reported there has been a very small drop in inner London. Between March 1991 and March 1993, surprisingly, inner London lost only 304 beds. My only criticism is that we do not have more up-to-date information, but that shows, first, that Jarman was not correct and, secondly, that he was talking about Greater London rather than inner London.

I was concerned about the issue of bed numbers, so when the Secretary of State appeared before the Select Committee just before the summer recess I asked about bed numbers in London, and, rightly, to a certain extent, she was mildly critical of the fact that I was focusing on bed numbers, which are not the key factor in the provision of health care. Nevertheless, I argue strongly that the rate of change in bed numbers is important, and therefore we need to look carefully at that.

Many figures have been bandied about on funding health in London, but figures from parliamentary answers and from answers given to the Select Committee show that in inner London spending per head is £603, compared with £415 in outer London. Indeed, outer London is only marginally above the average for England, whereas inner London is 57 per cent. above the average.

I do not subscribe to the theory that it is wrong for London to be better funded than the rest of the country. The issue is achieving the right level of funding for London to take account of its particular needs. The figures that I gave earlier suggest that funding is too high, but we need to look carefully at the funding formulae to see what would happen in the next four or five years if all the effects of the current weighted capitation formula arose, and I am concerned about the pace of change.

The King's Fund was quoted earlier as saying that London is underfunded by £200 million. That was based on a report that it published the day before our last debate on health in London in April. Despite a meeting with the King's Fund and the author of the report, and despite having read its latest report, that figure seems to be an assertion rather than a detailed analysis of the situation in London.

The key to the changes in London was the decision to set up the joint trusts for Guy's and St. Thomas's and other hospitals. My plea to the Minister is that, as much as possible, we should leave the decisions on the exact configuration of sites in central London to those trusts. It is difficult for others to judge what is the right configuration, whether for Guy's and St. Thomas's or Bart's and the Royal London hospital. I should like the trusts to take such decisions.

My second plea is that we proceed with caution when considering figures given for the costs of changing sites. Experience suggests that estimates of the capital cost of providing improvements on one site will probably end up being at least double the original sum and that alleged

[Mr. David Congdon]

savings will not materialise or will amount to only half the original estimate. In other words, we should treat such figures with great caution.

On behalf of my constituents, I am delighted to learn of the excellent news to improve and expand our accident and emergency department, but I do not want large sums of money spent on new building in inner London because the problem is not a shortage of buildings but a surplus. I urge caution in grandiose schemes for remodelling or rebuilding. As far as possible, we should maximise the use of facilities in which we have already invested.

Although I believe that we should proceed with caution, we should not lose sight of our strategic plans for London. The King's Fund's latest report stated that we should take stock, but it also urged Ministers not to change direction because we had got it right. I wish that more Opposition Members would recognise that the direction in which we are going is the right one.

1.51 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I welcome the Minister of State to his new post but I hope that it does not sound churlish if I say that, having heard him speak, it appears that he was offered the wrong job.

I wish to pick up some of the points made by the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). As a free man, he will be a much better person than he was when he was caged in the Cabinet. I was sad that his remarks were answered irresponsibly by the Minister, but I shall go into more detail on that subject later.

If it is a truism that Britain's future lies in the intelligence of its people, it is none the less one that is well worth heeding, and nowhere can it be more true than in medicine. Intelligence in medicine is at its best when individuals combine in centres of excellence such as Bart's medical college and Bart's hospital. The King's Fund medical audit of Bart's two years ago, which was produced just as the Secretary of State for Health embarked on her mission to break up Bart's, reported that the care of the hospital was such that we should "cherish" the hospital. "Cherish" is a strong word.

In 1993, an astonishing 27 per cent. of the people at Bart's medical college got distinctions in their examinations and, in 1994, the figure rose to an amazing 33 per cent. In the seven years from 1988 to 1994, Bart's came first five times among the nine London medical schools according to the number of students with distinctions in examinations; it came second once and third once. That is excellence. Much of that excellence is due to the heroic work of the dean of the college, Professor Lesley Rees. Along with most other thinking people, I was mortified when she was made warden of the new combined London/Bart's medical college.

Further to the important point raised by the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South, excellence does not pop out of a bottle like a genie. It does not come from performance review systems or league tables. At Bart's it has been polished and burnished down the centuries until it has become custom and practice, a matter of pride, and simply the right thing to do. If one shows contempt for such excellence, as the Secretary of State does, one shows contempt for civilisation itself.

I do not believe that the hospital will close, despite the best efforts of Sir Derek Boorman, who is now in charge of the trust. However, having been there three times in the past week, I cannot help saying that at Bart's, there is a kind of grief that speaks to pain and love alike in the hearts of people and personalities who cannot bring themselves to understand how it can be that those who run the political system no longer know the difference between right and wrong.

At about the same time as Rahere was inspirationally founding Bart's in 1123, masons and joiners were grappling with the problems of the hammer-beam roof at Westminster Hall in this building. Of the same age and born of the same spirit, Parliament and Bart's both went on to become wonders of the world. Yet, ironically, it is through Parliament and a merger that has turned into a takeover that the Secretary of State is destroying Bart's. As she does so, any sense that Parliament exists to shut out the bad and to bring in the good disappears.

Bart's faces three tragedies. The first is that the Secretary of State has not listened to the people of London or, indeed, to the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South. For some reason that none of us can understand, she has taken a pride in ignoring the rational and emotional, but brilliant campaign of the patients. On Monday, in the House, it really was difficult to speak to them about some of the despair that they felt.

> "To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
> To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates".

Yes, the words of Shelley say it all. I look the Minister straight in the eye as he tries to snigger. Shutting Bart's is evil.

The second tragedy is that the King's Fund, once a respected independent research institute, allowed itself to be used and abused by the Government. It is now so embarrassed at how wrong it was that it has put two of its greatest critics, Professor Brian Jarman and Professor Lesley Rees, on its management committee. However, Professor Rees tells me that she will never forget and she will never forgive, and I understand that.

The third tragedy is the lack of trust generated by this unwholesome mess—the breakdown of trust between competing predatory hospital chief executives, the breakdown of trust between the medical council at Bart's and Sir Derek Boorman, the chairman of the trust, the breakdown of trust between the clinicians at Bart's and the Secretary of State and the breakdown of trust between local Members of Parliament on the one hand and Sir Derek Boorman and the Secretary of State on the other.

The Minister referred to his visit to the London hospital yesterday. He had the temerity to read out to the House one letter from one clinician. That was a monstrous thing to do, as misleading as it could conceivably be, and I am not surprised that the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South got up to correct him. Perhaps the Minister does not know the facts and if he does not know, perhaps I can help him because the information is in the document in the file. In fact, it is on top of the file behind me.

In September, the chairman of the medical council at Bart's wrote to Sir Derek Boorman, the chairman of the trust, and said that he felt that what was being done now was not what they had agreed and that it would be damaging to medical care at the new merged hospital. He concluded first, that the time scale proposed by the trust board was driven by short-term political imperatives and secondly, that the medical council, which represented many more people than one, would strenuously oppose long-term plans that envisaged the eventual closure of St. Bartholomew's at Smithfield. Why, I wonder, was not the Minister told about that yesterday? Since he told us that he talked to so many people about Bart's, why does not he tell us about it here today?

As I said earlier, I have been to Bart's three times in the past seven days and about 100 times in the past two years. In the past seven days, I must have spoken to 30 doctors. None of them is giving the information that the Minister, using one letter, gave to this House. Do we want to give the House accurate information? Does the House deserve the truth, or is the Minister prepared to let down himself, his Government, the nation and Parliament?

Mr. Malone: What a lot of nonsense.

Mr. Sedgemore: The Minister says, "What a lot of nonsense," from a sedentary position. Is he telling me that what I say is not true? Is he really claiming that on a visit to the Royal London hospital yesterday he found out more about the views of every leading doctor, nurse and patient at St. Bartholomew's hospital? If so, that would be nonsense.

Mr. Malone: I am rather surprised that the hon. Gentleman refuses to recognise that there is another view and I think that it is perfectly proper to point it out. I did not for a second suggest that it was the only view. Clearly, it is not. The hon. Gentleman is a mite sensitive about any criticism of what he seems to think is an inevitable position with which everybody agrees. It is not.

Mr. Sedgemore: I do not know whether it is a mite sensitive of me. I am trying to represent the views of a million Londoners, the views of the overwhelming majority of clinicians, consultants, doctors, nurses and patients at St. Bartholomew's hospital. I am trying to put an accurate case to the House and, in fact, not to mislead the House, as the Minister was, on the position of doctors at St. Bartholomew's hospital. The position is not as he said it was from the Dispatch Box.

Perhaps I may go into more detail, since I know rather a lot more about the issue than the Minister. On 19 August, Sir Derek Boorman wrote to *The Times* and claimed that the cost of transferring services from Bart's to the Royal London was £113 million, made up from £25 million for renovation and £88 million for new building. That was not true. The correct figure, given in the Minister's brief yesterday, as he well knows, was £200 million. In fact, to be precise, in the statistical table that I have here, the figure is £202 million.

How can the chairman of a hospital trust write to *The Times* and get the figure so wrong? For a start, Sir Derek forgot the existence of the medical college. For someone who does not know much about medicine, it is an understandable mistake, I suppose, but it is not quite the sort of mistake that one expects from the chairman of a hospital trust. I suspect that when Labour comes to power in a few years' time, it will be "hail, glad, confident morn" never again Sir Derek.

In October 1992, we were told that Bart's would have an overspend of £12 million and that it would worsen with time. Bart's said that the figures were wrong, but Tomlinson repeated them—so did Ministers from the Dispatch Box. Again, if the Minister does not want to listen to me, I hope that he heard the point made by the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South.

In the past two years, under the excellent work of the professor of medicine at Bart's, Professor Mike Besser, who was chief executive during that period, Bart's paid off all the outstanding debt and the accumulated deficit of £2.45 million. It repaid all the outstanding loans to the trustees. It put £1 million into the contingency fund. This year, it reported an operating surplus and it has brought the capital account into balance. In other words, Bart's did everything that Ministers asked of it; working—

Mr. Malone *rose*—

Mr. Sedgemore: May I finish this point? Working in the internal market, Bart's produced a surplus, got rid of its debts and showed that it was financially viable. What has happened to it now?

Mr. Malone: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the report of the accounts up until 1994. May I remind him that they apply not just to Bart's but to Bart's and the Homerton? In addition, the accounts include a special payment of £4 million in that year from the special trustees. What the hon. Gentleman has said does not fully represent the position as I understand it from the Besser letter.

Mr. Sedgemore: The Minister must look at the figures. The money from the special trustees has been paid back. Indeed, most of it was never drawn. The Minister will discover that if he checks the figures. I have carried out a detailed study of the matter and I beg the Minister to try to find out what is going on.

I am delighted that the Minister mentioned the Homerton, for two reasons. First, the future should lie in Bart's working closely with the Homerton and not in some kind of predatory relationship between the two. Secondly, we know that what are now called "episode costs" or patient costs are extremely high at the Homerton. The Homerton would benefit from a broader throughput, working in conjunction with Bart's, which would bring the average costs down. The Minister must go back and do his basic homework.

Professor Besser was the chief executive and he ran, along with the patients, a brilliant campaign against the closure of Bart's. He has just been overwhelmingly elected vice-president of the Royal College of Physicians. I am told that his vote represents a recognition of his clinical excellence and an overwhelming condemnation by all the physicians in the country of the actions of the Secretary of State.

I have a petition which has only one signature. It is not a big petition and one may say it is not much of a campaign. It says:

> "We, the undersigned, support St Bartholomew's hospital as patients and friends. Bart's has provided essential services and must continue in its great work."

[Mr. Sedgemore]

There is just one signature, from one great man. It is the signature of John Smith.

After John Smith died at Bart's, in an act of extraordinary spite, the chairman of the trust, who had decided that there would be provision on the site for the next 13 years, on instructions from civil servants at the Department of Health, reduced that to five or six years in an attempt to prevent a Labour Government from keeping the hospital open. That was a despicable act if ever there was one.

However, that cannot work. First, the hospital cannot be shut within five or six years. Secondly, earlier this week Professor Lesley Rees met my right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party and they had what might be described as useful and constructive discussions. Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo), whom I regard as the closest thing one can get to a saint in this world, and who replied to the debate today, gave an assurance that when Labour comes to power in three years' time, the decision to close Bart's will be reviewed. At least I leave the House today with some hope; indeed, with considerable hope.

2.7 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on instigating this debate today, and on his luck. Had I been so lucky, I might have chosen a similar topic although not in exactly the terms of the hon. Gentleman's motion. The hon. Gentleman was rather premature at the beginning, when he said that he had "won" the debate. I do not think he meant it quite like that. I am not sure whether he had won it then, or whether he has won it now.

I listened carefully and with great interest to most of the contributions. They ranged very widely from listing the major London-wide issues, of which there are many, to equally relevant individual constituency cases which I am sure we have all come across. It was right that the debate should range that widely.

I fear that there has also been a good deal of political point scoring. That is a great shame because no Conservative Member would deny that there are deficiencies, difficulties and problems which should be sorted out. However, it does not help the quality of debate inside or the wider debate across London to indulge in hyperbole because that discredits the people who follow that course.

To suggest that the whole of the health service in London is not working or has collapsed is a gross distortion of the truth. Indeed, it demeans all those in the health service—doctors, nurses, clinicians and managers—who are working hard with the positive aim of improving health care in the capital. Also, that claim cannot be borne out by the hundreds of thousands of people in London who receive extremely good health care and who show their appreciation later. Like many of my colleagues in London, I receive many letters from people saying that they are delighted with their treatment. To suggest that all is doom and gloom is a grave misjudgment.

The wider debate on London health care has been dominated too much by the understandably emotive issues of large and prestigious central London hospitals. There is a consensus that change must come, although of course there is no consensus on the detail of change. An example of that concerns the Guy's-St. Thomas's future, which is still subject to lengthy consultation which has highlighted a variety of viewpoints.

The Guy's-St.Thomas's dispute, if I may describe it as that, affects even my constituency in south London. The majority of my constituents who need hospital care go to local hospitals. I shall refer to that matter in more detail later. On occasions, however, specialist treatment is needed in a central London hospital. There is certainly affection for such hospitals. From listening to my constituents, it is obvious that there is no clear view on the best way forward. Although I understand the views of those who wish to "defend" the future of Guy's, such views are by no means universal; some people would prefer to see emphasis elsewhere.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who has patiently attended most of the debate and has played a leading role in the Guy's campaign. From his and his constituents' point of view, it is an important campaign. However, I stress that such arguments do not necessarily apply to the whole of south London.

I cannot support the full campaign, which has strangely been called SICK—saving casualty in crisis—the save Guy's campaign. Like my hon. Friend the Minister, I had an acute episode with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The acute episode that I shared with him happened to be on a train, when he came up to me and handed me a leaflet, which I promised to read. I was interested to note that the hon. Gentleman's leaflet states that bishops and actresses support Guy's. It also states that African tribal chiefs support Guy's. I do not doubt that that is correct, but I find it puzzling; the hon. Gentleman's campaign has obviously gone much further than I thought.

The main reason why I take exception to some objectives of the SICK campaign is that the leaflet states that many people regard the closure of Guy's as part of a wholesale destruction of the NHS. That claim is wildly out of touch with reality and does nothing to assist the genuine objectives of those who want a different future from the preferred option for Guy's.

Ms Jowell: The all-party, hospital, trade union and community campaign to save Guy's hospital is different from the SICK campaign, which is based in Southwark communities. Ten years ago, they were promised that, when two of their hospitals, New Cross and St. Olave's, were closed, Guy's would continue as their district general hospital. There is very strong feeling in the communities of Southwark that the national health service is disintegrating and that promises are being broken.

Mr. Merchant: I thank the hon. Lady for clarifying that point, but it does not change my view on the leaflet produced by the Save Guy's campaign and SICK. It is a joint leaflet carrying both logos, so presumably everything that it says represents what both groups feel. I was making the point that such statements do not convince me that the arguments are genuine enough for me to lend my support to the Save Guy's campaign, even though I understand and have sympathy with many of its objectives.

Mr. Jenkin: All hon. Members feel an emotional attachment to these great institutions with their established history and worldwide reputations. Even my constituents, who are on the fringes of a Thames regional health authority, write to me on occasion about their concern about the possible closure and rationalisation of London's teaching hospitals. When I explain to them, however, that rationalisation of London teaching hospitals is necessary in order that more of their health services should be based locally, they understand that it is not the emotional but the practical case that must rule our hearts. We must go on advancing the practical case and not allow emotion to rule over practical decisions.

Mr. Merchant: My hon. Friend is right. I am grateful to him for making that point, to which I was about to move. If it applies to his constituents, it applies also to my constituents, who are London constituents and who, nevertheless, would always prefer, if possible, to have treatment locally.

I imagine that it will always be necessary for some of my constituents to seek specialised treatment in central London hospitals, but I would prefer that far fewer of them need to do that in the future than have done in the past. It is interesting that the people who are strongest in campaigning to freeze, if you like, the position of the centres of excellence and central London teaching hospitals are the people who have had treatment there. Understandably, they have a warm feeling about that experience. When given the option, people who know that they might need similar treatment say that they would prefer to be treated locally, if possible, rather than centrally. We must take those people most into account. They are the future patients. We have to think of their interests in constructing the best possible health care system in the capital.

My constituency is in outer London in the borough of Bromley, which has a population of just over 300,000. In terms of area, it is the largest London borough. The interests of my constituency are at least of equal importance to the interests of inner London, despite the fact that inner London so easily dominates the debate. I want the reorganisation of central London facilities, which is inevitable, to be carried forward strictly in tandem with the needs of outer London and with provision in outer London.

I should like to refer to existing health provision in the London borough of Bromley. As reference has been made to the largest and most prestigious hospitals, perhaps I can refer to one of the smallest hospitals in the Greater London area in Beckenham. I am not an expert in this, but the problem in that part of outer London—and I dare say that it is reflected in many other parts of outer London—is that hospitals are wrongly placed and in many cases very old. No one needs to be blamed for that. Population and health provision change. The sort of facilities that are available need to change and things will inevitably become out of date and need to be revised. It is important that, when that revision takes place, it matches present and future requirements rather than serves a purely nostalgic purpose.

There are four hospitals in Bromley. One is an accident and emergency hospital on a cramped site almost in the middle of the town. Access is extremely difficult, and physical reasons make it impossible to find a practical way to expand it. The second hospital is Orpington, which is on a very large site, much larger than the buildings need, and its location means that it serves only a corner of the borough. The third is Farnborough hospital, which is on a good site and reasonably well located. But its buildings are Victorian and some of them are huts and the like. It was badly planned and has been developed piecemeal over decades, and clearly needs to be improved. The fourth is Beckenham hospital in my constituency, which evokes great local support but could clearly never hope to provide all the facilities that are required nowadays.

Since the setting up of the Bromley hospital trust, great efforts have been made on future planning to improve the situation for residents of the borough. I place on record my appreciation for the work of the trust's chief executive, Mark Rees, who has provided a first-class service to me and to my hon. Friends and who makes great efforts not just to provide the best service for today, but to improve it for tomorrow.

There is clearly merit in centralising facilities in a borough, especially for the major acute services, and the provision of such facilities has caused the borough great problems. The original plan was to build a new district general hospital on the Elmfield site but, sadly, that opportunity was lost, though only on planning grounds. It was supported by the local authority and was obviously the best plan from the health point of view, but I am afraid that it was prevented by a rather cynical appeal to self-interest by local Liberal Democrats who put the advantage that they saw in stirring up their own back yard, if I may describe it that way, before the wider health interests of the borough. It was a great pity that idea was lost.

As a result, no other new sites are available on which to put a district general hospital—the planning position is as bad as that—and there is therefore a need to develop the existing hospitals. Luckily, there is a possibility of doing that and Farnborough hospital offers the best option. I support that option, provided that alongside it there is proper recognition of the role played by the other hospitals in the borough. They should not be seen as rival hospitals duplicating services but as hospitals providing different but necessary services for proper health provision for local people.

The health trust has promised that the future of Beckenham hospital and that of other hospitals in the borough is guaranteed, so I am not in any sense fighting to prevent a hospital closure. I am seeking to stress the need for the future to be clear and for plans to be adequate. Although the term is not approved by current hospital administrators, I am talking about the provision of a proper cottage hospital in an area with a unique identity. That would provide facilities which would give, with much greater convenience, a whole series of health services to local people. The word that tends to be used now is "polyclinic." I do not like the term, but a small hospital of that type still has a relevant role. It could provide out-patient facilities so that consultants covering a wide range of specialties could come to the hospital and patients could see them there rather than having to travel long distances on public transport facilities which are not always ideal. That fits in with the pattern of overall health provision in London that we have been discussing. Day treatment should be provided at an enhanced level. Specialist clinics should be developed, not just for people in the immediate area, but to cater for wider borough

[Mr. Merchant]

needs. That would take pressure off the other hospitals—a sharing of specialist services. That is already beginning to develop.

There should also be a full array of diagnostic services because that is usually the early stage of a patient's treatment. If that can be handled locally, so much the better for the patient and for the hospital treatment. Last but not least, I would like the hospital to have a small injuries unit. My hon. Friend the Minister referred to small injury units and clinics. I listened with great interest and I was pleased to hear him say that he envisaged an important future for them. There used to be one at Beckenham hospital and it provided a useful service. Sadly, it was lost some years ago, but there is now a real possibility that it might return. I know that the health trust has been examining the issue in detail. Indeed, I view it as a condition that I would want fulfilled if I am to support the overall development that the trust envisages for hospitals in the Bromley area.

Provided that everything is understood, a clear distinction can be made between the sort of services provided by a small injuries unit and those provided by a major accident and emergency unit. Local people would be provided with a viable service, without in any way compromising the major A and E service that would be provided elsewhere. Since I have made that suggestion, I have received a tremendous response from local people, showing how strongly they feel about it and how large is the potential demand. Indeed, I have a file full of letters, which I do not intend to read, showing a clear favourable view.

I want briefly to refer to two other important aspects of London health care. The first is primary care. I have already mentioned the role that a small hospital can play and the specialist services that it can provide. The general practitioner can also provide many of those services.

Ms Judith Church (Dagenham): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would be interested to hear about a constituent of mine, Mr. May. He is a second world war veteran who fought for his country, was a prisoner of war and escaped from the prisoner of war camp. He is a man of great fortitude and bravery. He is certainly not fainthearted in any way. However, when he went to his general practitioner to get pain-killing tablets for his back, he was told that they were now available only on private prescription. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to comment on the general practitioner services available to patients such as Mr. May.

Mr. Merchant: It would not be right to be drawn into a medical judgment on one of the hon. Lady's constituents, much though she may tempt me. I was once visited at one of my surgeries by a constituent who complained about his knee. Before I had the chance to ask him what the problem was, he had rolled up his trouser leg to show me his knee and he asked me to examine it. I declined as I did not feel that I was sufficiently qualified.

My point about primary care is that GPs are increasingly able to offer services which in past decades only hospitals could provide. Indeed, a major GP fundholding surgery in my constituency—Elm road surgery—provides a whole range of services which in my youth, many years ago, one would never have imagined would be provided by a GP. Consultants go to that surgery and carry out what previously would have been an out-patient appointment at a large hospital and would have required the patient to travel. That is an excellent advance.

Another point that I must make—I see that I have little time to do so—is about the London ambulance service. It has had serious problems and there are still difficulties, but I should like to record my gratitude—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (NO. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

UNFITNESS TO DRIVE ON MEDICAL GROUNDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

DATA PROTECTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) (WALES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

SPORTS (DISCRIMINATION) BILL

Order read for consideration (as amended in the Standing Committee).

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): To be considered what day? No day named.

ENERGY CONSERVATION BILL

Order read for consideration (not amended in the Standing Committee).

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered upon Friday 28 October .

SOCIAL SECURITY REGULATIONS (CHRONIC BRONCHITIS AND EMPHYSEMA) (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

MARRIAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

REGULATION OF COSMETIC SURGERY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

HEREDITARY PEERS (DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

HOMICIDE (DEFENCE OF PROVOCATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

CONTAMINATED LAND (REMEDIATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

TAMPONS (SAFETY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

REGULATION OF DIET INDUSTRY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

NURSERY EDUCATION (ASSESSMENT OF NEED) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [18 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 28 October .

FREEDOM TO ROAM (ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

CHILDREN ACT 1989 (PROHIBITION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

TREASURE BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

PARDON FOR SOLDIERS OF THE GREAT WAR BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

WATER (DOMESTIC DISCONNECTIONS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [25 February].

Hon. Members: Object.
Debate further adjourned till Friday 28 October .

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES (NO. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

UNFAIR DISMISSAL (INSOLVENCY OF EMPLOYER) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

PUBLIC INQUIRIES (IMPROVED PROCEDURES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

CONTROL OF CAR BOOT SALES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (COMMUNITY LAW) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

STRAY DOGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October .

CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) BILL

Order read for further consideration (as amended in the Standing Committee).

Hon. Members: Object.
To be further considered upon Monday 24 October .

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the course of the London health service debate the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) intervened on my speech to remark that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) did many services to the House. It should be placed on record that no hon. Member has previously moved so many Bills in such a short time, on behalf of so many other hon. Members, and that we pay tribute to the hon. Member for Leyton.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That was not really a point of order for the Chair.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 26th October, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions on the Motions in the names of Mr. John M. Taylor relating to the draft Legal Aid (Scope) Regulations 1994, Mrs. Secretary Bottomley relating to the draft Parental Orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) Regulations 1994 and Mr. Secretary Lang relating to the draft Parental Orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) (Scotland) Regulations 1994 not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion, and the said Motions may be entered upon and proceeded with at any hour, though opposed.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Royal Docks

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

2.35 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I sought this Adjournment debate to discuss the redevelopment of the royal docks because they are symptomatic and symbolic of what is happening not only in east London but in London as a whole, and also of some Government policies.

I am glad to see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in his place. This is perhaps the first occasion since he took office on which we may formally exchange opinions. The hon. Gentleman and I come from opposite political traditions, but my thesis is that there is room for constructive conciliation in respect of the royal docks. At present, there is little sign from the Government or their agents—welcome though some of their actions have been—of the common ground that I seek.

The royal docks are part of the former and existing geographical Thames corridor, which is now to be called the gateway. In fact, there are several gateways on the Thames between Tilbury and the tower of London, but the royal docks are to be pre-eminent among them because they are available for redevelopment. That is not, I hasten to add, because they are derelict—far from it. Features already exist there.

The docks themselves comprise an area of open water equivalent to 200 acres and an area of land larger than Hyde park and Kensington gardens combined. They are of local and national importance and could fulfil an important strategic function. They already fulfil an important function in respect of water sports. There is potential for an Olympic running track—the docks have one nearly that length already—and for opportunities for young people. Wandsworth had a water recreation centre, and there is one in east London too. Unfortunately, however, the permanence and placing of that unique recreation facility has not yet been decided. That illustrates the ambiguity of the policies for this important area.

The London Docklands development corporation is thought to have a duty in regeneration but it relates to the physical framework. There is nothing in the relevant legislation—I tried unsuccessfully to include such provision—for the regeneration of the communities as such. The community in and around the royal docks is part of the London borough of Newham and, like other docklands, tends socially to be north-south away from the river.

I will concentrate on the needs of Newham in respect of the royal docks, not excluding their regional significance. In that respect, I view the attitudes of the LDDC and the Government rather as one might view the central character in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". The good Dr. Jekyll—the London Docklands development corporation—distributes benefits and provides facilities and improvements where they are needed and where the Government do not give the money. Everyone says, "Thank you very much", although it is taxpayers' money anyway. Then along comes Mr. Hyde. Communications between the two are blocked. Dr. Jekyll does not know of the damage that Mr. Hyde is doing and Mr. Hyde cannot be educated by the good Dr. Jekyll. I wish to concentrate on the need for reconciliation in such disparate matters.

The Newham community is statistically one of the most deprived. In reality I do not think it is, because the people are vigorous, hard working and full of initiative, as examination results at the new sixth-form college demonstrate. The ethnic—if I can use that word—population makes up more than 60 per cent. of the community. Newham's standard spending assessment is down by £20 million and I am sure that other boroughs are not so badly placed. Perhaps the Government will do something about it in the near future. The borough has to spend more than £10 million on the homeless, which is a statutory duty and we have many homeless people from other boroughs because homes are relatively cheap for such boroughs to rent in Newham. We have 47,000 refugees. Refugees are a national problem and there are many different refugee communities in Newham, which make quite a call on our social services.

There are also areas of great community stability and continuing close kinship networks in the south of the borough, especially around the dockland area—the traditional areas of London too often shown in television programmes and the rest. Such communities exist around the dockland areas as they do in the adjacent Isle of Dogs.

The huge and as yet undeveloped area under discussion must be placed in that context. There have been great developments. I estimate that between £500 million and £800 million has been spent on roads between great open spaces by the LDDC and the Government. Aspects that are perhaps more important, however, have been less developed. We have just heard that reconstruction of the Connaught rail tunnel, which was to cost £3 million only, has been postponed. Of course, we have the airport, but it is, quite properly, a strategic provision and is not for local people. Transport is therefore important. The Jubilee line is coming, which is a good thing. It was a developer's railway and was not initially for local people, but there will be a station at Canning town.

The LDDC has been helpful with education. We have better primary schools because of the facilities that it has provided—all 12 of them are better and some are new—and it has also provided a health clinic, but only because it has been filling gaps in what should have been a Government programme. We hope to have some secondary schools there as well, but that has nothing to do with the LDDC as it is another issue.

My late hon. Friend Ron Leighton, who was a Member for Newham, demonstrated that local east London training facilities were not fulfilling the needs of a rising generation, and my concerns for the future are built on that generation.

A large royal docks university college or institute has been proposed on the north side of the Albert dock, which covers a huge area. I think that the LDDC is backing that project, but unfortunately the funding may have to come from the single regeneration budget for London, which is not specifically an education, employment or training budget, but is part of a large new invention, which the Government have introduced somewhat controversially as it is four times oversubscribed. How can one measure the need for second-language section 11 development in one London borough—say, west London or Lambeth—against the need for technical training in east London? Even if

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

projects in the royal docks are backed by the LDDC we must deal with that budget, which might cause some difficulties.

According to the statistics, which I think are right, at least one ward in the Canning town area has 40 per cent. male unemployment. The employment prospects of young people, especially of those who do not achieve the top examination results—and there are always some— are not great, but the greatest problem in the royal docks is housing.

In 1979, about 1,000 dwellings were constructed, mostly by the council but some by housing associations. In the early 1980s, the figure was 400. In the past few years, there has been no council building and 200 or 300 housing association vacancies or new builds. That is welcome up to a point, but some of it was for people from outside and some for people from Newham. All calculations show that, compared to the historic pattern, we are down at least 500 to 600 new builds a year for Newham's population alone. It is therefore impossible for young people—who might have been expected, as they were for generations, to move out if they have the means or to remain with their families if they have not—to avoid overcrowding and have some local connection.

I do not say that the royal docks should be covered with new housing to deal with such problems, but we must deal with the problem, which is a consequence of Government policy, of our having 7,000 fewer dwelling units, which have been sold. That policy has operated for many years and we know the reasons for it, but it means that the vacancies that would have arisen from such housing are not available to rehouse people. People who have bought their homes or whose relatives have bought their home for them, particularly if they are elderly, sell them on the private market, which is out of the reach of local people.

All those problems tend to compound each other. The difficulty is that people see other building going on. The visible proposal of the LDDC— in the form of Mr. Hyde rather than Dr. Jekyll— is a so-called urban village on the southern side of Victoria docks. It is a very high-profile and well-advertised development. It is not really a village because there will be a good many flats in blocks of up to eight storeys and the idea of having an adjacent employment area to allow people to walk to work may not work out.

Facilities are available and there is so-called mixed development, of which, at most, one dwelling in four—or more like one in five—is for social housing at rents of £50 or £60 a week, and even that will be difficult. Immediately alongside, to the north of the docks, there is a real post-war garden estate.

In addition, concern has been expressed about the inhabitants of a tower block. I cannot go into the rights of wrongs or whether the block should be demolished because it is near the path of the urban village but some residents cynically say that the developers want to get rid of the tower blocks because it will increase the value of private development nearby. That may or may not be right, but it is certainly said.

Local priorities have been inverted, which, given the needs of the area, may lead to social difficulty. Only about half a mile to the west are the West India docks and the Isle of Dogs. Roughly the same mix of public and private new housing applied in the Isle of Dogs. That was a very visible piece of social engineering. I am not saying that the LDDC wants to put up Canary Wharfs through the royal docks. I am sure that it does not. The lessons of Canary Wharf have probably already been well taken. However, the proportions are the same and I have been very outspoken in my comments. I get on very well with the chairman of the LDDC, who is an appointee of the Department, but he has taken me to task because he believes that my comments have been too strong.

Employment offers people hope and the opportunity to settle down, but an imbalance can be created if local people are denied the right to live in their own communities in the type of housing that has traditionally been available. If one adds to that people from abroad and people from different backgrounds, the homeless and the refugees to whom priority is properly given, one creates a social mix and psychological situation that is not necessarily what one would wish to see.

When the LDDC was founded, there was a hearing in the House of Lords. I cannot quote directly Lord Cross of Chelsea, who was the chairman, but I shall paraphrase. On 11 July he said that there would of course always be a need for rented accommodation, preferably houses with gardens, but that it did not look as though the Government were going to facilitate that for the moment. He said that it appeared that only private capital would be available to regenerate docklands. It was recommended that the relevant statutory instrument be passed. Lord Cross's priorities were right—they were the priorities of Dr. Jekyll.

I hope that the Government will bear in mind what has happened in east London and the views expressed by some young people who are extremists but who, in some places, feel that they have a point. I hope that the Government will reconsider the redevelopment policies for the royal docks which could benefit not only the communities of Newham but the people of London as a whole.

2.52 pm

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for allowing me to speak. I welcome the new Minister and congratulate him on his appointment. I hope that it will not be long before we can welcome him on a visit to Newham—his predecessors have been welcomed by my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, South and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and myself.

The royal docks are the premier urban regeneration opportunity in western Europe. In concert with the international passenger station at Stratford which, I hope, will soon be given the green light, they represent the single most important opportunity to enable us to boost London's standing in the world and the prospects for what the Government now refer to as the Thames gateway to Europe, a concept that I welcome.

In 1987, I was the member of Newham council, which led the negotiations with the London Docklands development corporation that resulted in a memorandum of understanding on the redevelopment of the royal docks. As that memorandum was based on the belief that there would be three major consortium developments between then and about now, much of it has not been tested but there was a clear commitment in the memorandum that

1,500 units of affordable rented housing—mainly houses with gardens—should be provided in the redevelopment. About half of those homes have been built—real progress has been made.

There is now an excellent working relationship between the local authority and the development corporation, but I very much hope that there will be a clear commitment by the corporation and the Government that the remainder of the promised 1,500 units will be provided in the development. The local authority and the development corporation are working closely together on the arrangements for the de-designation of a substantial part of the urban regeneration area in Newham. I believe that the two authorities will soon reach an agreement about that.

The chairman of the LDDC recently identified two key projects for the redevelopment of the royal docks—the exhibition centre and the university college development, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South has already referred. I support both. It is widely agreed that there is a need for a new, major exhibition venue in London. I very much hope that the Government will stand by their view about development to the east of London and will support the location of that centre in docklands and, indeed, in the royal docks.

The university college proposal is supported, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South has already said, by the development corporation. It is obviously supported by the universities participating in the bid and it is supported by the local authority in Newham. A few months ago, I was pleased to hear the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Development say that he welcomed the proposal as well. I very much hope that the bid to the single regeneration budget, which has been submitted to take that project further forward, will be supported by the Government.

The royal docks present us with a dual challenge. It is a very important national opportunity, but the way in which the royal docks are redeveloped must also bring clear, tangible benefits to the people who live in the area. I hope that we can go forward on that basis.

2.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir Paul Beresford): I thank the hon. Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) for their kind words of introduction. I especially thank them for the constructive aspects of their speeches this afternoon, which I have come to expect especially from the hon. Member for Newham, North-East who has worked constructively with the London Docklands development corporation. He has been able to recognise the benefits. I am a little disappointed by some of the attitudes of the hon. Member for Newham, South. He has provided me with a brief opportunity to put some of the docklands' record straight and to put some of the positive side in the 10 minutes that I have left. That will not be enough time, such are the successes. His attitude occasionally suggests that it is a case of reverse virtual reality. Perhaps I could put the matter into the context of actual reality.

The hon. Member for Newham, South perhaps conveniently forgets what the LDDC inherited in 1981. There was appallingly high local unemployment and falling employment. There were antiquated road and rail systems, deteriorating housing, inadequate community health, education and leisure facilities, derelict land and appalling buildings. The hon. Gentleman says that it was a community. It was a community that was going into a downward spiral of urban decay. It was an area of 5,500 acres which was depressing and unattractive to the existing community and a no-go area for investors and businesses. The local authorities in the area did not co-operate.

The scale of the problems, but equally the opportunities offered, were unmatched anywhere in Europe. It is abundantly clear to anybody going there today, part the way through, that the regeneration of the whole area needed and has received an imaginative, innovative, focused, single-minded and single-bodied approach. That is why the Government set up the LDDC.

The corporation's specific task was to assist and encourage the physical, economic and social regeneration of the area. It was there to create new houses of mixed tenure, jobs and businesses. It was not, and has never professed to be, the local housing, education or health authority for the docklands. Those responsibilities remained with the local authorities with which the LDDC was expected to work in partnership, as it has done. The aim was to create a stronger and more diverse economic base for the docklands, leading to self-sustaining growth and a broadly based community.

Much has been achieved to date, and there is still time to go. It has been impressive. There has been a particular benefit to the docklands community and to London as a whole. Working in partnership with the three docklands local authorities—there has been a considerable partnership there—housing associations, private developers, especially, and statutory authorities, the corporation has brought about many other achievements. I shall touch on a few.

We have reclaimed 1,469 acres of derelict land in an imaginative way which halted the previous local authority policy of filling in the docks and which ensured their retention as important leisure and heritage assets for the community and for visitors. The corporation has invested £162 million on housing for local residents, invested £91 million on training, education, industry, support and health and community programmes for the local people and provided grant support for 300 community groups—the local community. It has levered-in—an unfortunate phrase, but perhaps appropriate—something like £6 billion worth of private investment, with a further £3 billion committed in principle. It has encouraged 1,550 businesses to locate in the docklands, 52 per cent. of those being new business start-ups. It has helped change employment from 27,000 in 1981 to 55,000 and rising. Many of those jobs are for local people. It has carried out £36 million worth of environmental improvements across 40 housing estates—social housing—affecting 3,500 homes. That is for the local community.

The corporation has provided £3.7 million across 55 schools for up-to-date technology. The programme was called "computers in schools". Another point, as this is urban tree week, is that the corporation has planted 100,000 trees and 500,000 shrubs, laid 300 acres of publicly accessible open space and helped to provide a vast range of nursery facilities in and around the dock estate, for the local people. It has won 55 national and international awards for architecture and conservation. It has established an integrated network of 61 miles of new and improved roads, plus the docklands light railway

[Sir Paul Beresford]

extension to Beckton. It has contributed to the capital's fastest-growing bus network, as well as the development of dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes. The LDDC has not finished, but those achievements—I add to that the Government's go-ahead for the Jubilee line extension—have given an immeasurable extra boost to the regeneration, which was accepted by hon. Members.

Together with the increasingly successful London city airport, those developments have provided a docklands with a particularly comprehensive transport infrastructure, serving the needs of public transport users, car users, cyclists, business travellers, tourists and the local community. People now want to live and work in docklands businesses. Businesses want to set up and relocate there. Overseas tourists want to visit there and spend money. One in 10 tourists already do so. Together with visitors from the United Kingdom, docklands receives 1.2 million visitors a year. That means jobs for local people.

The picture is one of success. It is one of a growing, thriving business and community area. It is vastly different from that of 1981. The hon. Member for Newham, South however, seems, certainly about the urban village, to believe otherwise. He speaks of stable communities—given his superior knowledge, I must accept that. He must also accept that, just because one has a community as it is, where it is, now, which has been there for perhaps 100 years, it does not mean that we cannot do better by it. That, of course, is the key point.

In the hon. Gentleman's recent, highly emotive and vehement press release—I happen to have the privilege of a copy—he publicly called the development of the corporation's urban village as a

"satanic carbuncle that could fester".

Mr. Spearing *indicated assent.*

Sir Paul Beresford: I hear the small smiles. Not only are those dangerous words, but they are totally unjustified. We are working with the community. The hon. Gentleman talks about regeneration and mentioned, in fact, my previous hat of responsibility. Some of us have been through a different approach to regeneration from that which he is able to see.

Social housing provision is, of course, important in any regeneration, especially in areas as massive as docklands. We must appreciate the pressure on local authorities to meet their obligations and aspirations in that context. Indeed, in Beckton, the LDDC, in partnership with the London borough of Newham, has contributed more than £27 million towards the provision of 861 new housing units. The dense concentration of social housing, to the exclusion of shared ownership, private ownership and private rented accommodation, will bring us back to the same stagnant communities that we have had to deal with in regeneration, not only in that area, but in the rest of London.

The results of the policies are there to be seen. The results of the policies as tested elsewhere are there to be seen. The mixed tenure is a success. More than 75 per cent. of existing households south of the royal docks are socially rented accommodation, where there are high levels of unemployment and high levels of dependence on housing benefit. That has patently failed. It is also obvious that any new developments must avoid simply adding more of the same.

The urban village in the royal docks seeks to establish a balanced community with a mix of social housing, shared ownership, private housing and private rented housing. The London borough of Newham has been closely involved in the planning and supports it, as do the Peabody housing trust and the East London housing association. In time to come, I hope and anticipate that the more reticent Member present today, the hon. Member for Newham, North-East, will recognise the importance of the achievements and will follow us and applaud the achievements of the London Docklands development corporation.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 24 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mortgage Interest

1. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for ending payments of mortgage interest for income support claimants.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Roger Evans): None, but in the course of the long-term review, we are examining and encouraging discussion on all aspects of the benefit system.

Mr. Illsley: Does not it seem a bit strange that the party and the Government who have done so much to encourage home ownership over the past 15 years now see fit to do away with mortgage interest payments—or even to reduce them—when repossessions are running at 1,000 a week? Rather than reducing the assistance available to people who are losing their jobs and who are being placed in difficulties, should not the Government be doing more to help them?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman obviously did not listen to my answer, which was "none". The Government have very much in mind the need to maintain an effective and appropriate safety net for those who purchase their homes.

Mr. Brazier: I welcome my hon. Friend to his well-deserved new position. Sympathy is obviously required for existing mortgage holders who find themselves in, or close to, difficulties. However, as we are the party that is committed to value for money, is not it time that we drew a line and said that, for future mortgages, the taxpayer is not willing to take on such a burden because private insurance is available? People should in future take that out at the same time as they start their mortgages.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend has made a point with his customary force. The Government have in mind the importance of an appropriate safety net. Although insurance may have some part to play, it may well not be the complete answer to providing a safety net.

Benefit Fraud

2. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further measures he is proposing to combat fraudulent benefit claims.

11. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out his Department's objectives in pursuing fraudulent claims for social service payments.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. James Arbuthnot): Many measures are being developed to improve the security of the entire benefit system. They include strict checks to help discover cheats when they first try to make a false claim and more use of computers to weed out frauds already in the system. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has reinforced his commitment to crack down on fraud by appointing a senior official to head a special security branch within the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Waterson: I am grateful for that answer. I take this opportunity to give my hon. Friend a warm welcome to the Dispatch Box. Will he confirm that he has already clamped down on fraudulent claims by benefit tourists and by new age travellers? When will he do the same for payments of housing benefit to convicted prisoners and yuppies who try to avoid national insurance contributions?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I confirm that we have introduced an habitual residence test because it is quite wrong to allow tourists to claim benefits when they have no intention of looking for work in the United Kingdom. We are also introducing changes for new age travellers. It will be impossible for the unemployed to claim benefit unless they can prove that they are both available for, and actively seeking, work. As to prisoners on housing benefit, subject to certain conditions, single prisoners get housing benefit for up to a year for rent on empty houses. In response to genuine public concern about that being over-generous, we intend to limit the period to 13 weeks from next April. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has also announced that he intends to put an end to scams involving the use of diamonds and wine to fiddle national insurance claims.

Mr. Frank Field: I also welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box. I hope that he takes a lot more action on that front than his colleagues have over the past 15 years. Would not the most effective way to deal with gang attacks on the benefits system be to give everyone a free giro account? Why was such a step, which would have saved taxpayers billions of pounds, not taken 15 years ago?

Mr. Arbuthnot: For a long time, the Government have given high priority to attacking fraud, and the year-on-year savings show that that is the case. This year we have made the highest ever saving—£654 million, which is up 17 per cent. on last year's figure.

As regards the hon. Gentleman's other point, we are introducing an automated benefit payments system, which will probably take the form of a card. It will stop fraudsters, help taxpayers and be good for rural post offices.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I also welcome my hon. Friend to the Front Bench. May I ask him to commend the fraud squad at my local DSS office, which covers Lancaster and Morecambe? Although it is a small squad, it is extremely efficient and has saved a substantial sum since it was set up, all of which can be devoted to helping those who are in real need.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend is right, and I certainly commend her local fraud squad. Everyone in the system must remember that every pound that is wrongly claimed in benefit is a pound that is not available to those in genuine need. I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing that to our attention.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that, a couple of years ago, a House of Commons Committee found that more than £200 million was lost to the Exchequer as a result of firms not passing on the tax and insurance that they had taken out of the pockets of many low-paid employees? There have been hardly any prosecutions as a result of the loss of that enormous amount of money. What steps are the Government now taking to recover that?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what I take as his support for the Government's strategy on preventing fraud. We have a strong strategy, which depends on prevention, detection and deterrence, and we are now concentrating on the prevention of fraud. We shall introduce new electronic measures, more home visits and computer data matching and automated benefit payments systems. Those measures will ensure that the social security system will not be seen as a soft touch, as it has been in the past.

Benefits Delivery

3. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are his objectives for the delivery of social security benefits; and what new initiatives he is considering to ensure sufficient delivery with reduced opportunity for fraud.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I have three clear aims: to ensure that pensioners and others can choose to be paid via the Post Office, to reduce administrative costs and to crack down on fraud. That is why in May I announced our intention to automate the process by which benefits are delivered at post office counters. That is good news for customers, good news for taxpayers and good news for post offices.

Dr. Spink: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that he intends to involve the private sector in the automation of benefits delivery and that that improvement will enable those changes to be made more cost-effectively, more efficiently and more quickly and will be welcomed by sub-post offices?

Mr. Lilley: I can confirm that we shall seek to involve the private sector in the introduction of the system to computerise the 20,000 post offices. It will be an immense operation. We have already invited expressions of interest, and more than 90 firms have expressed an interest in taking part in the consortia. Post Office Counters is now trying to narrow the number of those who will be invited to tender. The result will be that we shall be able to involve private sector finance and private sector expertise to get fraud savings more quickly, more efficiently and better.

Ms Lynne: Is the Secretary of State aware that the merging of income support and unemployment benefit under the job seeker's allowance will discriminate unfairly against 18 to 24-year-olds who have been in previous employment? They will have £9.55 less than they have at the moment. Is not that unfair?

Mr. Lilley: I am not quite sure what that has to do with the delivery of benefits through post offices, but in the spirit in which the hon. Lady asked the question, let me say that I shall be making a statement immediately after Question Time about the job seeker's allowance. We shall bring together income support and the contributory unemployment benefit in a single structure of benefits. We shall naturally have a single structure of rates, including the lower rate for the under-25s, as is long established for those who are on income support. That is right and it reflects the lower level of financial expectations, and often of costs, of younger people and the shorter period during which they have been paying into the system.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the Home Secretary's announcement on a voluntary identity card system in the United Kingdom? Would not a voluntary benefit claimant's card, for use in sub-post offices and post offices, be good news not only for the Government, as it would save taxpayers' money in relation to fraud, but for sub-post offices, which would then provide a secure route for the delivery of benefits?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, the proposals to which I have just referred will probably result in the introduction of a payments card for those whose benefits are paid through post offices. It would be voluntary in the sense that if they wish to have benefits paid through the banks, they will have whatever means the banks require to identify and ensure secure payment. That sensible approach will benefit pensioners and others, and will save the taxpayer money, as about £150 million-worth of fraud should be eliminated. It is right that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary should approach cautiously the issue of a national identity card, as he is through the discussion of a Green Paper and consideration of whether there is a prospect of widening the use of the benefit card. However, that is very different from a compulsory identity card, which would not be the same as my proposal.

Child Support Act

4. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to change the provisions of the Child Support Act 1991.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): I have said on many occasions that the Government are keeping the policy under close review and that continues to be the case. We have no specific proposals at this stage.

Mr. Miller: I am sure that the Minister will acknowledge that I have written to him in support of fathers and mothers affected by the inadequacies of the Child Support Act. Will he confirm that he and his officials met many groups over the summer and that all of them pressed the case for sweeping changes to the Act? Will he now give a commitment that such changes will be introduced as a matter of urgency, in the interests of all parts of families?

Mr. Burt: I and colleagues met several groups over the summer. However, one of the problems is that people's interests in the matter are not necessarily the same. The reforms that some people want may not be wanted by others. As I said at the start of my reply, we keep the policy under review. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Select Committee on Social Security is considering the matter at the moment. It would be presumptuous of us to comment on policy direction before the Select Committee has reported.

Mrs. Roe: Does my hon. Friend agree that top priority must be given to sorting out the operation of the Child Support Agency? Does he also agree that policy change inevitably leads to disruption and that such changes should be kept to a minimum?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend has made two significant points. First, with regard to the agency's administration, it is common currency in the House that the agency's first year was not a good one, and that was acknowledged by the agency in its report. During the summer, we took steps to implement administration reforms to ensure that more people receive more maintenance and that all cases are dealt with better. There is already some fruit from that. From April this year, about 300,000 cases have been cleared, compared with just over 360,000 for the whole of last year. We are endeavouring to ensure that administration is better. We know just how much that means to all hon. Members.

Secondly, I agree that policy changes cause disruption. Therefore, they are not easy matters to bandy about. All policy changes must be thought through extremely carefully.

Mr. Barnes: Why is the agency's operation entirely inept? Why is the principle upon which the agency is operating entirely heartless and one which requires considerable transformation? Will not it be like the operation of the poll tax in respect of which there were transitional demands and transitional alterations until finally it was transformed into something else? The operation needs to be transformed.

Mr. Burt: No. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's major point, I do not think that it is wholly inept. I certainly do not think that the principle behind it is heartless. That principle has been endorsed by the House on several occasions since the Child Support Act was passed. We all want to ensure that the principles behind child support are delivered properly. That is our determination and I believed that it was the determination of the whole House.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my hon. Friend aware that many people are under the misapprehension that the CSA chases only those absent parents—generally fathers—who have paid money in the past? When my hon. Friend deliberates on the changes, will he bear that point in mind? What proportion of cases now involve chasing fathers who have paid nothing in the past? How will that change in future?

Mr. Burt: The misapprehension that my hon. Friend speaks of is appropriately raised. It has always been considered that the agency would look for those who had not previously paid maintenance as well as for some of those who had previously paid maintenance but whose maintenance payments needed to be raised. Of the 210,000 cases taken on since April this year, more than 77 per cent. involved those who have not regularly paid maintenance. We have also been pursuing 45,000 absent parents who had disappeared. I remind the House that, under the previous system, there was no mechanism for finding those absent parents, and we have been successful in 80 per cent. of cases. That is a solid gain for the children involved and for the mothers who have been looking for those fathers.

Mr. Ingram: I congratulate the Minister on keeping his job in a very changed Department. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps commiseration is much more appropriate. Will the Minister comment on reports in Sunday's edition of *The Observer* that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has privately told Conservative members of the Social Security Select Committee to oppose fundamental changes to the Child Support Act? If the Government do not favour taking clean-break settlements into account, do not want a disregard for parents on benefit and do not favour changing the existing formula for calculating maintenance, what changes do they favour, or would that question be more appropriately put to the Treasury, which seems to be running the Department?

Mr. Burt: I dealt with policy in my first answer, when I said that we continue to keep the policy under review and that we must consider carefully what representations are made to us. As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, newspaper comment on this topic abounds. If the Government were to take notice of every report, they would do nothing else.

Mr. Cormack: Does my hon. Friend accept that I have brought cases to his notice which show that some conscientious fathers are now required to pay wholly unrealistic amounts which bear no relation to either their obligations or their means?

Mr. Burt: It is precisely because of the depth of concern expressed by my hon. Friends that we are looking carefully at the matter. The formula, which was put into place with considerable support in the House, is causing more maintenance to be paid, and that has been uncomfortable on some occasions. It is because of those cases that have appeared to be particularly hard that the Government are taking the time that they have—indeed, that is why the Select Committee has taken the time that it has—to make sure that they see the way forward clearly and carefully.

Child Poverty

5. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he is taking to alleviate child poverty.

Mr. Burt: Extra help worth more than £1 billion in the current year has been directed through the social security system toward low-income families with children. The new child care disregard will benefit about 150,000 families, and through that and other improvements to family credit we are helping more than 500,000 families to be better off in work.

Dr. Jones: Does the Minister realise that while Tory Members have been dining at the Ritz, the number of children growing up in poverty has been increasing dramatically, with one in four now growing up in families for whom even an 1876 workhouse diet is too expensive? For the sake of those children and for the rest of us who are increasingly affected by divisions in society, is not it time that the Government got to grips with the magnitude of the problem?

Mr. Burt: I am sure that the House is aware that, since 1979, average income has risen by 36 per cent. It is common sense to understand that unemployment levels over the years have affected the figures for those on the lowest incomes—we know that. Therefore, the best way for the Government to proceed is through increasing opportunities for employment. That is why our unemployment rate is going down in comparison with the rate in the European Community, where it is going up. That is also why the unemployed have been protected. The hon. Lady might care to know that a couple on unemployment benefit with two children are now 24 per cent. better off in real terms than they would have been under the equivalent benefit under the previous Labour Government. If the hon. Lady supports the idea of a minimum wage, she should be aware that it is calculated to make poor families still poorer as fathers lose their jobs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend accept that the child additions for those on income support and the new arrangements to help those caring for children to get back to work will be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House? Will he continue to ensure that the House is aware of the figures which illustrate that those who are, sadly, out of work or dependent on income benefit are sharing in the increased standard of living? Will he ensure that our policies are directed not only at getting more people back to work but at continuing to protect those at the bottom of the heap?

Mr. Burt: Yes, my hon. Friend makes a valid point. As I said a moment ago, the benefit system has tried to protect those who still find themselves unemployed. I gave the comparison of unemployment benefit rates for a couple with two children which shows how that is done. The crucial point is to help people back into work. Other parties do not have a monopoly on that particular aspect of social welfare. For some years, the Government have seen the welfare system as an opportunity to move people back into work—we will hear more about that today—but the family credit system has been uniquely successful in ensuring that that happens. That is contributing in no small way to the improvement in living conditions for many low-paid families.

Invalidity Benefit

6. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on tests for invalidity benefit.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. William Hague): All benefits for people who are incapable of work are subject to medical control procedures, which may include a medical examination by a doctor from the Benefits Agency medical services for a second opinion about a person's capacity for work.

Mrs. Roche: Given that the report on the new tests was published more than a month late, and that there were considerable delays in issuing copies of the report to members of the public, will the Minister stick to his departmental pledge that there will be a three-month consultation period so that members of the public, including many of my constituents, who have grave concerns about the new tests can make their fears known to the Government?

Mr. Hague: It is important to ensure that the tests are soundly based, and that is why the time was taken to consider the work of the panel of 80 experts which led to the document mentioned by the hon. Lady. That has meant that the time for consultation is compressed. Obviously, it is also important that the tests come into force at the time next year that the Act states. That means that the consultation period is shorter than intended, but I hope that all who are interested will take the time available to contribute to the document and to send their views to the Government.

Mr. John Marshall: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his promotion. Can he tell the House the trend in the number of recipients of invalidity benefit over the past 10 years, at a time of improved health standards? Does not that increase lead one to suspect that some people who have been getting the benefit should not have been getting it?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend refers to an important point. The number of people on invalidity benefit has increased from about 700,000 to more than 1.5 million. The Government's reforms are intended to ensure that incapacity benefit goes to people who are genuinely incapable of work. The social security system should be geared to looking after people in that position, not to people for whom the benefit was not originally intended.

Mr. Bradley: I welcome the Minister to his new range of responsibilities, and I welcome all the extra Ministers whom the Government have put up against the quality, if not the quantity, of the Opposition Front Bench. Can the Minister confirm that, since he belatedly published the medical test, the Government's original estimate that there will be an extra 200,000 people claiming unemployment benefit but not eligible for the new incapacity benefit is still the case? What will be the impact of the new job seeker's allowance on those people who are in receipt of invalidity benefit but who will fail the new medical test and be expected to go on to other benefits?

Mr. Hague: Yes, I can confirm that our estimates of the numbers involved are the same as before; we have had no reason to change them. Obviously, for people who are not eligible for incapacity benefit, the full range of other benefits of the social security system are available, as, indeed, they are to everyone else.

Occupational Pension Schemes

7. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he proposes to change the system of regulation for occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Yes. Our proposals are set out in the White Paper "Security, Equality, Choice: the Future for Pensions" and we have undertaken to bring forward legislation to implement them at the first available opportunity.

Mr. Ainsworth: I welcome my hon. Friend to his new responsibilities and also welcome his proposals, which will bring to millions of employees a sense of security about their retirement and encourage employers to continue to provide occupational pensions. Does my hon. Friend share my concern at proposals which would be detrimental to the interests of those on occupational pensions such as the proposals made by the so-called Commission on Social Justice?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. He is right to welcome our proposals in the White Paper. A recent survey by Alexander Clay and Partners showed that almost nine out of 10 companies welcomed our White Paper and the key proposals in it. They felt that we had struck the right balance between security of pensions for employees and keeping costs to the minimum for employers. As regards the Commission on Social Justice, I have not yet read its proposals in full and I need to study them with care. My initial reaction to what I have seen of them is one of disappointment as they might impose considerable costs on top of the national insurance contributions for which employers are already liable and which we opted out of the social chapter specifically to avoid. I should like to know what the Labour party thinks would be the costs of the proposals. Unless it faces up to that, it can never be taken as a serious party.

Mr. Rooney: Will the Minister confirm that in his world of a deregulated labour market with constant changes of employment and patterns of unemployment and part-time work, the only suitable pension for workers is the state earnings-related pension scheme?

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Government aim to maximise the choice and flexibility in the provision of pensions. We recognise that there is a definite need for additional pensions over and above the state retirement pension, but the state retirement pension will remain the sound foundation of our pensions policy.

Mr. Hawkins: I join in welcoming my hon. Friend to the Front Bench. I also welcome the Government's proposals for member-nominated trustees of occupational pension schemes. Does my hon. Friend agree that member-nominated trustees with time off for training and information for members will greatly safeguard the interests of members of occupational pension schemes?

Mr. Arbuthnot: Yes, I agree. It is right that members of schemes should have the right to nominate a third of the trustees as that will give them a say in the running and safeguarding of the assets of their pension fund. As my hon. Friend says, training is vital. That is why we intend to make employers give employee trustees paid time off. We do not think that it is right to prescribe that for all trustees, but we believe that it is extremely important.

Social Fund

8. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what change would result in the administration costs of the social fund if loans were to be ended and the resources used for grants only.

Mr. Roger Evans: It is impossible to make a useful comparison between the present system of grants and loans with the hon. Gentleman's hypothetical grants system. But if grants were to replace loans entirely, for the same amount of money far fewer people would be helped.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that that answer must be nonsense when in a previous answer the Under-Secretary of State said that more than 45 per cent. of the social fund was used in administrative costs and that a large part of that was due to the administration cost of giving loans? Is not the system targeted to help the poorest section of the community? Is it not nonsense to try to administer a scheme with all the costs involved and to ask people to pay back loans when they cannot afford to pay them back in any case?

Mr. Evans: The answer is firmly no. In fact, people pay back the loans. The recovery level is very high indeed. The hon. Gentleman has not appreciated the force of the point that for £43 million net cost, total loans of £255 million in total are currently advanced. What might be described as the multiplier effect of giving loans increases the amount of help given fivefold. Any system that is designed to be attuned to specific needs and responsibilities is bound to be more expensive to administer.

Mr. Hendry: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, for a total outlay of £280 million over the life of the fund, it has been possible to offer loans of £1.2 billion? Does that not show the benefits of recycling money in that way?

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has cast the figures that I gave a moment ago over the period since the scheme was introduced and they point my previous reply. By making a loans system operate in the way that we have done, we have vastly increased the amount of help given.

Benefits Payments

9. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy in respect of the automation of benefits payments at post offices.

Mr. Lilley: I intend to move as rapidly as possible to an automated system for paying benefit at post offices. That will reduce costs for taxpayers, be more secure for customers and guarantee the future of post offices.

Mr. Whittingdale: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the plans that he has announced represent a massive vote of confidence in the future of the sub-post office network and give the lie to suggestions that that network is under threat? Does he further agree that the increased opportunities available to sub-post offices as a result of those plans will allow them to win new business, thus ensuring their continued survival?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right on both counts. When I announced the proposals to the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, it especially welcomed the fact that our decision to computerise post offices was the clearest possible commitment that we could give that we would continue to deliver benefits through post offices for the foreseeable future. Once that network is installed, it will open up to sub-post offices the opportunity to undertake other business through the computer system, such as the payment of electricity and gas bills, or any other business that they might be able to secure which is not possible at present. It opens up a rosy future for sub-post offices.

Mr. Hain: Does the Secretary of State accept that the majority of sub-postmasters, while welcoming the automation of benefit payments as I do, believe that post office privatisation will threaten rural sub-post offices and small post offices and that the social security claimants whom he is seeking to help by automation will find their local post offices being closed by the thousand? Why do not the Government abandon their crazy proposal for post office privatisation?

Mr. Lilley: No, they mostly realise that that sort of propaganda is the sheerest nonsense. Sub-post offices are private enterprises and sub-postmasters know the benefits of private enterprise. We want to reinforce their ability to provide excellent service to their customers. That is why we are considering the proposals laid out in the Green Paper. Whatever happens, the future of sub-post offices is secure as a result of the decisions that I announced.

Pensions Fraud

10. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he will take to combat fraud in occupational pensions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The great majority of schemes are well run. We will, therefore, impose the minimum burden on schemes and employers consistent with providing adequate security. We propose a clear framework of statutory obligations on employers, trustees and professionals, backed by a powerful regulator who will focus on schemes with problems.

Mr. Spring: Will my hon. Friend confirm that about 20 million people in the United Kingdom have rights to an occupational scheme and that that is about a quarter of all personal wealth in Britain or some £500 billion, which is a greater sum than in all the other countries of the European Union put together?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I will indeed confirm that. Our pension policy is the envy of Europe. We have given millions of people the right to build up funds for their retirement. Our proposals will be very good for pensioners and for the future economy of this country.

Mr. Flynn: Do the Government accept that the major fraud in occupational pensions involved the 500,000 people who were persuaded against their financial interests to leave occupational pensions and go into personal pensions? Will the Government accept their debt in that? Will the hon. Gentleman explain why, while the Prime Minister is promising to double the standard of living in the next 25 years, he is also promising to halve the value of the state pension in the same period?

Mr. Arbuthnot: Dealing backwards with that rather backwards question, the Government have always promised that the state retirement pension will be uprated in line with prices. That is a promise that we have kept and will keep.

As regards the mis-selling of personal pensions, an announcement is expected shortly and the hon. Gentleman should curb his impatience. The Government have made it clear that we expect the Securities and Investments Board to ensure that there is a full investigation of any mis-selling, and that anybody who has suffered a loss through mis-selling should have redress.

As regards pensioners' incomes, pensioners in this country have had their incomes increased on average by 50 per cent. in real terms since 1979. That is a higher increase than the rest of the population. The Government have been able to give £1.2 billion since 1988 to those without other earnings who have not had those increases. Pensioners are doing extremely well.

Benefit Fraud

12. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to reduce fraud involving order books and giros.

Mr. Lilley: In addition to the measures to replace order books and girocheques which I announced earlier, we plan to improve security in advance of this by the electronic stop notice system which has been successfully tested in parts of London and is soon to be extended. The trial reward scheme for post office staff has also been extended, following the excellent results achieved in Birmingham.

Mr. Luff: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there has been a huge increase in the amount of fraud that has been stopped by the Benefits Agency in terms of both order books and giros? Is not the reason why sub-postmasters in Worcestershire have given such a warm welcome to his plans that they realise that the plans will not only help to contain fraud but will guarantee the future of their own sub-post offices?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, indeed. The plan has been particularly warmly welcomed in south Worcestershire, and elsewhere in the country. Sub-postmasters are aware of the level of fraud and abuse of the archaic order book system, and they are anxious to see the move to automated payment in the interests of the wider community, as well as their own self-interest. The system will be more secure for them and for pensioners and it will be less open to fraud and abuse.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

National Audit Office

25. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will make a statement on the National Audit Office expenditure on value for money inquiries relating to capital spending on buildings.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (on behalf of the Public Accounts Commission): In the absence of the right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), who is away on a parliamentary delegation, I have been asked to reply.

The Comptroller and Auditor General selects topics for investigation based on a review of all Government spending and the risk to value for money. Where those reviews identify the need to examine the capital spending on buildings, the Comptroller and Auditor General will include studies in his programme. The National Audit Office has published three reports on capital projects: the benefits centre project, the prison building project and the Trident works programme. All were published in July this year.

Mr. Bruce: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that reply. Will the Public Accounts Commission look further, particularly at defence office block building and the enormous overruns which have occurred on so many projects such as the MOD headquarters in Whitehall?

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman will know that that is a matter for the Public Accounts Committee, but the Committee does have the power to ask the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine certain projects and to come to a conclusion as to which will be the subject for examination. I shall pass the hon. Gentleman's message to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend to his new role and I hope that it will presage an unprecedented case of getting accurate answers to questions in the Chamber. Will he extend the role of the National Audit Office to look at the vast amounts of taxpayers' money being thrown away on unnecessary changes to Norman Shaw North, where a listed building is being changed irrevocably in a way which has not been consulted about and which can only damage both the fabric and the use of the House of Commons?

Mr. Sheldon: As I said in reply to an earlier question, that is a matter for the Public Accounts Committee, but I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

26. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how many staff are employed by the National Audit Office; and how many are qualified accountants.

Mr. Sheldon: I have been asked to reply. As at 30 September this year the National Audit Office employed 768 staff. Of these, 308 are qualified accountants and a further 124 staff are undertaking professional accountancy training.

Mr. Marshall: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his temporary position. Does he believe that the number of qualified accountants employed is adequate?

Mr. Sheldon: The staff are doing very well, in fact. Not only are the accountants taking the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy qualifications, but they are becoming chartered accountants. That means that they are able to deal with Government Departments in the same way as the leading accountancy firms in this city are able to handle such matters. That gives the NAO accountants a much greater status and standing, to the benefit of the public administration.

Mr. Winnick: Would it be possible for the NAO to employ sufficient accountants and to have the authority to look into cases where Members of Parliament receive payments from outside sources, the money involved, the services provided and, for example, how much money is given for putting down parliamentary questions? In the absence of any other form of regulation, would it not be desirable for the NAO to have such authority?

Mr. Sheldon: As my hon. Friend says, the NAO does not have that kind of power and it would rest upon the House to give it that power, which I think might be rather difficult to achieve.

Visitors (Refreshments)

27. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what financial provision will be made for the provision of refreshment facilities for visitors to the House.

Mr. Paul Channon (Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee): Following the approval by the House of the Catering Committee's report on refreshment provision for Line of Route visitors, the amount of financial provision for a visitors centre will be for decision by the Finance and Services Committee and the House of Commons Commission.

Mr. Hain: Is it not an insult to coachloads of visitors, who have often got up at dawn to get here, that they cannot even get a cup of tea in the House? As Westminster Hall is some kind of mausoleum at the moment, why cannot it be turned into an open area with tables and chairs where people can get a cup of tea and a snack? In that way the House would present a warm and friendly reception to visitors instead of a stiff and snotty one.

Mr. Channon: I know that the hon. Member has been pursuing this case for many years and I pay tribute to him for that. He will recognise that the Catering Committee has recommended that the Westminster Hall cafeteria should be converted into a visitor centre. When that is achieved it will meet a great many of the points made by the hon. Member. That cannot be done at once, of course, because 400 people already use that cafeteria and they must be given somewhere else to eat. We cannot let down the staff and policemen of the House by not providing somewhere else for them to eat.

Child Care Facilities

28. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what progress has been made in the provision of child care facilities in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. A. J. Beith (on behalf of the House of Commons Commission): The Commission has arranged for a survey of potential demand for child care provision to be made available in the Vote Office. The Commission wishes to hear the views of Members and I understand that consideration is now being given to the timing of a debate on the matter.

Dr. Jones: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for allowing the publication of that report, which clearly shows that there is a demand for affordable child care facilities. I hope that, following the debate, progress will be made as quickly as possible. When I first came to this place, my youngest son was only two years old. Now he is nearly five. What is holding matters up? If the answer is finance, perhaps we could consider reducing subsidies to the bars so that money can be made available for this very important facility.

Mr. Beith: The normal way in which new or extended services are provided in the House is when the relevant Committee puts forward a proposal and the Finance and Services Committee and then the Commission consider whether it can be financed. That route is not being followed in this instance because the relevant Committee did not agree to the provision of such a service. The matter will therefore be debated in the House and the Commission will consider what to do following that debate.

Mr. Dykes: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we should improve facilities urgently for the long-suffering wives and husbands of Members of Parliament?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman has not made any specific suggestions, but if he has some I hope that he will put them to the relevant service Committees of the House.

Minimum Wage

31. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what consideration has been given to a minimum wage for House employees.

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978 requires the House of Commons Commission to ensure that the complementing, grading and pay of staff in the House Departments are kept broadly in line with those in the home civil service. For most staff, the rates of pay are the same as those of the equivalent grades in the civil service. Where variations have been introduced, they have been achieved through negotiations with the appropriate recognised trade unions. No consideration has been given to a minimum wage for House employees.

Mr. Enright: Is it not scandalous that no consideration has been given to this issue when people who serve us and work on an extremely low wage are hard put to it to live in London, which they are bound to do by the very nature of their work? I therefore urge the right hon. Gentleman and the Commission to reconsider this issue and to consider carefully what is a fair and just wage for our employees.

Mr. Beith: The lowest rates of pay for full-time employment in the House are above any of the minimum wage suggestions that I heard put forward at recent party conferences.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be unwise to introduce a policy that is likely to put some members of staff out of work?

Mr. Beith: My earlier answer makes it clear that that would not happen. Rates of pay in the House are, by statute, linked to civil service grades, so we could not introduce a different method of determining pay without changing the statutory basis on which we do it.

Banqueting Rooms

32. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what financial contribution is expected in the current and next financial year from the use of banqueting rooms by outside organisations; what account is taken of this income in the overall financial planning of expenditure on the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: In 1993-94, banqueting contributed a net profit of some £200,000 to the Refreshment Department trading fund. In that year, £190,000 was transferred from the fund to the House of Commons administration vote and a further £530,000 was contributed from the fund's accumulated surplus to the works vote. It is too soon to forecast those sums that are to be similarly transferred in the current and coming financial years to offset part of the cost of the Refreshment Department's agreed programme of modernisation.

Mr. Banks: Perhaps we should charge somewhat more for the use of those facilities. Are not some 80 per cent. of all the bookings of private banqueting rooms made by Conservative Members, often on behalf of outside companies? There are examples of Conservative Members using those facilities to raise money for the Conservative party. Why are we no longer allowed to ask the party affiliation of those who book rooms, and why are we not told which organisations benefit? Is that not a further example of sleaze and the fact that the Tory party does not want to give us that information because it will embarrass it?

Mr. Channon: Whatever the rights and wrongs of the hon. Gentleman's allegations and assertions, I am glad to tell him that that matter is the responsibility not of the Finance and Services Committee but of the Catering Committee. I hope that he will address his remarks to the Chairman of the Catering Committee and his colleagues so that they may consider them.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Identity Cards

13. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will consider introducing a personal identity card as one of the means to reduce fraud.

Mr. Lilley: I propose to replace payment by order book and girocheque with a benefit payment card for customers who collect benefit at post offices. This should largely eliminate theft, forgery and fraudulent encashment of instruments of payment. However, most social security fraud arises from false representation of circumstances rather than false identity.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will not my right hon. Friend's earlier answer about automation and payment of benefit at sub-post offices be welcomed by sub-postmasters? His earlier announcement presaged the fact that he might introduce a social security benefits card. Will its introduction be coupled with a consultative paper to be issued by the Home Secretary and its results taken into account when the benefit card is issued? Will not any measure that reduces social security benefit fraud be welcomed?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for welcoming those proposals. I shall proceed with all speed in introducing a more secure method, probably involving a benefit payments card. That will not depend on the outcome of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's discussions about the possible wider development of a voluntary identity card, although the proposals could be linked if that proved fruitful as a result of those consultations.

Mr. Bennett: How much does the Secretary of State expect the manufacturers of those cards to earn, and how much are they likely to pay consultants to try to get the contract? Is there not scope for increased crime as a result of such cards, given that people in most cities can find opportunities to buy forged passports, car discs and driving licences? Will not the manufacture of the identity cards simply create a new form of crime?

Mr. Lilley: No, that is twaddle. The present system of payment through order books is one of the most archaic and unsecure systems of transmitting money known to man. It is sensible to update it and we are looking for methods that will be more secure. We shall seek competition to keep the costs of that system down, but the system itself will save not merely large sums of money that are presently wasted through fraud and abuse but up to £60 million a year in administrative costs. That must be good for the taxpayer and I should have thought that it would be welcomed by a modern Labour party, were not so many representatives of the old Labour party still around.

Mr. Dykes: I warmly support the identity card proposal made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown). In view of his 1993 Conservative party conference speech, is the Secretary of State now satisfied that no immigrants are fraudulently claiming social security benefits from United Kingdom agencies?

Mr. Lilley: I am not sure that I specifically discussed immigration in my 1993 conference speech, or in any other. However, following that speech I introduced a residence test for people coming from the European Community who claim benefits, thereby putting us on a par with other countries in the Community. I know that that will please my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). It will mean that we are no longer unique in handing out benefits to people who have not made a contribution to this country.

As for those people who come to this country from outside the Community on the express understanding that they will not be a burden on the public purse, I also introduced measures to prevent the payment of income support and housing benefit to them, which had previously been possible through a loophole, so we have clamped down on them as well.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sitting Hours

34. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to implement changes to the sitting hours of the House.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and I told the House last Thursday, we have had further constructive discussions during the summer recess. In the light of those, I hope shortly to have an opportunity to discuss matters with the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), the shadow Leader of the House, to whom I offer my congratulations on her assumption of that position.

Mr. Bruce: I am sure that the Leader of the House is as tired of answering this question from me as I am tired of asking it. I wonder whether the hon. Lady has given him any sign whether, like her predecessor, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), she will take two years to be persuaded that progress should be made.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will understand if I concentrate on repeating that I have had some very constructive conversations with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East. I have no reason to suppose that the hon. Lady will be any less constructive, but I suspect that she has hardly had time to catch her breath since her appointment last week and, if she has, I have not.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Opposition Members want Parliament to work more efficiently, but also more effectively, and we shall co-operate fully to those ends. Does the Leader of the House agree, however, that in doing so we must be mindful of the need to improve accountability, especially by allowing Parliament to scrutinise more closely the activities of those quangos which are causing so much public alarm at present?

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Lady knows that her supplementary question is somewhat wide of the subject matter of the Jopling report, but let us hope that whatever we are able to agree will enable Parliament to do all the things that it wishes to do as effectively as it would wish to do them.

Parliamentary Questions

35. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to limit the number of oral and written parliamentary questions an hon. Member may ask; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to recommend any changes to the existing arrangements. If my hon. Friend wishes to make proposals, he might wish in the first instance to express his thoughts to my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir Peter Emery), the Chairman of the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Question Time is a uniquely British democratic institution? Will he undertake to safeguard its adversarial nature against any pressures to reduce, terminate or tame it by the Leader of the Opposition or anyone else?

Mr. Newton: I certainly have no personal or ministerial plans to reduce, terminate or tame it, although my hon. Friend must be aware that the Procedure Committee, following many observations from various parts of the House, is currently considering the subject of Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. Robert Hughes: As early-day motions now have to contain the letter "R" beside the principal proposer, will the Leader of the House propose that those who table questions for Question Time should have the letters "FR" put after their numbers, meaning "fee received", and how much they get paid for them?

Mr. Newton: Ingenious though the hon. Gentleman's question is—I foresaw, if not precisely that question, that some effort might be made to introduce currently controversial matters—I had better fall back on the observation that I am Chairman of the Select Committee on Privileges.

Sittings of the House

38. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when the recommendations of the Select Committee on the sittings of the House will be implemented.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I have just given to my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce).

Mr. Hughes: The House will understand the position of the right hon. Gentleman and of his opposite number, who has just taken up her job. However, will the Leader of the House remember the extremely strong views held on both sides of the House? The matter was without resolution for years and years before the Jopling Committee, let alone since. The Leader of the House indicated, without an undertaking, that at the beginning of the new Session—after the Queen's Speech—proposals would be introduced to reform the time of our sittings. Is that still his expected timetable—that something will be announced before the end of 1994?

Mr. Newton: That is very much my hope. I can only confirm it as an expectation when I have had the opportunity for discussions with the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) in her new position. There have been further constructive discussions during the summer. I shall look for an opportunity—I think that I have an arrangement—to speak to the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on the subject.

Job Seeker's Allowance

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the White Paper on the job seeker's allowance which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and I published today. Our proposals have three main aims: to help people back into jobs; to improve incentives to work; and to streamline the system to give job seekers a better service.

The White Paper is a major step forward in creating a labour market in Britain which generates jobs. The Government's strategy is bearing fruit. Unemployment in Britain used to be higher than in Europe; now it is well below the European average. In Europe, unemployment has risen during the past year. In Britain, it has fallen. It has gone down by 400,000 since the recovery began. Every day 1,000 people leave unemployment. We are determined to reinforce that success.

The benefit system has a vital role to play in helping unemployed people into jobs. It should help the job seeker and motivate the jobshy. But the present system does not always do so. It contains disincentives to work. It is complex, costly and confusing for claimants. Above all, it was designed to support people out of work. But unemployed people want help back into work. That is what the job seeker's allowance will provide.

A central feature of the new system will be the job seeker's agreement. The Government already provide a wide range of programmes to keep people in touch with the world of work, to help them search effectively for jobs and to improve their skills.

Some 1.5 million opportunities on employment and training programmes are available for unemployed people this year. Now we will ensure that every job seeker can take full advantage of the help available. The Employment Service will spell out the help that the Government can provide. Job seekers will then be asked to consider the steps that they need to take to get a job. They will agree with the Employment Service a solid programme of action directed towards getting work, and they will commit themselves to follow it. The agreement will be the taxpayer's bargain with the job seeker—"We will support you in your efforts to get back to work. But you must also help yourself."

Equally important will be measures to improve incentives. The vast majority of unemployed people want to work. Until full-time work is available, part-time work can be very valuable. It is valuable in allowing people to keep in touch with the world of work and to maintain skills and work habits. It also acts as a stepping stone to a full-time job. I propose, therefore, to reinforce incentives to take part-time work.

At present, people whose partners are unemployed can be better off giving up work, too, because if they work 16 hours or more, the household will receive no benefit at all. I propose to change that. From April 1996, partners of people on job seeker's allowance or income support will be able to work up to 24 hours a week without losing benefit. We estimate that 20,000 households will gain as a direct result of that change.

At the moment, people working more than eight hours a week lose their national insurance credit, even though they may not be earning enough to pay for a contribution; yet even small jobs can help people stay in touch with the labour market. I shall change the rules, therefore, to allow everyone on job seeker's allowance to have a national insurance credit for work that they do.

In addition to those measures, we shall tackle a problem that has always defeated policy makers. At present, unemployed people who take part-time jobs can lose benefit almost pound for pound, yet if they could keep their part-time earnings on top of their benefit, they would have little incentive to go on to full-time work.

I propose to square that circle by introducing a back-to-work bonus. Job seekers and their partners will receive credits for part-time earnings which they can cash in when they move off benefit. For every £1 they earn above the earnings disregard, we shall set aside 50p, which they will receive as a lump sum bonus when they move off benefit into work. They will be able to build up a lump sum bonus of up to £1,000. We estimate that some 150,000 unemployed people a year will benefit from that. It will restore incentives to work part time, reward effort and honesty and be a stepping stone to full-time jobs.

The new allowance will provide financial help for unemployed people and their dependants according to their needs, and this will be paid as long as they need it. Those people who have paid national insurance contributions will receive a personal rate, irrespective of their capital or their partner's earnings for up to six months.

The present benefit system for unemployed people has grown up haphazardly over 80 years. We currently have two benefits for the unemployed—unemployment benefit and income support—and they overlap. Some people are entitled to both. Many switch between the two and the benefit levels leapfrog because they are uprated by different indices. Last year, single adults on unemployment benefit received 65p more than on income support; this year, they receive 25p less. The two benefits cover different periods. Unemployment benefit excludes Sunday; income support includes Sunday. It is time for reform. From April 1996, there will be one claim form, one set of rates and one set of rules.

The majority of unemployed people will receive the income-related element of the job seeker's allowance. Income support is the more modern benefit and its rules are aligned with those for other income-related benefits. Job seeker's allowance rules, therefore, will be broadly the same. However, they will be updated and clarified in some respects.

For example, the rule requiring job seekers to be available for work will be changed. It will specify that they must be available for at least 40 hours a week. They may, of course, take jobs offering fewer hours and they will be able to restrict their availability if they are disabled or ill or have caring responsibilities.

In the first 13 weeks of unemployment, job seekers may limit their search to their usual occupation. From then on, job seekers are required to broaden their horizons. To give people confidence to accept jobs in unfamiliar occupations, we introduced employment on trial. That allows people who have been unemployed for six months to try out an unfamiliar job without fear of losing benefit if they decide to leave after six weeks.

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

We intend to ease the rules further. People will be able to take a job on trial after just three months' unemployment and to leave it after four weeks. That should help more than 200,000 more people.

The job seeker's allowance will introduce straightforward rules for the treatment of earnings. Most single people will be able to earn up to £5 a week without losing benefit. Couples will be able to earn £10 even if only one is working. That will provide extra help for 70,000 people, and the back-to-work bonus will provide an additional incentive to earn more.

Many unemployed people receive substantial occupational pensions from their previous employer. It is right that larger occupational and personal pensions should reduce the amount of contributory benefit for people of any age. The present limit, however, is too severe, so I shall remove the arbitrary age threshold and raise the amount of pension that can be paid without affecting benefit from £35 to £50 a week.

The vast majority of unemployed people do genuinely look for work, but some do not. Those who fail to meet their obligations forfeit their right to benefit. That has always been the case in principle and the new rules will make it crystal clear. Those who pay taxes and national insurance should not have to subsidise people who make no attempt to get a job, but, of course, reduced payments will be available for those most vulnerable to hardship.

The benefit system must be capable of adapting to changing circumstances, but it is sensible to test the effect of changes before introducing them nationally. We can already pilot new employment services and training schemes. For example, the job interview guarantee scheme was tested on a pilot basis and it is now a successful national programme. The job seeker's allowance will provide new powers to use local pilots of benefit regulations, too.

We have no intention of reducing benefit rates, so the Bill will specifically rule out pilots involving reduced rates. Above all, we want to improve incentives to work. The power to test improvements on a pilot local basis will be invaluable.

The counterpart of making the system harder for the workshy is making it easier for the vast majority of genuine job seekers. We are already committed to giving a one-stop service for all benefits within the Benefits Agency. Now we can extend that principle to cover the services provided by two different Departments. Together, the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency will provide a one-stop service for job seekers, so job seekers will usually deal with a single office—the jobcentre.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has recently confirmed that the Government's strategy has given Britain the best performing labour market in Europe. These proposals for job seekers will help Britain generate even more jobs. They will help unemployed people find work; they will strengthen Britain's economy; and they will give better value for taxpayers' money. They will be welcomed by all those who want to see a prosperous economy and want to help unemployed people achieve their main goal—a job. I commend these measures to the House.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that I should like to be enthusiastic about this package if I could? I accept that it is a step forward in some senses—at least it is not the usual dirge about the welfare system as a grudging safety net and there are some signs that the Government are trying to adopt a more sensible approach to encouraging people back to work.

The main feature of the package is the job seeker's allowance itself. Will the Secretary of State accept one simple fact? Will he accept that the result, which will be a harsh experience for many, will be that when those with a full contributions record lose work they will be guaranteed help for only six months instead of 12? Will he also accept that that is a unilateral and remarkable departure from the contract entered into between the contributor and the Government, involving 10 per cent. of gross earnings within the national insurance contributions band, and that the result will be a loss of half the principal benefit? What part of the citizens charter covers this particular happening? Is there a help line that people can phone to get an explanation? What insurance company would get away with such an increase in premiums and a reduction in benefit?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, with regard to the job seeker's allowance, at any one time 250,000 people would be better off under the present arrangements? What is the so-called saving to the Treasury? How many people under the age of 25 does he estimate will have a cut in benefit, even when they have a full contributions record, because of the introduction of the distinction between those above and below 25, a distinction with which we are familiar in terms of income support and which is now to become part of the job seeker's allowance? Will the Secretary of State confirm that the present loss would be £9.55 a week? What does he imagine it will be in a year or two?

How many of the 90,000 who will not even qualify for means-tested job seeker's allowance will be women? Is not it true that only 43 per cent. of women who will qualify on their contributions are likely to be able to draw benefit of any kind once their six months' qualification has run out? How does the Secretary of State fit that in with the rhetoric that we have heard in the House about invalidity benefit?

We have been told that about 200,000 people will be evicted from invalidity benefit by the arrival of incapacity benefit. In fact, they will be shunted—that is perhaps the elegant way in which to put it—into the job seeker's allowance. How many of them does the right hon. Gentleman think will qualify for no benefit at all because they have, very properly, been thrifty and have accumulated savings?

I ask the right hon. Gentleman specifically about the job seeker's agreement which must be signed on this occasion. I stress, on behalf of my party, that of course I accept 100 per cent. that it is the duty of anyone who is unemployed and drawing benefit to co-operate with the authorities, to search for a job and to do everything possible to better his or her situation. There can be no dubiety about that. Can the Secretary of State, however, answer one simple question for starters? What power, which is not presently available, will be available as a result of the announcements he has made today in terms of the job seeker's agreement?

I ask that question because I recently read in the papers a quotation from the manager of a jobcentre. It happens to be in London, but it could be in any part of the country. He said:

> "We already have back-to-work plans that a claimant must sign, so we are a bit puzzled about what all the fuss is about."

It is important that we pin down exactly what the new powers that are being given are and what the new sanctions are, so that we can understand and form a judgment on them.

Do the new powers simply include, for example, the provision that someone who is seen to be in default of an undertaking, under the job start programme, for example, now has not one week's loss of benefit, but two weeks' and, on repetition, four weeks' loss of benefit, or is there something else that I have not noticed—other than, perhaps, what I have noticed about the hardship allowance? In certain circumstances, people can be left not with a reduced benefit, but with no benefit at all. Does the Secretary of State expect to see that in play over a period?

I ask that question because if hon. Members, as they will, read the White Paper, they will see, for example, the power, carried forward to the JSA, but widened,

> "to enable advisers to direct jobseekers to improve their employability through, for example, attending a course to improve jobseeking skills or motivation, or taking steps to present themselves acceptably to employers."

If it is simply a matter of dress, deportment and drawing up a good curriculum vitae, or trying to motivate people, no one could object. I suspect, however, that there is a great deal more in the hidden agenda, and I ask the Secretary of State to spell that out.

Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us, for example, what is the significance of what has been widely reported, which is that the targets that have been set by the Employment Service performance agreements have now been put at the figure of 135,000 people to be referred for adjudication and, therefore, potentially for loss of benefit, which is more than double the performance in the previous year? Does that reflect a change in the rules and, if so, will the right hon. Gentleman spell it out, or is it simply a matter of his rigging the performance targets and leaving the unfortunate staff to do the job on the ground? It is important that he comes clean on exactly that point.

The back-to-work bonus is, of course, welcome in the sense that it is some attempt to provide an incentive for those who seek help. It is something of a compliment to the Commission on Social Justice that it should have been unveiled as a pre-emptive strike by the right hon. Gentleman. As I said earlier, it is certainly better than the rather dreary message we get, not so much from the right hon. Gentleman as from the Department of Employment, about safety net provision and leaving everyone else to exist in the marketplace. Does he accept that the fair description of it is that someone working part time will not get any jam today, may get half-rations on some indeterminate date, but may also find that the whole pot is confiscated by the Treasury?

Let us assume for a moment that a husband is working full time and is made redundant, the wife continues with a part-time job and rolls up only half her earnings, so that in effect she is already paying 50 per cent. tax. Can the Secretary of State say specifically that the wife can claim the allowance when she moves into a full-time job or can she also claim it when he moves into a full-time job? Or is that a choice between them? What will be the tax treatment of that rolled-up sum at the point when that person enters employment?

My next point will please the Secretary of State. Not everything in the report is bad. The fact that employment and child provision is now available after three months out of work instead of six is helpful. A salutary lesson—I hope that the Secretary of State will accept it—is that very often there are jobs that are not entirely suitable for those to whom they are offered, and that there are occasions on which people genuinely have good reasons for giving up work.

Will the Secretary of State tell us what has happened to the £200 grant, which we understand was being tested for the long-term unemployed? I did not hear anything about that in the statement and I am anxious to know whether it is operating and what results, if any, are emerging.

On sanctions—I think that this a helpful question to the Secretary of State, as it will allow him to clarify the situation—it has been widely reported in the press that certain categories of long-term unemployed will be required to work for benefit, and that a form of workfare is on the agenda. Indeed, that was the impression that I got genuinely from something that was said this morning on the radio by the Secretary of State for Employment. Can the Minister categorically deny that a compulsion to work or sacrifice benefit is on the agenda?

Labour believes that entitlement to benefit is, of course, something which carries duties and responsibilities. I hope, however, that the Secretary of State will recognise that, if the right opportunities are provided, the problem will be dealing with the rush, not finding the volunteers to come forward. Will he join me in expressing regret that the Government, who have talked about improving training, intend—I quote from a press report on an announcement from the Secretary of State for Employment—

> "to shake up the main government scheme for training unemployed adults,"—

training for work—

> "by cutting its funding by a third"?

Is that a very good way of encouraging people to have hope in unemployment?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for his welcome, albeit a grudging one, for many aspects of the statement. We have had a debate over the past year or so on the reform of social security, ever since I called for such a debate in the Mais lecture. During that period, the whole climate of opinion has changed in this country from one in which many people said that there was no need to reform the social security system to one where most people accept that there is a need, and that the emphasis should be on restoring emphasis, targeting benefits to where they do most good and ensuring that the system does not outstrip the nation's ability to pay. The litmus test of whether the Labour party has moved along with that national debate or is still lagging behind is whether it will endorse on Second Reading the job seeker's allowance Bill.

The hon. Member for Garscadden claimed that the vast majority of people would suffer as a result of the reduction of the contributory element of the benefit to six months. In fact, two thirds of people get back to work

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within six months. We want, as a result of these measures, to increase that proportion, because the sooner that people get back to work the better it is for them, quite apart from the savings to the taxpayer.

As for changing the terms of the contributory benefits, it has been possible for Governments of all complexions to make changes in the terms of benefits over the years as long as good notice is given. That is what we are doing.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether I could confirm that 250,000 people would lose as a result of the changes. He ignores entirely the numbers, which I mentioned, who will gain as a result of the changes. As a result of the back-to-work benefit, about 150,000 people will benefit. As a result of the changed treatment of the disregard of earnings for couples, 70,000 will benefit. As a result of the increase in the partners' earnings rule to 24 hours, 20,000 will benefit. Therefore, many people will gain, quite apart from those who will gain from getting back to work earlier.

The hon. Gentleman asked specifically about the impact of the proposals on women. I will naturally look up the information and see whether we have any estimates broken down between sex and write to him. He may care to table a written question to ensure that the information has a wider circulation.

With regard to the invalidity benefit changes, we expect some people who would previously have received invalidity benefit to be found capable of work under the more objective test introduced by incapacity benefit. They will be helped back to work through the new job seeker's allowance. That is what it is there for, and that is what they need.

The hon. Member for Garscadden accepted that it is the duty of people to co-operate with the benefits system and to seek work. That is the underlying philosophy of the allowance. He asked what power we would have that we do not have now. We will have the power to make the job seeker's agreement a requirement of benefit. The present back-to-work plans are not a requirement of benefit. Therefore, there is not a commitment on the part of the person drawing them up to follow them. There is no obligation to review them and ensure that people have followed them. The new agreement will change the nature of the allowance into a contract between the job seeker and the taxpayer which is in both parties' interests.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked whether I expected the new sanction, which will mean that able-bodied people with no dependants and no caring responsibilities can lose all benefit, to apply often. I do not believe that it will apply often, any more than it did when we changed the rules on income support affecting able-bodied new age travellers and others. It will have a healthy effect on those who were inclined to malinger and who thought that they had a right to payment from the taxpayer indefinitely without making an effort.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman's welcome became warmer as his comments progressed and that he offered an unequivocal welcome to the back-to-work bonus. However, he promptly became equivocal once more. The fact is that it is unequivocally better than the present system. People will have an incentive to do part-time work and they will be helped to take the further step into full-time work after that. It would be deplorable if the hon. Gentleman wanted to return to the old system. The tax treatment of the back-to-work bonus is very much a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Garscadden welcomed employment on trial. He asked what became of the job finder's grant. That was something we promised to pilot in our manifesto and I am pleased to say that it is being piloted at the moment. The only reason I did not mention it in my statement was that there were so many good things to include that there was no room for that as well. It is also something which we have already announced.

The hon. Member asked whether the measures would be a step towards American-style workfare. Under present arrangements, we have the power to require job seekers to make an effort to seek work, to train and thereby to maintain contact with the world of work. That is right; taxpayers expect something in return and there is nothing wrong in principle with requiring greater effort on any front from those seeking work.

The difficulty is one of practice that has always ruled out the kind of workfare programme which the hon. Member for Garscadden seems to reject. We believe that jobs come from business being profitable. It has not been possible for the Government to provide millions of jobs to operate such a system.

We will certainly require more effort from people to maintain contact with the world of work and, where appropriate, to take steps to get back to work and to improve their training and, if need be, to undertake tasks of benefit to the community. That is something which taxpayers will whole-heartedly welcome, as they will welcome the whole bunch of measures that I have included in the job seeker's allowance.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. After those initial exchanges, which have taken almost 30 minutes, many hon. Members wish to ask questions. I ask Back Benchers and Front-Bench spokesmen to co-operate and to ask brisk questions and give brisk answers from now on.

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): What action does my right hon. Friend propose to take to ensure that the two agencies involved in implementing the scheme—the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service—liaise and co-operate to guarantee an effective and efficient service for their clients?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend highlights a very important aspect of the reforms, which is the improvement of the service to clients and the streamlining of the delivery of what has been a confusing mixture of benefits. We have established close working arrangements and a working party between the two Departments, which has been developing plans to bring together delivery, which will involve Benefits Agency staff working alongside Employment Service staff. The claimant will receive at one place—the jobcentre—all the help that he needs, and there will be direct links to the Benefits Agency for related benefits such as sickness benefits, and so on. It will be an improvement in the service that we provide to job seekers. The House will think that that is right and proper.

Mr. David Chidgey (Eastleigh): I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that the requirement for the unemployed actively to seek work is not in dispute. However, I hope that he will also agree that little in today's statement will increase the chances of the long-term unemployed gaining and keeping worthwhile jobs. Does he agree that policies such as the benefit transfer programme, which turns welfare benefits into job subsidies, will tackle and finish off the long-term unemployment problem?

Mr. Lilley: We will, of course, examine any constructive proposals that are put forward from any quarter in the spirit that I mentioned in my original Mais lecture, but there are measures in the statement that will help the long-term unemployed. I have just mentioned the job finder's grant, which has been piloted and which is specifically aimed at those who have been unemployed for a long time, who face costs of going back to work and who will, therefore, possibly be helped by a lump sum towards doing so.

The back-to-work bonus will likewise help those who have been unemployed for more than three months, including those who have been unemployed for longer periods. Our philosophy is to try to get people back to work as early as possible after they become unemployed and not to allow them to languish for long periods in unemployment, if that is at all possible. That is a much more constructive philosophy.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome my right hon. Friend's excellent proposals. May I contrast his positive reforms with the utter waffle in the report of the Commission on Social Justice, which apparently even includes a recommendation that everybody should have a sabbatical year? Would not that be equivalent to a 15 per cent. compulsory unemployment rate?

Mr. Lilley: I have had time so far only to peruse the proposals from the Commission on Social Justice, and I will look closer at them. I do not exclude the possibility that there will be constructive proposals within the report, although, in the first 13 pages, I found 18 spending proposals and no savings proposals to offset them. I, therefore, believe that we should pursue our strategy of focusing benefits where they can do most good and look for ways of restoring incentives and not extending the benefit system through high-spending policies and new programmes to add to those that we already have in our budget, which amounts to over £80 billion a year.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Will the Secretary of State give a clear undertaking that the new job seeker's allowance will be non-means tested? His statement about partners' earnings suggested that it will be. If he believes that the new benefit, which cuts the unemployment rate in half, will be popular, will he undertake that the first pilot will be carried out in St. Albans?

Hon. Members: Yes?

Mr. Lilley: I will come to that point. The job seeker's allowance will have two components. It will have an income-related element which will be available as long as people have need, and that clearly will be related to people's means. The other aspect, the six-month personal allowance, will be based on the contributory principle and will, as at present, be unrelated to people's capital or to whether their partner is at work. It will be abated in the case of occupational pensions, as it is at present, but I am raising the amount that people can keep before that abatement applies from £35 to £50 per week, and abolishing the arbitrary age limit. That is an important development, and it is probably a move in the direction that the hon. Gentleman would wish.

The piloting powers will relate to changes in the regulations. The basic benefit structure is to be introduced from April 1996. Once it is bedded down, we want to have the opportunity to test reforms, and any reforms that we introduce will, by definition, be attempts to improve it. I am sure, therefore, that I will be bidding to have improvements tested in St. Albans, against similar bids which will undoubtedly come in from Birkenhead.

Sir Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): May I say how much I approve of many of the measures contained in the statement? However, I consider it to be a half-measure, rather than the major reform that is required to solve the awful problem of unemployment.

Can my right hon. Friend tell the House how much he thinks the measure will save, or will it cost more? It seems that the training and extra £10 are based very much on the North Norfolk action scheme, which is costing something like £70 a week more than the benefit that was paid earlier. Why is not the measure based on the workstart programmes which have been so successful in Kent and south London where a payment is made to an employer who takes an unemployed person off the register and real work is provided, rather than work for charities?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend sought a pilot scheme in his constituency, the North Norfolk action scheme, which he has been following closely and has praised. We are seeking to learn from that and the other pilot schemes mentioned by my hon. Friend to ensure that there are genuine savings from them. That illustrates the benefit of being able to run pilot schemes, which we already can for employment services. However, I am taking additional powers to pilot changes in the benefit regulations, other than any reduction in the basic rate of benefit, which we do not propose and therefore would not seek powers to test. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. I hope that, as a result of the experience in his constituency and elsewhere, we will learn that we can build on the changes that we have announced today to go somewhat further in the direction that he would wish.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): The Secretary of State said in his statement that the Government's strategy is to generate more jobs and that it is "bearing fruit". As he has taken the lead over the Employment Secretary in what is obviously an employment matter, can he answer this extraordinary conundrum: why has the Government's successful strategy resulted in an alleged reduction in the number of unemployed people but a fall in the number of people who are in jobs?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. and learned Member is wrong about that. According to the labour force survey, which is the best founded survey, there has been an increase in the number of jobs, particularly full-time jobs, recently. The hon. and learned Member casts doubt on whether our

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policies are "bearing fruit". If he visits his constituency, he will find that there are 842 fewer unemployed people now than there were one year ago—a drop of 12 per cent.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of my constituents who have long felt that the benefit system encourages problems, rather than solves them? The job seeker's allowance will go a long way to helping people to solve problems and reduce their dependency on benefit. Can he comment on how the job seeker's allowance will compare to a statutory minimum wage? Will it incentivise people or will it discourage them from getting off the unemployment lists?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right—this is a problem-solving measure. It is a measure introduced by a Government who are determined to create jobs. That is why we are not going down the road of introducing policies that would destroy jobs. Undoubtedly—this has been confirmed only hours ago by the Commission on Social Justice—a minimum wage can destroy jobs. That is why we are not going down that route, and I am surprised that any hon. Members in the House would want to do so.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is it not revealing that all the fine words ever said by this Minister and others from that Dispatch Box never turn into reality in my constituency and in others? Will the Secretary of State comment on the case of a fisherman desperate to return to work who gets a job working fewer than eight hours a week going out in boats? He has found the few hours' work that he can. Why does he no longer receive national insurance credits? How will it encourage people to go back to work when people such as my constituent lose national insurance credits when they take up a very small part-time job?

Mr. Lilley: I think that the hon. Member must have misheard what I said. We are improving the position. At present, if one of the hon. Gentleman's constituents works as a fisherman for an eight-and-a-half hour trip a week he will lose national insurance credits. Hereafter, he will keep them under the arrangements that I have announced today. So we are dealing with the very problem that the hon. Gentleman has highlighted. At the same time, I should say that the arrangements for share fishermen will be broadly carried over into the new system.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): There will be a widespread welcome for these measures as a way of removing obstacles and providing incentives to move people from benefit into work.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his Department has tested and will test the practical working of the schemes among new age travellers and others who may evade the full rigours of our social security benefits and employment placing system? In particular, will he consider providing some flexibility to enable people who are on benefit to obtain relevant training which may facilitate their eventual movement into employment?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend will doubtless welcome the fact that the age-old midsummer ritual in which my Department went out to raves and places such as Stonehenge, Glastonbury and so on and set up stalls to hand out benefits to people no longer takes place. We have changed the rules so that able-bodied people who have no dependants will lose benefit entirely if they are not actively seeking work and do not even pretend actively to seek work or to be available for work. We are trying to tighten up the measures that record where people have claimed when they are moving about the country. On all those fronts, we are making progress in dealing with exploitation of the benefits system by those who choose a non-conventional life style, about which otherwise I have no feelings at all.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): The Secretary of State suggests that the changes will be of benefit to the unemployed, yet on two occasions he has been asked to state the costs. May I ask him specifically whether the so-called generous measures will cost the Department money or save the Treasury money?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is still stuck in the past in the debate on social security. We have seen a substantial increase in social security spending in this country and others over the years.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Because of unemployment.

Mr. Lilley: Not primarily because of unemployment but because of the growth of dependency, the growth of old age and other factors. We should seek ways of concentrating that huge sum of money—£85 billion—where it can do most good. It costs every working person £15 every working day simply to finance social security. We should not measure the charitableness of our nation by how much extra money we can spend on top of that sum. The measure that I have announced today will save £200 million in a full year in the direct budget. To the extent that the measures are successful in getting people back to work earlier, which is what we want to see, the savings will be much greater still. I hope that those savings will be positively received by everyone. Surely no one wants to spend money on supporting people out of work. We always want to help people back into work.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): May I welcome what I understood to be my right hon. Friend's intention to proceed with great caution in requiring unemployed people to take part in workfare schemes? Has he studied the American experience, which shows that compulsory schemes yielded few or no benefits at considerable costs? Does he accept that the voluntary schemes, such as those in Massachusetts, produced better results? If any additional public funding were to be available here to support workfare schemes, the money might be better spent on education, training and child care. If we are to reduce dependence, what really matters is the availability and accessibility of adequately paid jobs.

Mr. Lilley: We will obviously proceed cautiously in all those aspects of the new allowance that I discussed, especially when applying the pilot powers that we will gain under the benefit to test the new measures. I take my hon. Friend's point. We would be unwise slavishly to follow policies in the United States, which tend to be set in an entirely different framework, relate almost exclusively to single parents and are not geared to the needs of this country. We have the long-standing power to require people to take work when it is available and is offered to them, which is absolutely right and proper. The Government do not have the ability to create the millions of extra jobs that we want—no Government do. Such jobs can come only from a more vibrant economy and labour market, and the measures will help to achieve those.

Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford, South): When making such a statement, is not the Minister embarrassed at the scale of the piecemeal effect that it will have? In areas such as my constituency, we must create 1,000 jobs a year just to stand still. This is only a small measure. When will the Government start to consider the need for full employment and how will the measure create that employment on its own? People want real jobs and real prospects. The manufacturing base of the country has been lost, especially in areas such as Bradford. How will the measure help people in Bradford to seek work?

Mr. Lilley: The measures that we have announced today are a further important step and addition to the strategy that we have been putting in place for some years to give this country the most successful labour market of any country in western Europe. Our youth unemployment is substantially lower than that of the rest of Europe at about 13 per cent.—it is half as high again in Europe as a whole and it is 23 per cent. in France and 35 per cent. in Spain. Why are we more successful than those countries, which allegedly have better training and education? I point to the minimum wage and the social chapter. If anyone is serious about improving employment prospects in this country, he or she cannot simultaneously advocate the minimum wage and the social chapter.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us on the Conservative Benches believe that, in an increasingly flexible and insecure labour market such as that which we have today, it is sensible to have a flexible and responsive social security and employment benefit system to respond to that situation? In that context, why, even with the benefits of computerisation, does it seem to take so long between the announcement of such timely and sensible decisions and their implementation? I noted two cases—the partners' earnings rules and uniform claim forms and rules—whose implementation will be delayed until April 1996. Is not it possible to speed things up a little?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point about needing a flexible system to respond to a rapidly changing labour market. That is why we are having a pilot scheme. In future, we want to be in a position to respond.

The new allowance will be introduced in April 1996. All those other measures are being introduced as part of the new allowance. Why does it take so long? First, we have to obtain parliamentary approval. The measure is likely to go through the normal processes and I suppose that we will not have approval until next summer. Then we must introduce the regulations, under the primary powers, and the organisational changes to bring together Benefits Agency and Employment Service staff. We are developing plans to do so and we will have to develop the necessary computerisation. It would be virtually impossible to introduce the system before April 1996, but once it is in place we will be able to make changes in the regulations much more rapidly, within the primary legislative structure and subject to the approval of the House.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): Will there be anything in the legislation about job seekers from other European Union countries? May I tell the Secretary of State that I was horrified at my surgery on Saturday when a young Spanish woman told me that she had recently lost her job and was being denied income support in spite of actively seeking further employment?

Mr. Lilley: There are no specific changes in the White Paper relating to people from other countries in the European Community; it relates purely to our domestic situation. We will of course continue to have reciprocal arrangements with other countries, both in the European Community and in the wider ambit of European co-operation involving other countries, specifically to help people who wish to seek work across international boundaries. Those will continue as at present.

I should be happy to look into the case that arose at the hon. Gentleman's surgery to see whether the treatment is appropriate.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): May I welcome the back-to-work incentives in my right hon. Friend's statement, and ask how many people he expects to benefit from the 24-hours relaxation of the rules for national insurance credits and from the back-to-work bonus? In the brief time at his disposal, has my right hon. Friend discovered anything in the Commission on Social Justice that matches those back-to-work incentives?

Mr. Lilley: We believe that some 150,000 people will gain from the back-to-work bonus, and that that could be more if more people respond positively to the existence of the bonus. Some 20,000 people should gain from the change in the partners' earnings rule; again, that could be more if people respond positively. Some 70,000 people will gain from the £10 disregard for couples where only one of them is working and, again, that could be more if people respond by working and declaring their earnings in those circumstances.

It would not be fair of me to make a comprehensive judgment on the proposals announced by the Borrie commission today, but I have not so far been able to see in any of the reports that have come through or from my own perusal of the document anything as comprehensive or as positive as we have been able to announce today. The commission is rather stronger on analysis than on diagnosis and proposals for the future.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that his announcement is nothing short of an insult to the intelligence of more than 4 million people in Britain who do not have a job—never mind the fiddled figures—and to the 30,000 miners who were chucked on the scrapheap by the Government? They are not workshy—they had their jobs taken away from them. It is an insult to the shipyard and textile workers and to one third of those in our manufacturing base who have lost their jobs. We are faced with a Government who are backed by Tory Members who line their pockets with five, six and seven other jobs, and the Secretary of State

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

accuses people who want to work of being workshy. They ought to be ashamed of themselves. Why don't they get out of the road?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman does not seem entirely to support the proposals which I made earlier, but he will find them of benefit to his constituents. We have put in place special measures in mining areas and, as one would expect, miners—being the aristocrats of labour—have often been extremely successful in getting jobs elsewhere. They are certainly not workshy. I know that, and I said that the majority of people in this country are not workshy. The minority who are will benefit from the motivation that the measures which we have introduced today will give them to find work. That is only right and proper and is part of their contract with the taxpayer.

As for fraud and abuse, the biggest fraud with which I have had to deal since I have been in office was the £500 million hole left in pension funds by the socialist millionaire Robert Maxwell.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In complimenting my right hon. Friend on the proposals that he announced today, may I suggest that the White Paper might give an opportunity to address a situation where somebody who is unemployed and is actively seeking work is using his spare time to undertake a course of study? What can happen—it varies from locality to locality—is that the mere fact that someone is doing a course of study is held to be in some way incompatible with his being available for work. Surely there is nothing incompatible when a person says that if a job is available, he will take it, but that, in the meanwhile, he would like to use his time constructively to get himself back to a better-paid job, where we can tax him more and raise money to apply to what we would want. Surely the White Paper at the very least gives us an opportunity to look at that situation.

Mr. Lilley: We will, of course, look closely at those rules, but, broadly speaking, the intention is to carry over much of the way in which people are treated at present into the new system. We will look closely at how that is done to ensure that we can still keep to the principle that people must be available for work without inhibiting unnecessarily their ability to acquire skills, to study and to develop their employability.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): How many of our people in Britain are unemployed and how many of those are long-term unemployed?

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment reminds me that the figures are 2.6 million and 1 million respectively. Either way, I can tell the hon. Member that it is too many. The intention of the measures I have announced is to reduce the number of unemployed people, but particularly to reduce the number of long-term unemployed people, because the longer people are unemployed, the more demoralising it is for them and the more their motivation is reduced; their skills get stale and they become potentially less attractive to employers. That is why we want to get those people speedily back to work through the job seeker's agreement and the measures that will be spelled out in it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall attempt to call those hon. Members who have been standing up to ask a question because they have been waiting for a long time, but I plead again for brisk answers to questions. We have taken almost an hour on this statement and we will be coming back to it at some time in the future.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the key factor about the job seeker's agreement is simplicity? Will he confirm that the allowances will all be claimed on one form and from one location, which is what I and others have recommended for some considerable time? That will benefit those who most need to know about it.

Mr. Lilley: Yes, I can confirm my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Does the Secretary of State agree that his statement proffers no solution—which is more quality jobs—but essentially props up employers of slave labour, who pay cheap wages and provide rotten conditions? Does he therefore agree that he is, essentially, subsidising the inefficient and the unimaginative?

Mr. Lilley: No, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I thank my right hon. Friend for his imaginative proposal, which will be welcomed by the British public, principally for two reasons, which I shall cite briefly. They will welcome it, first, because it unequivocally links the business of being unemployed with the business of looking for a job and, secondly, because it does not increase the burden on the working taxpayer, who is already paying £15 a day towards the cost of our social security system. Most people believe that that is too much.

Mr. Lilley: I entirely endorse the points that my hon. Friend has made with considerable clarity. I could not have put it better myself.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Minister agree that his statement means that we will have a benefits system that has more in common with the handout principle of the Poor Law than the principle of a national insurance scheme of benefit? Surely the reason why income support payments and unemployment benefits are the same or less than they were 15 years ago is the salami cuts made to those benefits, which have been imposed while the amount available for contribution has increased. Will he answer this simple question: how many people will lose out?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member epitomises the backward-looking tendency in the Labour party, always harking back to the 19th century and never looking forward to the 21st century. I hope that the proposals will put us in a position to have a much better working labour market in future than we have had in the past. I would hope that, if he cannot, at least his party will endorse them.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the vast bulk of the unemployed want work and, therefore, welcome the proposals in the job seeker's agreement? Will he also confirm that there is a direction for people who disobey the agreement? Will the White Paper address the problem of the small number of people who breach that direction and will the job seeker's allowance be put at risk thereby?

Mr. Lilley: I can confirm that there will be a direction to people to undertake specific courses of action that will increase their chances of getting work. Should they refuse to do so, they would, of course, suffer sanctions, though I would hope that they would generally do what is in their own interest.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will the Secretary of State accept that the problem, particularly in areas such as mine, is the lack of any jobs, not just suitable ones, for the long-term unemployed? Many of my constituents, such as the 14 per cent. unemployed and the 30 per cent. of males who are economically inactive, will regard the tightening of the test—the agreement is merely restating the availability for work test—as an insult. Can the Secretary of State also tell us how many Department of Employment staff will be made redundant as a consequence of combining the two agencies to provide the new job seeker's allowance?

Mr. Lilley: I appreciate that unemployment is higher in some areas of the country than others and that it is therefore much more difficult and disheartening. None the less, even in those areas, a considerable number of people get back to work and we must give every help to others to do likewise. In the region in which the hon. Gentleman's constituency is situated, the reduction in unemployment over the past eight years has been about one third. That may still leave a way to go in his constituency and others, but this measure will help achieve that.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many people will welcome the extension of the employment on trial scheme? I have met people in my constituency who are not workshy, but genuinely apprehensive about some of the jobs for which they are sent for interviews.

Mr. Lilley: That is very much the purpose behind the employment on trial measures, which have been successful as implemented so far. We are easing them in in a way that will help some 200,000 extra people try out jobs. I hope that, in most cases, they will choose to stay with them, but in some cases they will find that they are not suitable and will suffer no penalty as a result of leaving after four weeks.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As the Secretary of State has made a number of references to the workshy, what is his estimate of the current number of workshy among those who are unemployed?

Mr. Lilley: I believe that the vast majority are keen on getting back to work and all the evidence that I have is to that effect. But we all know that a minority of workshy people exists. There is no point in trying to put a number on it because if one sends out a questionnaire people will not list themselves as workshy—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman might do so, but others would not be so frank. A significant minority still needs motivating in this way and it is in their interest to receive this kind of help and encouragement.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Having admitted savings or cuts of more than £200 million, why does not the Secretary of State call this the job fleecer's allowance? It fleeces the unemployed of the right to benefit, just as his economic policies fleece them of the right to work.

Mr. Lilley: Success in this area must ultimately result in less spending on unemployment, not more. Our objective is to ensure that spending is well focused where it can do most good but, above all, to ensure that people get back to work as rapidly as possible.

Foreign Office and ODA Spending Plans

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Dr. Liam Fox.*]

4.32 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The Foreign Affairs Select Committee is grateful for this opportunity, in Government time, to have a short debate on its second report. This is in lieu of a normal estimates day debate, for which there was not time in the summer.

The second report covers a number of issues concerning Foreign Office and Overseas Development Administration expenditure. In particular, it looks at the planned fall in the size of the diplomatic service over the next three years; the growth in expenditure on UK contributions to the UN, to UN peacekeeping and particularly to the European Union's overseas aid budget, all of which are legally binding and over which Britain has little control; and the effect which that has on the overall aid budget, in that the bilateral budget will shrink to less than 50 per cent. of the UK's total overseas expenditure as the European Union aid budget increases.

The report also looks at the changing pattern of overseas aid and investment in developing countries. What were hitherto regarded as marginal institutions are becoming increasingly central to the development effort. Those include such bodies as the Commonwealth Development Corporation, the Natural Resources Institute and the know-how fund.

We looked at the need for a new role for the Commonwealth Institute which, since we wrote our report, seems to be groping its way towards finding such a new role. We examined it in the general context of the growth in support for the Commonwealth—a global institution whose membership is increasing. It is a club that is growing, not shrinking, and becoming more significant in tomorrow's world.

We returned to the subject of cultural diplomacy and reaffirmed the Committee's support for, and strong feelings in favour of, the work of the British Council and the BBC World Service.

The report discusses a wide range of issues and I shall concentrate on only one or two aspects. I shall concentrate especially on what is happening to our aid and development policy and to those parts of Foreign Office expenditure that support the policy.

Two major things are happening. First, our aid and development budget is becoming multilateralised. In other words, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Overseas Development Administration votes are now being led by demands over which the United Kingdom has less and less direct influence and for which, by definition, accountability to the House is minimal, and which are binding on the UK. We have undertaken to adhere to treaties that commit us legally and unavoidably to those increasing demands.

The second thing that is happening is that traditional patterns of development aid throughout the world are being replaced with a vastly greater role for the private sector in development, leaving aid—that is, Government resources, or taxpayers' money—to be focused more on poverty relief, basic needs, emergency relief, humanitarian aid and so on. That certainly applies to this country's development activities.

I shall discuss both changes in detail. First, on multilateralisation, one can see exactly what is happening by reading page 32 of the Foreign Affairs Committee's report. The UK's contribution to the United Nations' regular budget is increasing from £26.5 million in 1991-92 to £38.8 million this year. The UK contribution to UN peacekeeping is increasing from £177.6 million in 1992-93 to £310 million in 1994-95. The part of the overseas aid budget that is spent via the European Union is increasing from £564 million in 1993-94 to £745 million in 1996-97. The proportion of our aid budget that is spent via multilateral agencies, including the European Union, will have increased from about 29 per cent. in 1979-80 to 52.8 per cent. in 1996-97—much more than half.

All those types of expenditure are increasing at a time when public expenditure is under extreme restraint, and in many cases being reduced. That has caused, in the minds of my colleagues in the Foreign Affairs Committee—I think rightly—a double worry, which we have tried to air in the report.

The first anxiety is whether the European Union proportion of our aid budget, which is being removed from the control of Government and of the House, is being properly evaluated and monitored. We can argue, and no doubt will, about whether it is a good thing that it is happening at all; to find the answer, one must seek out agreements in the margins of past European summits to discover what was taken away, what was conceded and who wanted which slice of power transferred to which directorate in Brussels.

However, given that that has happened, is that large, and growing, chunk of our aid budget—and of other member state countries' aid budgets—being properly administered, evaluated and monitored? The Committee has set itself that question and, since finishing the report, has prepared, and is about to complete, another detailed report on precisely that question, which it will present to the House shortly. Without anticipating the work that we have done there, there are some worries about what is happening to the strict control and monitoring of that enormous chunk of our aid programme, which in the past was under the direct administration of Whitehall and Ministers and accountable to the House.

The second worry is whether the priorities are right in that aid sector. The European Union budget is soaring upwards—it has been greatly increased. It is a budget for administering aid in a variety of ways—much of it is in the form of traditional Government-to-Government grant; some of it is of the concessionary finance variety. That is happening while, as our report states, the diplomatic service is being cut over the next three years and while—although this is outside our report's scope—Army manpower is being cut. It is happening while support for agencies such as the British Council and the BBC World Service is being reduced over the next three years. Many people would argue that such organisations are moving to the centre of our overseas effort and the promotion of this country's interests, as well as the promotion of development and improvement in developing countries.

One is compelled to ask whether the right budgets are being increased and the right ones decreased. Above all, is it right for European Union aid to be expanding at this great rate and for all the new plans to be developed by the appropriate directorates in Brussels—for aid and support in one place and grants for development in another—when priorities throughout the aid establishment, if one can call it that, are changing radically and private investment flows are replacing the role of aid in development? If one wants proof of that, one can see it in the entirely new line being taken by the international financial institutions. They now say that the main thrust of development work should be through encouraging the private sector to wheel in and deliver the improved infrastructure and many of the better-quality services that have not been developed as a result of handing aid from Government to Government through the budgetary systems.

It is my personal view—not a conclusion of the Committee's report—that, at the very least, there is a strong case for re-examination of policy in the light of those two huge developments, one of which was pinpointed so clearly in the report. If I were asked to name the headings of the policy re-examination, I would suggest that the first should be to clarify the response of our policy-makers, the Foreign Office and the Overseas Development Administration, to the new ideas being promoted by the international institutions for private sector development to take some weight off the traditional aid budgets. The development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development issued a detailed set of guidelines urging Governments and officials responsible for aid policies to promote private sector development by transferring the emphasis of many of their programmes.

It was with such thoughts in mind that the Committee, when taking evidence for its short report, asked whether there was a new role for our Commonwealth Development Corporation. That is a classic example of an organisation which, over the years—it was originally called the Colonial Development Corporation—has combined the best of public support with the best of private enterprise and investment. Is not that the sort of model for future development aid that the Government should be studying? It is worth asking whether the CDC should be encouraged and expanded rather than regarded as a sideshow among the Government's development policies.

We note that Ministers are planning increased borrowing powers at some stage for the CDC. It would be interesting to hear when those borrowing powers are to be increased. Would such a policy require legislation before the House and, if so, when will time be made available for it? If we are now in a world in which private investment can fill the gap and take some of the budgetary pressure off aid budgets, which all Governments are having to re-evaluate—particularly the American and Japanese, but also our own and the French—we should be building up organisations such as the CDC, which can deliver development in a way that merely pushing aid between one Government and another did not seem able to achieve.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I am all in favour of encouraging private investment in genuine development projects, but surely private investment should be a supplement rather than a replacement for public investment. One of the report's most serious revelations is contained on pages XVIII and XIX, where the Committee refers to the reduction in real terms in United Kingdom Government expenditure on aid. It also states that we are moving away from the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. of GNP. Table II on page XVIII shows that we are nearer the bottom of the league than the top in terms of expenditure on overseas aid. The Government must address that important issue.

Mr. Howell: The view of the international finance institutions on private sector development is that it should be additional. Aid budgets around the world are to be increasingly constrained and private sector development can fill the gap much more efficiently.

The hon. Gentleman rightly said that aid budgets, including this country's, were not conforming to the United Nations target. Although he and I were in complete agreement over the report, we differ as to the importance in the world into which we are moving of the old United Nations targets. They are reiterated year after year and everybody pays lip service to them. But if we want the sort of development that is happening in the booming Asian economies, is beginning to happen—one hopes that it will happen much more—in parts of southern Africa, and has happened to a great extent in the developing countries of Latin America, we must expect the overall investment and flow of funds into those countries to come increasingly from the private sector rather than Government aid. I think that the hon. Gentleman and I differ on that subject and I hope that he will have an opportunity to put his view. I did say that I was voicing my views and straying outside the Committee's report.

My final question for my right hon. and hon. Friends in the appropriate Departments is whether the time has come to review the Bretton Woods institutions. They were constructed in a world where the developing third-world countries were all seen as being stuck in a morass of poverty which, in many cases, was getting worse all the time. Now, some parts of the societies in the developing third-world countries have rapidly lifted themselves out of that morass.

A good part of the dynamic growth of the world economy now comes from the developing world. This year the so-called less-developed countries will grow by 5.6 per cent., which is well above the level that will be achieved by the developed world. We are beginning to see both trading power and economic power shifting to the booming Asian economies that are starting to deliver living standards as high as, and in some cases higher than, those of the European powers. I believe that political power will follow. I say that not just because I think that it will happen, but because when international institutions come together there is a change of tone.

The so-called third world is no longer prepared to take lying down the diktats of the institutions representing the views of the so-called rich west. The balance is changing and our policy should accept that. The fastest growth in the developing world is being driven not by old-style Government aid or United Nations targets—as mentioned by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan)—but by increasing flows of inward investment, liberalisation, cutting taxes and unravelling state monopolies. That is going on in almost every developing country, sometimes with benefit, sometimes with little benefit, but it is going on.

It may be that, given our increased worry in this turbulent world that emergency relief will be more and more in demand and that humanitarian relief, help with basic needs and a focus on poverty and the poorest people is the real No. 1 priority, we should realise and accept that aid is not necessarily the most powerful instrument

[Mr. Howell]

for economic development in the medium term. Therefore, the more we can focus what aid resources we have—it would be nice, of course, to have more—on humanitarian and basic needs, the better. I notice that a number of organisations outside the House are urging just that.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The right hon. Gentleman raised the issue of development in Asia. May I remind him of what is still one of the poorest countries in the world, Cambodia, in south-east Asia? I notice in the Foreign Office answers to the Committee's questions that we are cutting back on the British embassy in Cambodia, a country that was denied access to the world institutions—the International Monetary Fund and the World bank—and a British embassy until very recently. Given that Cambodia is still troubled, is still developing and still has major problems, does he believe that the size of the British embassy should be cut?

Mr. Howell: Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will comment later on that issue, but the hon. Lady is right. In Asian countries such as India, areas of enormous prosperity and wealth stand side by side with areas of still blinding, breathtaking and increasing poverty. No generalities can be safely sustained in Asia.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend agree that Cambodia, like some countries of Africa, illustrates the point that countries that have concentrated on economic development and have not been at each other's throats fighting are the ones that have got ahead? Does he further agree that if we can do something to reduce the warfare, we shall do a great deal towards improving those countries' welfare?

Mr. Howell: My hon. Friend is profoundly right. Peace, stability and a degree of reliance on some sort of rule of law are the fundamental requirements for economic enterprise to grow. Where those things have been applied in Asia, there has been a miracle growth in wealth; where they have not, nothing of the sort has occurred.

Our report considered the work of the Foreign Office in relation to the European Union and to preparations for the intergovernmental conference in 1996. We hope that papers will be available to the House in ample time. The Government made an observation in reply that was not quite clear to me and about which I should like to hear more. In observation (h), Ministers talk about the possibility of a United Kingdom parliamentary report being made to the intergovernmental conference study group, which I think was set up last summer in Corfu. The group has a funny Spanish name that I cannot remember at the moment. Supposedly, it will be a preparatory group for the IGC's agenda, which is important for our country and for the House. What does that mean? How will we initiate a United Kingdom parliamentary report? Who will write it and who will read it? I should certainly like to know what the Government have in mind.

The world has totally changed, both with the evaporation of the Soviet Union and the end of the communist threat, and the rising economic dynamism of the Asian economies, which are delivering growth at rates that make even the post-war European miracle look mild. They are delivering not low-technology, but high-technology, high-quality manufactures at a pace that will make any challenge we have had so far, including that from the Japanese, look mild. The Committee's deeper concern is that, although the world has changed, the spending priorities of the Foreign Office and Overseas Development Administration still are inclined to reflect a bit too much the old order.

Where there is a new order, it is not necessarily the right one. It is being dictated by the moguls of the European Union, who are inclined to look inward rather than outward on these issues.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I should like to say how much I agree with my right hon. Friend about the need for flexibility, particularly in the Asian region. That takes me to the point that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) made about Cambodia. If she were to read, on the first page of the minutes of evidence, the memorandum submitted to the Committee by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—it comes at the end of the conclusions—she will find that flexibility has been applied in relation to Cambodia. A number of Committee members visited Cambodia not very long ago. The memorandum states:

> "With the ending of the UN operation in Cambodia, the size of the British Embassy in Pnomh Penh is to be reduced producing savings of some £100,000 annually."

Most of those hon. Members who went there would agree that that was the right policy as the UN operation had been run down. That displays the flexibility that my right hon. Friend was talking about.

Mr. Howell: I have come to the end of my remarks. I hope that the debate will encourage, or begin to encourage, the realisation that a change of priorities is needed. I hope that some of the points that Committee members raised in the report, such as those on the virility and activity of the Commonwealth, will be reflected a bit more in policy developments in the future. We used to be all in favour of the Commonwealth. Then it was written off. Now we suddenly find that everyone wants to join it and that it is becoming a rather useful global network. On that final thought, I think that I had better sit down. My right hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt have a chance to intervene later.

4.56 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I congratulate the Chairman and members of the Select Committee on their exhaustive report and on choosing overseas development aid as the highlight of their report. It is an issue that concerns all hon. Members very much. Such a spotlight is a good thing at this stage in our development and our relationships with other countries. Many aspects of the report concern us, but I know that many of my hon. Friends want to participate in the debate and will deal with more specific matters. With some exceptions, I should like to generalise in my remarks. I hope that many of our overseas friends, who from time to time bend our ears about the problems in their countries, will not be offended if their particular issue is not brought out in the debate. Obviously, time does not allow to us deal with every problem in the world.

One important issue dealt with in the report is the British Broadcasting Corporation World Service and the British Council, which has been alluded to by the

Chairman of the Committee. I admit that I read the section of the report dealing with the BBC World Service and the British Council with some dismay. It is yet another manifestation of the Government's consistent inconsistency. On the one hand, they extol the virtues and importance of those organisations; on the other, they cut the resources available for the organisations to carry out their functions. For example, there will be a cut in BBC World Service resources from £175 million a year to £158 million in real terms.

Those organisations have unparalleled reputations. The Select Committee said that they have

> "a record of providing cultural, technical and educational assistance worldwide and of encouraging international understanding and the growth of democratic institutions."

The World Service has a global audience of 130 million—three times, I believe, that of Voice of America and five times that of Radio France. It broadcasts in 41 languages. Last year, I understand that it received more than half a million letters from viewers, far more than even most Members of Parliament. It immeasurably disseminates our democratic and social aims throughout the world—what an area in which to penny-pinch. It is a British flagship, but the Government can only count the coppers. I am sure that some of my hon. Friends will emphasise the shabby treatment of the BBC World Service and the British Council.

In just over two years, Hong Kong will be returned to the People's Republic of China after many years of British rule. One would have hoped that at this stage, after 10 years of discussion and negotiation, we would now be dotting the i's and crossing the t's in the extensive and important matters that have to be decided for the future well-being of all involved—not only those in Hong Kong but those in China—and for the sake of the future trade, political and cultural links between Great Britain and the People's Republic of China.

Where are we in that process which has been going on for 10 years? We are bogged down politically, commercially, legally and almost every other "ally" one can think of. Indeed, we seem to be up a blind alley in a morass of bad faith, bad tempers and lack of trust. We are not merely blocked at a point along the path or the through-train line; there is a real possibility that in two years everything will be turned back beyond the starting point. That is the Chinese threat. Something has gone disastrously wrong, but it is no good simply blaming China.

Let us consider what the Chinese have done in the past 10 years. They have signed the joint declaration and passed the Basic Law. We should remember that the Basic Law is a Chinese law passed by the People's Assembly in Peking. It was an acknowledgement that there would be one country and two systems and that there would be an evolving process of democracy in the first two years of Legislative Councils after 1997, taking us roughly to 2004. The Chinese acknowledged that there had to be change, so what has gone wrong? They were significant acts for a communist country and a totalitarian regime, but the Government's report gives a most disappointing summary of them. Indeed, it is an almost offhand dismissal of the situation and, frankly, does a great disservice to the problem. The Minister with responsibility for Hong Kong will perhaps be able to clarify the situation, if not today, then at some future point.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Before the hon. Gentleman moves on, does he accept that there are three possible explanations for the lamentable, if partial, breakdown of negotiations with the People's Republic of China? The first is bad faith on our part, which I wholly reject. The second is bad faith on the part of the Chinese. The third is simply the change of climate inevitably brought about in Hong Kong and, more particularly, in the leadership in Beijing following the events of Tiananmen square?

Mr. Rogers: Yes, indeed. Like members of other parties, we have no sympathy with the abuse of human rights in the People's Republic of China and unequivocally condemn those abuses, but the hon. Gentleman perhaps illustrates the reason why the problem exists: he talks about bad faith instead of trying to engage in a more positive dialogue with the Chinese. A solution must be found.

In 1997, Hong Kong will be handed to the Chinese. For the sake of the population of Hong Kong, for the sake of Hong Kong's future relationships within the special area designated under the Basic Law, and for the sake of the relationship between Great Britain and the PRC, a solution must be found—and quickly. Because of its importance, we shall be looking for a full debate on Hong Kong in the coming parliamentary year.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend. The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has produced a report on China and the Government have responded to it. So far, however, the Government have not chosen to allow time for the House to debate it, even though it was produced before the report that we are debating today.

Mr. Rogers: I thank my hon. Friend for his help. It is not often that a prophet can call for a debate and have that call endorsed so quickly and efficiently. I am sure that the Minister will have heard my hon. Friend and that, when he is able to gather his thoughts on the matter, he will enable such a debate to be held.

We recently debated the Intelligence Services Act 1994, which we supported. It is alluded to only briefly in the report, especially in relation to the designation of expenditure available for our security services. We supported the Bill at the time, but I must admit that it has been a grave disappointment to us. We tabled some constructive amendments but, except for those involving the number of people to sit on the Intelligence and Security Committee, the Government were unable to accept them.

We did not and do not want details of operations or any information that would put the security of individuals or the country at risk, but the Act has created only a facade of openness. The circle of tasking, operating and accounting for our intelligence services remains closed. The Intelligence and Security Committee will comprise parliamentarians, but it will not be a parliamentary Committee. It will have very limited powers, it will not report to Parliament, and we shall receive only information that has been filtered through the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister.

[Mr. Rogers]

As I have said, the report that we are debating rightly highlights expenditure on overseas aid. I think that it was out of loyalty to his party that the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) perhaps failed to emphasise the neglectful way in which the Government have handled the problem of overseas aid. I know that some of my hon. Friends wish to speak on the subject, so I shall not go into detail. I understand that the Pergau dam scandal is being dealt with separately by the Select Committee, but I will say that I do not think that it was the best example of bilateral aid. However, we await the report with interest. I fear and am sure that it will be another sad, sleazy story that will reflect badly on the Government and their approach to overseas aid.

Mr. Canavan: The Select Committee has published a report on the Pergau dam and the Government have published their response. We now need Government time for a debate on the matter so that we can bring the Government to book for their disgraceful behaviour in this instance.

Mr. Rogers: Yes, it was the debate on the report to which I was alluding. It is clear from both reports that the resources available for overseas aid in general are falling, as the Chairman of the Select Committee said.

As the Chairman also said, more and more money is being sucked into the European pot for uncontrollable multilateral aid rather than into bilateral aid over which we have some control. Indeed, the fact that multilateral aid will rise from 45 per cent. to 53 per cent. over the next few years fills me with alarm. Where is this European money going? I was rather amused by the suggestion made by the right hon. Member for Guildford as to how it was decided how the money was to be spent—"in the margins of some summit" was, I think, the expression that he used. I do not understand how we can control this aid. What are the mechanics for reporting back to us where the aid is going?

Some adjustments need to be made in our overseas aid programme. Bilateral aid to Africa is to fall by 17 per cent., or some £60 million over the next three years, and that to Asia is to fall by £31 million. Clearly, we need to consider how we are to develop a poverty focus for the aid that is available.

Another point in relation to diplomatic expenditure is the issue of Cuba and the Government's attitude towards it. We feel that the continuing United States embargo of Cuba is as much an act of political spite as the result of any great strategy. We support the Government in their criticism of the embargo, but we ask them to press harder so that the movement within Cuba towards a more open and pluralist society can gain influence and momentum. It surely makes sense politically and morally for America and the rest of the world not to reduce a country's economy to ruins and not to subject the most vulnerable—women, children and old people—to degradation, as is the case in certain parts of Cuba.

Two years ago, we debated the Foreign Compensation (Amendment) Bill in Committee. Only last week, the issue of our relationship with Iraq arose again. The Bill was intended to enable the United Nations compensation commission to handle the compensation to be given to those affected by Saddam Hussein's brutal invasion of Kuwait. What has happened since the Bill was enacted? On a number of occasions, we have asked about the operation of the Act, but we have had negative responses from the Government.

What is the present position on Iraq's observation of and adherence to UN resolution 687, from which the funding is supposed to originate? What action is proposed to enforce the resolution? Is oil being sold illegally? What has happened to the sequestered Iraqi assets? Have millions been spent simply on funding the bureaucracy set up within the UN? How many of the 3,000 United Kingdom claims have been processed by the UN compensation commission? How many have been settled? There are people who have lost substantial personal assets and who require substantial compensation; yet they are still waiting, two years after the Bill was enacted.

I will briefly refer to President Clinton's test ban proposals and the Government's attitude towards them. The report refers to our relationship with the United Nations, which is important. The specific problem that faces us, however, is acute. France, our Community partner, Russia and America have already announced their participation in a moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons. Of the five major nuclear powers, only Britain and China oppose such a complete test ban agreement. The scientific community has said that no further testing is necessary either for defence or for scientific reasons, and that whatever work requires to be done can easily be done under laboratory conditions. Why does the Foreign Secretary not make the adoption of a nuclear test ban one of the tests of a common foreign and security policy and approach in the European Community? If agreed, it would be a big step along the road to promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which is a vital step towards successful renegotiation of the non-proliferation treaty, which is due for renewal in 1995.

Mr. David Howell: If the hon. Gentleman checks, he will find that the United Kingdom, with the other nuclear powers, has agreed in principle to the comprehensive test ban treaty. We consider it important that any future requirements might have to be met by simulations and not by nuclear testing. We have agreed to that. The question is whether agreement should be made a condition of a successful non-proliferation treaty, which is a matter that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is currently considering and on which it will report to the House quite soon.

Mr. Rogers: The point that I am trying to make to the right hon. Member for Guildford is that on all occasions when a ban has been proposed in the UN—and as recently as a year ago—the Government turned their face completely and utterly against subscribing to a nuclear test ban. They say that they might decide to subscribe to such a ban in principle, but when will the action take place? The non-proliferation treaty will come up next year and unless the Government make their mind up fairly quickly about taking action rather than merely saying that they subscribe to a ban in principle, I am afraid that we shall not get a non-proliferation treaty signed next year.

We have a unique position in international affairs. No other country is at once a permanent member of the Security Council, a leading member of NATO, a member of the Commonwealth, a member of the European Union, a member of G7, a member of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe and a member of the Western

European Union. We are in a unique position to use not just our position and policies, but our views and aims for the betterment of the world, but we can do that only if there is the political will to do so. In a rapidly changing world, we must realign our thinking and policies if we are to meet the new international challenges.

There is great danger in the world because the relative stability of the cold war stand-off has resulted, to quote the departmental report, in

"a world where disorder is spreading and where nationalism is out of hand."

There is great disappointment also because the new world order, which everyone wanted to come to fruition, and the hopes that the UN could fulfil its mandate, have not been realised. However, the danger and disappointment must not be accompanied by despair. There is hope, but only if we are prepared to search positively for solutions to the conflicts in the world.

Disputes and instability, born of economic conflict, territorial claims, and ethnic, religious and nationalist fundamentalism, are all too frequent. Whether those wars involve high-technology weapons or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) has so often reminded us, small weapons such as land mines, mortars and small arms, the results are much the same. Repression replaces Government institutions, accompanied by massive refugee flows which are creating a huge burden on the rest of the world.

At present, there are more than 30 million refugees world wide. There are 26 conflicts raging in which two or more countries are at war. There are 23 other areas of potential conflict between nations and there is tension in another 24 areas, making 73 possible flashpoints throughout the world.

There is no evidence available that regional organisations can tackle regional problems. Indeed, the evidence is the other way. The European Union, Western European Union and NATO have all failed with the problems in Bosnia and in other parts of Europe. The Organisation of African Unity has failed in Africa. The same is true throughout the world. It is becoming more and more obvious that the United Nations is the only organisation that offers hope. That is not to say that other organisations cannot play a part, but I believe that no other organisation has the potential for bringing peace that the UN has.

The challenge that we have to face—this comes through in the general remarks in the Select Committee report—is that the international community must be able to intervene in new ways to head off catastrophe. The "Agenda for Peace" from the UN Secretary-General noted that between 1945 and 1987 there were 13 peacekeeping operations; in the past five years, the organisation has established a further 13. The aggregate cost up to 1992 has been about $8.3 billion. Huge sums are being spent on operations that could well have been avoided—I am not saying that they would have been, but they might well have been—if we had kept up our efforts of preventive diplomacy, as outlined in the departmental report and as mentioned in the Select Committee report.

I do not believe that military solutions can enforce political conclusions in those areas of conflict. What is lacking is not military technology, but political will. That is a problem of this Government. I believe that the Government should decisively support a number of clear policy areas: the agenda for peace is a good start. They should support the reform and enlargement of the United Nations Security Council and the decision-making processes there; the necessary transition of the role of NATO; the move by the USA and Russia to a nuclear test ban, which should be supported in a much more positive way, as I suggested; continuation of the important dialogues of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe; and reform of the World bank and other facilitating agencies, to which I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) would like to refer if he can catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The ideas offered in the report, "Agenda for Peace", offer the best hope by far for world peace, and in the long run they will be the cheapest option. We must decide what role we must play and then allocate the resources to fulfil that role. That is why in another area we have called for a full-scale defence review, and that is why we ask the Government to address those urgent problems and provide the resources required to solve them.

5.20 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I welcome the chance to speak in the debate, particularly because the evidence that was presented to the Select Committee was presented in late April and early May, and between that time and the Government's response, there has, of course, been quite a significant change in policy by the Overseas Development Administration. It has announced a substantial increase in funding for population programmes: the funding now available is at least £100 million over the next two years. It is not new money but a reallocation of funding. It has been made quite clear to me that we are moving away from spending on infrastructure projects and are targeting the relief of poverty.

The announcement made in July of this year was made very much in anticipation of the United Nations international conference on population development, which took place in Cairo in September, and about which I will speak in a minute. The emphasis is consistent with recommendations contained in paragraph 70 of the Select Committee's report, in which it refers to the changing nature of aid. Contained in that paragraph is the emphasis or recommendation that expertise be made available, through agencies such as the United Nations, to improve

"the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of international efforts to encourage sustainable development."

I am pleased that, in their response, the Government have accepted that recommendation. It is probably fair to say that the Cairo conference was a macro presentation of the policy that the Government are prepared to set. As a Member of Parliament, I was a fairly rare example of a member of a UK delegation at a UN conference.

I pay tribute to the Egyptian Government for the way in which they laid on the conference. Some 18,000 delegates were there and it was held at the height of serious tension in Egypt—I was disappointed to see on the news last night that it still exists there—amid threats from fundamentalist terrorists to destabilise it. It is a tribute to the Egyptian Government that there was no incident whatever throughout the fortnight, as several Heads of Government were present. It was a very successful conference.

[Mr. Richard Ottaway]

As I sat in the opening plenary session with my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), the Under-Secretary, who was representing the British Government, and as I heard the speeches of world leaders—from Mr. Boutros Ghali, the Secretary-General of the United Nations; Gro Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway; Benazir Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan; President Mubarak of Egypt; to Vice-President Al Gore of the United States—which all came in the first morning, it struck me that everything that I and the British Government have argued for in recent years was at last being realised and was coming true. There was, of course—

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): There was only a slight difference.

Mr. Ottaway: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene?

The hon. Gentleman asked from a sedentary position about the differences of emphasis. A perfectly good example would be Benazir Bhutto, who argued against abortion but fully accepted that population growth and the population explosion was a global problem which had to be addressed. In that, she differed from Gro Brundtland, but both countries signed up to the final declaration. That is what I mean by the change of emphasis.

President Mubarak, in his opening speech, said that the conference was not a separate event and that it should not be isolated from the past, that it was not something taking place in a vacuum, and that it had to respond to people's hopes and find common ground in open and free discussion.

The basis of the consensus was quite clear and, despite last-minute media criticism, there was quite clearly an overwhelming desire that the conference should succeed. The Group of Seven had asked it to come up with a solution to world population growth, and succeed it did. It has now produced a global action plan. The big difference is that, on that occasion, unlike 10 or 20 years ago, the developing world was there and asking for help. We now have common ground. Poverty is the challenge and sustainable development built around population programmes is the answer. The common ground was that there was a full understanding of the nature of the problem. There was an understanding of how to address it. There was an understanding that there are now clear definitions for aid and of the role that reproductive health can play in solving the problems, and an idea where the resources were coming from.

After all, it is quite clear that there are parts of the world, which, as a result of excessive population growth, face scarcity of resources, crime, tribalism, disease and unemployment, all of which are destroying the social fabric of societies. Rwanda is a classic example of a country in which a territorial dispute has been caused by overcrowding. The truth is that the stork is becoming the bird of war.

The conference took on a life of its own. Delegates came from all over the world, and I am pleased to tell the House that, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall), the Inter-Parliamentary Union held a parliamentarians' day, where members present, from throughout the world, came and spoke in full support of the aims of the conference.

The extraordinary feature of the conference was the implacable opposition to its aims and objectives, sadly, from the Roman Catholic Church. I say sadly because I believe that the Roman Catholic Church recognises the problems that are faced by the world, but is simply unable to answer the fundamental question. What does one say to an African woman, living in absolute poverty with six children, who wants no more children? In the end, the Roman Catholic Church lost the argument, because it had no answer to that fundamental question.

The Roman Catholic Church did the conference a favour in that it kept the whole conference in the world's headlines for the best part of a week. Very few people to whom I have spoken since returning from Cairo in September were not aware that the conference had taken place. They are thoroughly aware now of the seriousness of world population growth—at some 250,000 new persons every day—and the significance of that conference.

The media reporting of the conference was first class. I find myself surprised to say that. The interesting reason for that—perhaps it is a lesson for many other areas of media reporting—is that the media were denied access to the main committees, because there simply was not room for the 2,000 members of the press present to go and listen. Reporters were forced to dig for their stories; they did not simply regurgitate press releases. They got in there and found out what the issues were. As a result, the reporting back from Cairo was far more sensible and more serious than much of the reporting that occurs in this country.

Mr. Waterson: With regard to my hon. Friend's previous point, does he accept that it was not just the opposition of the Roman Catholic Church to some proposals that caused controversy, but the similar opposition from an entirely different quarter—the countries in which a type of fundamental Muslim creed is held? Those countries were just as plain in their opposition to certain proposals as was the Catholic Church.

Mr. Ottaway: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. However, those countries placed a different emphasis. From the word go, Benazir Bhutto was prepared to support the conference's objects even though she could not support certain aspects which she felt were contrary to the Koran. However, having heard the opening day's speeches, I believe that the Vatican should have piped down. Instead, it went full profile in its implacable opposition to everything that was achieved.

I pay tribute to our ODA officials who staffed the United Kingdom delegation. Their professionalism, which was quite exemplary, was recognised by most of the other delegations at the conference. That professionalism, and the recognition of it, had great influence on the European Union position. If it is not a rather hackneyed phrase, it is fair to say that as a result of the quality of our officials, Britain was able to punch well above its weight at what I believe was a very significant conference.

I also acknowledge the role of the non-governmental organisations present in Cairo. For a long time, the NGOs have treated population issues very much at arm's length because they have been nervous about them. However, I am pleased to say that they have shaken off their hesitancy and have made a substantial input into the thinking on that subject. Anyone who left the main conference and went to the NGO forum would have realised that that was where tomorrow's ideas were coming from.

In his opening remarks, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) emphasised the importance of bringing the private sector into aid programmes. Non-governmental organisations, such as Marie Stopes International, are advocating social marketing which basically involves persuading people to buy their own contraception. The social marketing of contraception in the third world is a good example of an area in which the private sector is beginning to play a role.

The NGOs made us address the question of reproductive health. They drew to our attention the importance of the education of women. As the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said, a great emphasis was placed on migration. There are about 30 million homeless people travelling around the world. However, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would acknowledge the fact that that is largely the result of over population. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities report which was published last year drew attention to that point.

The most significant thing to come from the conference in Cairo was the issue of empowerment of women. Everyone concerned about that subject now realises that unless women become empowered—*[Interruption.]* Before the Government Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), becomes too nervous, let me say that I mean by that that women should have the right to decide whether they want to use contraception and whether it should be available. That is the kind of language that came from the Cairo conference, which should be carried forward to the Beijing conference on women's issues which is to take place next year.

I met a female Nigerian Member of Parliament at Cairo who told me that she had six children, and that she had come to Cairo to ensure that she did not have 36 grandchildren. I am proud of what the British Government have achieved. I believe that, as a result of our efforts, she will not have 36 grandchildren. It is important that we build on the success of Cairo and that we implement the action plan, which has been agreed by hundreds of countries. For the future's sake, we must not relax our efforts.

5.34 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am sure that the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) will forgive me if I do not follow him down the path of contraception. Instead, I want to stick to the absolutely first-class Select Committee report, to which the Committee received a very second-rate answer from the Government.

I have visited vast numbers of diplomatic posts in my work with the Employment Select Committee, or privately or on behalf of the Jewish community. I have always been impressed by the standards of our diplomats and the service that they provide. On the whole, they do [illegible] absolutely first-class job, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances.

I mourn the dreadful killing of one British citizen, and the injuring of others, in Egypt. I mourn the death of my friend, Gamini Dissanayake, who was murdered yesterday in Sri Lanka, along with some 50 other people. We salute him and we send our condolences to his widow and to the Sri Lankan people. I mourn the awful killings in Israel last week, the murders of the people on the bus and of Sergeant Wachsman.

All over the world, there are those who believe that by murdering civilians, they can kill peace. They are wrong. In the process of being proved wrong, they cause misery in a world of danger. Our diplomats live and serve in that world of danger and we are proud of them.

Paragraph 78 of the Select Committee report is right. It states:

> "The budgets for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Overseas Development Administration, the BBC World Service and the British Council have been cut significantly for the next three years. All provide impressive services despite these financial cuts. It will not however be realistic to expect them to go on providing services as good as they now provide if they have to suffer repeated reductions in resources. We recognise that resources are no substitute for well-focused policy. However, we urge that the redefinition of the United Kingdom's interests, policies to further those interests and the deployment of resources in the service of these policies should go hand in hand."

I have searched the Government's reply for a reference to that paragraph, but there is none. I looked for a reference to the earlier paragraphs on which it is based, but there is none. The Government's response ends at paragraph 77. When I turned over the page to paragraph 78, that page was blank.

I appeal to the Government to listen to the unanimous report of a very respected Select Committee, not just to reply to those parts with which they immediately agree, but to seek ways in which they can respond positively and maintain the resources to enable our diplomatic corps and the organisations surrounding it to do their job.

The Government's normal reaction is to say, "Oh well, we must assess the results." Unfortunately for the Government, diplomacy is not like a school or a hospital, in respect of which they can issue tables of attainment. It is not a matter of saying how many Bulgarian anglophobes have been turned into anglophiles in how long, over what period and with what results.

Diplomacy is not a shop. I am aware that the foreign service draws inspiration from Marks and Spencer, but it cannot calculate sales of British policy per square foot of shelf space in any of our great residences or embassies. It is not possible to make assessments like that. Assessments can be made in three ways: respect, human rights and business.

The respect in which our country is held abroad greatly depends on the work of the diplomatic corps. In its turn, that depends much on the resources that the Government are prepared to allow it. The closure of fine embassies is no answer when we want to retain respect, or especially when we want to use that respect for political purposes, to maintain Britain's place in the Security Council and to achieve the political results that we all want from our diplomatic corps.

I pay tribute to the great efforts of many of our diplomats working in countries in which human rights traditions are rotten, nil or very defective. Often, they handle delicate cases, and often they succeed. I know how much help not only Jewish people but many others obtained from our diplomats when the Soviet Union was a dictatorship. I know how many others today depend upon our embassies for a form of decent insurance in a thoroughly wretched world. Our diplomats sell Britain and our products.

[Mr. Greville Janner]

Recently, I travelled with the Employment Select Committee to Finland. For the first time in my life, I went on board the much-criticised royal yacht Britannia. There were no royals on board, the ceremonies were all very proper, and it was an interesting day. The royal yacht attracted top Finnish industrialists to enable us to talk to them about Britain and to promote our trade. We cannot assess the effects of that. Later, when the Royal Marine band beat the retreat, hundreds of important Finnish people were looking at something that Britain was providing them with, which was a release from the usual boring ceremonies that most countries offer on their national days.

I asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office whether there was a way in which we could assess its impact on sales. It came up with an answer—in September a contract was signed between BP and the Republic of Azerbaijan estimated to be worth about $8 billion. The chief executive of BP wrote to the permanent under-secretary, Sir John Coles, saying that it would not have been possible to sign the contract without the FCO's help and representation in Baku. He gave permission for that to be quoted.

In the autumn of last year the embassy residencies in Paris and Rome were used for the successful launch of the Rover 800, one of the most successful epochs in British motor manufacturing. All over the world, our embassies and our residencies are being used to promote our commercial interests, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is on our side.

My favourite FCO story involves the tourist who was standing in Whitehall and who said to a policeman, "Excuse me, but which side is the Foreign Office on?" The policeman replied, "Well, madam, it is supposed to be on our side, but I sometimes wonder." I have had wonderings, particularly about middle east policies. I have had arguments; we do not always agree. On the whole, though, our diplomats do a smashing job. It is not sufficiently recognised that they are being asked to do that job with smaller embassies and less impressive means to impress more impressive and less impressed foreigners.

While our strength diminishes, it is the height of stupidity to say to other people, "Look how small we are; we aren't great any more. We can't afford a decent embassy and we can't even afford to entertain," and then expect overseas business people and politicians to treat us as though we were still Great Britain.

We should not beat the retreat on our overseas strength. We should not cut our wonderful BBC World Service, which has a reputation for honesty which it does not always deserve but which is believed by people all over the world, as a happy relic of the war. We should look to the Commonwealth Secretariat and say, "Yes, we saved it; isn't that good?" We should build our overseas resources and accept that the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report is an excellent one that the Government should implement.

5.43 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I should like to refer to three aspects of an excellent and workmanlike report, such as we are used to seeing from the Select Committee: first, support for British trade promotion abroad; secondly, cultural diplomacy, which right hon. and hon. Members have mentioned; and thirdly, rising to the bait of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), Hong Kong.

On trade, I always believe that the old jokes are the best. I enjoyed the rendition by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) of the story about the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Janner: It was a classic story.

Mr. Waterson: It was a classic story, rather like a classic automobile. I wonder whether the hon. and learned Gentleman remembers the story attributed to Lord Tebbit, who is reported to have remarked that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food looked after farmers and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office looked after foreigners. It that was true, it is certainly no longer the case. In travelling around the world both before and after I came to this place, I have found that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is very much on our side, in particular on the side of British business and industry. There is great support for that in the report.

The thrust of the report is the background of reducing resources and how they are being used to best effect as they are cut. In paragraph 18, the Committee says that the FCO is making considerable use of new information technology after what it describes as a shaky start. I particularly commend the reduction in the number of home staff, so that the teeth rather than the tail of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are better deployed abroad.

One of the most convincing sections of the report relates to the increasing demands on all levels of the diplomatic service. Nowhere is that more evident than in the size and number of our overseas posts. It is impressive, albeit in attempts to reduce financial commitment, that in our policy of closing or scaling down some overseas posts, we recognise areas where our trade interests are most important. I am pleased that the report recognises the growth of representation in our far eastern posts. That is an area of almost limitless potential in terms of our exports and selling expertise abroad.

I now refer to the service that we provide for business men. Much of it has to do with the messages that we politicians send to career diplomats. There was a time—happily, long gone—when being assigned to the trade aspects of diplomacy was regarded almost as punishment, or the diplomatic equivalent of being sent to Siberia. Recently, that has changed.

It is difficult for right hon. and hon. Members when they travel the world not to be impressed by the expertise and commitment of staff in many places around the world, working for the FCO in promoting British exports. It is also impressive to see the almost seamless way in which they co-operate with the Department of Trade and Industry in trade promotion. There has been enormous improvement in recent years, but there was plenty of scope for improvement.

I shall say a word about the messages we send. Opprobrium is no longer attached to people going into trade diplomacy, but I sometimes wonder, when speaking informally to diplomats, whether there is enough career benefit in spending time on it. Every diplomat who wishes preferment or promotion, especially so-called high fliers, should show that he has spent a significant period in trade promotion at one of our overseas posts. Only then will the business-oriented culture, which the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West supported, permeate upwards through all ranks of the FCO. That is extremely important.

Before I leave that subject, I shall talk about the costs of such an enterprise. It is, by definition, something that we cannot share with other countries. The report makes the point—if it needed making—that we are doing a great deal to share costs with our European Union partners in representation abroad, and that is as it should be. For example, sharing premises in Kazakhstan, which are used by the visa sections of Britain, France and Germany, is a sensible way of spending our resources more wisely, especially with the growth in the number of places where we must be represented following the breakdown of the Soviet Union as we knew it.

Pre-eminently, one area where the sharing of costs simply is not possible is that of trade and exports. Paragraph 27 of the report states:

> "These new developments may demonstrate a paradox facing diplomatic services of EU member states: on the one hand we recognise that in certain matters such as common visa requirements or common stances taken by the EU . . . they will increasingly be working together . . . On the other hand there will always be circumstances when national policy interests will prevail, in some cases in a highly competitive way: some of our EU partners are among the UK's main commercial competitors."

That is so true. As we have a scaling down of expenditure in some areas, and a scaling down of representation in some parts of the world, it is vital that we recognise that trade promotion and exports must take a larger share of a somewhat declining cake.

My second area of concern is so-called cultural diplomacy. Hon. Members have talked about the importance of the British Council and the BBC World Service. I am especially pleased that the report makes an effort to highlight the importance of those media in our relations with China. It is a sad fact that grant in aid to both the British Council and the BBC World Service is being reduced in real terms. We know that the British Council has embarked on a radical restructuring process. Despite that, there is a great deal to be said about the sort of process that it is going through; many organisations need some outside impetus to engage in such a massive review of their commitments and aims.

As one travels behind what used to be called the iron curtain, it is difficult not to be impressed by the way in which the British Council has moved rapidly and effectively to represent itself in these places. Recently, I had the benefit of visiting the council's posts in the former Czechoslovakia, particularly the Czech Republic. Support in the local community for the council's presence was impressive.

The British Council was shut down in 1948 and reopened only a few years ago. It was somewhat alarmed to find that some people were trying to return books that they had borrowed in 1948, and were worried about the size of any possible fines. I am pleased to say that the fines were waived in the circumstances.

A tremendous feeling for Britain and the British way of life has been generated by the British Council. I wonder whether, because of budgetary constraints, the council has been obliged to look not at those countries where perhaps one could not say that its task was over—by definition, its task is never complete—but at those where it has gone an enormous way to reaching the local population, and perhaps where other media are effective. It has had to swing many its efforts and some of its best staff to new, almost virgin territories. The British Council is nothing if not impressive when one sees it up close.

I turn now to the subject of the BBC World Service. The significance of World Service radio is legendary throughout many parts of the world. The response of the Foreign Office to the report states:

> "As part of its support for United Kingdom commercial services, the FCO will continue to help World Service television extend its services in all overseas markets, including China and to achieve its aim of world-wide coverage."

There is a tremendous opportunity for expansion of both the scope and the nature of programming of World Service television. As I travel around looking at CNN, I sometimes wonder what World Service television could achieve with CNN's budget. I will not go on to say what I think CNN is doing with the budget it currently enjoys—that is a matter for another debate—but it is an example of what can be done on a relatively small budget.

The Government are correct in letting World Service television develop on a commercial basis, but they make the point that they want to encourage its growth in many areas, especially in places such as China. It is difficult not to be impressed by the potential and the current performance of World Service television. Some time ago, a decision was taken in principle not to fund television as such, whereas radio receives a grant in aid. However, the Government must do everything they can to ensure that World Service television has the commercial backing to become an even bigger player in international television.

When I check into an hotel in a strange country and turn on the television, I certainly get a boost when I find that the World Service, as well as CNN, is available—*[Interruption.]* I am careful to register that fact on my return to the United Kingdom. I mean CNN no harm, but sometimes it is a bit like electronic wallpaper; the World Service gets more to the heart of the matter. I endorse the response of the Foreign Office on the subject of cultural diplomacy.

We should not lose sight of the importance of World Service radio, although it has cut its operations in some areas and its programming in some cases. It has been broadcasting in new languages such as Azeri and Uzbek, and increasing its broadcasts to some parts of the former eastern bloc. Those are grounds for optimism and approval by the House.

Finally, I shall touch on the subject of Hong Kong. I had not intended to raise the subject of Hong Kong this evening because, frankly, I did not think that it came within the ambit of the debate. However, as it was referred to at some length by the hon. Member for Rhondda, it is only right that I take up some of the points that he made as the Opposition spokesman.

The hon. Gentleman called for a solution. Who could disagree with that? If only it were that simple. Recently, I was in Hong Kong as a guest of the Government, and had the chance to meet a whole range of people, including the Governor, to discuss the present position.

My first point is that there is progress at certain levels on a number of projects. The airport project is proceeding in some respects. However, as we know, there has been little progress, if any, through the Joint Liaison Group, despite the efforts of both the Foreign Secretary and the Governor of Hong Kong. Recently, in a speech to the Legislative Council, the Governor suggested that the

[Mr. Waterson]

United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China should draw a line under recent events and try to make a fresh start. That will be difficult.

As I told the hon. Member for Rhondda, the main difficulty is that attitudes in Hong Kong changed in 1989 following the events in Tiananmen square. A sort of democratic enthusiasm was awakened. Attitudes in Peking also changed because the leadership got a tremendous shock from the events in Tiananmen square and, to some extent, the apparent support for the students there from many people in Hong Kong. That is what has blighted relations between China and the United Kingdom since that date.

It is simplistic for people, including some members of the business community in Hong Kong, to attribute problems that have happened since events in Tiananmen square to the arrival of a new Governor. That is far from the truth. The truth is that the foundations for the present misunderstandings and lack of progress were laid in the tragedy of Tiananmen square.

Even if there is a will, as I am sure there is, on the part of many leaders in Peking to make progress now, there is a difficulty in that there is a sense of paralysis in the Government of the PRC. I do not believe that much progress will be made for the foreseeable future unless there is a change of leadership. Such a change is inevitable at some stage.

Therefore, we must simply press on as best we can with the nuts and bolts, whether by trying to progress the airport project, tidying up the statute book or whatever. We must deal with many of the practicalities which have to be tackled sooner or later.

Despite the occasional churlishness of the Chinese Government, we shall bequeath them in 1,000 days or so a vibrant economy, a fairly new but enthusiastic democratic system, reserves which are several times greater than those we promised to leave behind, and a new airport and associated infrastructure which will be the envy of the rest of the world. If they choose to regard all that in a churlish light, perhaps there is nothing much that we can do about it, yet we have a duty, as the hon. Member for Rhondda said, to the people of Hong Kong. I believe that this Government, this country and this Governor have done everything possible to ensure a smooth and peaceful handover of that miraculous state of Hong Kong to the People's Republic.

On that note, I again congratulate the Select Committee on its report. It is timely, workmanlike and detailed. We look forward to future reports of that Select Committee.

6.1 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I do not envy the Minister's task in replying to the debate. It has certainly ranged freely across a variety of issues, many of which have gone beyond what is within the blue covers of the report. There has been a certain lack of focus to some of the discussions.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) made some observations vis-à-vis Hong Kong, which was also mentioned by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) from the Labour Front Bench. Perhaps the one clear message that emerges from this small debate on the Select Committee report is what my colleague the Liberal Democrat Whip said in business questions last Thursday. There is clearly a pressing need for a full-scale debate on Hong Kong. I hope that that message has been communicated to the Foreign Office and the Government business managers, and that we can have such a debate in due course.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne said that what the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman had said was too simplistic. Equally, it is too simplistic to say that all the problems stem from Tiananmen square. When one goes to the far east and speaks to the Chinese representatives, one is left a little short for an answer when they say, "If the British now regard democracy as so overwhelmingly important, why did they take 150 years to do anything about it?" That is a good question, to which there is no immediate answer. It is not an issue that we can explore in this debate, but I underscore my view that today's debate has revealed so much parliamentary interest in Hong Kong on both sides of the House that we want to see it discussed further.

I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) for his chairmanship of the Select Committee, and to his colleagues for their excellent work in producing this detailed summation. An important summation of information it is, too. I wish to concentrate on two broad areas—first, the trends and developments that we have seen in overseas aid expenditure; and secondly, the cultural aspect, not least the BBC World Service.

The findings of the report show that, as a share of national income, British international aid expenditure continues to fall well below the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. of gross national product. Britain's current commitments total a mere 0.31 per cent. of GNP. One must bear in mind the fact that 0.7 per cent. is not in itself the most optimistic or ambitious of global targets. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) pointed out to me earlier that, several decades ago, the target was 1 per cent., so the ambition that had been set had fallen.

As a nation, we are not even meeting half the stated target. That surely is a matter not only for regret but for considerable shame. The freeze on the aid budget means that in real terms Overseas Development Administration expenditure is set to fall fairly rapidly in the next three years. That raises a question about the priorities of the Government. That development will pose a serious threat to the amount of bilateral aid allocated to the poorest countries, especially in Africa, because such aid is the first to fall under the Government's axe when they seek to comply with European Union targets.

The ODA has insisted that the cuts in the bilateral aid programme will not affect existing commitments to the neediest, yet its own figures suggest that Africa stands to lose some £60 million, and that Asia, which has also been touched on in our discussions this evening, will lose a further £31 million. That is disgraceful in humanitarian terms, but it is also self-defeating for the interests of Britain internationally, as the hon. Member for Rhondda said.

If one goes right back to the work that was done by the Brandt commission, the thesis remains intact and valid that, as well as a moral need to help those parts of the globe that do not enjoy anything approaching reasonable living standards—quite the opposite—we have a long-term self-interest in providing aid. It makes sense for Britain to be seen as not merely generous but enlightened by plugging our economy into the emergent economies.

Such countries sit on greater natural resources than we command, not only in and around our shores but in the western world as a whole. It will become essential to our interests to have good relationships and good economic co-operation with such countries. In a spectacular, international, sense we are cutting off our nose to spite our face by reducing overseas expenditure. That is the first point, and the general point.

The second, more specific, point is cultural diplomacy, which has already been mentioned by several hon. Members, and not least the BBC World Service. Except among those who perhaps follow the more detailed media pages in some of the better newspapers, it is perhaps not appreciated that it has been a massive setback to BBC World Service television to have been excluded from Rupert Murdoch's Star satellite services in the far east.

We are talking about, in China alone, 1.2 billion people—between a fifth and a quarter of the world's population. That is an enormous market that will inevitably open up. One needs only to go over the border to Hong Kong and the special development zones to see the rapid commercial transformation that has taken place in the past decade.

The Governor of Hong Kong was correct to acknowledge recently that mass communication made dictatorship more difficult. That is true. The more that people see, not least through the medium of television, what can be available and what living standards are regarded as the norm elsewhere, the more people will demand that of their rulers, and the more a regime such as that in China will become unsustainable when it goes through its next change. All that means that the World Service is of particular import in broadcasting accuracy and the truth.

If we had asked people a few years ago in an international opinion poll what they rated most highly about Britain—we will leave aside the monarchy, which is a sticky subject at the moment, for these purposes—they would probably have named our university system, our national health service and the BBC World Service.

Two of those services have not fared happily under Conservative Governments in the past 15 years and, increasingly, the World Service is not faring so well either, as the figures in the report make clear. Given current fevered comment in and around the Lobbies about interests, I suppose that I and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) should place on record the fact that we have a degree of interest in that we occasionally contribute to the World Service and receive a few pennies or ecu for doing so.

Internationally, the World Service is taken as a yardstick of all that is best in this country—a sense of fairness, accuracy and fair play. Frankly, it is almost impossible to put a price on the importance of that role.

The Government are consciously diminishing their support for the radio side of the service. The television sector now has to be funded independently and commercially; as a result, it has lost out in terms of clout and access to the Asian Star service satellite. That is a severe setback for the World Service and for what it represents, but it is also a severe setback for this country's interests.

In conclusion, there are genuine and deep grounds for concern over what the report reveals about the Overseas Development budget, bilateral aid and the BBC World Service. The paucity of the response in the Foreign Office memorandum also gives grounds for concern. The Minister has a fairly broad remit to respond to; I hope that he will be able to go further, and do so more convincingly than the memorandum was able to do in response to this excellent and comprehensive report.

6.12 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) mentioned the roles of the BBC World Service and of the British Council and there is consensus on the enormous importance and value of those institutions.

I shall draw hon. Members' attention to two issues highlighted in the report, one of which also concerns an important institution—this place. I cannot find a single precedent in the history of the British Administration for the fact that more than half the expenditure of a major Government Department will be spent outside the control and scrutiny of this House. That fact should not merely be allowed to pass and noted with some interest. Irrespective of the merits of the case, for the next 18 months more than half the expenditure of the Overseas Development Administration will be outside the power, scope and scrutiny of the Public Accounts Committee. I am old-fashioned enough to believe and have always understood that the origins of this place were rooted in our scrutiny of public expenditure, yet the report identifies the fact that a huge and significant area of public expenditure will be beyond the scope of the Public Accounts Committee and therefore of parliamentary scrutiny.

I am sure that you have often emphasised to groups of people and organisations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our exclusive rights over taxation and legislation—neither of those rights is now exclusively confined to the House. I am sure that you will also have explained the fundamental issue of scrutiny of public expenditure. Yet, the report states that more than half the expenditure of one Department will not be subject to scrutiny by the PAC or to the sort of scrutiny that those of us who have been brought up in the parliamentary tradition will want to uphold, and it appears that that aspect of the report will pass relatively unnoticed. That fact has been compounded by the way in which it was done.

The report identifies our annoyance and agitation. The Committee was vigilant on European issues. We spent much time asking Foreign Secretaries to come before us before European Council meetings and we tried to bring them back afterwards. Yet, the decision to allow that extraordinary situation—more than half ODA expenditure will now be spent by others and will not be subject to the scrutiny of the House—was made at the Edinburgh summit in 1992, as part of a horse-trading arrangement. We were not told beforehand that it was possible or likely and we were not told afterwards that it was a consequence of those decisions. On both scores, a serious parliamentary issue arises from the decision and we have sought to identify it in the report.

I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, but I must briefly mention another question thrown up by the report. Increasingly, our annual reports on public expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

provoke the question: what value do we place on diplomacy and how do we evaluate it, given the pressures on that expenditure?

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) spoke eloquently of some of those values, but historically the image of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has not lent itself to public sympathy. I recall vividly that when I was first appointed as a Minister in the FCO I felt rather pleased with myself and rang my wife to tell her. I got a very frosty reception. She asked why I thought that it was promotion or progress to move from being a Minister dealing with housing, health and roads, to get caught up in the world of foreign affairs and diplomacy and to join an establishment that belonged essentially to the English upper middle class—historically, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its staff have had that image.

By the end of the week, I thought that I had got over the problem. I went home and my wife asked me what I had done in my first week. I said that she would not understand as I had been dealing with a complicated problem concerning the Banabans—the inhabitants of Ocean island. My wife replied, "I know all about that. There was a television programme on it this week. The FCO and the Government are doing them down and depriving them of essential interests."

An early lesson for any Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister or official should be that foreign policy is understandably and rightly perceived in terms of human, civic and civil rights, especially where the position of British citizens is concerned. I quickly learnt that lesson afterwards, when Dr. Sheila Cassidy was tortured by the Chileans and Mrs. Dora Bloch disappeared in Israel, and by spending four and a half years dealing with our relationship with the Argentines over the Falkland islanders. One rightly learnt the lesson that people matter in foreign policy, just as they matter in domestic affairs. Consular diplomacy is as much a matter of profound concern as commercial or grand diplomacy.

If the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is to defend its share of the cake and fight its corner, it has to work on its public image. During my four and a half years in the Department I found that the general perception was not correct. In that large and elite service there were many people who came from more diverse backgrounds than was generally perceived. There is no doubt that the public perception is that of a service that is not in close touch with the needs and wishes of the British people and of Britain.

Secondly, the report asks how, in this day and age, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office determines the British national interest when its 2,500 staff decide how to spend £350 million in overseas posts. The decision was much easier when we had an empire because the scope and nature of our power was evident for all to see—it was part and parcel of the whole ethos. The empire had a proper dimension, which politicians and Governments of the day could utilise. In a post-imperial society—economically, almost a post-industrial society—it is much harder to identify British national interest. I must draw hon. Members' attention to an interesting exchange when the permanent secretary had a good shot at trying to identify why we should have a post in Uzbekistan. We asked him why and whether it would be of value. He said that it would and that we had just received a state visit from the President of Uzbekistan. The permanent secretary thought that he had brought all his gold over in the plane and delivered it to the Bank of England. That was a fascinating illustration of the so-called "British national interest" being defended by our having a mission in Uzbekistan. There will be increasing questioning about the nature and character of our representation overseas as the pressures grow. What is the value of diplomacy in the 1990s and what role does the expenditure of the FCO play?

Not long ago, a British Prime Minister said:

> "How horrible, fantastic, incredible, it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing."

That was a statement about Czechoslovakia, which is now on the verge of belonging to the European Union. Traditionally, the country was at the heart of European civilisation in the 17th and 18th centuries. Anybody who has been to Prague has seen the wonderful physical expression of the counter-reformation. The Prime Minister expressed that view about Czechoslovakia within the lifetime of a number of Members of this House, and no doubt a similar view was expressed about Sarajevo in 1912 also.

One answer to the questions is in the Committee's report. International issues are now transmitted by television and become issues of public concern and, in themselves, become a motive for action. The United Kingdom's contribution to expenditure on peacekeeping is rising from something like £177 million to £310 million. Again, that aid and expenditure is outside the control and scrutiny of the House. Nevertheless, that has been partly engineered and driven by external events which have often been projected vividly through the media with resulting public and political pressure.

The telescoping of international experiences places consequential demands upon Governments to do something. How many times have we heard this summer, "Why is not the international community doing something about Rwanda?" I do not think that we have a post in Burundi or Rwanda in central Africa, but suddenly a faraway place about which little was known became a major international issue of profound concern.

The other case for diplomacy which we make in the report—although not necessarily in the way in which it is organised now—is of course the post-cold war situation. It strikes me that cold war diplomacy was comparatively easy in many fundamental respects. Since then, not only has history come back into fashion, but I suspect that diplomacy has come back into fashion in a big way as we interpret and work out a more stable international order through diplomatic and political action.

A 75-year-old man or woman in our constituencies will have lived through two world wars. Churchill said that

> "to jaw-jaw is better than to war-war".

"Jaw-jaw" requires diplomacy and political action, rather than military action. As a consequence, there will be a revaluation of the importance of the role of diplomats and diplomacy. It is vital that, in the coming years, the nature and character of, and recruitment to, our British Foreign and Commonwealth Office service matches and reflects needs—not only of Britain—as well as the role which we would expect it to play in an increasingly complex world.

6.23 pm

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Many things have been mentioned which I do not wish to repeat, but, in the short time available to me, I shall look at two aspects of the report of the Select Committee of which I am a member.

Reference has been made to the reductions in overseas bilateral aid to Africa. Paragraph 38 of the report makes it clear that that is a serious problem. This country's bilateral aid to Africa is to be reduced by £60 million, or 17 per cent., between 1994-95 and 1996-97. Significantly, the report also points out that there has been a reduction of 8.7 per cent. in the number of diplomatic personnel in Africa since 1989.

Hon. Members have talked about Rwanda and Burundi, and we could draw similar parallels with other countries in west Africa and the horn of Africa, and potentially even in southern Africa and the Maghreb region, where events could have profound political consequences for the European Union, this country and the rest of the world. But we will be relying—in francophone Africa in particular—not on our own intelligence, contacts and diplomats, but on information that is provided by other countries. That is not the way in which a permanent member of the UN Security Council should behave in the future.

During the questioning of the officials from the Overseas Development Administration and the Foreign Office who came before the Committee, Mr. Vereker said that

> "we shall be able to play a rather less substantial part in the development of the African economies."

What does that mean in terms of the infrastructure that is forgone, water supplies which are not provided and lives which are lost in poor countries with the poorest people in terrible conflicts or in areas of drought and malnutrition? The Committee was told by Sir David Gillmore of the Foreign Office that increasingly our diplomatic representation is trade-driven. It is all very well for this country to have the best possible people in our missions in Asia and elsewhere, where there is expanding economic potential. But if we see our foreign policy and diplomatic representation solely, mainly or to a considerable extent driven by economics and we do not take account of politics, we can get into serious problems.

There is a danger for this country. If we are to have the diplomatic service and the weight in the world which goes with being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, we must say loud and clear that that has costs. It is important that we provide resources so that we are in touch with developments in all regions of the world and in all potential areas of conflict.

The UN Secretary-General, Boutros Ghali, pointed out to members of the Foreign Affairs Committee at lunch today that a world of 184 member states of the UN requires us to have a much higher level of diplomatic representation and involvement than in the simple days when the UN was established and there were 40 or 50 states. If this country is, to quote the Foreign Secretary, to "punch above its weight", we must make sure that it has at least a certain amount of weight so that when it does punch, it does not topple over and fall on its face.

The slimming down of the Foreign Office and of our overseas development aid has political and economic consequences, not simply in other countries but in terms of Britain's standing in the world. I agree with the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who said that we need to re-examine our aid policy. But, in my view, that re-examination should not be on the basis of trying to challenge or reduce the welcome increase in commitments to the UN or to multilateral aid programmes, although the scrutiny and the democratic accountability of those commitments—particularly through the World bank, and with the European Union and Parliament having a greater say—should be improved. The real answer is not to run down or hold back multilateral aid, but rather to recognise that, proportionally, this country spends just 0.31 per cent. of its gross domestic product on aid in comparison with Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and other European countries which exceed the United Nations aid target of 0.7 per cent. In fact, Norway spends 1 per cent. of GDP on aid.

This country should be at the forefront of the contributor countries. Our young people are concerned about the atrocities, bloodshed and starvation suffered in countries as widespread as those in the middle east, Europe or Africa. I am sure that, in time, those young people will influence politicians and make us raise our eyes above the immediate to the future of the continent and the planet.

The response of the Foreign Office to our report is regrettably inadequate in a number of respects. Next year, I hope that it will give a more detailed response to the many recommendations that we will make.

6.30 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I congratulate the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on its report, but I should like to draw attention to an issue that should command more attention from the Committee in the future—effective scrutiny of our expenditure on the World bank.

The Committee's report reveals that the underlying level of support to the World bank has grown to about £200 million a year. That is less than Britain's expenditure on bilateral aid or that given through the multilateral channel of the European Community, but it would be a mistake to think that the influence exerted by the expenditure of the World bank can be judged solely by the amount given. The money spent on developing countries by the World bank group has significantly greater leverage than that spent through our bilateral aid or aid from the European Community.

Those who have met people from developing countries can confirm that they rarely talk about the defining influence of British bilateral or European Community aid; rather they frequently speak about the defining influence and impact of the structural adjustment loans from the World bank and those given by the International Monetary Fund. The way in which projects and macro-economic policy, including trade policy and public expenditure, are developed is the dominating influence in many developing countries.

To concentrate on the poverty focus of the British bilateral aid programme or that of the European Union aid programme makes little sense if the overriding effect of the World bank's structural adjustment policy is cuts in health and education expenditure. The World bank's own report on the impact of its structural adjustment policy in Africa has already identified that problem.

[Mr. John Denham]

The role of our Government in the World bank should be subject to more effective scrutiny by the House than that currently offered. The World bank group recently launched an astonishing attack on Oxfam and other British non-governmental organisations, but we have no way of knowing whether that attack was agreed by the United Kingdom's executive director to the World bank. Was it made on the instruction of Ministers from the Foreign Office and the ODA? Were they consulted about whether British taxpayers' money should be used to launch an attack on our most respected NGOs? The truth is that the House has no effective control over or scrutiny of the work of the British executive director. We do not know what instructions that person receives from our Government.

We lag a long way behind countries such as the United States, Canada, Switzerland and Germany, which have established different but effective methods of regular parliamentary scrutiny of the role of their executive directors within the World bank group. In due course, I hope that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs will find time to consider our ability to scrutinise effectively our representation at the World bank. I hope that it will consider whether that representation should be the subject of an annual report and regular monitoring by the Committee, to be followed by a regular debate in the House.

6.34 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I should like to raise a subject that is as important as most of those that we have already discussed tonight—the terrible threat to the existence of the tiger.

I regularly table questions to the ODA about the amount of funds that the Government are prepared to make available to those countries that are desperately trying to preserve their rapidly disappearing tiger populations. In a written reply on 18 July, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said:

> "In recognition of the fact that tigers are endangered, we would be prepared to consider providing support for tiger conservation."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1994; Vol. 247, c. *30*.]

The Minister of State is aware that the tiger is already endangered. At the turn of the century, there were between 80,000 and 100,000 tigers; now, there are just 5,000 tigers in the 14 range states—95 per cent. of them have been wiped out during the course of the century. That is a calamitous state of affairs. So many people in this country and around the world would applaud the British Government taking whatever action they could to help those countries, particularly India and Russia, which are doing their best to try to preserve their tiger populations.

Tigers are disappearing so fast because of illegal poaching. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, CITES, has made it illegal to trade in any tiger products, but that trade still goes on. One must point the finger at the country that is primarily responsible for that trade—China. Because of its demand for tiger bone products and other parts of the tiger, China is almost solely responsible for the decline in the tiger population. Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore are also assisting in that dastardly scheme. Wherever there is a Chinese host population or a Chinese expatriate community, there is a demand for tiger products, which is unfortunately leading to ever increasing poaching of that magnificent creature. Even in London, if one visits Chinese pharmaceutical shops in Chinatown, one can buy tiger bone products. That is lamentable, because we could do so much to enforce the CITES ban ourselves. It should be our responsibility to set an example.

The British Government could do many things to stop the decline in the tiger population. For example, they could offer support to Russia, which is attempting to preserve the Siberian tiger. India has already rightly demanded assistance from us. In the past, politicians from this House—we mentioned some of their names earlier—visited India to shoot tigers. Can we imagine anything worse? People went there just to take pleasure from shooting tigers. Such hunting was partly responsible for the decline in tiger population.

Although people no longer shoot tigers and put their heads on the walls of their homes, tigers are being poached to provide products with spurious claims about providing greater potency among males. I should have thought that, with a population of 1.3 billion, the last thing the Chinese would want is males with greater potency. It is also claimed that tiger products can help to heal wounds. That may be helpful to a person who has been wounded, but to think that a noble tiger must be killed to provide someone with a plaster is obscene.

The British Government could and should offer material and financial support to those countries that are trying to preserve their tiger stocks. Ex-service Land Rovers would be welcomed by those countries, as would uniforms and field equipment. We might even get something from the peace dividend by asking some of our well-trained troops to assist those countries' various anti-poaching forces. Such help is important and needs to be considered by the Government. I ask the Minister to respond to my request when he replies to the debate.

6.38 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has already welcomed the report by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on the spending plans of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the ODA, and I very much welcome this opportunity for the House to debate it.

As always, the Committee has produced a thoroughly readable, thoughtful and balanced report. It brings much experience and expertise to its work, and we value its comments and its support for the work of the Foreign Office and the ODA. The Government's considered response to the Committee's report has been published as a Command Paper, and has been available to hon. Members in the Vote Office since Tuesday.

I am pleased that the Committee found the content and form of the Foreign Office's departmental report more informative this year. We shall continue to listen carefully to the Committee's views on that. In particular, we are consulting it about the proposed new form of the supply estimates, our guiding principle being that there should be no loss of detail in the expenditure information made available to the House.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) asked about the intergovernmental conference. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear to the House, we attach great importance to ensuring that Parliament has a full opportunity to express its views as the next IGC takes shape. Both he and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary have suggested that the Select Committee might submit its views directly to the study group, which will convene next summer. It will be for the Select Committee to decide how best to do that and who shall put pen to paper. Already I hear cries of, "Author, author."

My right hon. Friend also asked me about the review of the Bretton Woods institutions. The G7 leaders at the Naples summit announced their intention to look at the problems facing the international community in the coming years and see how the institutions that exist—including the Bretton Woods institutions—might best match up to those new challenges. Preparatory work on that is now under way, and the subject will be discussed by the Heads of the G7 Governments at their next summit in Halifax.

The world is changing fast. In certain ways, we are safer now that the cold war is over, but disorder is spreading. Violence and civil war are not confined to Asia, Africa and the middle east, but are tragically present on our doorstep in Europe. Since 1990, 22 new countries have come into being, most in the former Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe, where efforts to entrench market and democratic reforms have proceeded at different speeds and with varying degrees of success.

The United Nations, the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, NATO, the Western European Union and other international organisations have become more active. The UN Security Council passed 18 resolutions in 1989; in 1993, it passed 93. International peacekeeping has been a growth industry. In 1992, 12,000 troops were deployed in UN peacekeeping operations world wide; today, there are more than 76,000.

To protect and promote British interests and security in today's world, multilateral and bilateral diplomacy is needed more than ever before: for negotiation; for the reporting and analysis of events; for maintaining channels of communication; and for lobbying.

On the economic front, protectionism remains an ever-present threat. This year's GATT accord, a significant diplomatic achievement, is designed to check it. We have all become aware—it has already been referred to—of the rapid growth of the Asia-Pacific region, accompanied by its growing political influence. Latin America, too, is on the upturn.

The improvement in Britain's export performance has been at the heart of our economic recovery. The latest figures show that our exports are up by 10 per cent. But the competition is intense. Samsung's decision to create more than 3,000 jobs in Britain is a reminder that this country remains the preferred location in Europe for inward investment, but that position must be competed for.

The nature of overseas development is also changing fast. The UK's aid and development strategy is adapting accordingly. At an individual level, 34 million British citizens travelled abroad in 1993, which is 10 per cent. up on the previous year; and 8.6 million Britons are resident overseas. More than ever before, those people are calling on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's consular services, and last year our posts overseas handled more than 1 million visa applications from the growing number of foreigners wishing to visit this country.

As the Committee has recognised, our security and well-being as a nation and as individuals depends to a substantial degree on what happens abroad. Our interests are best served by a stable world in which we can prosper and live in peace, and our policies are designed to serve that objective.

I should like to focus on the main themes raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford in his characteristically authoritative speech, and by other Members in the debate. As my time is limited and a number of detailed points have arisen—the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) described them as "free ranging"—I may have to pick up some of the freer-ranging eggs in correspondence.

On overseas development, the major change is the rapid progress and increasing wealth of many developing countries. There is no longer one third world, if there ever was. Instead, we see an increasing diversity. Countries following sensible economic policies have enjoyed rapid growth and increased living standards for their people. That is enormously welcome. Some of those countries are graduating out of the need for aid. One element in that success has been the great growth in private finance to developing countries, as the Committee's report recognises and as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford pointed out.

Foreign direct investment in developing countries was around £80 billion last year—well above total official aid. Those countries are increasingly earning their own way in the world. But that development is not equally shared. There are still major problems of poverty and deprivation. A billion people are still living in absolute poverty, most of them in south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Private finance is concentrated in a small number of countries in Asia and Latin America. Sub-Saharan Africa misses out almost entirely. Those countries have a long way to go, and will need our continuing help.

British aid recognises that increasing diversity. Middle-income countries still need assistance, filling skills gaps and providing vital know-how to help them on their way. But it is right that the bulk—nearly 80 per cent.—of our bilateral aid should be focused where it is needed most: on the poorest. Those countries need both the finance and the expertise to help develop their infrastructures.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way, especially as time is short. On the criteria for overseas aid, may I draw his attention to the fact that, the other day, the Ministry of Defence identified the mismanagement of water and overpopulation as two of the criteria that will lead to flashpoints around the world where hostilities may break out in future? The Indian subcontinent is such an area, suffering from both vast overpopulation and a shortage of water.

Will the Foreign Office have another look at the criteria for overseas aid? It seems odd that, in a part of the world that is currently in receipt of considerable aid, there happens to be gross overpopulation, the mismanagement of water and vast spending on arms. Only the other day, India asked for tenders for 600 155 mm Howitzers. Would

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

not that country be better spending its taxpayers' money on tackling the problems of overpopulation and the management of water, rather than on arms?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend raises an important point. The criteria by which aid is given are kept under continual review. I need hardly say that India is an extremely poor country and a large recipient of aid. The Government make no conditional link between overseas aid and arms sales. There is a separate question whether the level of a country's expenditure on arms is appropriate. Our view is that each country must assess and provide for its own legitimate defence needs. Excessive military expenditure is, however, one of the factors which we take into account when deciding our allocations of bilateral aid.

I was saying that those poorest countries need both the finance and the expertise to help develop their infrastructures, and to support economic reform and good government.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister is saying how vital the bilateral aid programme is to the poorest countries. Why, then, as is shown in the minutes of evidence, will the allocation of bilateral aid to Africa, for example, fall from £334 million to £284 million? That is a cut, and the Minister has presented it as some sort of marvellous programme.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall discuss aid to Africa in a moment.

We are trying to help those countries to reach the stage where they too can earn their way. I mentioned health and education, and my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) was right to mention the importance of the Cairo conference on population and development. The programme for action agreed at Cairo sets new standards for population programmes. The programme reflects British Government priority policies of promoting sustainable development through economic growth, poverty reduction and children by choice, not chance. Its impact on the world's people, especially women, will depend on the capacity of national Governments to find new resources and spend them effectively.

Britain has taken a lead in committing extra funds to population assistance—a 60 per cent. increase of £100 million in the next two years. We hope that others, especially European donor nations, will follow suit. In doing that, we draw on the great wealth of skills and experience of British companies, consultants and non-governmental organisations. That effort powerfully reinforces our economic and political relationships with the countries that we help.

Aid is not the whole story. We have worked hard—none harder—for freer trade. The Chancellor's recent proposals on multilateral debt are the latest in a series of initiatives that the Government have taken to relieve developing countries' debt burden, but aid is a vital part of the mix. The United Kingdom has a substantial aid programme. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development review earlier this year commended it for its effectiveness and focus on the poorest.

As the Foreign Affairs Committee and my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford have commented, on current plans, more than half the UK's aid will be passing through multilateral channels by 1996-97. I do not accept the accusation made by some people that aid funded through multilateral channels is necessarily less effective, or "less good", than bilateral aid. The aid programme has always contained a significant multilateral share.

Multilateral agencies can co-ordinate assistance. They can exercise more leverage in support of important objectives such as economic reform. To the recipient—people in the Chamber have at some time or other visited recipients of aid—it is of little consequence whence the help arrives. The key is to ensure that all aid, through whatever channel, is spent well.

Mr. Rogers: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept the argument that, if more and more of our aid, as a percentage and in total, goes through multilateral channels, given the static total aid budget, that cuts the amount available for bilateral aid? Does he accept that that has had the immediate consequence of substantial cuts in aid to Africa and to Asia? As far as multilateral aid is concerned, it seems to me that much more money is going to relatively richer countries of eastern Europe.

Mr. Goodlad: I hope that I have demonstrated that we have been commended by international institutions for giving 80 per cent. of our aid to the poorest. Of course it is true that, as a greater proportion is taken by multilateral aid, a smaller proportion is taken by bilateral aid.

The European Community, which channels more than 20 per cent. of our aid, is a specific cause for concern. That was the prime motivation behind the speech by my right hon. and noble Friend Lady Chalker on 14 June, in which she set out a more structured emphasis on our multilateral aid, including strengthening the working relationship with the European Commission, both in Brussels and on the ground in developing countries, as well as the secondment of staff to key posts in Brussels. Those steps are now being implemented. The results will not be instantaneous, but I am confident that they will gradually bear fruit.

The vital point is to ensure that the UK makes a substantial contribution to the international effort: one that is powerfully in our interest, as hon. Members have said, as well as in the interest of the countries that we help.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford mentioned the European Community aid budget, and whether it should be increasing. The increase in aid passing through the European Union flows from the decisions taken at the Edinburgh European Council. Those reflected the outcome of complex negotiations to balance the interests of all European Union member states. They took into account the agreement reached at the June 1992 Lisbon European Council, that there should be a substantial increase in the resources devoted to EC external policies and, by implication, to the EC's aid programme.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford also mentioned private investment. I agree with him about the importance of private finance. This country is a major provider of private investment in developing countries. In 1992, British private investment has been estimated at about £1.7 billion—about half the EC total. Only the United States and Japan do better.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford also referred to the role of the Commonwealth Development Corporation. The CDC plays an increasingly important part in promoting the private sector in developing countries. Its role was endorsed and strengthened in the quinquennial review of the CDC. That agreed revised operating targets for the corporation. The Government fully endorse the CDC's plans to improve its focus overseas and to strengthen its links with British industry.

On the subject of legislation on the CDC, I cannot anticipate what proposals for legislation will be included in the Gracious Speech. On borrowing, the CDC is near its borrowing limits. However, the Government have reduced the rate of interest on the CDC's loans this year, so as to increase its cash flow, and the CDC intends to finance the expansion of activities largely from internally generated funds arising from its portfolio of investments.

The hon. Members for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) and for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and others mentioned aid to Africa. It is clear that the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa will continue to need substantial aid. Africa has been and remains a priority for British aid. About 40 per cent. of our bilateral aid—more than £500 million in 1992-93—goes to African countries. In addition, we are a major contributor to multilateral development organisations, which also treat Africa as a priority. The European Community's aid programme to sub-Saharan Africa for the period 1990-95 amounts to £7.6 billion; the British share is £1.25 billion.

The Foreign Affairs Committee's report, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford today, have focused on the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has major advantages for Britain. First, we have a common language, a shared history and a shared culture, and Her Majesty the Queen has a special status as Head of the Commonwealth.

Secondly, the Commonwealth is a network. It manifests great diversity in geography, in regional and political links and in economic and social perspectives. That diversity is part of the strength of the Commonwealth. It gives the Commonwealth a valuable and relevant role in this ever-changing world. For Britain, the Commonwealth is an essential link in our international relations.

The Commonwealth has a new task in the 1990s. Good government and democracy cannot be imposed by imperial means; democracy must be home-grown, but we need ways of persuading countries to live by democracy, ways of rewarding them for working democratically, and ways of expressing displeasure if democracy is undermined. We need arrangements that are explicitly post-imperial and non-confrontational, but which can effectively express the views of a country's friends.

The Commonwealth has dispatched 11 election observer missions in recent years. The Foreign Office has contributed 30 per cent. of the costs—rather more in the case of elections in South Africa. The UK is the largest single contributor to Commonwealth funds; 70 per cent. of our bilateral aid goes to Commonwealth countries.

We also recognise the importance of cultural diplomacy, which has been mentioned on both sides of the House. The British Council and the BBC World Service make valuable contributions to promoting British interests overseas.

The hon. Member for Rhondda mentioned the contribution of the World Service and the British Council to our diplomatic effort. The World Service broadcasts more hours, 1,400, each week, in more languages, 38 together with English, than it has in its 62-year history. The worldwide audience of 130 million regular listeners is more than double that of its nearest competitor. It has an unparalleled reputation for impartiality and accuracy.

Mr. Ernie Ross *rose—*

Mr. Goodlad: I have no time to give way any more.

The World Service was excluded from overall budget cuts in 1993-94. It kept every penny of the substantial planned increase in that year, because that was part of the agreed 1991-94 triennial settlement. The World Service was warned long in advance that it would have to bear its share of expenditure cuts after 1994. The World Service funding increased substantially in earlier years; a 60 per cent. real-term increase since 1980. None-the-less, with efficiency savings, the reallocation of resources and increases in revenues, there is room for some new activity in the increased broadcasts to Russia and central Asia, and the introduction of Azeri and Uzbek broadcasts.

As for the British Council, the real-terms reduction in the council's grant in aid reflects the reduction that confronts the FCO as a whole. The council's combination of activities is a British strength that is the envy of our competitors. Japan, France and others seek to copy our model. The council operates in an intensively competitive business sector. Its restructuring has left the organisation much leaner and fitter, and nearly half its income is now revenue from non-grant in aid sources.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye and others called for a larger aid budget. But of course the Government have to juggle a number of spending priorities. The House would not expect me to pre-empt that process. The Chancellor will announce the outcome of the current public expenditure survey in the Budget next month.

We maintain a substantial aid programme, which has grown by 10 per cent. in real terms since 1987-88. This year's budget is nearly £50 million higher than last year's, at a time when many other large aid donors are reducing their budgets. In 1993, our aid amounted to 0.31 per cent. of GNP—above the average of 0.29 per cent. of all donors.

We remain committed to meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. of GNP as soon as possible, although we are not prepared to set a timetable for doing so—*[Interruption.]* I am not aware that the Opposition are prepared to set a time scale. The Opposition talk about billions of pounds of increases in public expenditure, but they are not prepared to say where that will come from or how they will finance it. All they do is complain, and I think that people will take their complaints for what they are worth—very little.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) mentioned the commercial work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in helping British companies break into new markets—the Foreign Office's largest single activity overseas. It is foolish to suggest—as did a writer in the *Daily Mail*—that the level of exports should be the sole determinant of the number of staff required in each of our missions.

Most of the 83 staff in Islamabad, for example, are there for entry clearance work. At the other end of the scale, the chairman of BP has recently written to praise the efforts of our three-man embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan, where a BP-led consortium has landed a £7 billion oil extraction contract.

[Mr. Goodlad]

The hon. Member for Rhondda and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne mentioned Hong Kong. The hon. Member for Rhondda also referred to subjects raised in other reports. I take note of what has been said about the desirability of a debate, which will be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the business managers.

Her Majesty's Government remain committed to implementing the full letter and spirit of the joint declaration, which is the cornerstone of our policy in Hong Kong. We have no reason to believe that China is less committed to the joint declaration. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has made clear, we wish to draw a line under our differences with China over constitutional issues.

In his speech to LegCo on 5 October, the Governor of Hong Kong set out a series of constructive proposals on the future Sino-British co-operation over the future of Hong Kong. That was intended to signal—as was my visit to Peking a few weeks ago—our continuing sincere wish to intensify work on outstanding issues during the remaining period of British sovereignty. The House can be assured that we are working hard, both publicly and privately, to achieve the smoothest possible transition, and I know that we have the support of the House in doing so.

The cost of the diplomatic service is a very small part of the £27 billion that the Government spend on defence, aid and diplomacy—just over half a billion pounds. In fact, total FCO diplomatic wing funding, including grants to the British Council and BBC World Service, accounts for less than one half of 1 per cent of total Government spending. That buys 215 overseas posts—down from 243 in 1968.

Britain depends on overseas trade and investment abroad. Exports account for 25 per cent. of our GNP. Inward investment provides 23 per cent. of net manufacturing output. We were the second largest overseas investor in the world in 1993. We have a unique spread of distinctive, worldwide interests, through Hong Kong, South Africa, the Gulf, and the Indian subcontinent, as well as our stake in the European Union and other OECD markets.

The international community holds the key to many vital UK interests—the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation for security; the United Nations for the international rule of law. To promote our vital national interests, we need an effective voice in all the important international organisations, as well as posts in individual countries.

Our distinctive assets—the armed forces, the English language, our financial skills and enterprise, our overseas experience, and the skill of our diplomats, our aid experts, the British Council and the BBC World Service—are admired around the globe. Those assets come at a price, but the sums are tiny compared to spending on health, social security and education. They are what it takes to have a strong, effective foreign policy, promoting British interests around the world, as well as our objectives of peace and prosperity for Britain, promotion of exports and security for British citizens abroad.

There are always a few commentators who cling to myths and stereotypes. They are the voices who criticise our diplomatic effort as if the purpose of our foreign service were to serve our vanity as a nation. Those tend to be the same voices who criticise our aid effort for supposedly serving the vanity of foreign dictators. I doubt that there was ever much truth in those propositions; there is certainly no truth in them now.

Our diplomatic service is fit, lean and streetwise. It is working to clearly defined objectives that serve the interests of our country in measurable and tangible ways. As the struggle for power, trade and influence grows more and more intense, we have to make sure that we do not cede an inch of ground to our competitors. Of course, as the Committee has said, there is always scope for improvement, just as there is in the way that we run our substantial aid programme. But, here too, we are setting a world standard for effectiveness and value for money.

Power and influence do not drop into our laps—they have to be worked for. Running an active foreign policy is partly a matter of political will power. But, to deliver the goods, our foreign policy also needs a solid commitment in terms of manpower and resources. Together, those two ingredients have helped us to carve for Britain a uniquely valuable role and status. That is what the British people expect from the British Government. We will not betray that trust.

Innovative and Competitive Technology

7.6 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I welcome the fact that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is here. I know very well that he has many matters pressing on his attention. I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). I suspect that he will undertake his baptism of fire towards the close of the debate. I welcome him to his office of Parliamentary Secretary and trust that he will have a fruitful partnership with the Committee in developing the policies to which the Government have set their hand.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy will not mind if I add my warm respect for the work that was done by his immediate predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), who is now Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It was, after all, the Government's initiative that created the Office of Science and Technology and thus brought the Committee into being. For that reason, my colleagues and I have double thanks to offer.

We should place on record the fact that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West was able, in a relatively short period of office, to preside over substantial changes in the way in which science was treated at Government level. During his time in office we witnessed the enlargement of the role of the chief scientific adviser, the development of the director general of the research councils, the alteration of the research councils and their remit, and the first publication, in the "Forward Look", of a White Paper that clearly outlined the developments for science and technology and the role to which the Government were determined to set their hand for the future of British science and innovation. That is a thoroughly worthwhile achievement.

I trust that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy will recognise that we wish to build on those substantial initiatives, and on the developments that are consonant with an increasing commitment showing that the OST is here for keeps. It is the development that best co-ordinates public sector science with private sector requirements. I hope that it will eventually produce, through its policies, a substantial increase in the nation's commitment towards scientific endeavour, innovation, investment in research and a consequential improvement in economic performance.

Hon. Members are grateful to the Leader of the House for allowing us the time to debate the Committee's report this evening. The report is a substantial effort by a Committee that has dedicated itself to investigating, in a relatively short time, significant issues affecting scientific and technological development.

Committee members were aware at the outset that the Select Committee in another place had already dealt with innovation in industry and published a significant report in 1991. We took that not as a disincentive but as an encouragement to build on that initiative to broaden science and technology, and innovation in particular. We felt that they were hugely important to the country.

How grateful I am that Committee members acted as one in that endeavour. We were grateful to the team of advisers who guided us to the report—Professor Ivan Yates, Gerard Fairclough and Professor Michael Gibbons and his excellent team at the Sussex science policy research unit. All colleagues and advisers helped to achieve drive and unanimity on the subject. It is accepted by hon. Members on both sides of the House and by people throughout the country that the science base in the United Kingdom is exceptionally fertile and well regarded, that it has developed effectively both within and without the Government service and that it has been regarded world wide as being of great distinction.

However, in our first report, into the workings of the Office of Science and Technology, we realised that the problems went wider than the science base. The evidence to the Committee at that time showed that, for a wide variety of reasons, there was a need to develop innovation and technology that matched the excellence of British science. That is probably the key reason why we felt it correct to dig deeper than perhaps our noble colleagues had done into the reasons why innovative developments in the UK, despite a fertile industry and a very fertile science base, had been so disappointing when compared with competitive developments in other countries.

The fact that the science White Paper "Realising our Potential" had stressed so obviously the importance of science and technology to industry, and the fact that it had announced new arrangements to make research councils and universities more responsive to industry's needs, encouraged Committee members to feel that the time was right to match that up with research into industry's problems and the scale of development and innovation that the country had achieved.

Although the White Paper was encouraging and although the Government were right to entitle it "Realising our Potential", the Committee's subsequent inquiry into the routes through which the science base is translated into innovative and competitive technology showed that, even though improvements could be made, the science base was already relatively responsive to industry. Industry was able, as many companies were, to get the scientific input that they needed, at the time that they needed it, and of the quality that they needed.

The real problems, however, were much wider and deeper. In many cases, UK industry appeared unprepared to make use of the resources of the science and technology base. Perhaps it was from ignorance; perhaps it was from industry's own short-sightedness, but, worryingly, there were many reasons why the UK's innovation record was internationally uncompetitive. The Committee believed, therefore, that a policy to encourage innovation could not be narrowly focused purely on the science base.

We might reflect at this point that the position of British industry—let me call it British manufacturing industry for the purposes of the debate—has been perceptibly, and some people would say substantially, in decline in recent years. It is not surprising, therefore, that the pressures of having to survive in a pretty ferocious economic environment have made it difficult for countries to set aside the commitment, both in cash and in people, to investigate and to develop innovatory technology for the markets in which they competed.

During those times, one had to consider inflation rates and the fact that it was relatively difficult to obtain capital to make profitable investments. There is no doubt, however, that, against that background, there has been a substantial diminution in what we should call with some pride manufacturing culture. The consequence of that has been a diminution of interest in, let us say, engineers

[Sir Giles Shaw]

becoming engineers and graduates seeking to earn their money in the industrial climate, and a general resistance to the smokestack image of manufacturing processes, an image that has, happily, been largely eliminated and that has done no great service to industry.

The Committee was convinced, therefore, that policies to alter attitudes and activities in relation to innovation and technology would be effective only if they were shaped by knowledge of the innovation process and if all the factors promoting or hindering them were recognised. Accordingly, the inquiry was intended to be a major review of the subject. I suspect that that is why it lasted 18 months. In addition to holding 14 sessions of oral evidence and considering more than 160 memoranda submitted by interested parties, the Committee conducted its own research. It commissioned research into six industrial sectors—pharmaceuticals, aerospace, automotive products, food and drink, machine tools and office electronics.

The Committee chose the science policy research unit at the university of Sussex to conduct the research. Professor Gibbons and his team were able to design a substantial questionnaire that produced a great deal of response on the use by industries of the science base, their investment in innovation, their skilled personnel requirements and their ability to raise the money needed for further investment. In addition, the Committee visited both Germany and Japan to see at close and at far hand the way in which those two highly effective economic giants performed in relation to innovation and technology.

Although the particular sectors that we researched varied widely in their needs and in their relative successes, the overall picture that we gained was pretty gloomy. In the past three or four decades, the UK has fallen behind comparable-sized countries in the amount spent on research and development both as a percentage of gross domestic product and as a percentage of patents on the international market. The Committee was forced to agree with one of its witnesses that

> "the UK has tended to under-invest in R and D".

There is no doubt that that has been the case.

The Committee said in its report:

> "In the course of our inquiry we have come to believe that unless reforms are urgently undertaken the United Kingdom will remain less able to exploit science and technology than many of its competitors. There is no one reason for this; rather it is the result of a set of interactions between the education and training system, the organisation of industry and the operation of the financial system, all of which are strongly affected by government policies and the state of the economy."

That will come as no surprise to hon. Members on either side of the House.

In part, the problems identified involved a culture that failed to reward adequately those people engaged in industry and, in particular, science and engineering. There was no question but that the rewards for those going into the sciences or engineering in Germany or Japan were substantial. I might add that their social stature was considerably enhanced by their so doing.

Colleagues will recall that in Germany, the status of a doctor of engineering commanded a great deal of acceptance at any level and was certainly equivalent to that of a physician or banker in this country. In Japan, in what I think was an aside, a member of the Toyota company said, "We call all our workmen 'engineers' here, at whatever level they operate." Therefore, we are up against cultures which have been established on ground which should still be fertile here but which now is not bearing sufficient fruit.

Industry has indeed recruited engineers but the result has usually been that scientists or engineers tend to remain within their specialities. Few join upper management or reach the general management of their companies and therefore they do not have the ability to gain the high salaries available in industry to those who manage enterprises.

The Government's response to our report stated that there was

> "no firm evidence of a current shortage of science and engineering graduates to fill specialist posts."

I agree, but the response misses the point entirely. We are concerned to get the scientist and the engineer into mainstream management, into finance and the City so that they can perhaps bring more orthodox attitudes to bear on industry's need for cash for research and on the way in which high risk should be something to which City advisers should respond. We need scientists and engineers in general management. We need them to lead our companies and to bring the disciplines that they have acquired in their specialities to the running of those companies.

Moreover, the lack of scientists and engineers in management sits ill with the fact that, even during the recession from which we are now—thankfully—emerging, nearly half of the companies that responded to our questionnaire had experienced skill shortages, and the majority expected similar problems to arise in the future.

We were forced to conclude that the financial system in the United Kingdom produces a culture that appears to be risk averse and inclined to rely too heavily on short-term measures. I am sure that short-termism will be one of the themes taken up by colleagues in the subsequent debate. One of the problems is that it is quite rational for those who work in the financial world to take the views that I have outlined but to do so can have a very destabilising effect on industry. We welcome the industrial finance initiative study that started when my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) was at the Treasury. We also welcome Budget initiatives such as the enterprise investment scheme to encourage small and long-term investors in this process.

I sincerely hope that such schemes will be maintained and developed, but we were of the opinion that attitudes tend to vary substantially within the banking system. Some within the financial system claimed that there was plenty of risk capital available but there was clearly no fertile route through which it could flow to those who really needed it. In many cases—certainly in the clearing banks—it rested on the good will of local management to determine such things rather than on head office deciding that it was a policy worth pursuing.

The financial system and the restriction of technological expertise combine to make industry disinclined to invest in innovation. In Japan in 1991, industry-financed research and development amounted to 2.12 per cent. of GDP as opposed to 0.94 per cent. in the United Kingdom. If Japan is thought to be exceptional—which in many ways it is—let me add that German investment was 1.5 per cent. of GDP and that of France

1.01 per cent. There are considerable differences between our measurable performance in investment in innovation and that of those with whom we still seek to compete.

The Committee was presented with recent research which appeared to prove that tax incentives for R and D might not only produce greater R and D expenditure than the revenue forgone but, through stimulating such R and D, might significantly increase the rate of economic growth. We thought that that was an important point to record in our report and the Committee thus recommended that, in the light of this evidence, there should be a major re-examination of the case for fiscal incentives for investment in R and D. It was disappointing that the Government in three lines—I suspect that that was their shortest comment on any item in our report—decided that such a reappraisal was not to be undertaken.

However, we did not want a commitment; we simply thought that it was reasonable for us to make a suggestion and leave it up to the Treasury to take the rash decision to do a little bit of research to see whether the results might lead to better innovation and better economic growth. If that is the way in which the Treasury is to lead our scientific and technical development, I suspect that the policy of mortmain cannot be far behind.

The Committee accepted that many of the problems involved in providing a fertile route for science to bring a competitive innovation into industry were beyond the power of the Government to solve. However, it was clear that the Government intend to take the lead in tackling many of those problems. The White Papers on "Realising our Potential" and on competitiveness show a welcome appreciation of the value of industry. The Government's response to our report is welcome in many respects. We note that many of the Government's recommendations coincide with ours or, to put it another way, that the Government are prepared to agree with many of our recommendations. However, some of the Government's responses cause us concern.

The first of the Government's responses on which I shall comment is in paragraph 11, which deals with the Department of Trade and Industry. I noted with some apprehension the way in which the new departmental restructuring has taken place. We commented on the failure to replace the chief adviser on science and technology, but we were informed that the post is being discontinued for the reason stated. The Government state:

> "A recent Departmental restructuring has brigaded his Division with the Sector Divisions under one Deputy Secretary Industry Command."

I was beginning to think that perhaps the President of the Board of Trade had gone back to his flak jacket and was seeking to instal a military system in the DTI. No doubt he will shortly be leaving his office and cascading through the country rather like Sennacherib:

> "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
>
> His horses, his chariots, his teeth filled with gold".

We wish him well if the result is greater innovation, but we can hardly accept the language used.

Paragraph 12 of the Government's response deals with another important issue. In paragraph 332 of the Committee's report we dealt with the form of identifying and maintaining the wider knowledge base that industry requires. The Government's response was:

> "In the Government's view, it is for industry to identify and maintain the expertise it requires."

The reason for our demanding—or seeking to provide—that the Government have a role in maintaining the science base was to ensure that the distribution of scientific endeavour leading to innovative technology can reach the places which the larger initiatives do not reach and, in particular, to protect its use for smaller and medium-sized enterprises which the Government, through the DTI initiatives and the business link scheme, recognise as essential for the collective development of better industrial activity in this country.

Therefore, I found the Government's response unsatisfactory. It also appears to conflict with the response contained in paragraph 25 of the Government's report, which agrees with many of our comments in support of collaborative research. It states that the DTI recognises the importance of technology generation but that its efforts would be best directed at

> "encouraging companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises . . . to improve best practice and use new technology more effectively.".

That seems to be an inconsistency in the report. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will comment on that when he winds up.

We also noted—I have dealt with the matter of general tax incentives—the Government's response at paragraph 21:

> "On the Committee's point . . . about the lending decisions of the banks, the Government has been informed by the banks that they are seeking to base their lending decisions primarily on the basis of the quality of the proposals being considered, and are making efforts to adopt a more systematic approach to risk assessment."

The Committee will certainly welcome that. There is, however, much evidence that small businesses are far too often locked into mortgage-related arrangements with banks, which have brought real distress for the families and have created the impossibility of getting out from under their problems in a humane and generous manner. The developments hinted at in paragraph 21 should be acted on pretty urgently.

My next point on the Government's response relates to paragraph 57. We were talking here about Government laboratories. The Government said:

> "It is not evident to the Government that the value of Government Research Laboratories depends on their ownership, and indeed, their effectiveness and the efficiency with which they use their resources in response to industrial needs may well be greater if they operate under the commercial disciplines of the market."

Our concern is that the Government should be responsible for the preservation of the base of scientific knowledge and at least ensure that, at the current level of expenditure, it is preserved or enhanced. On the whole, the Government have been disinclined to make provision for that. I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to express a view on that issue.

I concede that, all in all, the Government's response to the Committee's report is generous in that many of our proposals have been accepted. I also welcome the fact that the direction in which our report is set is one that the Government strategically find convincing. Our debate now, however, will range over many issues that are far from satisfactory. There is great dissatisfaction because we know that many industries are in need of assistance for innovative technology, yet are unable to manage it, to find the finance for it or to develop the techniques that they really need.

[Sir Giles Shaw]

We have recognised that the productive qualities of British industry are just as great as they ever were. Indeed, in recent years, British industry has improved enormously in international competitiveness. The sector is ripe, therefore, for a new and substantial step forward not only in efficiency but in technology, and not only in technology but in innovation. It is now that the Government must ensure that the initiatives that they have set in train and the Committee's initiative in comparing how innovation takes place here with how it takes place in other competitive countries lead to an increase in effort and not to a diminution in Government expenditure or Government commitment.

It has always been the case that the Government have a huge role to play in the nation's research and development. Public sector investment is substantial and nowhere more so than in the Ministry of Defence. It is equally true that the Ministry of Defence has, over many years, provided a significant spin-off for civil use in a wide range of industrial applications, but we all know that the role of the Ministry of Defence has been reduced. We all know, therefore, that the requirement of the Ministry of Defence will be reduced and we all know, therefore, that the amount of development through research and innovation in Ministry of Defence activities will also be reduced. If we have that reduction, we must compensate for it by a wider generation of innovative technology springing from our existing science base through industrial application. That is the challenge to which, I trust, the Government will respond.

7.33 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I unreservedly welcome the report. It will be an invaluable contribution to the debate that we are about to have on innovation and the regeneration of our industry. I also welcome the Minister to the Front Bench and I hope that he lasts a wee bit longer in the job than his predecessor did. I am sure that he will find his new job very interesting and quite a change from some of the things that he has done in the past. Perhaps he will show the same interest in developing his scientific knowledge as the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster did with his much reported investigation of the Higgs boson and various other arcana of the scientific world. I shall await his comments with interest.

The report, valuable as it is, must be set against the background of a country coming out of an extremely painful recession, which has, once again, seen a contraction of our manufacturing base. It should be obvious that the more the base contracts, the more difficult it becomes to regenerate growth thereafter. The report is, therefore, all the more important and timely as it comes against that background.

Equally, we have the background of Government action over the same period—or should I say Government inaction? Over 15 years, the Department of Trade and Industry has cut its budget of support for industry every year. The Government are fond of saying that they will do something; sadly, they rarely get round to doing it.

The report covers one of the key areas of economic and industrial development—the interface between our science base and industry. British science is the best in the world. All of us here would give ourselves a pat on the back and agree to that. However, that in itself is not sufficient, because if we really want to build a prosperous future and if we really want to provide the money that we shall need to improve the things that we all want to improve—health care, education, our infrastructure, pensions and benefits—we shall have to improve industry's ability to utilise and to benefit from the ideas that we generate in our research departments.

The gap between inventiveness and application is nothing new; it was first recognised in the mid-19th century and has been commented on repeatedly since then. The Labour Governments of the 1960s attempted to redress the balance with the Ministry of Technology and the Department of Economic Affairs. That neither was an unqualified success is a matter of historical fact. Perhaps the tragedy was that both were ideas ahead of their time.

We should compare that record with the record of the DTI. On the very day that the science White Paper "Realising our Potential" was published, the Department announced the abandonment of its advanced technology programme. Every year, we have seen supposedly new advances in support for technology and support for industry being developed with a great flourish—fancy papers and advertisements on television. Each time, there has been a repackaging of less and less cash.

I have said that I welcome the report. I shall single out one or two of its most important features for comment. The Select Committee recognised the need for the Government to play their part in assisting industry to identify and carry the innovation it needs through to production. Were that statement alone to be accepted and acted on by the Government, it would be a significant change in their attitude towards industry.

The complexity of the innovation process is properly identified and due tribute is paid to the pioneering work of those in the Economic and Social Research Council who have carried much of the work forward. As the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), has just said, the case for Government support for research and development through enhanced tax credits is made. Frankly, I cannot see how the Government can still refuse to recognise the value of such a system in the light of the work of Bronwyn Hall in the United States. How much evidence do they need?

As the Chairman said, the Committee is not even asking for the Government to implement the scheme. It is only asking them to look at it again in the light of the present evidence. Surely that is not too much to ask. I sincerely hope that tonight the Minister will withdraw the comments made in the Government's response to the report and will say that they will go ahead and at least examine the case for looking at research and development credits.

Much emphasis is placed on the importance of creating effective technological databases, both local and national, and the provision of technological consultancy services for small and medium-sized enterprises—something which I have long been in favour of. I feel that appropriate reference in the conclusions and recommendations to the crucial role of our telecommunications network might have been appropriate and might have enhanced what is otherwise an excellent report.

Action is needed to create information super-highways in this country. They are needed to implement the proper use of the databases that the Select Committee is talking about. Our present approach to telecommunications is a guarantee that other countries will bypass us in the race to develop proper broad-band communications. *[Interruption.]* I welcome the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), the former Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science, to his place on the Front Bench. I am amazed that, with his onerous duties in Europe, he has time to idle here for a few hours to listen to our debate, but he is welcome none the less.

The report underlines the importance of independent research and technology organisations, and points to the significance in Germany of the Max Planck and Fraunhofer institutes for basic and applied research respectively. Again, I feel that we need to re-examine the possibility of developing a similar system in the United Kingdom. How else are we to take full advantage from, for example, the technology foresight programme? That is surely one of the key reasons for our chronic failure to innovate in this country. Applied and near-market research cannot be left to the vagaries of our short-termist industrial and financial sectors.

Apropos short-termism, I am glad to see that the need for effective sources of long-term funding for small and medium-sized enterprises was also given prominence in the report. We must remember that our crucial deficit in the industrial sector is in the middle-sized companies—which we hope that small companies would grow into. That is the crucial lack in Britain's industrial manufacturing sector. One of the key reasons why we do not produce more medium-sized companies in this country is the critical shortage of long-term, secure finance to fund expansion and development. Chronic financial constraints on growth, as well as a lack of technological know-how, undoubtedly inhibit the organic growth of companies. I hope that, at last, the Government will consider doing something about it and not merely confine their response to accepting what was said in the White Paper.

That brings me neatly to my last point: the response of Government to the report. There is a fair old collection of platitudes in the Government's response, which is only to be expected. The Government will, of course, tell us that, in advance of the Budget, they cannot possibly make any concrete proposals that might cost any money. But I do think that they might have tried a little harder than they seem to have done in their response to the report. It is one thing to accept and say, "Oh yes, you are right," and, "Oh yes, we agree with that." It is quite another to say, "And we are going to do something about it."

Sadly, there is a wee hole in the Government's response, which clearly indicates that they have no intention of doing anything about the report. They hope that, like so many Select Committee reports, it will be quietly buried after it has had its stock debate for three hours on the Floor of the House on an otherwise fairly empty Monday evening. That should not be their response.

There are so many things that I could mention, but perhaps the most obvious point has already been mentioned by the Chairman of the Select Committee: the three-line rejection of the consideration for the case for general tax incentives. I was also disappointed with the Government's response on their own research institutions, particularly in view of the editorial in the *New Scientist* this week, which said:

> "According to government figures, by next year departments will be spending a staggering total of £620 million a year less on research than they did 10 years ago . . .
>
> Next year the Technology Foresight Programme should bring this problem into sharper focus when it identifies commercially valuable areas of research for the country to invest in. But invest what?"

Where is the money to come from? Government spending on research is being cut year after year—not just the budget for the Department of Trade and Industry, but other areas of research as well. It is the seed corn for future industrial development in this country. We cannot afford to cut investment in that area, which, it seems, the Government wish to do. So the self-congratulatory note of the response to the report leaves me a little cold.

I found paragraph 39 of the report particularly galling. It says:

> "The UK Government has played a leading role in negotiation of the Fourth Framework Programme for EC Research and Technological Development."

They certainly did. They spent about two years trying to cut the total sum that was to be spent on research, and congratulated themselves on having done so. Having cut spending on research in this country, they congratulated themselves on having managed to cut it in the European Community as a whole as well. That is scarcely something which I would want to boast about. It is a monumental piece of cheek to claim that they have played a leading role in the negotiations when the role was entirely negative.

The report is an important contribution to the debate on the future of Britain as a successful manufacturing nation. I trust that, in his response tonight, the Minister will show that our Government intend to do more than just take note of the proposals. I fear, however, that they will not and that it will be left to the next Labour Government to begin the process.

7.45 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I join other hon. Members and in welcoming my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to their new positions at the Office of Public Service and Science. They have inherited a curiously assorted collection of responsibilities. Of those, their responsibility for science is probably the most esoteric, but it is also probably the most important and, I believe, the most vulnerable. I hope that they will ensure that it gets a full share of their attention. I wonder whether in time they will come to feel, as I think may prove to be the case, that it was a fundamental mistake to shift the responsibility for the research councils away from the Department for Education. Meanwhile, as they attend to science, they can be reassured by the encouragement and support of the Science and Technology Select Committee. It has indeed produced, for its first report, a weighty document which is full of both detail and good sense.

We are at the beginning of a new era at the OPSS, at both ministerial level and the highest official level. I take this opportunity to congratulate Richard Mottram, the superb founding permanent secretary of the OPSS, on his new appointment to the weighty office of permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence.

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

As the OPSS is at the beginning of a new era, I hope that my hon. Friends and the House will forgive me if I pitch my speech at a level that is more of philosophy than of detail. In that, I will follow the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). What I have to say runs counter to much of the current orthodoxy in this area, but I know that Ministers have a taste for the battle of ideas, and I hope that my remarks may be lodged with them as a valid counterbalance to much of the thinking that will surround them in their offices.

Let me express my thoughts in a serious of propositions. First, basic science is necessary for the health of an advanced economy such as that of Britain. By "basic science", I mean science that aims at a theoretical pay-off, rather than at any clearly perceived utility. Fundamental science—what the jargon calls the "science base"—is vital to an economy such as ours because it trains the most highly educated manpower, on which advanced economies depend; because it equips those people to tap into the flow of ideas from the science base both at home and abroad; and because it is the seed bed of innovative technology.

It is important to restate that fundamental proposition, because although lip service is often paid to it, except from time to time by the Treasury, its full implications are not always fully and properly understood, as I hope that I will be able to explain. Historically, as has been said several times in the debate, Britain is strong in basic science. It is one of the jewels in our national crown, but it is not one which we keep highly polished. In its statistical analysis, the Select Committee report does not enter that well-trodden field. However, I believe that it is now well established that our spending on basic science in Britain is relatively low compared with that in the other leading basic science countries—the United States, Germany and France.

My second proposition is that basic science has two intrinsic characteristics which severely limit the extent to which profit-oriented industry can be expected to invest in it. One of the features of basic science is that it has no evident utility at the time it is being undertaken. It develops most effectively under conditions of openness within the global community of scientists, and that makes it difficult for economic operators to appropriate and exploit the intellectual property that it may represent.

From the point of view of science-based companies, basic science is what might be called a necessary externality. In that respect, it resembles many other kinds of infrastructure which must be provided as public goods. That is where we must locate the most important responsibility of Government in science.

Advanced economies around the world have found that the only way to secure a flourishing science base is for the Government to pay for it. In this country, the OPSS has a substantial role in relation to that half of our investment in basic science which flows from the research councils. I suggest to my hon. Friends that that is the responsibility which they must keep closest to their hearts.

With regard to science that aims at commercial and other applications, which is the subject of the report from the Science and Technology Select Committee, I want to state a third proposition. The delicate chain of innovation, of which science is only a part, can be managed successfully only by the organisations and companies that have a direct stake in it. They must have a sense of ownership of the process if they are to manage it successfully and, in particular, they must feel wholly committed in the management of that most difficult transition of all—from the laboratory bench to initial market and production concepts.

Innovative companies must obviously have strategies for gaining access to the science base, especially in universities at home and abroad. There is bound to be an extensive interface between the Government-funded area of basic science and the industry-funded area of applications. As in the science White Paper published earlier this year and the Select Committee's report, thought must be given to the way in which that interface is managed. However, the temptation and the danger are that the Government will become more involved than they should, so that the proper boundaries are blurred and industry's sense of responsibility and ownership in the management of innovation is diminished.

It is still too early to say whether that is happening as a result of the changes constituted by the creation of the OPSS. However, hon. Members should watch that point closely, as should my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We should bear in mind, as an object lesson, the story of the British Government's engagement with science and industry in the 1950s and 1960s.

In those days, under Governments of both parties, the Government were a heavy investor in what is now called near-market research. The Select Committee report has much to say about the applications gap. It refers to the weakness in innovation in British industry. The report does not offer an extensive explanation of the problem, but I believe that much of our present weakness derives from that period and from the impression it fostered that science is more a matter for Government than for companies.

While there has to be a partnership in that area between the Government, industry and scientists, it is critical that there should be a clear sense of the boundaries between the responsibilities of those different parties. That is why I believe that we were on the right lines in the late 1980s, under the leadership of Baroness Thatcher who had a close personal interest in such matters, when the Government sought to concentrate on their responsibility for the science base and to point industry clearly to its responsibility for profitable applications.

I want now to refer to a point of detail which appears in the Select Committee report in paragraphs 181 to 186. If my analysis is right, one of the implications must surely be that it is better and healthier for Government support for scientific innovation in industry to take the form of tax credits rather than being cast in the form of grants and subsidies.

Of course, public money is involved either way and the Treasury insists, probably rightly, that the public expenditure costs of a grants regime are bound to be cheaper than those of a tax credits system. However, that misses the psychological point that it is better for companies to be encouraged to spend what they see as their own money on R and D than for them to become habituated to the idea that their R and D is basically the Government's business.

I strongly support the Select Committee's recommendation at paragraph 186

"for a major re-examination of the fiscal incentives for investment in research and development."

As has been pointed out, the Government reject that advice in their note at paragraph 19. I continue to find it odd, although not untypical of the Treasury, that the Government should be so certain on that point when so many other countries, with Governments of the right and of the left, believe that tax credits of the kind called for by the Select Committee have an important role to play.

On another point of detail, the Select Committee report is absolutely right to insist at paragraph 164 that the Government should proceed with care in handling applied science for Government purposes in the Government research establishments. I support the concept of the so-called internal market for Government science and, where appropriate, for privatisation of the GREs. However, the report is absolutely right to highlight the risks that that involves.

In that respect, I have particularly in mind the future of AEA Technology, the great British applied science asset whose headquarters are at Harwell in my constituency and which faces the risk of fragmentation on privatisation. That must not happen and the uncertainty which has for too long surrounded the matter should be ended as soon as possible. I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy and my hon. Friend the Minister will take a close interest in what the Department of Trade and Industry is doing in that respect.

More fundamentally with regard to the GREs, we must remember that there are two sides to the customer-contractor relationship and the Government must be careful to keep them in balance. They should not rush ahead to create contractors before they have adequately developed their capacity to act as a set of intelligent contractees—a problem which the Select Committee report refers to as the "intelligent customer". There may be a danger that the new research contracting organisations will contract in the negative sense as well as simply being contractors.

Returning to the main thread of my argument, I want now to draw a conclusion from what I have said about basic science and applied science and state it in the form of a fourth proposition. As I said earlier, basic science is vulnerable to a host of takeover bids which I see it as the duty of my right hon. Friends to resist. On the part of industry, there will always be a taste for subsidy, although perhaps not from the best companies. On the part of Government, there is always a measure of impatience for quick results. It must be said that, in the current climate, there is also a desire among academic scientists to legitimate themselves through promoting their claims to relevance.

I saw something of the ambitions of other Departments in relation to the science budget of the OPSS—the research councils' budget—when I was a junior Minister in the Department. On that point, I simply want to repeat what I said in any earlier debate about these matters. I pointed out that any significant shift of Government R and D funding to support what are taken to be business objectives will never be enough to make much difference to business and could have potentially catastrophic effects on the availability of resources for basic science.

Let me cite some figures to illustrate what I mean. Twenty per cent. of the annual research councils' budget amounts to about £240 million. That sum is no more than 4 per cent. of the estimated annual spend by British industry on R and D. Yet that £240 million covers just about the whole of the cost of the Medical Research Council, on which we spent £257 million last year, or it equates to the cost of supporting all the work done in astronomy and particle physics, at a cost of £190 million, together with the whole of the sum devoted to the Economic and Social Research Council, £53 million.

"Partnership" is an attractive word and an attractive concept, and I used it earlier—I see that the Select Committee has endorsed it several times—but I want to draw the attention of my right hon. Friends to its risks, and in particular to the risk that the direction of fundamental research may be shifted, through the development of the apparatus of partnership, into directions that serve the interests of the industries of today rather than the industries of the future.

In particular, I must tell my right hon. Friends that, although the Select Committee supports them at paragraphs 346 to 348, I think that the jury must still be out concerning the arrangements for technology foresight, upon which the OPSS has now embarked. That will turn out to be either a set of talking shops, which will be costly in terms of high-grade manpower, but without practical effects or, much worse, it will become a mechanism for distorting the organic development of the science base under academic leadership. I hope that the Government will produce a full report on that exercise in due course so that the House can draw its own conclusions.

That same line of reasoning leads me to dissent from the Select Committee's report when it refers, at paragraph 129, to the universities. The Government's response on that point is at paragraph 52 of its note, and, to the extent to which it follows the line taken by the Select Committee, I believe it to be mistaken. The Committee says that it would

"support the initiatives to widen the criteria used in assessing research performance and to increase the status of industrial research"

in universities. That conclusion flows from what I see as the current orthodoxy and it reflects the blurring of the philosophical distinctions which I am attempting to assert.

Contrary to what the Select Committee says, and indeed what the Government think, the Government's policy with regard to the science base in the universities should be to build fundamental science in those universities where that work is best done and to make it clear both to industry and to the universities that it is industry's business to develop and fund appropriate networks with the universities in support of applied research. The danger otherwise is that the Government will end up paying for research which is neither first class as fundamental science nor of any real practical relevance to industry, while first-class, basic research opportunities are neglected and industry is encouraged to go on underestimating its practical interest in building its own links with the universities.

I said earlier that Britain's history of strength in basic science is one of the jewels in our national crown. That position was achieved with much effort over several centuries and it can be sustained only with much effort over a long haul. However, great damage can be done in only a short period of neglect and mistaken priorities. That

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

is why my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Ministers have assumed a heavy burden of responsibility in taking on the S part of the OPSS. We all wish them well in carrying it forward.

8.2 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) has added to the signal services that he has given the Select Committee by his wide-ranging speech, which clearly presented the scope and depth of the report and reflected many of the views which the whole Committee would take of the Government's response and the Committee's disappointment with some aspects of it.

The Chairman of the Committee rightly referred to the services given to the Committee by its advisers, Professor Ivan Yates, Mr. Gerard Fairtlough and Professor Michael Gibbons. They are distinguished men of great achievement in the scientific world. Ivan Yates is a former chief engineer and deputy chief executive of British Aerospace. Gerard Fairtlough is the founding managing director of Celltech Ltd. Michael Gibbons is the director of the science policy research unit, which is the leading and longest-running science policy unit in the country. Professor Gibbons was assisted by Professor Roy Rothwell, whose books on industry and science have been of great value for many years.

With that breadth of advice and the wide range of evidence taken, the Committee sought to come up with an analysis which was to be of value both to people in the science community and to its neighbours in education and in other parts of government. That objective was achieved. The report is beginning to be quoted in conferences and forums which look for objective analyses of the overall situation. I am sure that the Committee's report will stand the test of time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) rightly spelt out our criticisms of the Government's science policy. In his capable hands, that criticism will be extended into further practical developments of our own policy over the next two years.

I welcome the speech of the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), whose fulfilment of the duties of Minister with responsibility for science was enjoyable and always stimulating. I agree with much of what he says. It is a great advantage to the House if a Minister or an hon. Member speaks with long experience of and commitment to a subject, and the hon. Member for Wantage has certainly done so over the years.

There has been a change of personnel and Ministers. I echo what the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Pudsey, said about the departure of the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to other duties. He undoubtedly won acceptance by the science community to an extent that totally exceeded the resources in financial terms which he added to it. I am not saying that his acceptability was undeserved; he took an intelligent interest in science and certainly launched some important developments in the restructuring of the research councils which are still being worked out and implemented. Thanks to the right hon. Gentleman's experience of the machinery of government, he was able to carry through changes to the extent that he did, although he lost some important battles in setting up the Office of Science and Technology which probably will not be won until we have a change of Government. It was, of course, a direction in development which Opposition Members had foreshadowed in our proposals for the setting up of the Office of Science and Technology, and the fulfilment of those proposals and their further development will be in the hands of my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy.

After the admirable, wide-ranging and direct speech by the Chairman of the Committee, I should like to stand a little outside the vantage point taken by the Committee and consider the problem from a different point of view:

> "Our dissatisfaction with Britain's industrial performance begins when we compare ourselves with our principal competitors. The quality of our manufactured goods is lower than that of Japan. Our record of innovation cannot match that of the United States. The skills of our designers are often outstripped by those of Italy. Our levels of scientific and technical education are lower than those of Germany. The job of research"—

and, one might say, of Select Committees—

> "is to find out why those things are so; the job of government is to put them right.
>
> Tonight I want to propose a rather different perspective. When I view my own personal performance, I find the outlook equally depressing. I cannot bat as well as Brian Lara. I cannot write as felicitously as Tom Stoppard. I am not as handsome as Hugh Grant. You may feel that I should spend more time in the nets, improve my writing style, and spruce up my image, and indeed I should perhaps do all these things. But the solution I have found is a rather different one. I know I cannot match Lara's cover drive, but when it comes to calculating a demand elasticity I know that I can beat Lara ninety-nine times out of a hundred. Let Lara face the bowling, while I deal with the economics.
>
> Competitive advantage is based, not on doing what others already do well, but on doing what others cannot do as well."

Those are not my words; they are John Kay's introduction to his recent Economic and Social Research Council annual lecture on the foundations of national competitive advantage, but they put a powerful point of view. Of course, John Kay was one of the advisers to the Select Committee.

What are the things that we are good at as a nation? Surely, one thing is, or used to be, basic science. There is a perfectly legitimate case to be made for that in its own right—the hon. Member for Wantage made the point today—irrespective of its economic application. We need to understand the universe and nature in order to survive. Many scientists reasonably regard their own work and their primary duty as a contribution to that end.

Taking the point of application, however, particularly commercial application, science and research and development have an essential contribution to make and a particular application in Britain. Doing what others cannot do as well does not lead to different conclusions from those reached by the Committee and, indeed, the hon. Member for Wantage. Currently, the test criteria are the contribution to the balance of payments and the avoidance of excessive Government borrowing, given adequate levels of public services and acceptable levels of taxation. For national economic performance, it is no good excelling in the production of formula one motor cars if the consumer taste is for much more massive imports of high-tech Japanese-made consumer goods.

It is argued that manufacturing is nothing special and is a rapidly diminishing proportion of economic activity in an advanced industrial economy. As a country, perhaps we have gone post-industrial somewhat prematurely for the health of our balance of payments. We have ceded to foreigners the control and profits of our motor car firms while rightly, in our reduced circumstances, welcoming branch factory investment from Korean electronics companies which have followed the Japanese example rather more successfully than we have. Never mind: it may well be that in the future the proportion of the community engaged in manufacturing and the utilities will fall to less than 5 per cent. in the same way that employment in agriculture has done.

If that is the scope of the application of science and technology, does that mean that the importance of science and technology will diminish in society and perhaps become an activity that can safely be left to other countries? I do not think so. The last wave of technology-generated industries included cars, trucks, planes, oil, gas, electricity, appliances, central heating, radio, television, telephony, petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals. An earlier wave included rail, steamships, coal, coke, steel, gaslight, public health and telegraphy. An earlier one still, which ushered in the industrial revolution, included canals, heat engines, coal and coke again, cast iron and textiles.

It may be that our concept of research and development at the upstream end of a linear process is too closely related to the industries of those earlier waves. The product is first invented; then it is made. What will happen in the industries of the next wave? Commonly included in the list are information technology, biotechnology, health, new materials, environmental restoration and protection. The manufacturing activities of those industries will be small in relation to their total activities, and activities which we would have called research and development in the past will become a much larger part of their activities.

We have already observed that trend in pharmaceuticals, with expenditure on research and development at well over 10 per cent. of turnover. Recently, Dr. George Poste, the head of research and development at Smith Kline Beecham, presented a scenario in which even the giant pharmaceuticals concerns would cease to exist, becoming a complex web of external alliances spread around the globe. In that web will be some of the new breed of biotech companies which have never made a dollar's profit or even a dollar in sales and where all is research and development.

Again, people say that research and development is mainly a long-term investment. In fact, however, 80 per cent. of British Telecom development expenditure is focused on the delivery of projects within the next one to two years. Development is very much a part of current operations.

As for the clearing banks, it has been estimated that smart cards carrying credit will reduce the cost of processing financial transactions to less than one tenth of the present cost; payments will cease to go through the banking system. The nature of high street banking will be transformed yet again, and there will be massive redundancies. Human resource managers in the clearing banks speak of their industry replacing the mining and steel industries as the principal job shedders of the next decade. As the effort to build up personal financial services to replace present high street banking gathers momentum, high-tech finance will move from the corporate to the personal sector with a matching increase in research and development in that service industry.

In the process of changing the role of research and development within economic activity generally, what happens to the accounting definitions and the research and development figures reported in the accounts will be governed by other considerations. In the future, the mental and physical processes that research and development scientists and engineers go through today will become an increasing part of the overall activity in a firm and in society. Many things, from cars to drugs, will be custom developed and made, with the processes taking place largely within the computer systems used by the researcher-developer-designer.

A consequence of that increasing research intensity is the shortening of the duration of the waves of new technologies, as well as that of individual product lifetimes. It is also a major factor in the need for education and training, and for access to them to continue throughout life.

None of that is to be taken for granted. None of it will happen without a great deal of enterprise and effort. It will all have negative as well as positive aspects. But what is missing in the Government's whole approach to industry, technology, science and social policy is any sense of overall strategy, sense of direction or purpose, and the country senses that they have lost their way.

One small instance of what hon. Members have already underlined is the Government's refusal to examine the case for tax incentives for research and development, as recommended by the Committee. The underlying case is simply that it is impossible to appropriate sufficient of the benefit in much research and development; much of the benefit spills over to other firms and, indeed, other countries. Therefore, firms tend to invest below the level that would be best for the competitiveness of the national economy.

The two papers—by Bronwyn Hall and by Coe and Helpman—which are quoted by the Committee are certainly not the last word, but they are a great deal better than the arguments relied on by the Government's White Paper and the recent ACOST study. The Hall paper outdates the Inland Revenue review of the literature, from which Ministers continue to quote. The Inland Revenue has internally reviewed the Hall paper, but Ministers refuse to publish the new analysis; I am not sure whether they have even seen it.

The Coe and Helpman paper also sets within a coherent framework the OECD international comparative data on the intensity of research and development, output growth, and so on, which Ministers constantly distort but which at long last the annual review of Government is beginning to spell out in honest terms.

I shall give one comparison in relation to corporation tax regimes. In the United Kingdom, a company with surplus advance corporation tax gets back in tax relief only 13 per cent. of the cost of a marginal increase in research and development expenditure. In the United States it receives 35 per cent., in Germany 30 per cent., in France 33.3 per cent., and in Japan 37.5 per cent. That lower marginal support for research and development in Britain has been a material encouragement for important British companies to build up their research effort abroad rather than in Britain. Furthermore, it is a self-perpetuating phenomenon in that as the profits earned abroad from that research increase, so surplus ACT increases and the incentives to the firm become more deeply rooted.

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

We can achieve the general major shift in Britain's competitive position that is needed, with much of it contributed by improved innovation processes, and more use of a greater intensity of research and development activity through the kind of measures that have been proposed by the Committee. A strong position in the science base is more important than ever in securing access to and winning the understanding of the faster flow of new results and in providing the essential well-trained researchers. It requires a shift in the role and perception of Government, of which there is no trace in the Government's reply to the Committee's report.

8.21 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): What a pleasure it is to follow a thought-provoking speech such as the one that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). I, too, welcome the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) to his new responsibilities. When the former Science Minister sat on the Bench I had a flashback to the Standing Committee which considered the Intelligence Services Bill, but fortunately we are discussing something a little more interesting today. I declare an interest in ICL.

I thank the members of the Science and Technology Committee for the excellent report which they produced in April. Clearly, they spent a great deal of time on the report—18 months, as we heard from the Chairman of the Committee. It was time well spent. However, like other hon. Members, I find the Government's response disappointing. One of the reasons why I became a Member of Parliament was that, after spending more than 20 years in the information technology industry, I could see other countries catching up with and overtaking Britain in their standard of living. They did it by investing in the future, not in the short term but in the long term, researching and developing products that might not produce tangible benefits this year or next year but in five, 10, or 15 years or longer down the track. If Britain is to survive as a modern, industrialised nation, the people of which enjoy a high standard of living, we must invest long term, too.

Whole swathes of our industry have contracted. We have heard about some of them, including the machine tools industry, today. The science and technology report identifies the real problem. It is a problem shortly to be exposed in a book entitled "The State We're In" by the eminent journalist Will Hutton. Mr. Hutton gave the inaugural Summerfield lecture at the Cheltenham festival of literature earlier this month and identified the problem as short-termism. Other hon. Members have pointed that out.

The former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster listened positively to the wishes of the science community, but I always felt that he was beating his head against a brick wall in trying to persuade his Cabinet colleagues to invest in research and development. The Government's response to the report confirms those fears. We have already heard about paragraph 186 of the report, which says clearly:

> "We believe the time has come for a major re-examination of the case for fiscal incentives for investment in research and development, both at personal and at company level. Such a review should be conducted openly, and its conclusions should be considered by experts outside the Treasury."

In paragraph 19 of the Government's response we read:

> "The Government does not, however, agree with the Committee that there is a case for general tax incentives for spending on research and development".

The Government are wrong on that point. We need to invest now in research and development of the new products that will create wealth and jobs in the future. Through the tax system we need to make it financially attractive for companies to invest in research and development, as they do in the United States.

For example, it should be more attractive for companies to invest in the future than to pay out excessive dividends to shareholders. The country, the companies and the shareholders all have an interest in long-term investment for the future instead of short-term gain. We have already heard that Japan, the United States and Germany are investing more in the future than we are. That means that they, not Britain, will create the wealth and the jobs in the last years of this century and into the next.

The banks, too, must be more flexible in supporting manufacturing industries that are investing in the future. There is a hopeful sign in the Government's response that the banks may be changing their attitude. Without properly funded research, we will spend even more time in the House in the coming years debating further cuts in social programmes, health, education, police and social services. As I have just touched on the police, is not it a disgrace that the Home Office is contemplating introducing a new formula which, at a time of record crime, would cut the budget of the chief constable in my area of Gloucestershire by 9.9 per cent?

I fear that the Government will put short-term financial issues before the long-term goal of providing for Britain an adequate base to maintain and improve our quality of life not only for our generation but for future generations. Indeed, the strategy of the Government seems to be to cut investment in key services to create enough elbow room for a cut in income tax before the next election. That is not only short-termism; it is cynical short-termism. One person's tax cut in 1996 could be that same person's job loss in 1998.

I came across an example of what is wrong a few months ago. An excellent company, Johnson Matthey, is one of the leaders in environmental technology, which is one of the growing industries. It makes catalytic converters, among other things, and it has recently carried out research into fuel cells, a subject mentioned in paragraph 346 of the Committee's report.

Johnson Matthey is now in a position to start manufacturing the technology. When I asked where it would make the new product I expected the answer to be Sonning, just outside Reading, where the research was carried out. But no. It will make the fuel cells in Belgium because the Belgian Government almost fell over themselves to attract Johnson Matthey to create Belgian jobs and exports for the Belgian economy. That is an instance where the Department of Trade and Industry could not keep the jobs and the wealth creation in Britain because it has such a small budget.

Many of the skills learnt in research are those of identifying and better understanding problems, and providing basic knowledge to be used in the future. A potential wealth-creating area may be identified, but will there be resources to make anything of it?

One key area which is regarded by some as likely to have bigger world market potential even than information technology—the field I came from—is biotechnology. Some hon. Members may have seen Dr. Chris Evans of Chiroscience in "The Money Programme" on BBC2 some time ago. He bemoaned the fact that it was likely that the new industry would not get off the ground in Britain because research and venture capital was so difficult to obtain.

Yesterday in *The Sunday Times* there was a report which should interest all hon. Members. It was entitled "Doctors unlock secret of old age". It states:

> "Scientists investigating the development of human cells believe they have unlocked the secret of ageing. The discovery could transform the quality of later life by enabling doctors to delay the onset of age-related illnesses . . . The research, funded partly by a British company, Biotechnology Investments, was hailed this weekend by international experts, who said that if the promise of early results was fulfilled, it could have profound impacts on the treatment of some of the biggest human killers, including cancer and heart and kidney disease."

Clearly there is still an enormous amount of research to be done in that field, but for the sake of mankind it is research that should be done and British scientists should be involved in it. The research is being carried out in California.

That is why it is so vital for the Government to realise that scientific research is not merely something that one should do. Once proven it is something that should permeate all Government Departments—to the Department of Trade and Industry and through it to health, agriculture and beyond.

The reality, as all hon. Members know, is that funding could be limitless. We can all think of projects that are worthy of investment but would far outstrip the budget of any of the parties in the House. There is a shortfall, however, which is damaging Britain's future.

During our debate on science in February, I mentioned David Ko, who was a lecturer in the department of physics at Oxford university. He was worried about the effects of Government funding policy, which was leading to a reduction in the number of physics graduates. Since that time, Mr. Ko has left what I consider to be his vital job at Oxford, because of the lack of funding, and is working for a merchant bank in the City. Perhaps, as the Chairman of the Committee pointed out, he may bring a scientific bent to the workings of that bank, but he went because it pays better and he no longer faces the pressure of making do with a budget that is totally insufficient for the job that he was asked to do.

There should be a proper career structure for research scientists, with salaries and conditions that reflect their level of qualification, which will keep scientists in Britain and encourage others to become scientists. We need to value our scientists in the same way as they are valued in Germany, France, Japan and the United States. We must also match our competitors in research and development.

In this month's edition of *Laboratory News*, the Government's rejection of tax breaks for research and development is greeted with some concern. The Save British Science executive secretary, Dr. John Malvie, condemned the Government's decision as "blind adherence to dogma." He said:

> "The Government should at least be trying to match the assistance that other countries give to R&D. Other countries adopt pragmatic approaches and are not bound by dogma in the way this Government appears to be."

I hope that when the Minister sums up he will provide answers to the questions raised so far and especially to paragraph 19 of the Government's response to the Committee's report. I wish him well in the task of persuading his colleagues of the importance of research in this country. If, as I suspect, he and the Chancellor of the Duchy are unable to persuade the Cabinet to invest more now, that is another example of why Britain needs a fresh start under a new Government.

8.33 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): It is a great pity that the Select Committee report and the report of tonight's debate, in which there has been much consensus on both sides of the House, will not get the attention that they deserve. They are not such good theatre as the performances in the House when we are all at one another's throats, shouting and baying for blood. None the less, I hope that the Minister will listen to the arguments that have been presented and take those back because they are serious and important for our country.

In trying to emphasise the importance of the report I must quote a letter from one managing director to our Committee Clerk. He wrote of the report:

> "I have to say that it is the most sensible and thoughtful summary of our parlous state and prescription to reverse our decline that I remember seeing. It is, in fact, quite magnificent in its measured and intelligent insight.
>
> Let it all be done, just as your Committee has set it out, and we can at least plan to put the Great back in front of Britain."

Judging by the published Government response, I think that that correspondent will be very disappointed, but perhaps the Minister can reassure us when he sums up.

The report outlined, as the correspondent said, the parlous state of our industrial and our research and development bases. The United Kingdom was the only OECD country in which total expenditure on research and development declined as a percentage of gross domestic product between 1981 and 1988. Since then, it has fallen further. Research and development data suggest that the United Kingdom has tended to underinvest in research and development costs compared with our major competitors. That problem is even more marked when defence expenditure is excluded.

According to the National Westminster bank, United Kingdom companies spend twice as much on dividends as on research and development. By contrast, the top 200 international companies spend twice as much on research and development as on dividends. The business sector in Japan spends as much as a percentage of its gross domestic product on research and development as our entire business and Government expenditure put together.

We have demonstrated how the UK tax system encourages distribution rather than retention of profits. Financial institutions such as pension funds own nearly

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60 per cent. of the equity in UK manufacturing—a total of £350 billion. Of course, they receive large tax handouts to encourage them.

Mr. Jackson, the chairman of the Celltech group, told the Committee that the

> "Government should consider with some urgency what steps can be taken to re-divert the savings stream so that more private individuals can contemplate investing in young companies a part of their savings".

He said that only a very small part is needed so that we can invest in the future and at the same time people can exercise

> "their right to make their own wealth and provide for the future."

The Government need to consider ways in which that change can be brought about. They need to consider ways to encourage long-term investment in British industry and to ensure that small high-tech companies get the investment that they need.

As we heard, the Committee proposed that the Treasury should consider the possibility of providing fiscal incentives for increased expenditure in research and development. We quoted various new items of research which led us to believe that, over a five-year period, there will be more than sufficient payback to justify that expenditure. When we raised the matter with the former Chancellor of the Duchy, he said:

> "We have had discussions with the Treasury about this."

It is clear from the Government's response that those discussions quickly terminated.

Although I welcome the initiative to consider the supply of finance and so forth, as explained in paragraph 18 of the response, how can we have an open look at the matter when the Government immediately rule out any possibility of even examining the case for tax incentives, without dealing with any of the arguments that the Committee put forward?

Last March, on the same day as the former Financial Secretary to the Treasury urged the CBI to enter into a dialogue with the Government over the problems of securing funding for British companies on terms comparable with those of our competitors, the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology was answering questions in the House on interest rates for long-term loans. It is difficult to believe that they were speaking about the same issue.

The Under-Secretary of State told the House that British companies had no problems in securing long-term loans at favourable rates, whereas the Financial Secretary identified difficulties in raising capital for high-tech start-ups, problems with high dividend payouts and the short-term nature of many of the loans to small and medium-sized enterprises; many of the problems highlighted in the Committee report. As that Financial Secretary to the Treasury has moved on, it seems that the open mind which seemed to be signalled at that time has now been closed tight.

The Government make great play of their success in securing inward investment into this country. To some extent, that has been recognised by the Committee report, which states:

> "We have been impressed by the potential in inward investment to boost the innovatory and technical capacity of UK industry. The influence of new manufacturers from Japan in raising standards throughout the supply chain has been considerable."

That is true, but the figures show that—far from the boast of the Government that we have secured large amounts of inward investment—more money is going out of Britain and being invested abroad than is coming into the country.

The Government try to say that their policies of deregulation and low wages have led to their "success", as they call it. However, when Committee members were in Japan, it was made clear that low wages were not an issue at all for potential investors. They were concerned about the skills of the people and the infrastructure of the areas to which they were coming. Above all, our success in attracting overseas investment has been due to our one great advantage over other European countries—we speak the international language, English.

We have secured a considerable amount of inward investment, but we must address the lack of long-term investment in our own country and stop the haemorrhage of investment that goes from this country abroad. During the past five years for which figures are available, Department of Trade and Industry figures show that more than £8 billion more money has been invested overseas than has come into this country. I understand that the most recent figures are even worse, and show a deterioration. If we are to get the investment that Britain needs—yes, investment from abroad, but also the investment of our own country's wealth—and if we are to ensure that the investment that is available is invested for the future of our country, the Government should take more note of the recommendations in the Select Committee's report.

8.43 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): In welcoming the Minister to his new post, I point out to him that if he cares to visit his boss's constituency in Wirral, West he has to trespass on my territory and pass through Ellesmere Port and Neston. There are other ways round, but that is the natural route in. In doing so, the Minister might care to note that he would have to pass four research centres—two in the private sector and two in the public sector.

The private sector organisations are involved in lubricants and electricity research and both are important centres of industrial research in our community. In the public sector are two parts of Liverpool university; the school of veterinary science and the botanical gardens at Ness, both of which are, in their own right, important centres of research.

The Minister should have a careful look at the work of some of the institutions which contribute greatly to British life, but he must also look at the needs of small and medium-sized companies which are emerging with fresh ideas, and he must look most carefully at how those businesses are supported. The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) referred to *Laboratory News*, and quoted from the chairman of Save British Science. I hope that the Minister recognises that Save British Science has taken an objective view of the Government's action—or inaction—on the question of science. It has praised where praise is due and, on the issue of taxation, damned where damnation is due.

The Government take a two-edged position on the matter. When it is convenient, they pass the buck to the Treasury, and this is perhaps one of the examples where, in the interests of science, they should be leaning on the Treasury and persuading officials that this is the right way forward. I have just had an exchange of correspondence with a Minister from the Department of the Environment on the important issue of pollution caused by motor vehicle emissions, and the different fiscal policies that are applied to fuels used by motor cars. The response that I got was that it is a matter for the Treasury. It is extraordinary that matters which have a direct impact upon the environment are regarded by the Government as being simply matters for the Treasury. Surely Departments should be looking long and hard at why pressures are emerging for them to have a fresh look at their fiscal strategy.

I want to dwell on a comparison between some of the successful industries in our nation and the difficulties faced by small and emerging companies. I shall try to illustrate why I think that some of our smaller companies do not become big companies and either become victims of takeovers or disappear off the face of the earth. Companies involved in successful industries such as pharmaceuticals, aerospace and telecommunications would welcome any changes which the Government made. But historically, many of the successes in those areas—for example, the development of the System X switchgear, launch aid programmes in aerospace or developments inside the pharmaceuticals industry with a view to marketing through the national health service—have had a huge inbuilt advantage in that they knew exactly where the marketplace was.

It is interesting that, in telecommunications, much of the private sector work—with the exception of that which is done by Martlesham—has now disappeared out of this country. There is a risk that the successor to System X will be researched outside the UK. I hope that the Government will think carefully about the implications of that for jobs, both in research and development and in manufacturing.

In contrasting those three areas of success with some of the small companies, we must ask what those small companies need. They need ideas, education, training, financial backers, and infrastructure support such as my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) mentioned and which is available at institutes in other countries such as the Frauhofer, Max Planck and Steinbeis institutes, and others.

If we look, section by section, at the evidence received by the Committee, one must conclude that the Government are being extremely short-sighted in simply ignoring what was, as many hon. Members have already pointed out, a simple recommendation for a major re-examination of the case for fiscal incentives for research and development conducted by people and by companies. The Committee's recommendation also suggested:

> "Such a review should be conducted openly, and its conclusions considered by experts outside the Treasury."

Perhaps the Government are a little uncomfortable with the final part of the sentence, which harks back to their Treasury-driven policy.

In their response, the Government simply said that there was no case for general tax incentives. I want to highlight the support that small and medium-sized companies need to enable the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. Such support would encourage fresh scientific thinking in the smaller companies in the manufacturing industry and enable them to grow.

On education, most members of the Committee shared my disappointment at the weakness of the evidence that we received from the Department for Education—I found it one of the most depressing sittings of our 18-month study. There was an acute lack of understanding as to what industry needs, for example, in terms of information technology. I find it quite extraordinary that existing benefits in our education system in relation to information technology, especially with the explosion in the use of the information super-highways and the Internet, are simply being played down by the Government.

In September, I read an article in a magazine which jokingly referred to the Government's contribution to the debate on the information super-highway in terms of the Department of Transport. It implied that the cones hotline is to be made available on E-mail. So we will be able to find out which roads might be dug up by various utilities and work out whether it would be wise to drive down them. I wrote to the magazine to point out that although it was a good idea in principle it presupposed that the utility company does not sever the telephone cable as well, as that would make communications rather difficult. Given the potential benefits within government for such information technology development, it is depressing that the Government have such a narrow view on the subject. I hope that they will have a fresh look at the evidence that some of their own Departments gave to our Committee.

The Committee also took evidence about various overseas institutes, particularly in Germany, which give infrastructure support to emergent companies. I was so fascinated by the role of one, the Institute for Micro Electronics at Stuttgart, that during the following summer, while on a holiday to Germany, I took a day out, much to the chagrin of my family, to revisit that institute. I was fascinated by the links that it has established between the major players in the Stuttgart area, such as Siemens, Mercedes Benz and Bosch, and small emerging companies. To see how the those large players give active support to the concept of potential future competition is an interesting challenge not just to British industry but to the British Government. Such institutes, which receive proper support from both the federal and state Governments, have an important role in the future.

As many hon. Members have already said, we need to look at the role of the financial institutions in supporting our science base. To use a well-worn phrase, short-termism seems to be the order of the day. There is no doubt that small and medium-sized companies are the biggest sufferers from that phenomenon. We cannot simply look at the role of the banks and other financial institutions in total isolation. We must consider it in the context of infrastructural support and education and training. One must ask why the banks are not prepared to adopt a positive role to science similar to that evident in other countries. One must conclude that the banks believe that, in comparison with investing in parallel companies in other countries, they would find themselves at a disadvantage if they invested in our science base. That belief is due to our failure to give such infrastructural support to those emergent companies that are full of fresh, good ideas.

That support, unfortunately, falls down in education, because of the lack of the kind of institutes that exist in other countries and because of our failure to give any assistance through our own fiscal policies. As the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who chaired our

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Committee so admirably, outlined in his contribution, that complex relationship of support must be taken into account. I do not believe that it is adequate for the Government simply to say that they do not agree with the Committee. If the Minister is to be the Minister for science he must understand that science is based on careful study and analysis. The Government's response—a paragraph of a mere three and a half lines—represents neither careful study nor careful analysis. The Minister's conclusions are therefore faulty. I press the Minister to think again along the lines urged by hon. Members on both sides of the House tonight.

8.57 pm

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House who welcomed the new Minister to his post this evening. He may not realise it yet, but he probably has one of the most interesting posts in government, and I hope that he will enjoy it as he should. It is important that he immerse himself in science. The previous Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster set a good example in doing so, and earned the respect of many scientists in the process.

This has been a high-quality debate, and I am pleased to be able to participate in it. I have enjoyed immensely all the contributions that have been made, and it is satisfying that so much thought and consideration has gone into the speeches this evening.

It is worth reflecting that it is 30 years since a Labour Prime Minister heralded the "white heat of the technological revolution". During the period since then, however, all political parties have come to realise the crucial importance of exploiting science and technology for industrial and commercial success. A recent White Paper on competitiveness underlined the importance of innovation and put in place a series of measures that will, I hope, encourage industry to make better use of the science and engineering base.

Universities are being encouraged to recognise the value of intellectual property rights and to protect their activities appropriately. I should like to say more about that, because how intellectual property rights are treated by universities and exploited by industry is crucial to the whole process of innovation. I am concerned about whether the line which the Government are taking on intellectual property rights will necessarily lead to the industrial success which they are promoting.

When Professor Sir David Williams, vice-chancellor of Cambridge university, gave evidence to the Science and Technology Select Committee's inquiry, he said:

> "It is the policy of this University not to take title itself in the intellectual property rights of its employees nor to apply for any patent in the name of the University itself."

He went on to say that the "Cambridge phenomenon" has been attributed to the university's policy on intellectual property rights.

That appears to be unusual, if not unique, among universities in the UK. Indeed, most of the institutions that gave evidence to the Science and Technology Select Committee said that they made every effort to exploit their intellectual property rights, and several universities, such as Edinburgh, quoted the fact that they were making some £3.5 million a year through contract research and the royalties from their intellectual property rights.

The great incentive for universities, which have been starved of funds over the past few years, is for them to follow the Government's advice. Universities have done everything possible to raise income from a variety of sources, one of which must be income from industrial research, whether funded directly by outside firms or by royalties, as I have just described. The reality, however, is that, despite some excellent endeavours by industrial liaison officers and highly professional organisations such as the British Technology Group, universities earn only a tiny fraction from their intellectual property rights of the public funding that they receive in grants. One commentator put that amount at about 1 per cent., which is extremely small.

Chris Elliott, director of Smith Systems Engineering, said:

> "Contract research should be a low priority but has been increasingly popular with Universities because it earns money. It is dangerous because it can distort the priorities and lead to a risk of Universities changing from being centres of academic excellence to centres of industrial mediocrity."

He went on:

> "The real value of research lies in the understanding that it generates, not the knowledge—and understanding is not something that can be packaged and sold under licence."

When the Science and Technology Select Committee reported on that matter, we said that it was important to take a flexible approach to intellectual property rights. Although in some areas there may be little packets of knowledge that can be sold on to industry for exploitation, the problem is that, when universities are encouraged to exploit all their IPR in that way, the understanding is contained rather than disseminated. We have industrial liaison officers who start behaving like police officers and raising barriers, rather than playing what is perhaps their proper role as salespeople and advertising executives.

Industrial liaison units in universities have problems. Many are understaffed and under-resourced. Industrial liaison officers are often undertrained and do not appreciate the nature of the commodity that they seek to exploit. Several firms have complained that universities demand too high a price for the knowledge and understanding that they have to sell.

I believe that that shows a misunderstanding of the way in which technology transfer is effected. If industry is to benefit from the understanding that is generated by university research, industry must participate throughout the process, and gain a thorough comprehension of the ideas.

One of the ways that the research councils have been trying to promote such comprehension is by means of firms adopting what they call the "heavy uncle model"—that is, providing expertise, guidance and some funding, as well as access to special facilities, if needed. I am pleased to say that I know of an excellent example in my constituency, in the form of the Rolls-Royce university technology centre, which is about to be opened in the department of material science at the university of Cambridge. That is a major collaboration; more than £1 million of funding will be provided by Rolls-Royce.

That type of input from British firms is all too rare: in the past it has been provided by Hitachi and Sony and many Japanese firms and firms from the rest of Europe and from the United States, but infrequently by British firms. Therefore, I very much hope that the Rolls-Royce lead will be followed by other major industrial players in the UK.

The policy of the university of Cambridge, of assigning intellectual property rights to the inventor, has had many other desirable effects. As Sir David Williams has said, it is one of the factors that has led to what is commonly known as the "Cambridge phenomenon"—the growth of many high-tech firms in and around Cambridge. It has encouraged many scientists to become entrepreneurs, and to set up their own high-tech firms and consultancies.

The success of industrial collaboration and the local high-tech economy in Cambridge is a shining example to the rest of the United Kingdom. Cambridgeshire now has 27,000 high-tech jobs, and it is a rapidly expanding sector. The Government should take time to think about that, and to consider what they can learn from that experience. There are some special factors in Cambridge; we should think about whether those can be replicated in other parts of the UK. The approach to intellectual property rights that has been taken in Cambridge is an important factor, which should continue.

Unfortunately, the university of Cambridge is becoming increasingly hampered by the research councils' insistence that intellectual property rights be exploited. Departments with projects that rely on research council funds are being told that they should not collaborate freely with industry without demanding a commission for their time and understanding.

The Select Committee on Science and Technology recommended that there should be a diversity of arrangements for exploitation. That means that universities should be free to build links and co-operate with industry in whatever way is beneficial for that collaboration to succeed. They should not be under pressure from the research councils, or anyone else, to sell every bit of knowledge and understanding. That would be highly counter-productive.

I associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) about the importance of basic research. That subject is not discussed in the report, because we were speaking about the rather applied and market-oriented research that universities and industry do when they work together. However, basic research is fundamental, and it is crucial that it is not geared into applied areas and mission-oriented sectors that have a practical and applied basis, because there are some excellent centres of basic research in this country.

It is important that those continue, because they are providing the foundation and basis for industries 20 or 30 years' hence, instead of today's industries. I know that there is much concern in my constituency about the way in which the Government now talk about mission-oriented research. There is much alarm that some of the basic research may not continue to be funded.

We said a great deal in the report about the significance of funding. I am anxious about the funding for small technology-based businesses. Many small firms complain about the lack of availability of finance, especially for development.

A survey of such firms in the Cambridge area is quoted in the report; it reveals that only one third of the firms had outstanding bank loans, just two had used the small firms loan guarantee scheme, and venture capital was regarded as far too expensive to be a viable option. Most entrepreneurs had to rely on families and friends—which one firm called the black economy—to start or develop their businesses.

Many Cambridge entrepreneurs attribute the successful start of their firms to an innovative manager at Barclays bank in the early 1980s called Matthew Bullock. It is worth mentioning his name, as it comes to many people's lips when they describe how their own firms were started at that time.

Unlike modern bank managers, Matthew Bullock appeared to have a delegated responsibility for deciding which ideas were worth funding, and he was prepared to take the sort of risks from which banks in the 1990s shy away. If it is impossible for banks to emulate Bullock's success in post-recession Britain, we need to evolve much better systems for financing people who have ideas that they wish to exploit.

Many of our more successful competitors have different arrangements to ensure longer-term financial support is more readily available. We need to shift towards a more co-operative relationship so that banks can offer more advice, and give both technological and business support. Small businesses need access to funds that are both competitive and secure.

Yesterday's edition of *The Observer* contained an excellent article by William Keegan, in which he discussed a book by David Storey of the university of Warwick, "Understanding the Small Business Sector". He said that 40 per cent. of small businesses starting today do not survive for more than three years. But if firms are technology-based, they are more likely to offer high growth rates, more jobs—and many more interesting jobs—and less risk of failure.

The trouble is that banks and venture capitalists are wary of high tech. During our inquiry, we found that often there was no one in a position of responsibility able to take the relevant decisions, with the depth of knowledge and understanding of high-tech business necessary to take decisions about funding.

That is in contrast to the United States, where 80 per cent. of venture capital portfolios involve technology-based business compared with only 20 per cent. here. But in my constituency in Cambridge, the St John's innovation centre has had an extraordinarily low failure rate among high-tech firms—only 4 per cent. per annum in the past five years, which must have been among the worst years for most small businesses.

Throughout a very damaging recession, we have had a failure rate among high-tech firms of only 4 per cent. That is something of which banks, venture capitalists and everyone else involved in the funding of business need to take note because it is not generally recognised. There is a myth that high-tech firms are high-risk, which is simply not true when one considers the facts. Mr. Storey is quoted as saying:

> "We need a huge cultural change to encourage and promote the development of science-based businesses."

I could not agree more.

I welcome the fact that the Labour party is discussing the idea of helping to establish a private sector-managed investment fund whose assets would be available to small businesses. We are considering ways of using the tax system to support that scheme. A fund would be managed

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

regionally and would act as an intermediary between the investor and the small business. Such an arrangement is long overdue.

Very few hon. Members tonight have mentioned the importance of skills and training. I do not intend to dwell very long on that matter, but I want to draw attention to the letter that has been sent, I think, to most hon. Members today by the Institution of Electrical Engineers. It draws attention to the need for professional engineers constantly to update their skills.

The institution today announced an ambitious plan to establish up to eight engineering centres by the end of the century. They will be strategically placed around the country; the first will be located in Birmingham, I believe. The centres will provide easy local access to training courses, lectures and similar activities. They will be available not only to members of the institution but to all similar institutions and private organisations. They will combine modern lecture theatres with meeting rooms and offices. They will become one-stop shops for the professional engineer to gain access to up-to-date technical information and skills training.

That is a welcome recognition of the importance of engineering training and of the continued need to keep skills up to date, particularly in the engineering sector. I hope that other professional organisations will follow suit and try to do the same for their people working in British industry.

One of the Select Committee report's most important recommendations has been mentioned by almost every hon. Member—the major re-examination of fiscal incentives for investment in research and development, both at the personal and at company level. Having carefully considered evidence on the matter, Committee members felt sufficiently strongly to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The reply did not instil confidence. It said:

> "As you will know, the Government's general view is that we see no need for any further change in the already generous arrangements for research and development".

The reply to the Select Committee report was even more depressing. It said:

> "The Government does not, however, agree with the Committee that there is a case for general tax incentives for spending on research and development."

I started to think about why the Government are saying those things. Is it because they are convinced that the evidence is not worth considering? Have they rejected it in advance? That is one possible explanation. Or are they worried that, if considered properly, the evidence would show overwhelmingly good reasons for spending more money?

I cannot decide which reasons the Minister could possibly have for rejecting an eminently sensible idea. I therefore hope that he will tell us tonight whether I am correct in my assumptions, or whether there is a different reason why the Government do not even want to examine the compelling evidence, which convinced Committee members that the proposal was worth considering and which would convince him if he were seriously to pay attention to it.

Dr. Bray: Is not one of the most worrying aspects of the Chancellor's letter that he says that he is generous? Is the Chancellor in a position to be generous to anyone?

Mrs. Campbell: I was amused and entertained by my hon. Friend when he spoke about true tax incentives, and when he compared the United Kingdom with other countries. It is clear from what he said that the UK is not generous in its tax incentives for R and D. Perhaps that explains why business expenditure on R and D is so low in this country compared with our international competitors.

Sir Giles Shaw: I do not wish to enter into a debate about the generosity of the Chancellor—that is probably a contradiction in terms—but I suggest that the generosity lay in the fact that the experiment on the American basis suggested a percentage of economic growth which more than compensated for the actuality of the fiscal incentive. The generosity had been demonstrated in the experiment.

Mrs. Campbell: I am grateful for that intervention. Our investigations revealed that, if the level of business expenditure in the United Kingdom was increased over five years from 1.36 per cent. to 1.8 per cent. of GDP, it would increase the rate of growth by 0.8 per cent., or £5 billion a year.

That is an enormous sum of money, which no Government could afford to ignore or say is not worth considering. I am sure that the Minister has got the message that we want him to take this point seriously. It is true that the tax yield from the increased incomes would quickly exceed the tax loss from the tax credit. I regret that the Treasury seems unable to take that point on board.

We are trying to encourage our industrial firms to invest in R and D, new equipment and training, but we are not prepared to do so ourselves. Perhaps the Government could ignore Treasury advice for once and set a good example in this instance.

It is essential that the Government do everything possible to expand the R and D they carry out, and that carried out by business. The President of the United States has just announced that he intends to increase the total amount spent on R and D by Government and business from 2.6 per cent. to 3 per cent. of GDP. At the same time, there will be a massive switch from defence R and D to civil R and D. The United States Government call that the transition from a vigilant society to a humane society. They are powerful words, which we too need to note.

Although the Government are intent on cutting defence spending, there is no plan for that money to be switched into civil research in which we clearly need to invest. There is a very sharp contrast between our plans and those of the United States. In this country, R and D has already slipped to 2.1 per cent. of GDP, and the Government appear to be proposing that it should fall even further—there are sharp cuts in the pipeline over the next two years.

Many scientists are alarmed by Sir Peter Levene's inquiry into, or efficiency scrutiny of, Government research establishments. Scientists are worried, but not because they do not welcome change—I think that many feel that the time is right to re-examine Government research establishments and ascertain what are their objectives and whether they are still being met. What is demoralising and dispiriting most of the people who work in those establishments is the fact that the exercise is Treasury-led. At the end of the day, the Government are hoping to achieve the reduction in R and D spending outlined in their "Forward Look" plans.

There has been a dramatic decrease in Government spend—around 35 per cent. between 1986 and the projected spend for 1996. Some of that reduction in spend still has to be achieved and, as I have said, the great worry is that Sir Peter Levene's inquiry into Government research establishments will find the means of effecting that decrease in Government spend.

I do not know whether the Government hope that private business will make up for the reduction in Government research and development. I am afraid that there is little hope that that will happen. I believe that we are seeing the country spiralling down because essential investment is missing. What worries me is that, in the next century, Britain will become one of the technologically illiterate countries that will make up the new third world.

9.24 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert G. Hughes): I thank hon. Members who have made some kind remarks about me and about my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. It is, indeed, a great pleasure and change for me to address the House. As I took a vow of silence in the Whips' Office, it has been two years since I addressed the House. I hope that, after hearing my first address, my constituents will think, "I wonder why he did not speak before," rather than wondering why I spoke at all.

The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie)—I am part Scots and my grandmother, if she were still alive, would kill me for my dreadful pronunciation—mentioned the Higgs boson. After two years in which I sometimes wondered whether there was a majority for the Government in the House, it is an interesting change to wonder whether the top quark exists or not. That is quite a difference.

I welcome, as the Government have, the report from the Select Committee on Science and Technology and I commend it for its work. In particular, I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), not only for his work over such a long period on putting the report together, but for the statesmanlike way in which he put his case tonight. It is fair to say that there is a great deal of agreement between the Government and the Committee, although one would not necessarily have thought so from listening to the debate tonight.

Nevertheless, the debate showed that there is a great deal of expertise and a great deal of knowledgeable concern about these important issues in the House. Some think that it is fashionable to write in the press that if one wants expertise and knowledgeable concern, one has to go to another place. I have never thought that to be true. Tonight's debate has shown that. There is no doubt that the Government are committed to promoting science, engineering and technology. That commitment is shown, although we can bandy statistics—there have been a lot of statistics in the debate—by the fact that the science budget has increased by 30 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80.

Science and technology touch every aspect of our daily lives. Our future prosperity and quality of life depend on them, as has been pointed out by many speakers in the debate. The Prime Minister, of course, is determined that science should play a part in the centre of our lives, at the heart of Government. That is why, as most hon. Members have said, he appointed the first Cabinet Minister with responsibility for science and technology for 30 years. That has been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey and by many other speakers. They have referred to the proud record of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) in terms of his work and in terms of the trust that built up in the scientific, engineering and technology communities in him as the first Cabinet Minister with responsibility for science, aided as he was first by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) and then by my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis).

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and I will seek to follow very much in the mould of our predecessors. We shall seek to be a friend to the science community, to be a voice at the heart of Government and to ensure that the arguments, some of which have been reflected tonight, are made right at the heart of Government.

One of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey, the Chairman of the Select Committee, was whether the Office of Science and Technology is here to stay. I can assure the House that it is. It is a voice that must be heard, not just at the heart of Government but across the European Union and throughout the world. I shall refer more to that in a minute, because science is an international endeavour in which we believe Britain must play its full part.

The Government set out their policy for science, engineering and technology in last year's White Paper, "Realising our Potential". At the heart of our policies is a conviction that we need a closer partnership between industry, academia and Government. The report of the Select Committee, on which the debate is rightly focused, showed that, in general, members of the Committee share our view. We welcomed the Select Committee's inquiry and were pleased that the Committee was looking at an area of such central importance.

The Committee's conclusions, in my view—it is perhaps why our response was rather shorter than the report itself—were broadly supportive of what the Government are doing and, of course, we are now seeing the first results of the policies that we set out in "Realising our Potential".

Let me deal now with some of the specific points that were made by right hon. and hon. Members. Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey and the hon. Members for Kirkcaldy and for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell), referred to the efficiency unit's scrutiny of public sector research establishments. The report, which was published in July, raises important issues about the future of scientific establishments in the UK. It is important that we get the arrangements right, which is why we are having a period of public consultation. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will meet the Science and Technology

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

Select Committee on Wednesday and we are very much looking forward to hearing what it and the Committee in another place has to say about it.

Obviously, because we are towards the end of a consultation period, I should like to reassure the House that decisions have not been taken on the recommendations in the report. I am sure that hon. Members would not want me to pre-empt the decisions while we are still listening to those with an interest in what the Committee has to say, but it is important, as we pointed out in the science, engineering and technology White Paper, that the ownership and financing of the public sector research establishments is examined to ensure that the resources that the Government provide are spent as effectively as possible. I do not think that any hon. Member would seriously argue with that. It is an efficiency scrutiny, and we are seeking to spend the money in the best way possible.

I now deal with a matter that every hon. Member speaking in the debate has raised—tax incentives for research and development. There was, as hon. Members pointed out, only a three-and-a-half line reply in the Government's response to that matter. It is simply that we do not consider that there is a case for general tax incentives for spending on research and development. We believe that the current system of relief for R and D is comprehensive and substantial, and almost all expenditure is written off when it occurs, or very shortly thereafter.

A number of foreign comparisons were made, but foreign tax comparisons are notoriously difficult to make, as the complete fiscal picture must be considered. UK corporation tax rates, for instance, are among the lowest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Government believe that low tax rates, a broad tax base and few special allowances are the best way to promote investment and stimulate industry.

I would add just two points to that. Of course, some of the companies quoted in the debate tonight would prefer tax credits to grants. I understand that. They are bound to say that, because tax credits remove some of the strings that are attached when a grant is paid. It is understandable that they would take that view, but nevertheless, that is not a good reason for changing.

Sir Giles Shaw: I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend so early in his speech.

I fully understand the reasons why, for example, it is considered that there are other ways of dealing with the matter than tax credits or grants—for example, through taxation, economic management and so on. The crucial point, which my hon. Friend might care to address—probably not tonight, but subsequently—is that the condition in which we find ourselves requires a significant lift in the commitment to innovation and investment technology by industry. It is that aspect of it that makes other systems of releasing new energy in that sector worth re-examination.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend has made an extremely important point. No one would disagree about the importance of lifting the amount of investment in that area. As the point has been made strongly in the debate by every speaker, I will ask the officials in the OST to consider the matter again in terms of the case that has been made.

I listened carefully to the arguments. Of course the argument can be made in terms of what we want to happen. However, the question is whether what we want to happen will be realised by the use of tax credits. I heard no substantial arguments to convince me that the advice that I have been given is wrong, but that does not mean that such advice does not exist. As I have said, I will ask my officials to look at the matter once more.

Dr. Bray: I understand what the Minister is saying and he is right to say that the subject is complex. That is why we asked that it should be thoroughly examined. Has the Minister seen the Inland Revenue evaluation of Bronwyn Hall's paper? If not, will he read it and lay it before the House?

Mr. Hughes: While I have not seen that paper, it is something that only my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer would bring before the House. Funnily enough, that has always been the case with Governments in the past and it will be the case in future.

Mr. Miller: There is a key document which is crucial to the analysis of the problem that we are facing, a problem that has been identified by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but the Government are saying that some of that evidence will not come out for public consumption. I thought that the Minister's Department was responsible for open government.

Mr. Hughes: No Government have published more information about the workings of government than this Government. However, that point is rather removed from the debate.

If people recommend a change as substantial as the proposal, they must produce harder and more concrete arguments than they have produced today. Several hon. Members prayed in aid small companies when they advanced their argument tonight. Many small and perhaps struggling companies would be tax-exhausted and would not pay tax. How can we believe that tax credits would help them better than grants? The argument does not stand up in that sense.

Dr. Bray: Tax credits, as income tax allowances, would help small companies as they would give them credit against future tax liability. The Inland Revenue published an evaluation eight years ago. The Minister was quite right to say that it would be for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to publish it, but surely he could give an undertaking to make representations to the Chancellor to the effect that he should update that study.

Mr. Hughes: If a company is not paying tax and does not believe that it is going to pay tax, it may not be impressed by the idea of receiving a tax credit. I have already given an undertaking to the House that I will ask my officials to consider the matter in the light of the comments that have been made today.

I want now to consider the apparent conflict between paragraphs 12 and 25 in the Government's response. We believe that our approach to innovation in industry is increasingly directed to small and medium-sized companies by improving the climate for innovation, helping to identify and disseminate best practice, helping firms to get the services and support that they need and that industrial research and technology organisations can supply and by helping firms have access to, and use effectively, technology from home and abroad. I do not believe that there is a difference between those two paragraphs.

I want now to refer to the points raised by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) about the information super-highway and the Internet. A recent report for the Government by PA Consulting in February 1974—*[Interruption.]* I beg hon. Members' pardon; we are ahead of our time, but not that far ahead. A report for the Government in February 1994 found that the United Kingdom had a more developed fibre network than the United States or Japan, largely thanks to the investment of billions of pounds by cable companies. Whereas the Americans started by choosing to pay for the installation of the network to lead to the information super-highway, they are now moving toward our approach. It is not wise for us to adopt their approach.

The Government, through the Office of Public Service and Science, are giving a lead by consulting on public service applications of information super-highways. We are proposing to make public service information available as a first step on the Internet, called "open gov".

Mrs. Anne Campbell: I am sure that the House is pleased to hear that. Is it desirable that we have in the United Kingdom several small companies which are financed mainly from across the water in the United States and which are installing a variety of systems, not all optical fibre, with their own standards and regulations? That will make it difficult for us to have a national network that is worthy of the name.

Mr. Hughes: Of course there are some concerns about that matter. Even with the problems that exist and, frankly, even if the money is inward investment from the United States, Canada or anywhere else, that matter does not concern me at all because we have the benefit of that investment. Not all investment is exactly what we would want, but if we state-directed it and told companies precisely what they could and could not do, we would not receive that investment at all. Therefore, I would be loth to go down that road.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage rightly spoke about AEA Technology and the importance of ensuring that it is not fragmented on privatisation. We shall do our best to ensure that it is not, for the reasons that my hon. Friend gave, but, if he considers that points are being missed he will be very forthright in telling us what we should do on behalf of his constituents. We would welcome his input.

I have referred to a new partnership. That brings me to the launch of the technology foresight programme, which was one of the most important steps in building the partnership. An enormous number of science-driven opportunities lie before us. Indeed, the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) referred to some of them. If we take advantage of them we shall reap large rewards. For instance, victims of heart disease may benefit from the use of miniature robots which can work inside the body to unclog arteries. International business and tourism may benefit from systems that provide real-time translation of telephone conversations into various languages.

Much of the tedium of business travel might be replaced by "virtual meetings" which bring participants from many locations into contact through multi-media communications. When that was mentioned in a debate on the travelling of Select Committees, it did not enjoy a very good reception, and I am not sure whether it would do so more widely. The environment might be cared for with the help of custom-designed organisms which clean up pollutants.

Many of those advances are just around the corner, as hon. Members have said. We must face up to the stark reality, but not all hon. Members did. The United Kingdom cannot afford to do all the necessary science and technology to realise such advances—indeed, no one country can. Technology foresight is important to enable us to identify future market opportunities and emerging technologies to allow United Kingdom companies to exploit them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage referred to the risks to the science base of our moving money from basic science. We recognise that risk as well, and it is our intention to ensure that that does not happen.

The technology foresight programme has built new networks between industry, academics and Government, and the process itself, as I saw at the technology foresight forum, is of great value and importance. We have established 15 panels to conduct foresight in specific areas, and those produced preliminary views during the spring and summer. The programme covers the sectors that one would expect, such as information technology, manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, but it is also breaking new ground by covering financial services, retailing and leisure.

In a most thoughtful speech, the hon. Member for Motherwell, South spoke about smart cards, the effect of new technology on banking and the effect that that could have on jobs, on the way that people use banking and on the way that people shop. All of those things are important. That is part of the work that the financial services panel is undertaking. As the City of London is the centre of financial transactions not only in Europe but in the world, it regards the programme as an opportunity to expand its business. We must never forget that what may be a problem can be an opportunity as well.

The panels are holding 60 regional workshops to consult on the key issues arising out of their initial analysis. To reach the parts that would not be reached otherwise, a postal questionnaire was sent to 8,000 people. It has already elicited more responses than equivalent exercises in Germany and Japan, and the responses are still coming in thick and fast.

The technology foresight programme has attracted enthusiasm and commitment from a wide range of firms, research and technology organisations, academics, professional institutions and learned societies. Looking at the amount of work that is put into the technology foresight programme by important people from all those organisations, I wonder how some of them find time for their day jobs. I simply take this opportunity to thank the companies and institutions that have been so generous in allowing their senior employees to spend so much time on the technology foresight programme.

The programme is on track to produce its first results next spring. They will inform our thinking about science, engineering and technology, and will provide useful guidance for private sector investment. We have already announced our intention to undertake another foresight exercise in a few years' time. We want to learn from our

[Mr. Hughes]

experiences of this programme in devising the next one, and will welcome the views of the Select Committee and other hon. Members in due course on what they have learnt from the technology foresight programme and what they would expect from the next one.

Several hon. Members spoke about education and training. For me, that comes within the important topic that was launched by the White Paper, public understanding of science. As hon. Members, in particular the hon. Members for Ellesmere Port and Neston and for Cambridge, pointed out, it is crucial to cultivate tomorrow's scientists now and to encourage the contributions that they can make to wealth creation and our quality of life.

In January, we launched a campaign to enhance public understanding of science, engineering and technology. The first event in the campaign was the national science week which was organised by the British Association for the Advancement of Science with funding from the Office of Science and Technology. New scientists described the week as a staggering success—and, indeed, it was. We believe that about 1 million people attended some 1,200 events in 230 towns and cities throughout the United Kingdom. I am able to tell the House that in our preliminary examination of national science week for next year, there have already been expressions of interest which substantially outweigh the amount of work done last year.

I put a lot of store by the national week of science, engineering and technology, and my right hon. and hon. Friends and I and, I hope, hon. Members from both sides of the House, will play our part in ensuring that the large number of events that will be run are a success, and that young people will learn more about the importance of science, engineering and technology. SET95, as it will be called, can be a staggering success again and can produce a great deal of important work to increase public understanding.

The Office of Science and Technology will spend £1 million on the overall campaign in this financial year. That includes £270,000 to the British Association and the Gatsby Foundation, to promote and publicise substantial existing activity; £150,000 to the Committee for the Public Understanding of Science in support of two grants schemes; and £120,000 for work in schools, including the highly successful creativity in science and technology awards scheme—CREST—which I had the pleasure of attending a few weeks ago. The awards are for important and interesting schemes and experiments put together mainly by fifth and sixth-formers.

One of our main targets for next year is to encourage greater industrial participation in science week. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has invited the top 200 companies by R and D spend to consider how they might be involved. We are also keen to encourage more women to participate in science, engineering and technology. The White Paper recognised that in Britain we underuse the talents of women in those sectors, and that that, indeed, was to our cost and to the country's cost. In response, we have established a development unit within the Office of Science and Technology to tackle the issue. I am pleased to tell the House that the head of the unit has just been appointed. Linda Sharp is a civil servant mathematician currently working at the Ministry of Defence. She will take up her duties in a few weeks and will spearhead this important work.

Let me say a few words about the priorities for future action. The Government are continuing to develop their policies for science, engineering and technology. Our priorities for action include, first, taking forward the technology foresight programme. We will have the first overall conclusions next spring, but that is only the start. We must make sure that the results are widely disseminated, so that everyone with an interest—in industry, Government and academia—can take them on board. We shall help to sustain the networks that have been developed, which are so crucial to the new partnerships mentioned in last year's White Paper.

We shall develop the "Forward Look". My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage was worried about what would happen to the "Forward Look". It is safe in the hands of the Government. Government-funded science, engineering and technology is important. Our aim is to produce a more far-sighted approach to science and technology policy and to provide fuller and better information on the Government's investment. Next year's "Forward Look" will reflect the first results of the technology foresight programme.

We shall continue to promote the public understanding of science, engineering and technology. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and I are concerned that science should be in the mainstream of public debate. Our public understanding campaign will include what we hope will be an even bigger and better science week, as I mentioned earlier.

We shall continue our quest for maximum effort in the administration of the research councils. We want to direct as high a proportion as possible of the science budget into supporting top-quality science and engineering. The director general of the research councils is working with the councils to ensure that this happens.

We must preserve the high quality of basic research, which has been mentioned in the debate, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage, but in a framework informed by technology foresight and benefiting from closer partnership between those in industry, in Government and in academia.

The international aspects of the matter have been mentioned in the debate, particularly by the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy. We are developing the specific programmes under the fourth EC framework programme and we look forward to finding a satisfactory basis with our international partners for formal approval of the large hadron collider.

Our guiding principle in each case will be to secure settlements which are good for Britain and good for science. Certainly my experience at the last European Research Council meeting, which agreed 10 research programmes under the fourth framework, is that we are far from being alone in the European Union in putting national interest high on the agenda. Of course, this is an international matter and we want to collaborate. We want to co-operate with our partners in the European Union and beyond and my right hon. Friend and I are doing so. To suggest, however, that we should not put British interests high on our agenda is something with which I would not agree.

Shortly, we shall establish the OST development unit to promote greater participation by women, as I mentioned. We are reviewing the LINK programme, with the objective of broadening it to deliver high-quality collaborative research with minimum bureaucracy.

We shall develop an action plan based on the efficiency unit's scrutiny of public sector research establishments. Again, I assure the House that the priority will be to ensure that resources are devoted to science, with the minimum of overheads.

In Britain, we have always supported and carried out good science. It is not just me saying that—we have supported and carried out good science that is internationally recognised as being the most exciting and innovative in the world and the Government are determined to maintain the tradition of excellence.

When he opened the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey said that we must see to it that the initiatives that we have set in train lead to an increase in activity. That one phrase could be our watchword—increase in activity and increase in success for Britain.

The Government's policies will ensure that we boost our economy and enhance our quality of life. That is our concern and it has been the concern of those hon. Members who contributed to the debate. It will continue to be our joint concern as we go forward in the important matters that we have debated tonight.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Standard Spending Assessments, Isle of Wight

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

9.57 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Thank you for granting me this debate, Madam Speaker. Having heard the technology debate, when we looked forward, perhaps I can delve into the past. Before I do so, I welcome my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to his first Adjournment debate on the funding of services on the Isle of Wight and I also welcome the fact that there are two Whips on the Front Bench, both of whom were my favourite candidates for promotion—especially since they became Whips.

If my record is anything to go by, my hon. Friend will be answering many more of these debates. Since my arrival in the House in 1987, I have had or participated in 11 debates on the subject, which is an average of 1.5 per annum.

Tonight, I intend to try to turn the tables on the media by being the first Member of Parliament to offer a bribe to the public. I am offering a free holiday for one week on the Isle of Wight, which far exceeds the offerings of a fat Egyptian in some run-down and shabby establishment on the far side of the channel. That parliamentary prize is available to anyone who can name me one constituency that has campaigned for longer than the Isle of Wight on any issue that he or she likes to name.

Our campaign began in 1960, when my predecessor but one, the late Mark Woodnutt, said in the debate on the Local Government General Grant Order:

> "I wish merely to protest against the adverse effect it has on some authorities, including my own county of the Isle of Wight. I realise that the Isle of Wight is one of a small minority affected in this way, but for that very reason I feel that something should have been done to give relief."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1960; Vol. 631, c. 1488.]

As a result of Mark Woodnutt's relentless campaign, in 1962 the Edwards committee reported to the House on the workings of the rate deficiency grants in England and Wales. The chairman, Mr. F. L. Edwards, was Under-Secretary for Finance and Accountant-General at the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. I am delighted to see that a distant relative of my hon. Friend the Minister—Mr. J. A. Jones, clerk of Knighton rural district council—was also a member of the working party.

Chapter 4 of the report is headed "The Special Position of the Isle of Wight". Paragraph 30 of that chapter states:

> "Prima Facie there is a case here for some weighting to take account of the inevitably higher costs caused by severance by sea (as is provided for the Isle of Scilly.)"

So there we have it. A firm and unequivocal recommendation from the Department of the Environment's predecessor, and 32 years later the Isle of Wight is still waiting. If anyone can beat that unenviable record, a free holiday on the Isle of Wight is his. The only rule in the competition is that only those who hold British citizenship may take part.

Next year, the island will have the first unitary authority in the country and that provides us with a unique opportunity. I believe that we have already achieved victory on our standard spending assessments, as the very fact that the Department's officials are considering our case together with the Association of County Councils—

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

Mr. Field: The fact that the Department's officials are considering our case together with the Association of County Councils is, I believe, official recognition of our long-standing problem.

Tomorrow, as my hon. Friend knows, I shall be leading a deputation to see the local government Minister. I hope that this debate, and my hon. Friend's knowledge of local government and of the Isle of Wight's problems from his time on the Environment Select Committee, will tip the scales in our favour.

Before I deal with the fire standard spending assessment, I shall mention the situation over the community care special transitional grant for 1995-96. The island has consistently argued that the violent swing in using the SSA formulae for 1994-95 should have been damped by applying a floor and ceilings approach. Such an approach is a quite usual arrangement in the Department of Health and, given that no changes can now be made to the 1994-95 distribution, a mechanism should be found to redistribute the unused grants of local authorities for 1993-94.

Ministers at the Department of Health have said recently that that has been ruled to be illegal, but something is clearly wrong when some authorities that are unable to spend all their grant publicly announce their embarrassment at receiving too much money and at their inability to spend it. The Isle of Wight feels that it should have had a smoother transition from STG to SSA for community care.

Having been in Parliament for more than seven years, I know that all things are possible if the good will of officials exists and if Ministers give the nod. I hope that my hon. Friend's Department will explore this point again for us. In view of the council's request to see the Prime Minister on this issue, my hon. Friend might give me an undertaking to come back to me on the matter when his officials have looked at it again. I can then tell Downing street that we have explored every possibility before troubling the Prime Minister.

It is, however, on the fire SSA that I wish to concentrate tonight. Several delegations have seen Home Office Ministers about this problem, the first of which was in 1988 soon after my election. My noble Friend Lord Ferrers—then the Minister responsible for the fire service—has been a consistent supporter of the island's case and expressed himself to be very surprised at the small amount of money, which was causing such problems for the island. His exact words were, as I recall, "Amazing! You couldn't buy a cup of tea and a wad for that!"

Lord Ferrers and Nick Roberts, his assistant private secretary, confirmed to me, to the Isle of Wight county council and to His Excellency the Governor of the Isle of Wight that he had written and spoken to the Minister for Local Government following our subsequent meetings. I have passed copies of our correspondence to my hon. Friend and I am sure that he will see that the tenor of the papers is that the Home Office has always supported our case. Under the Fire Services Act 1947, the fire authority has a statutory duty to provide an adequate fire service. Successive inspections by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services have agreed that the current levels are the very minimum required, yet this service costs 50 per cent. more than the SSA formula provides.

The ferry crossing for a fire vehicle takes on average 50 minutes and for a large part of the night there is no scheduled crossing. It is important to remember that the crews of the ferries live ashore and not on board the vessels. Therefore, in the event of an emergency requiring assistance from mainland fire tenders, 24-hour cover is not available. The island's fire service therefore has to be self-sufficient. We have a total of 16 operational appliances at 10 fire stations and two in reserve. Of those 10 stations, only one of them is staffed by full-time firemen; all the rest are part-time volunteers or "retained men" as they are known. That situation has remained roughly the same since 1948.

As I have already stated, a succession of inspections by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services, a Home Office appointment, have all found that the level of appliances and personnel per 1,000 of the population on the Isle of Wight is higher than any other on the mainland. They have, however, all warned the island that the number of personnel, appliances and stations cannot be reduced because of the isolation of the island. Indeed, the inspectorate sat in on the meeting with Lord Ferrers and fully supported the claim that the island's fire service was the minimum acceptable. In 1988-89, the Minister of State, Home Office and Her Majesty's chief inspector of fire services confirmed that view in writing. It was repeated again in 1992 and 1993 by Her Majesty's inspectors.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): Can my hon. Friend confirm that we are talking about 120,000 people on the island?

Mr. Field: We are talking about nearly 130,000 people, who are served by just 10 fire stations, one of which is full time. We also get more than 2 million visitors a year, so the population is even larger at the height of our holiday season.

The best illustration I can give to the Minister is that, as he knows, the island is about the size, both in population and in geographical terms, of an average district council. If we were part of a county on the mainland, our 10 stations would be reduced by between five and seven, allowing for the mutual assistance that is available to mainland fire services, as required under section 2 of the 1947 Act.

The problem does not stop there. Because of its dislocation by sea, the island has to have its own pool of specialist vehicles, which are exceptionally expensive—an hydraulic platform appliance costs more than £100,000. A community of the island's size and particular architecture would never normally warrant such expenditure, let alone operational requirement.

Throughout the centuries, and because of the position of the Isle of Wight, its people have been content with their historical role as the first line of defence of England's liberty whether from the unwashed hordes of Napoleon or the satanic ranks of Hitler's legions. We are very resentful of the fact that we have been up-anchored and positioned in Whitehall between the Home Office and the Department of the Environment. We have watched with increasing frustration as the pin-stripe warriors battle it out over our island's fire service. One says it is only just big enough while the other says it is costing too much. It really is the original good game played slowly. I even discussed whether we should approach Sir Robin Butler to see whether he would act as the island's umpire in this

Gilbertian campaign, but I was counselled to stay my hand. "Wait" said the island sages, "wait for the arrival at the Department of the Environment of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones)." I did and tonight I have great expectations that I may finally close the file opened by Mark Woodnutt 32 years ago. If I am correct in my expectations, I am sure that the Minister will not feel inhibited by recent revelations in accepting the second prize of two weeks' holiday on the Isle of Wight, for he will be the hero of Vectis.

The Isle of Wight has become rather anecdotal in the House and, to some, I am the epitome of that article in "The House Magazine" that interpreted Back-Bench speak. It said that, "So and so is a good constituency Member," really means that he can talk of nothing else.

When the Prime Minister mentioned the "action thing" in his speech the other day, it struck a chord with me. For far too long, the islanders had been fed the "vision thing" and, in 1987, I promised them and myself that I would devote my time to correcting those anomalies. Next year, we shall have a unitary authority, thanks to the "action thing".

I hope that one day soon I can debate human rights in China, the abolition of child benefit and the Christmas bonus for higher rate taxpayers, the failure of the doctrine of universality in the benefit system, the abolition of vehicle and television licences and light dues, and the publication of coroners' reports in the same way as I now debate the publication of maritime accident reports. All those and many more subjects are dear to my heart, but so, too, is the Isle of Wight and until I have dealt with its problems and obtained the action, I cannot launch myself upon the vision.

I hope that tonight my hon. Friend will put the final brick on the chimney so that together we may top out the country's first unitary authority and I and the House may be released from my monotone culture.

10.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) began by tempting me to look back over the history books and find a record equivalent to that of him and his predecessors. It does not require that to tempt me to the Isle of Wight, as the climate and hospitality of his constituents are enough to make me visit it anyway. Just in case he thinks that it is a record, when I looked back at the history books on my constituency, I found that, since the 1930s, my predecessors have been campaigning for a bypass for the town of Berkhamsted. But there is some hope for my hon. Friend because that bypass was opened recently, so there is sometimes a happy ending to the story.

I welcome this debate on the standard spending assessments for the new Isle of Wight council and the opportunity that it provides to address the issues that my hon. Friend has highlighted this evening and put to us on other occasions. I pay tribute at the outset to his tireless efforts on behalf of the island's interests. Few hon. Members fight as hard as my hon. Friend, and he deserves success for persistence, if nothing else. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government will meet my hon. Friend tomorrow, when he leads a delegation from the island, no doubt to re-emphasise the points made tonight.

My hon. Friend will be aware, from his work on the Environment Select Committee and his close interest in the subject, that SSAs are calculated on a common basis for all authorities that provide the same services. He may also know that we put considerable efforts into getting the right methodology to deliver SSAs that properly reflect the needs for local authority spending.

Our efforts to get the right methodology involve a dialogue with local authority associations and a full examination of both the options for change and their consequences. Between March and September, officials from my Department met representatives from local authority associations and other Departments to look at technical issues and options for improvements to the current SSA methodology.

Ministers are currently considering a report on the options for changes that this group has examined. Thirty-five possible changes in SSAs have been exemplified, together with a further 12 options on the police SSA. The local authority associations have received copies of this report and we have received many subsequent representations and comments about the various options before us.

We are looking closely at all the possible changes, the impact that those changes would have and the views that we have received. I cannot say tonight what conclusions we shall reach on those options, but the Secretary of State will announce our proposals for 1995-96 SSAs shortly after the Budget. At about the same time, local authorities will be told the technical basis for those proposals. However, I can tell my hon. Friend that our decisions will not change our aim of fairness and consistency in the methodology.

We have considered whether the change to a unitary authority has implications for SSAs. The change to a unitary authority for the Isle of Wight will improve the co-ordination of services, but we also believe that it will help to reduce the bureaucracy and running costs that eat away at the funds that the Government and local council tax payers make available for delivering local services. The Isle of Wight will be treated no more or less favourably because of its unitary status. We expect gains in efficiency in the delivery of services as a result of the new arrangements. They will give the local authority the scope to improve local services or to reduce the burden on the local council tax payer.

We recognise that there may be transitional costs, but those will be met by borrowing and will be repaid out of the savings arising in the longer term. A change to a unitary authority does not change the underlying need for the local authority to spend.

It may reassure my hon. Friend that we have calculated what SSA would have gone to a unitary Isle of Wight, had reorganisation happened on 1 April this year. The results show that there would have been only a minimal difference in the SSA for the island as a whole. We have shared the figures with the authorities on the island. The SSA for the new Isle of Wight authority will be calculated in the same way as for other authorities with responsibility for the same services. The SSA will not be calculated by simply aggregating SSAs for the county and the two districts. Details of the calculations will be available when the provisional settlement announcement is made.

The Department will specify, as part of the settlement package, a "notional amount" for the new Isle of Wight council. That will be used as the base position for the operation of the capping regime for the year immediately following reorganisation. In essence, the notional amount will be the sum of the budgets set by the three island

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

authorities for 1994-95, but police service spending will be removed, since that will become the responsibility of the newly formed Hampshire police authority in 1995-96.

My hon. Friend emphasises that the Isle of Wight is unique, and so it is, but my hon. Friend and his family have had a long involvement with local authorities. He knows that every local authority would say that it is unique. Each argues its special circumstances strongly whenever that might win the area a larger share of what is available. There is nothing wrong with that.

However, the total available each year for SSAs is fixed. If one area is given more, the others must have less, so we must ensure that our decisions about SSAs are as objective and fair as they can be. We examine the case for new factors to be taken into account, but new factors cannot always be considered one by one.

Any change in the SSA formula is bound to be scrutinised closely by individual authorities. They will not only wish to probe the justification for the change, but to ask themselves whether our latest change could be prayed in support of making some other change to the formula, from which they would benefit. Therefore, we sometimes have to ask ourselves: if it would be right to make one change, ought we to make others as well, if we are to be fair as between authorities?

However, changes often bring complexity, and we are worried about the complexity of the SSA formulae. My hon. Friend will remember the predecessors of standard spending assessments—the grant-related expenditure assessments. One of the factors in their downfall was their complexity. One of the benefits that we sought, when we introduced SSAs in 1990, was a more understandable system. We are continually trying to balance the arguments for refinement of the formula, with the attendant increase in complexity, against the original wishes to keep the formulae reasonably straightforward.

I acknowledge that there are long-standing contentions that the island is confronted by greater costs on account of being cut off from the mainland. Parallels have been drawn with the Isles of Scilly. The case for increasing resources for the Isle of Wight due to its island nature is still a matter of debate. Other authorities may also feel that they suffer, in other ways, from poor accessibility. The Isle of Wight cannot be compared with the Isles of Scilly. I note, for example, that the Isle of Wight has 60 times the population of the Isles of Scilly, and we should also bear in mind the fact that the Isle of Wight is far closer to the mainland than the Isles of Scilly.

I recognise, however, that there are different circumstances on the Isle of Wight compared with local authorities on the mainland. For example, none of the roads on the island is maintained by the Department of Transport. However, the SSA formula takes full account of all the roads for which a local authority has responsibility. The Isle of Wight, therefore, receives full recognition of that responsibility.

I also wonder whether the island benefits from some lower costs, too, as a result of its separation from the mainland. For example, it gets the same percentage allowance for higher labour costs as Hampshire, but are rates of pay on the island as high as on the mainland? Even without any other special allowance for being an island, the Isle of Wight has done well on SSAs in recent years.

For instance, the Isle of Wight had an increase in SSA of almost 3 per cent. this year. That is well above the average for England of 1.8 per cent., and above the average for shire areas as a whole of 2.5 per cent. South Wight gained 13.7 per cent. Those changes mean that the Isle of Wight area received an increase in revenue support grant of £2.73 million in 1994-95. I also note that the Isle of Wight county council this year has an SSA per head 10 per cent. greater than Hampshire county council or West Sussex county council and 15 per cent. greater than Dorset county council.

My hon. Friend has raised specific, detailed SSA worries this evening and on other occasions. I recognise his concern about the SSA for the fire service, where actual expenditure by the Isle of Wight authorities is significantly higher than that provided for by the SSA. As my hon. Friend knows, Home Office colleagues also understand that concern.

A number of authorities have suggested that the formula for the fire SSA should be reconsidered. Our proposals for changes in SSA will be announced very shortly after the Budget. But I can say now that we have been considering closely ways in which the formula might reflect the way in which the coastline makes it more difficult for brigades to obtain reinforcements—a point made by my hon. Friend.

The area cost adjustment has similarly been considered by the technical group. We are concerned to find a more robust basis for the taper of the adjustment outside London. A number of possibilities have been considered, including the use of more detailed data on employees' earnings or an approach based on distance from London. We will, as always, consider carefully all the evidence about the robustness and fairness of changes, including the points submitted by the Isle of Wight, before announcing our proposals for consultation.

The transition to community care has also, I know, been a matter of concern to the island. For all authorities, we provided a special transitional grant for 1993-94 to assist in the transition from the previous arrangements. Since those previous arrangements were based on income support, the transition was based partly on income support data. But that was always intended as a temporary feature of the grant. We now base the grant on the same factors as the relevant part of the SSA formula for social services. I realise that the income support data were more beneficial to the island, but I do not think that we could justify continuing their use.

My hon. Friend has very properly raised points about the standard spending assessment for the Isle of Wight. We are very willing to consider such concerns. We will give full weight to what he has said this evening. I am sure that he, and those in his delegation, will make the points in more detail when they visit us in the Department tomorrow. We wish the Isle of Wight success in its transition to a unitary authority.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 25 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL

Lords amendment agreed to.

RIVER CALDER (WELBECK SITE) BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the River Calder (Welbeck Site) *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph (b) of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

MALVERN HILLS BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Malvern Hills Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph (b) of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to the date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the City of Westminster Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed) and shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means, who shall make such Amendments thereto as have been made by the Committee in the present Session, and shall report the Bill as amended to the House forthwith, and the Bill, so amended, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SHEFFIELD ASSAY OFFICE BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Sheffield Assay Office Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session, the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That, no Petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders to the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

HUMBER BRIDGE BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Humber Bridge Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph (b) of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 27 October.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Accident And Emergency Units

1. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many accident and emergency units are currently proposed for closure in Greater London.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): A number of London health authorities are considering proposals for change to the current pattern of accident and emergency services.

Sir Michael Neubert: Should not ease of access by road and proximity to the main centres of population be the overriding factors in determining the location of accident and emergency units? Do not those considerations point overwhelmingly to the continuing need for Oldchurch hospital in that all-important life and death role?

Mr. Malone: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the fact that on the two occasions that I have so far appeared at the Dispatch Box, he has been able to represent the interests of his constituents in this matter, which he does extremely assiduously. As I told him in the debate on Friday, his representations will be considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as the matter is now before her.

Ms Church: Will the Minister undertake to make a visit to Harold Wood hospital so that he can see for himself the great difficulty that my constituents will encounter if the proposed closure of the accident and emergency department at Oldchurch hospital goes ahead?

Mr. Malone: I am be extremely keen to inform myself in whatever way is absolutely necessary to be sure of all the facts. I have undertaken a number of visits to accident and emergency units around London since I was appointed to my post. I remind the hon. Lady that the overriding requirement for the reformation of accident and emergency services across London is continuing quality of patient care and the proper provision of services for all patients.

Mr. Dykes: In terms both of the accident and emergency services and of the other services, will my hon. Friend pledge to do all that he can to save Edgware general hospital from closure?

Mr. Malone: Those are clearly matters to be decided at a local level. Even in my short time at the Dispatch Box, I have noticed with interest that many people are in favour of changing the structure of services in London, but when it comes to their constituency interests they make particular representations. One cannot restructure services in London without making sure that that is done in a proper and sensitive way. I repeat to my hon. Friend the point that I made earlier—quite simply, it is the quality of overall patient care in London that will inform us as we proceed with any changes.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of that reply, I beg to give notice that I will raise this matter on the Adjournment.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, but I cannot accept that request from the hon. Member because Question 1 was not his substantive question.

Vehicle Emissions

2. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the effect of motor vehicle emissions on respiratory diseases.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): While there is, as yet, no conclusive evidence that motor vehicle emissions cause respiratory diseases, including asthma, high levels of motor vehicle emissions may exacerbate existing respiratory conditions and may trigger attacks in some asthmatic people.

Mr. Jamieson: Is the Minister aware of a report published earlier this year by Noel Olsen, the director of health in the Plymouth and Torbay health authority, who concluded that there is a strong link between asthma and motor vehicle fumes? He said that, shortly, 10 per cent. of children in Plymouth will need inhaled steroids. Is the Minister aware that that view has been strongly reinforced today in a report from the Select Committee on Transport? When will his Department do something about it?

Mr. Sackville: A great deal is being done by the Department of Transport about vehicle emissions. I remind the hon. Gentleman that asthmatics also suffer from pollen, fungal spores, house mites, smoke and a series of other factors.

Mr. Wilkinson: Are not high levels of motor vehicle pollution a grave exacerbating factor in many respiratory conditions, particularly in London? Has not the incidence of asthma and other serious respiratory diseases increased in direct proportion to the increase in motor vehicle traffic? Should not the Department of Health, therefore, concert effectively with the Department of Transport, to get more people onto public transport, especially the tube and railways, rather than using their cars?

Mr. Sackville: There is undoubtedly a connection, which is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has brought in a series of new measures to tighten up diesel emissions and emissions from catalyst and non-catalyst cars, and to put inspectors by the side of roads in inner cities to find those who are polluting the atmosphere. My right hon. Friend has promised to "get tough", particularly on those who drive smoky diesel vehicles. Having worked for him for the past two years, I am now glad that I do not pollute the atmosphere for a living.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate that the Minister's second response was a little more positive than his first. However, may I press him to speak to the Minister responsible for transport because, despite clean air zones in our cities, the pollution has intensified, as we are now discovering again this year through fogs?

Mr. Sackville: I confirm that we are working closely with the Departments of the Environment and of Transport. We are also organising a major conference on the causes of asthma. We have invited the National Asthma Campaign to organise it jointly with us.

Private Finance Initiatives

3. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in taking forward the private finance initiative in the South Thames region.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Good progress has been made in taking forward the private finance initiative in the South Thames region. Since the initiative was launched in November 1992, seven projects have been approved, each with a capital value of £1 million or over. This is bringing in more than £26 million of private sector capital to the region.

Mr. Ottaway: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will she confirm that, since the private finance initiative was launched, it has resulted in additional investment nationally of some £100 million and that a further £500 million has been earmarked? Is not that excellent news for patients? How will those latter opportunities be realised?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend and can certainly confirm the figures that he gives. The private finance initiative is an excellent opportunity for us to extend patient care further and faster. With the great range of projects, we are giving advice and keeping a data bank so that good practice can be developed. The criteria in every case is that projects should be good value for money and lead to good patient care.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Has the Secretary of State seen the regional private finance initiative referred to in *The Independent* today? The Worthing district health authority has accepted a bid from an outfit called Westminster Health. Is the Secretary of State absolutely satisfied that those who run it are suitable people to be in charge of the care of our elderly long-term sick? After all, they have been involved in a substantial fraud case in Texas and have had about 150 separate allegations of abuse pending against them since the 1980s. In any event, was not the NHS trust bid cheaper?

Mrs. Bottomley: First, I welcome the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) to their new jobs. I am pleased, from the point of view of private finance, that it was the hon. Gentleman who said:

> "public and private finance working together in transport, in housing, in capital projects, in health and education"

have a part to play. We thank him for that commitment to the initiative. Clearly, he has no objection to the principle but is querying an individual case. I understand that the original proposal was that the district health authority should take on three projects. That did not satisfy the trust. The trust was, however, satisfied that the individual project concerned would lead to the best value for money and high-quality patient care. Those are always the top criteria.

Cheviot And Wansbeck Hospital Trust

4. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about redundancies in hospitals run by the Cheviot and Wansbeck hospital trust.

Mr. Sackville: We have received letters from two hon. Members. I also met the right hon. Gentleman and the hon.

Members for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) on 13 July, to discuss their anxieties about redundancies at the trust.

Mr. Beith: Now that the equivalent of 51 posts have been lost in the Cheviot and Wansbeck group, now that safety standards have been publicly questioned even by a consultant, and now that there is even a threat of the closure of the Rothbury cottage hospital, will the Minister reconsider the situation and answer the question: why do patients have to suffer if the first year of operation of the trust system throws up something that would probably never have happened under the old system?

Mr. Sackville: Let me say how glad I am that the actual number of redundancies has been reduced to 27, the large majority of which are in administrative grades. I do not accept that patients will suffer. I have been given an absolute assurance that those changes will be made without detriment to patient care.

May I remind the right hon. Gentleman of all the good things that are happening at the trust, including the new accident and emergency department, at whose opening ceremony no lesser person than the right hon. Gentleman himself officiated?

Mr. Jack Thompson: Has the Minister seen the letter that I sent some time ago about the case of Charlene Bentley from my constituency, who broke an arm, went to the Wansbeck general hospital, was unable to receive treatment at that hospital because of the lack of beds in the children's ward and had to be transferred to North Tyneside to have treatment? Is that the satisfactory arrangement that he endorses in terms of that hospital and those staffing levels?

Mr. Sackville: I am aware of that case, and it is unfortunate that that little girl had to be transferred to another hospital. Let me remind the hon. Gentleman that the trust works on several different sites and is at a disadvantage in that way. It is not possible to provide all acute services at all sites.

Disabled People

5. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many disabled people have been struck off local general practitioner lists in each of the past four years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): Only 1.2 per cent. of patients deregistering from general practitioner lists do so at the request of the GP. Those patients are not categorised in any way.

Mr. Sheerman: If the Minister does not know how many of those people are disabled, perhaps he should speak to Toby Harris, the director of the National Association of Community Health Councils, or even the health service ombudsman, both of whom are extremely worried about the number of patients who are being struck off by GPs. A Manchester report recently said that 1,700 patients, many of whom were disabled people, had been struck off lists by their doctors. Indeed, Mr. Harris said recently that one could be struck off for being too ill.

Mr. Bowis: I have looked carefully at Mr. Harris's press release and the other report to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Neither of them refers specifically to people with disabilities being struck off. That type of evidence has not been presented to us.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that under the patients charter, everyone has the right to be on a GP's list, and if anyone has any difficulty, family health services authorities have a role in ensuring that that is possible. I also remind the hon. Gentleman that the General Medical Council, supported by the General Medical Services Committee, has made it clear to doctors that it would be unacceptable if doctors were to remove people from lists because of the cost of their disability.

Mrs. Beckett: Surely the Minister is concerned when, according to a report from the National Association of Community Health Councils, about 30,000 patients are estimated as being struck off and, as he says himself, he has no knowledge of what percentage of those are people with severe long-term illness, disabilities and so on.

Does not the Minister also recognise that there is considerable concern that that is happening as a direct result of the Government's policies on GP fundholding; that in Essex, for example, an increase of about 27 per cent. in fundholding practices has been accompanied by an increase of 20 per cent. in patients being struck off? That is a worrying trend. If the Department of Health does not know what is happening and why, perhaps it is time that it did.

Mr. Bowis: There is no evidence to support what the hon. Lady says. Let me first welcome the hon. Lady to her responsibilities. [Hon. Members: "Right hon."] I apologise, the right hon. Lady. We look forward to many years of enjoying her position across the Dispatch Boxes.

The right hon. Lady referred to the report of which the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) spoke, which is the one that Mr. Harris produced. That report does not produce that evidence.

I am aware, however, that there are some worries about the general issue of registration and deregistration. We are examining that as part of our regular review of registration procedures to discover, first, whether any improvements can be made and, secondly, whether there are any grounds for concern.

Junior Doctors

6. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctor posts which entail working more than 83 hours remain in the South Thames region; and if she will make a statement.

8. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctor posts entailing more than 83 hours remain in the North West region; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All posts contracted for more than 83 hours a week in the South Thames and North West regions have been eliminated. That is a remarkable achievement as there were more than 3,300 such posts in those two regions in September 1990.

Mrs. Lait: I thank my right hon. Friend for that most encouraging news and I congratulate her on the success of a policy that she initiated when she was Minister for Health. Is she aware that reports are emerging of a significant reduction in the number of applications for doctors' jobs in my region? Will she comment on the fact that Conservatives cut junior doctors' hours while the Labour party cut their pay?

Mrs. Bottomley: I take note of my hon. Friend's comments. The way in which juniors are trained—their rotations and accommodation and many other conditions—requires further consideration. I welcome the discussions that we have with the junior doctors to ensure that we continue to train and support some of the best junior doctors so that they can help the health service. Their pay has increased substantially during our term of office. I am pleased, however, that there have been such significant cuts in their hours.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the Southport and Formby community health service trust which, in March this year, met its important 1994 target of reducing the number of hours worked by junior doctors? Will she give me an assurance that, as the acute trust continues to make progress in that important sector, it will continue to have the support of the regional task force?

Mrs. Bottomley: I certainly pay tribute to the Southport and Formby community health service trust and can assure my hon. Friend that the task force will continue to play a crucial part. I know his region well and have met junior doctors from there. Only three years ago, when I was in Blackpool for a certain purpose, a number of the juniors came to see me and my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans). Two years later, we were able to visit them on their night shift at the Blackpool Victoria hospital to talk about the new systems, the way in which shifts have been introduced and the fact that extra resources have been put to good effect and the junior doctors' hours reduced.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Is the Secretary of State aware that one of the arguments advanced for the closure of the Brook hospital in the South Thames region is the requirement to meet the junior doctors' hours? Is she further aware that the future plans of the health authority depend on the acquisition of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital from the Ministry of Defence? Is she aware that the national health service may be gazumped by a private bidder? What steps will she take to ensure that that hospital remains in the public sector?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am aware of the facts of that situation, but the hon. Gentleman will understand that the Minister for Health deals with those matters as I have a close personal relationship with one of the hon. Gentleman's neighbouring Members of Parliament—that is in the Register of Members' Interests. I am aware that the effects of the reductions in junior hospital doctors' hours have implications for service delivery. It is extremely costly to provide juniors on duty overnight in a great number of establishments and we have to look carefully at that aspect. We also want to safeguard patient care and the quality of doctors' training. The dialogue that we have established between Ministers, the junior doctors' leaders and the NHS is leading to sensible outcomes, and improvements for juniors and the service.

Mr. Purchase: Is the Secretary of State aware that some of the reductions—which are by no means universal—have been achieved by some grades of nurses having to take on tasks formerly performed by junior doctors? That has led to considerable stress, especially in hospitals in Wolverhampton where, I understand, the Minister has imposed a block on further recruitments of junior doctors. Will the Secretary of State respond to that?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will understand that the recruitment of junior doctors is connected with a long-standing agreement with the profession over the number of juniors trained for the number of consultant posts available. I hope that we may move towards more flexibility in some of those matters as time goes by, but there has been a steady increase—of 3 per cent. a year—in the number of consultants in the health service and that is a significant achievement in itself. The hon. Gentleman rightly points to the part played by nurses in taking on some of those tasks. Managers, much denigrated by the Labour party, and administrative support staff have also taken on some of the tasks previously done by junior doctors.

We need a pragmatic approach that ensures that juniors are well used for the tasks for which they are trained, and that their hours are not excessive. I think that we are making great progress.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend remember the case of my constituent, Alan Massie, a talented young junior hospital doctor at Warrington district general hospital who died some months ago? Is she aware that the coroner's report has now found that he died from stress and overwork because of the abnormal number of hours that he was forced to work? Will she therefore keep the matter of junior hospital doctors' hours under continual review, to ensure that young, talented people such as my constituent do not die because of their commitment to the health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: I well understand the case to which my hon. Friend refers. The stress of being a junior doctor is associated with a number of factors, not least rotations. I was interested in a scheme being developed in New Zealand, where there is talk of a mentoring system to give support to junior doctors in training. Reducing the number of hours has been a clear priority. In 1990, 13,000 doctors were working rotations of more than 83 hours: none are now. There has been a fall of one quarter in the number of hard-pressed posts involving more than 72 hours. We want to do very much better than that by the end of the year; it is an important priority for us all.

Mortality Reduction Targets

7. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made in respect of the mortality reduction targets set out in "The Health of the Nation", Cm. 1986.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest figures show that good progress is being made towards virtually all the mortality targets set out in "The Health of the Nation" White Paper. The targets were deliberately set to be challenging and it is most encouraging that so much has already been achieved.

Mr. Rooker: Speaking between two planted questions, may I ask whether the Minister accepts that poverty is an important factor in determining death rates? That is shown by the fact that deaths from coronary heart disease among poor men and poor women are respectively 44 per cent. and 61 per cent. higher than would otherwise be expected. Does the right hon. Lady appreciate that in the past 15 years in just four regions of the country—the north, the north-west, Yorkshire and Merseyside—there have been 125,000 more deaths from coronary heart disease than should otherwise have been expected? That amounts to the Government, by their neglect, killing off two constituencies of Labour voters.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am with the hon. Gentleman to the extent that the Government are committed to wealth creation, job creation and the relief of poverty, and we have been remarkably successful in that. I am also with him to the extent that I am aware of the severe problem of coronary heart disease in his constituency. That is why I hope that he will welcome the £23 million going into primary care in the Birmingham area precisely so that more GPs can deal with those issues and with the multi-factor causation of coronary heart disease and strokes. A great number of factors are involved; the whole point of "The Health of the Nation" strategy is to look into the causes of disease.

The hon. Gentleman may like to know that the health of the nation has improved for all income groups and all social classes, and perinatal mortality has decreased, as a result of the success of the health reforms and the work that we have been undertaking.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the highly successful programme of childhood immunisation has made a major contribution to reducing the numbers of untimely deaths and improving the health and well-being of children? Will she take this opportunity to reinforce the message that, with the threat of a measles epidemic, it is vital that parents ensure that their children are vaccinated?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend. I can confirm the great success of the immunisation campaign. It is bizarre that the Labour party so stubbornly resisted the new GP contract, which has resulted in well over 90 per cent. of children being immunised against avoidable childhood diseases.

That is just one of many ways in which we set a target that we not only met but beat. The introduction of the hib meningitis vaccine has resulted in an 80 per cent. fall in those cases in only a year. This country now has its largest ever immunisation programme. Some 7 million schoolchildren are to be immunised in November. We hope that the scheme will be widely supported because it is the effectiveness and success of the national health service that enables us to implement that important policy.

Mrs. Wise: What account is the Secretary of State taking of the clear links that have been established between unemployment and mortality and ill health? What is the right hon. Lady doing about that, and will she restrain her hon. Friends from hounding the unemployed and persuade her Government to act to provide more real jobs?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am vigorously championing the success of the Prime Minister and other members of the Government in reducing the number of unemployed. A reduction of 400,000 in the number of unemployed since the end of 1992 is a remarkable achievement. I am certainly not pursuing populist gimmicks such as compulsory paternity leave which would be imposed by Brussels and would drive jobs out. A minimum wage would also be counter-productive in terms of providing real jobs for our people. I want to make sure not only that we have people in employment but that we have healthy people in employment.

Mr. Sims: Is not the progress towards meeting the targets in "The Health of the Nation" extremely encouraging? But does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment at the poor figures in relation to reducing the incidence of smoking among young people and especially girls? What are her plans to reduce the largest avoidable cause of premature death?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is a persistent and wise champion of the cause of reducing the extent of smoking. As he will know, in that respect we have been more successful than any other European country apart from the Netherlands. That is largely because we believe that price is a crucial variable. Every 10 per cent. increase in price leads to a 3 to 6 per cent. fall in consumption. We are meeting the target for adults and pregnant women. The problem is in meeting the target for young people. The most important factors are parental disapproval and education in schools. I am pleased that through our "Health of the Nation" strategy we are reinforcing our messages to parents and to those in control of young people and are increasing the extent of anti-smoking education.

Private Children's Homes

9. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring her Department is undertaking of the placement of children by local authorities in private children's homes unregistrable under the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Bowis: The social services inspectorate is currently undertaking a study of children's small homes in England.

Ms Coffey: How can the Minister undertake adequate monitoring when his Department has absolutely no idea how many children are placed in children's small homes? His Department does not specifically request that information from local authorities. As he knows, a lot of nonsense is coming from his Department about such homes. When will he introduce legislation that will require those homes to register and enable them to be inspected so that the same standards can apply to all children's homes irrespective of size?

Mr. Bowis: That is precisely what the current study is doing. It is establishing a database of small homes and considering whether the regulations that apply to them are adequately understood and applied. As the hon. Lady knows, unlike homes for adults, small homes for children are covered either by foster home regulations or placement regulations, and that is in addition to the welfare responsibilities of the authority in whose area the home is located.

Dame Jill Knight: As most of the worst cases of bad treatment of children in homes—for example, pin-down—occur in local authority-run homes, why are we being asked to monitor only the private homes?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right. Sadly, the cases of abuse that we have had to investigate occurred in homes run by or under the auspices of local authorities. The homes that we are discussing here are for four children or fewer. Except in my discussions with the hon. Lady about her concerns and with the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) about the impact on the community of children from such homes, I have not heard anyone say that children in such homes are at risk.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister acknowledge the importance of professional training for officers in charge of residential homes for children? Will he confirm that the Utting report found that 21 per cent. of officers in charge do not have relevant professional qualifications, and can he give the House an assurance that the Government are on target to achieve the Utting recommendation of having all officers in charge of residential children's homes fully qualified by 1995?

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman is right. The Warner and Utting reports both contributed to our policy making. As he will know, we have set up the support force, which is doing excellent work around the country. He will also know that we have a budget of some £70 million for training and that there are now 5,000 more qualified social workers every year. We are seeking to meet the targets to which he refers. The proof of that is that, 20 years ago, 38 per cent. of field social workers were trained, whereas the figure is now more than 90 per cent.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Only this morning, I was speaking to the owner of a private unregistered children's home in my constituency who stressed that such owners want to be registered and distinguished from what he termed "the cowboys" involved in private care. I met the Minister's predecessor—

Madam Speaker: Order I am waiting for a question from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Bearing in mind the fact that it is now nearly two years since my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) and I met the Minister's predecessor at the Department of Health to discuss this matter, why has it taken so long to plug what is, frankly, a dangerous loophole in our child protection legislation?

Mr. Bowis: There is no way that I would be satisfied if I thought that regulations were inadequate to protect children in those homes. That is why we have issued a circular reminding local authorities of their very real powers in such matters. That is why, from now and in future years, the annual gazetteer of children's homes will include the numbers of children placed in such homes so that we know what the position is and can continue to protect children in small homes as well as in the larger ones.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend will know that one of the great difficulties in the care of children, whether in small or in large homes, is that there is such a rapid turnover in the people who look after them. Will he take steps to give much more robust guidance to the statutory services, to encourage caring volunteers to act as long-term mentors for those children and keep an eye on the way in which they are being looked after by the statutory services?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. So much can be done by statutory services—by inspection, regulation and visits—irrespective of the size of the home. What is needed are friends for children—key workers looking after children and making sure that they are in touch with those individual children's lives, ambitions and hopes so that if they get into difficulties, somebody is there to take note and alert the proper authorities.

Dental Services

11. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has received on the Government's proposals for NHS dental services and charges.

Mr. Malone: We expect the dental profession's representatives and those others consulted to respond to Green Paper "Improving NHS Dentistry" when the consultation period ends on 1 November.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister realise that a 25 per cent. increase in dental charges would further increase the number of patient deregistrations because many people would no longer be able to afford to visit the dentist? In view of the recent Denplan survey, which revealed that more than three quarters of dentists would be more likely to leave the national health service if the Government's Green Paper proposals ever became a reality, and forecast that 69 per cent. of patients would be private by 1999, will the Government scrap the Green Paper and instead take steps to ensure an adequately funded dental care system within the national health service?

Mr. Malone: Certainly not. The hon. Gentleman should remember that Denplan is a private organisation. Its headquarters happen to be in my constituency, so I know the company extremely well. It is hardly surprising that a limited survey carried out by an organisation with such an interest has come up with such a finding.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that recruitment of NHS dentists is extremely good, with 578 additional dentists being recruited in two years. Also, 378,000 more patients have been added to NHS lists during that time. Spending on general dental services under this Government has increased by 56 per cent. since 1979 in real terms. That is the real level of this Government's commitment to NHS dentistry, which will continue.

Cancer Research

12. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was spent last year on cancer research; and what percentage of that was provided by charities.

Mr. Bowis: The latest figures are for 1992. They are £250 million and 45.9 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Chisholm: Why is much less money spent on cancer research per million of population in the United Kingdom than in other countries? Why is it that in this country, uniquely, most of the money comes from charities? That makes long-term research difficult. Will the Minister undertake today to give more Government support to research into breast cancer—the biggest single killer of women between 35 and 50—as part of a much-needed national action plan on breast cancer?

Mr. Bowis: That is a collection of questions. Of course, it makes sense to combine with our counterparts abroad to ensure that the resources of the world are devoted to combating cancer. According to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Britain is spending 7 per cent. of the NHS budget on cancer—that is some £2.8 billion. The hon. Gentleman must be aware that this country leads Europe in its breast cancer screening programme and on investment in that.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the mixture of funding for investment. We very much welcome, and work alongside, the resources invested by charitable organisations and also by the pharmaceutical companies.

Sir Donald Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that charities give all sorts of people the opportunity to contribute directly to the extension of knowledge, to the fight against cancer and, very often, to mutual support groups?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The work of charities and their ability to attract resources from individuals is a great asset and one which we should nurture. They are especially good at attracting resources from individuals for the fight against cancer.

NHS Employees

13. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from employees afraid to speak publicly on NHS matters.

Mr. Malone: None.

Ms Eagle: Does the Minister agree that there is growing concern about the increasing number of dedicated health care professionals who are being disciplined or even dismissed by their health trusts for speaking out about the decline in standards? What will he do now to put a stop to draconian gagging clauses?

Mr. Malone: There are no draconian gagging clauses. The procedure is set out clearly in the guidelines that have been issued, which emphasise not only that there is a right to speak out and go through the proper procedures but that there is a duty to raise such matters in the proper way and to have them dealt with thoroughly and properly.

Mrs. Gorman: What representations has my hon. Friend received from the proprietors of private nurseries who are being harassed—

Madam Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am on my feet. If the hon. Lady will relate her question to the question on the Order Paper, I will hear it.

Mrs. Gorman: What representations has my hon. Friend the Minister received on health matters from the proprietors of private nurseries, who are afraid of speaking out publicly for fear of their being closed for the most minor infringements?

Mr. Malone: None, to my knowledge.

Mr. Pike: Is the Minister aware of the concern at Burnley health trust, where many of the employees are not able to speak about what is happening? Is he further aware that one consultant was dismissed last month with three hours' notice and that the chief executive was asked to resign yesterday? Should not there be an inquiry into what is happening at that health trust?

Mr. Malone: The guidelines are precise. They state that fair procedures should be set out which allow openness and that a climate should be established between those who manage the institutions and those who are employed in them so that such matters can be properly investigated. The hon. Gentleman should refer to the guidelines. If it is the case that the institution to which he refers is not living up to them, that is a matter which needs to be looked into.

Junior Doctors

14. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met representatives of junior doctors to discuss the implementation of the new deal.

Mr. Malone: I last met the junior doctors' committee chairman to discuss the new deal on 29 September, and before that on 28 July. Ministers have met the representatives of the junior doctors on numerous occasions since we launched the new deal.

Mr. Congdon: Given the success in reducing junior hospital doctors' hours, does my hon. Friend agree that it is now important to do what we can to ensure that all accident and emergency departments have the appropriate level of junior and senior doctors on duty at the most critical times?

Mr. Malone: It is always extremely important that all accident and emergency units have a proper mixture of staff. However, those patterns are changing and, in many cases, it is possible to break down boundaries between the nursing profession, junior doctors and consultants. Where that happens, a far better mix of patient care is available for those who need it.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Berry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Berry: Does the Minister for business probity still command the full support of the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I shall be making a statement immediately after Question Time and the hon. Gentleman should contain himself.

Q2. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Clark: During the course of his busy day, does my right hon. Friend ever pause to reflect on how easily little bits of bad news can push major items of good news out of the headlines? In congratulating my right hon. Friend on his continuing achievements in Northern Ireland, may I ask whether he agrees with me that the end of 1994 will be remembered not for the media's obsession at the present time, but for the achievements in Northern Ireland, which have brought stability, hope and peace beyond our wildest expectations?

The Prime Minister: It is attractive from time to time to maintain a proper perspective on political matters and

I do believe that we have now entered a fresh phase of the peace process in Northern Ireland, as I set out in my speech in Belfast last week. As I saw for myself across the community in Belfast last week, there is enthusiastic support in Northern Ireland for the progress that has been made and appreciation and understanding of what still needs to be done. But there is greater hope that peace may now be permanently achievable than we have seen at any time in the last quarter of a century.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the Prime Minister investigate the affair of Healthcare International at Clydebank and tell us why more than £30 million of public money has been put into creating a private hospital and what will now happen to rescue that hospital? Will he guarantee that any such rescue effort will not be at the expense of NHS hospitals in Glasgow and the west of Scotland?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will examine carefully what the hon. Lady has said. As the hon. Lady will know, year on year, the resources available to the health service in each part of the United Kingdom have increased, as have the number of patients treated and the quality of service offered by the NHS, and we intend that that will continue.

Q4. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Thomas Arnold: I invite my right hon. Friend to use the time between now and the start of the intergovernmental conference in 1996 to persuade our partners in the European Community to adopt a moderate rather than ambitious agenda. Does he agree that a stately minuet would be preferable to the rain dance that he described in his celebrated article in *The Economist* one year ago?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend sets out my view with great clarity. It will be necessary in 1996 to look carefully at changes that have occurred. I do not personally believe that there is a great appetite across the European Union for dramatic changes. We will have to wait to see what is placed on the agenda, but my judgment is that changes deserve to be modest and should be no more.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Does the Prime Minister accept that it is not sleaze but his party's basic values that have been exposed? Is it not the case that, now that public service is set at naught and the marketplace rules, Conservative Back Benchers are operating in that marketplace?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman examined improvements across the range of public services over the past 15 years, he would realise that his remarks are utterly and totally misguided. Service to the public is what matters. Where that can best be provided in the private sector, it should be. Where it remains in the public sector, we have done more to improve service than any previous Government.

Q5. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that choice and diversity are essential if we are to continue improving the nation's schools? Will he reconfirm yet again his support for grammar schools, grant-maintained schools, the assisted places scheme and city technology colleges? Can he tell the House how many children are being educated in those schools?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's point follows on rather well from the previous question. Education is a service to the public and now offers more choice at a higher standard than previously. It does so as a direct result of the policies that we have followed. Giving parents more choice and more information on which to base their choice is a fundamental part of our policy will remain so. That means that we need more grant-maintained schools and CTCs. I cannot immediately tell my hon. Friend how many pupils are attending those schools but I will do so in writing. Something like 1 million parents have benefited from those schemes, and many more will do so in future.

Mr. Barron: When I was first elected to the House, I believed that I was elected to perform a public service. Will the right hon. Gentleman make a comprehensive statement at 3.30 pm, to ensure that other Conservative Members believe that we are here to give public service and not for self-service?

The Prime Minister: Clearly the hon. Gentleman was not listening a few moments ago. I set out clearly our determination to improve all services that must remain in the public sector, as many must. I commend to the hon. Gentleman my speech at the chartermark awards a few days ago, which he would find of some interest.

Q6. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those who have something to contribute to public life should be encouraged to serve on public bodies? Has not the obsession with sleaze reached absurd heights when the Labour party accuses General Sir Peter de la Billière and the Duke of Kent of being Tory placemen on public bodies?

The Prime Minister: I believe—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) is entirely right in pointing to the fatuous nonsense that appeared in a Labour pamphlet published last week. There is a serious debate to be held about public service and non-departmental bodies but it cannot be held by claiming that General Sir Peter de la Billière and the

Duke of Kent were placed on quangos because of donations that they made to the Conservative party. Where there are issues, let us look at them.

Let us look also at the large number of Labour party members who serve on quangos. I have here a long list of members of quangos, all good Tory placemen: Mr. Bill Morris, Mr. Jack Jones, Mr. Harry Irwin, Lord Plant, Eric Hammond, Hugh Scanlon, Reg Bottini, Lord Cocks, Baroness Blackstone, Lord Barnett. I shall spare the House the rest of the list.

Hon. Members: More.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the House does not want more of me. Quieten down now.

Q7. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms Lynne: Given the Prime Minister's avowed intention to maintain the highest standards in public life, will he reassure the House that the disgraceful tactics used by the Government to crush the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill will not be used again when disabled persons' legislation comes before the House in future?

The Prime Minister: I indicated earlier in the year that we would send out a consultation document on the question of anti-discrimination legislation for disabled people. We have done so. We have received more than 1,000 responses to that document. We are examining those carefully and, as soon as we have finished that, we will make an appropriate announcement.

Mr. Thomason: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the creation of 1,000 additional jobs by Rover at the Longbridge plant on the edge of my constituency is a demonstration of good Government policy and superb local management, and will he support it?

The Prime Minister: All extra jobs are worth while and we have had a lot recently. Unemployment has fallen by more than 400,000, partly as a result of growth in the economy, partly because of the increased competitiveness and partly because of the sort of investment in this country that would not take place if the policies of the Opposition parties had been followed. We now have output rising at 3.5 per cent., inflation at a 27-year low, unemployment down by 400,000 and business confidence at a high level. I look forward to more jobs being created in my hon. Friend's constituency and elsewhere.

Q8. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Tyler: When, this time last week, the Prime Minister answered my question about making his Administration a sleaze-free zone, why did he not admit to the House that he had had an inquiry for three weeks into the behaviour of members of his party? Why did he not come clean with the House at that stage, instead of waiting for newspaper revelations to force that information out of him?

The Prime Minister: When the hon. Gentleman reads the Cabinet Secretary's report, which I will be publishing this afternoon, he will see that his question is wrong and he will owe me an apology.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Is not the point about public appointments that, if we had not had denationalisation, the Government would still be left appointing their own placemen to run half of British industry? Has not one of the great gains of having a Conservative Government for the past 15 years been that we have got rid of most of those appointments and that we do not need to have trade unionists on every board in the country?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that. It is also entirely to right to say that we need people who are public spirited to serve on non-departmental public bodies. That is the case and it has been for a long time. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps I may remind hon. Members who shouted out, "They are all Tories" of a Labour party national executive committee advice note published recently? It reads as follows:

> "Labour Party members may take up places on non-elected authorities and use them as a platform for our campaigning".

It goes on:

> "Members accepting appointments of this kind should inform Walworth Road so that the ... Shadow spokespeople and Head Office policy officers can maintain a network of contacts, informing appointees of Labour policy and collecting useful information in return."

That is the sleazy way in which the Labour party deals with non-departmental bodies.

Mr. Bill Michie: Why are the Prime Minister and his Government spending so much time chasing would-be or wishful job seekers, instead of concentrating on his right hon. and hon. Friends who have too many paid jobs?

The Prime Minister: We are seeking to put as many people as we possibly can who are at present without jobs and unemployed—whom the hon. Gentleman claims that he cares about—back into work. The job seeker's allowance seeks to play its own part in doing that. It is a necessary innovation; I welcome it, and I believe that it will be very successful.

Public Life (Standards of Conduct)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I shall make a statement on the conduct of public life, and put some proposals before the House. Before I do so, I shall refer to the report that I asked the Cabinet Secretary to undertake on allegations of impropriety against named individuals that had been made by Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed. I have now received Sir Robin Butler's report, and am publishing it in full in a written answer this afternoon. Before turning to wider matters, I should like to draw on that report.

Perhaps it would be best if I quoted paragraph 2 of Sir Robin's report to me. It reads as follows:

> "In reporting those allegations the informant said that Mr. Al Fayed wanted a meeting with the Prime Minister, principally because of Mr. Al Fayed's wish to have the DTI Inspectors' Report on the takeover of the House of Fraser revised or withdrawn."

It continues:

> "He had made a number of allegations against Government Ministers and was contemplating passing them to others."

Sir Robin then sets out my reply. He records that I replied that it would be impossible for me to see Mr. Al Fayed in these circumstances. If Ministers had been guilty of wrongdoing, as Mr. Al Fayed alleged, I was not going to make any sort of deal, regardless of the cost to the Government's reputation. I said that I would consider how to proceed, and suggested that in the meantime my informant should make no response to Mr. Al Fayed.

I said that because I was not prepared to enter into discussions with Mr. Al Fayed on any of these issues. However, it was clear to me that I would need to establish whether there was any substance in the allegations. If there was, it was unlikely that they would remain private; nor was it right that they should remain private.

Upon the substance of the allegations, the House now knows that my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) has resigned from the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) has rigorously rejected—both orally and in writing—the allegations of impropriety made against him, and is taking legal action. Sir Robin's report makes it clear that he has found no evidence that controverts my hon. Friend's assurances on these matters.

I must tell the House, however, that, since Sir Robin completed his report, other unconnected allegations which were not the subject of his investigations have been made against my hon. Friend. I must consider whether the combined impact of these allegations disables my hon. Friend from carrying out his responsibilities as Minister for Corporate Affairs. I believe that they do, and my hon. Friend agrees and has resigned from the Government.

On the other allegations put to me, Sir Robin found that they are either demonstrably false or, so far as he has been able to establish after careful inquiry, entirely unsubstantiated, as well as being denied by the Ministers concerned.

I now turn to wider issues. It is important that the public have confidence in our system of public administration, our methods of making public appointments, the conduct of people in authority and the financial and commercial activities of public figures. It has always been the wish of this House that British Government, Parliament and administration should be entirely free of malpractice and I am determined to ensure that that is so.

In the present atmosphere, there is public disquiet about standards of public life and I have concluded that action is imperative. I have listened carefully and have reflected upon the points raised by right hon. and hon. Gentlemen in all parts of the House in framing my recommendations.

I have decided to establish a body with the following terms of reference:

> "To examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standards of propriety in public life."

For these purposes, public life should include Ministers, civil servants and advisers, Members of Parliament and United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament, members and senior officers of all non-departmental public bodies and of national health service bodies, non-ministerial office holders, members and other senior officers of other bodies discharging publicly funded functions and elected members and senior officers of local authorities. That is a wide-ranging list, and it is intended to be so.

I have considered the nature of the body to be established. A royal commission tends to be cumbersome, and would probably take too long; a committee composed solely of Privy Councillors might be seen as being too narrowly drawn; a Speaker's Conference traditionally deals only with electoral law; and a formal board of inquiry or judicial inquiry tends to carry out specific investigations rather than considering broader issues and making recommendations to the Government. Arguments can be made for any of those bodies, but I believe that a better way ahead exists.

The body needs to be able to respond quickly and to be sufficiently flexible to deal with the wide range of issues I have outlined. I have, therefore, decided to establish standing machinery to examine the conduct of public life and to make recommendations on how best to ensure that standards of propriety are upheld. It will contain prominent individuals who have practical experience of Parliament and public life, but also others with expertise and knowledge of our principal institutions. Lord Nolan, a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, has accepted my invitation to chair this committee.

I have invited the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Democrats each to nominate a member of the committee, and I shall announce the full membership shortly. I hope that the committee will be able to produce at least a first report covering the main areas of current concern within six months, and then stay in being as a standing body to advise the Government of the day.

It will be open to the committee to take evidence in public, although it could also invite evidence in writing or in private and would probably wish to deliberate in private, but the committee must determine this. Naturally, I would expect Ministers and Members of Parliament to give evidence to the committee if requested to do so, but I should make it clear that the purpose of the body is not to replace the House's own machinery, which is the proper way to consider issues affecting individual Members of the House.

The new body will advise on general procedures, including procedures governing public appointments rather than investigate individual cases. When the committee has reported, I will publish its report, I hope in full, lay it before the House and take the proper action upon it. Recommendations affecting the Members and procedures of this House will, of course, be for the House to decide.

I hope that I have made it clear that I am determined to ensure that this is a wide-ranging review of the safeguards of standards of public office. It is vital that the system is seen and recognised to be beyond criticism. I shall naturally make available to the committee "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and any other documentation concerning the proprieties in Government that the committee may seek.

This country has an international reputation for the integrity and honour of its public institutions. That reputation must be maintained and be seen to be maintained. I hope that the standing committee I have announced today will enjoy the support of the House and reassure the people of this country about our determination to maintain high standards of conduct in public life.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I welcome the new body to look at conduct in public life. It is plainly sensible and necessary. I accept that some of the allegations made by Mr. Al Fayed may well be unsubstantiated and, indeed, badly motivated, but will the Prime Minister accept that public anger over these issues goes far wider than merely the matters raised by Mr. Al Fayed?

On the inquiry, will the Prime Minister confirm that it will cover not simply the consultancies of Members of Parliament and outside financial payments, but whether Ministers who privatise companies should then sit on their boards; the role of lobbyists, the use of patronage generally, not just for Members of Parliament but for others; and appointments to quangos, especially given the news today—I should be obliged if he would confirm it—that there are some 66 national health service trusts whose chairmen are either prominent members of the Conservative party or gave a donation to it?

Does the Prime Minister agree that the inquiry must be comprehensive, covering past malpractice, present practice and future rules? In that regard, may I point out what I think is a weakness in his statement? Will he confirm that the one area of investigation that appears forbidden to this body will be the specific allegations made against Ministers or Members of Parliament that have given rise to the public anxiety? If the new body is not to examine those cases, is there not an overwhelming case for the Committee of Privileges, which is the only other body that can examine them, to sit in public so that those matters can be investigated?

If that is ruled out, might I suggest alternatively that it is imperative that the new body, headed as it is by a Law Lord and with the power to take evidence, investigates the specific cases before moving to the general conclusions? If the Prime Minister rules out either the Committee on Privileges sitting in public or the new body investigating those matters, there will be justifiable public concern that the general inquiry is being used to sweep the particular allegations from public view when it is those allegations that have given rise to the public concern.

It would not be unfair to describe today's statement as decision-making on the run. Indeed, the resignation of the Minister with responsibilities for trade, just announced, suggests something of the same. I should be obliged if the Prime Minister would tell hon. Members what the nature of those other allegations against the Minister are. I repeat, however, that the inquiry is right. I do not underestimate the difficulties that beset the Prime Minister or the delicacy of the judgment that he must make, but the warning signs over these issues have been ignored for too long.

There should be no more statements made one day only to be superseded by different ones made the next. The action that the Prime Minister takes today should be expanded to encompass the comprehensive solution that I have put forward. If he does that in the way that I described, we will ensure that his Government once again start to control events rather than be driven by them.

The Prime Minister: Let me deal with the points that the right hon. Gentleman made. I welcome the fact that he supports the establishment of this new body. It will restore confidence where confidence may have been lacking, and that is to be welcomed in every part of the House. I welcome also what he had to say about the allegations that have been produced by Mr. Al Fayed.

On the right hon. Gentleman's specific questions about the inquiry, I made clear in my statement the answer to a number of the questions that he asked, but I shall confirm specifically for him that, yes, it is possible to look at the membership of boards, the relationship with lobbyists, patronage and quangos. That is all well within the terms of reference, as I said to the House a few moments ago.

On membership of quangos, no record is kept of the political affiliation—*[Interruption.]* No record is kept of the political affiliations—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot hear. The House must come to order so that at least I can hear what the Prime Minister is saying.

The Prime Minister: I repeat the point that I made a moment ago. People of all political persuasions serve on non-departmental public bodies. Many of them who are sufficiently well known for us to know their political affiliations without central record are well-known members and supporters of the Labour party.

There is no precedent for the Committee on Privileges to sit in public. The right hon. Gentleman knows very well the good reasons why that is so. It is necessary to have an investigation in depth without unsubstantiated allegations subsequently being made. That is a matter of natural justice, and has always been seen to be so by Members of the House, until some Opposition Members seemed to wish to play partisan party politics.

As for the new body, as I made entirely clear in my statement, it will set up the procedure to ensure that everyone has confidence in the way in which public affairs are conducted. It has been set up for that reason, and it is unbecoming of the right hon. Gentleman to suggest that it was set up for any other reason.

As for the nature of the allegations about my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), they are allegations and they are unsubstantiated. Whatever inquiries the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) may have, I am not going to retail unsubstantiated allegations. They will be investigated—they should be

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investigated—but every hon. Member should know that the purpose of the House is not to retail unsubstantiated allegations, but to make sure that they are investigated and, if true, acted upon.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): May I welcome the statement from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in particular the wide scope that is proposed for the inquiry, and the method by which it is thought that it should conduct its business?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I felt that it was necessary to give the committee the widest possible scope, so that it may deal with the whole range of concerns that have arisen not just in the events of the past couple of days, but I suppose, in some respects, rather earlier. It is therefore right to deal comprehensively with this matter; to have the committee independently chaired by a senior Lord in Ordinary, whose independence can be undoubted; to have representation on it from each of the three largest political parties in the House and to have other representation on it, which will spread across the band of public life, of people from politics and beyond it.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I welcome the Prime Minister's announcement, not least because it seems to follow almost identically the proposals put by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) a week ago. I am tempted to ask the Prime Minister why it has taken him so long to get there. Will he understand, however, that a welcome for the principle of a general inquiry into the ethics of public office should not be taken as satisfaction with the way in which the Prime Minister has handled individual concerns about individual Ministers in his Government?

Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that his indecision in this matter stands in stark contrast with the clear undertakings that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) little more than a week ago? If there are substantive matters to be investigated, does not the right hon. Gentleman understand that they should be investigated not by the Cabinet in the Cabinet, but by the Privileges Committee in public?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman's originality is such that he repeats precisely the points made some moments ago to which I have already replied. As for decision-making, an inquiry was established immediately. That inquiry has reported, and action has been taken on it. As for the wider issue, I would hardly regard as he does the decision to establish the widest-ranging committee to deal with the conduct of public life that has been established in this country at any time since the second world war.

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): May I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the action that he has taken? Is it not the case that only an independent inquiry of this kind will satisfy the public? Is it not much better to have such an independent inquiry than to allow the agenda to be set by political muck-raking?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend entirely about that. It is necessary to have a proper body so that people know that actions are taken within a proper framework and can then deal with suitable contempt with those who make unsubstantiated allegations.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Prime Minister emphasised the wide-ranging nature of the inquiry that he has just announced, and, like others, I welcome that. But will the terms of reference also include a matter that bears upon standards of conduct in public life—the financing of political parties in the UK?

The Prime Minister: This inquiry will deal with Government matters, Government appointments and Government behaviour. It has nothing to do with the financing of political parties, which has been dealt with by the Home Affairs Select Committee.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): While greatly welcoming my right hon. Friend's statement, may I ask him whether the Director of Public Prosecutions will examine whether Mr. Al Fayed should be prosecuted for attempted blackmail and whether all those who either succeed in bribing or attempt to bribe Members of Parliament should be prosecuted for corruption or summoned before this House for contempt of Parliament?

The Prime Minister: The latter point is predominantly a matter for the House. On the former point, the note of my meeting has been passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Is the Prime Minister telling the House that the inquiry will have no right and no capacity to inquire into those cases where substantial sums have been paid to the Conservative party in order to buy favourable decisions or privilege?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman would be wise to reflect on what he has just said and on his evidence for saying it. I set out clearly the remit of this committee. It is perfectly clear, and I have nothing to add to it.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the new body will have the power to look into the substantial sums of money that are paid to a number of right hon. and hon. Members for things that they do for the news media, based on information received while Members of this House?

The Prime Minister: I should think that the chairman of the committee may well consider that the remit would cover an examination of such payments.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): As the Prime Minister purported at Question Time to read out a selected list of Labour members of quangos, he must have taken some trouble to ascertain such political affiliations. Will he now compile and publish a full list of the political affiliations of chairmen and chairwomen of quangos, so that the public know how the Government fill those vacancies?

Will he also publish a full list of the chief executives of the next steps agencies with their salaries—something which he has totally refused to do so far—together with the salaries of the civil servants who did the comparable jobs before the agencies were set up?

The Prime Minister: That is a classic illustration of the sort of smear by association that we have seen so often during the past few years. It is not very difficult for most people in politics to know the political affiliations of prominent socialists like Baroness Jay, Helene Hayman, Lord Scanlon, Mr. Jack Jones and other people I mentioned earlier. I do not know where the right hon. Gentleman lives, but most of us on this side of the House can recognise a socialist, whatever activity they may be performing, if they have been as prominent as those.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): As chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement today, especially his reassurance that matters affecting Members of this House will continue to be considered by Members of this House.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said, and I certainly concur with the points that he made. My hon. Friend speaks with great experience of those matters.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Prime Minister aware that the matter of taking money from big business can never be properly cleared up until the Government face the 64-dollar question and say that Members of Parliament should have one job and one job only? Members of Parliament hold 550 directorships, consultancies and adviserships, which are mainly held by Tory Members of Parliament. It is high time that people understood that they should be able to live on the payments made to a Member of Parliament, and that there should be no conflict of interest between serving constituents and serving other masters outside. Clean up the stables now.

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman entirely carried his hon. Friends with him in those remarks—some of them also would have interests. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman also addressed himself to the question of trade union sponsorship and membership of that type. I do not think that that is a matter for the hon. Gentleman. He may be the latest living example of the old levellers, but many other people on both sides of the House believe that the concept of the wholly professional politician will only isolate politicians more and more from the people who send us here.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I refer my right hon. Friend to the second paragraph that he quoted from the Cabinet Secretary's report. I ask him to confirm that, in the past six days of hectic media reporting, not a single member of the media managed to discover the way in which they were being manipulated by the Al Fayeds. Although legitimate issues were raised in public, the media should be encouraged to try to ask how they are being manipulated by others.

I also ask my right hon. Friend to confirm that it is right that the new standing group should not examine every part of internal party funding, and that we cannot expect it to consider the way in which the Leader of the Opposition got his £70,000 and why the Labour party has appointed Tom Sawyer, the man who said, "No pay, no say", as its general secretary.

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Because he is the best man for the job.

The Prime Minister: "Because he is the best man for the job," the hon. Lady says. I do not doubt that. He may well be the best man for the job; I would not have any criticism about that in the case of Mr. Sawyer. The people whom we appoint are also the best people for the job; that is why they are appointed. I hope that Opposition Members will make the same type of judgment as the hon. Lady did to defend her position, that we would make to the people that we have appointed.

Now we know the truth, do we not? It is the right person if it is someone on the Opposition side; it is sleaze if it is someone on our side.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Prime Minister aware that it is no use writing a new highway code unless there are sanctions at the end of it, such as fines or taking away the licence, to implement it? Is he aware that the last time that the House received recommendations to expel two Members—in that case, Reggie Maudling and Albert Roberts—the Tories divided the House on party political lines and threw out that recommendation? Will the recommendations of the new body have to come back before the House for endorsement and be subject to political sanctions, or will the new body have the power to fine or suspend, or recommend expulsion on the verification of the Speaker?

The Prime Minister: I made the point earlier to the whole House, quite clearly, that the report would have to be laid before the House for the House to consider. If I had not done so on matters relating to the House, a large number of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends would have said to me, "This is a matter for the House of Commons, and it has to come back to the House of Commons." Opposition Members cannot have it both ways. As for dividing on party lines and walking out on that basis, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell the Privileges Committee about that.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Welcoming my right hon. Friend's statement, may I ask him whether he agrees that the same requirements should be made, as far as may be reasonable, of quangos as of local government, in respect of access to information and documents and meetings, as well as publication of membership and registration and declaration of interests?

The Prime Minister: Those are all points that can be covered in the report, and I suspect will be.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Prime Minister aware that, whatever the merits of a wider inquiry may be and whatever embarrassment to individuals or parties may have arisen from recent events, the matter of real concern is that, when people vote for a Member of Parliament, they should know that that Member works for them and is not using his position in Parliament to earn money on political matters that benefit the Member, not the constituent? Were that idea to spread, people would lose faith in the House of Commons, which would destroy centuries of work to establish the democratic principle.

That being the case, is the Prime Minister aware that the only way to deal with it is total openness, which is why I and other Members of the Committee of Privileges felt unable to hear the evidence in private and believed that it should be in public?

Is there not a clear answer to the problem? The Prime Minister and other Ministers, like everyone who has been a Minister, are governed by the strictest guidance of procedure for Ministers on private interests. If that were

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applied to all Members of Parliament, and if the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 were used to disqualify, by law, those who did not fulfil those criteria, the matters could be dealt with and public confidence restored.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman's latter point is certainly the sort of matter that the committee may wish to recommend, and may wish to send back to the House. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will be free to give evidence to the Committee on such issues if he wishes to do so.

On the subject of open government, may I remind the right hon. Gentleman that I have probably made more moves towards open government in the past three years than we have seen at any stage in the previous 30 years. Those include the membership and terms of ministerial Cabinet Committees, the publication of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", the Intelligence Services Act 1994, the White Paper on open government, the code of practice on Government information, the statutory access rights, the openness of public records, the code of practice that includes a range of other matters, more than 11,000 records released under open government initiatives—I could extend the list. Those are the moves towards open government that I have made in the past three years, and I think that it is time that some Opposition Members realised some of the movements that have been made.

On the earlier part of what the right hon. Gentleman said, many of his strictures are equally applicable to sponsorship by trade unions. The purpose of the Register of Members' Interests is to ensure that people are aware of what outside interests Members of Parliament may have.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Every weekend, the majority of Members of the House go back to their constituencies and hold advice surgeries to try to offer help to constituents from all walks of life. It is vital that those people are able to come to us—men and women on both sides of the House—and expect to receive sound, helpful and honest advice. It is for that reason more than any other that I welcome the inquiry that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has announced. My right hon. Friend has—

Madam Speaker: Order. Would the hon. Gentleman resume his seat for a moment? He is making a statement. He has been on his feet for some time, and I have not yet heard a question.

Mr. Gale: My right hon. Friend said that there would be an inquiry into the affairs of Ministers of the House, Members of the House and civil servants, which is absolutely right. It is not up to the House to question—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat. A number of hon. Members wish to be called, and I now want brisk questions to the Prime Minister, not long-winded statements.

Mr. Gale: There is a section of the community that has not been named in my right hon. Friend's statement. Will my right hon. Friend ask the chairman of the Press Gallery to conduct a similar inquiry into the political affiliations, financial interests and shareholdings of members of the Gallery, their editors and proprietors, and to publish them?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend may have achieved a rare moment of cross-party consensus.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Prime Minister appreciate that, when he appears before this House with a straight face and tells us that there is no current connection between political affiliation and quango appointments, he makes himself and his Government look shabby, foolish and quite incredible?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his view, even if, as usual, he is wrong.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, and I regret the resignation of our hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). Perhaps my right hon. Friend could also take a look at one of the biggest quangos of all—the European Commission. Would it be in order to suggest that British nationals serving in the Commission as Commissioners, or working for it, or who are now likely to serve on the Committee of the Regions, should also be included in the remit of the new body?

The Prime Minister: I have certainly included the United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament, but I am not sure whether the conditions of service of others who work in the Commission and elsewhere would legitimately fall within that remit.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the Prime Minister aware that many people in this country are appalled by the prospect of Members of Parliament holding consultancies that pay them large, although undisclosed, sums of money? If he wants to give real credibility to the new body that he has announced, why does he not include both Members' consultancies and trade union sponsorships?

The Prime Minister: I am interested to hear that suggestion. I made it clear earlier that it was perfectly possible for consultancies to be examined by the Committee, which can make recommendations about them. The hon. Gentleman should be in no doubt about that.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Has my right hon. Friend noted the number of times during these exchanges when Opposition Members have referred to the proceedings of the Privileges Committee as "secret"? Does he not feel that, in the interests of accuracy, it should be clearly stated that every line of every question and answer will be published and then debated in this House? There is no secrecy in that.

The Prime Minister: That is entirely true; I could have made the point in answer to a previous question. The report of the Privileges Committee, although its proceedings will be held in private, will be published, brought to the House and then debated by the House. That is hardly a secret investigation, and it is open to every member of the Committee to come and speak in the debate.

The reason why the Privileges Committee has always met in private has been well understood for many years: it is in the interests of natural justice that it should. I very much regret that on this occasion, for whatever reasons they may have—I shall leave others to judge them—Labour Members alone have decided that they will not sit and conduct the investigation into the behaviour of Members of Parliament in the traditional manner. I believe that people outside will see that as a partisan move for partisan reasons.

If the report were not to be published, debated and then acted on, Opposition Members might have a point. As it is, they have none—except that they want to create the maximum amount of difficulty, irrespective of how the House traditionally deals justly with its Members.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I generally support the Prime Minister's announcement today, although we share the view that some appointments to quangos are made for political reasons. In Northern Ireland, that is not usually because the persons concerned are Tories, as they are an endangered species there. Usually, it is people who have been defeated at elections who have been appointed to quangos.

Is there not a danger of hysteria getting to us in this House? Already I have heard people crying, "Why didn't he resign?" when earlier they were crying, "Why doesn't he resign?" It is a fact that standards in this House are still respected throughout the world as an example for all.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. There has been an hysterical reaction in some quarters. There seem to be a large number of candidates for the role of witchfinder-general on the Opposition Benches—people who seem unconcerned about the way in which they are behaving. That truly is as poor as any of the behaviour that they themselves criticise.

Literally millions of people in this country would claim to be Conservatives, socialists, Liberals or members of some other political party. The argument that those people are somehow different and should therefore be excluded from public service is totally and utterly ludicrous.

I want people of quality whatever their political persuasions to serve, and the sooner the Labour party removes its dogmatic opposition to bodies that run things locally, such as national health service self-governing hospitals, the sooner many of its supporters will wish to come forward and work for their local communities and make a success of those bodies. It is the Opposition's doctrinaire stupidity that stops that happening.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I thank my right hon. Friend for his announcement of the inquiry. I should like to return to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith). While all our officials in the Commission are meant to be honourable men, should we not set an example by regulating them in the same way as we regulate public officials in this country—or is my right hon. Friend saying that employees in the European Commission, those who are UK nationals, are beyond UK law and jurisdiction? Should we not do something about that, bearing in mind that the Commission is responsible for £5 billion of fraud in the European Union?

The Prime Minister: People working for the European Commission who may previously have been British civil servants are in exactly that same position as people who have been working for the United Nations and other bodies for the past 20 or 30 years. The fact that people work for the European Union ought not to mean that they are treated in any way differently. They are employed for a period by people other than ourselves, and do not fall within our natural responsibility and jurisdiction. People may regret that, but it is a fact. Those people who properly fall under the control of the House for these purposes are elected Members of the European Parliament, and I have included them in the inquiry.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Can the Prime Minister say whether Mr. Al Fayed was interviewed by the Cabinet Secretary? Will he say who the other Ministers were and whether they were interviewed? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that his inquiry is unprecedented, and does he not know that his Law Officers accept that the Committee on Privileges could meet in public or in private: that that is up to the members of the Committee?

In the context of being partisan, does not the right hon. Gentleman feel that the public might draw the conclusion that the partisanship lay with the Government supporters, and that the issue was decided only by the casting vote of the Lord President? The public will also ask, "What have this Government got to hide that they have to meet in private?"

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is sometimes mind-bogglingly silly. On the points in the first part of his question, I suggest that he refers to Sir Robin Butler's report. On his latter points, he should refer to the answer that I have several times given to his hon. Friends and which he has not yet taken in.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): For the avoidance of doubt, can my right hon. Friend confirm that the standing committee will examine and explore the substantial sums that pass from trade unions to Labour Members year in and year out, and no doubt the substantial favours that are required in return?

The Prime Minister: That is not specifically included in the remit, and I am not sure without a careful examination of the remit whether it would fall within it. But, of course, if people wish to volunteer that, it is a matter for them.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): The Prime Minister has suggested that no records are kept of the political affiliations of quango appointees. Is he aware of the existence of the Public Appointments Unit, which has nine full-time and two part-time staff investigating the backgrounds of appointees? Is he also aware that the Public Appointments Unit registers 10 different categories of information with the Data Protection Board? In the course of the inquiry, will he ensure that the criteria used for those 10 different categories of information about prospective appointees to public office are placed in the public domain?

The Prime Minister: Let me take, for example, the question of health service appointments, as I think, from memory, that that was the one I referred to earlier. No central record is kept there of the political affiliations of the people who are appointed. On the hon. Gentleman's logic, many of the people who are invited have high-profile positions. But hundreds more do not—they just have a commitment to public service. I ask the hon. Gentleman to reflect. Is he really suggesting that one should engage in a series of questions to all the people

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there as to what their political affiliations might be? What is the question to be, "Are you, or have you ever been, a Conservative?"—is that the sort of society that the hon. Gentleman wants?

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): In welcoming the Prime Minister's statement today, will he ask the Lord in Ordinary when he comes to looking at patronage and the abuse of it to examine carefully the record of the last Labour Government, and in particular the resignation honours list of one Prime Minister and the appointment of a son-in-law to the ambassador to Washington by another Labour Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I seem to recall that, when the last Labour Government were in power—admittedly, a long time ago—there was a great fuss about the number of Labour appointees to bodies of one sort or another, particularly those that became known as quangos. There is no doubt at all that that was certainly the case at the time. Anybody who has served on a local school governing body with a Labour-controlled education authority will know very well precisely what Labour authorities have done so frequently to Conservative Governments—

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): And Conservatives.

The Prime Minister: "And Conservatives," says the hon. Gentleman, so he concedes that that is what Labour authorities do. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman makes my point for me.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Can the Prime Minister repeat his assurance that the inquiry will report within six months? Some of us can remember that, in October 1989, the Home Secretary and the Attorney-General came to the House and announced an inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich cases. That inquiry was dragged out, and every conceivable excuse was used to drag it out, for the next five years, until most people had forgotten the origins of the inquiry in the first place. We do not want to see that happen in this case.

The Prime Minister: The timetable for the inquiry will not be in my hands. I have said that I hope the inquiry will be able to report, at least on the substantive part of its work, within six months, but that is a matter for Lord Nolan, the chairman, and the members of the inquiry, one of whom—a senior member—will be appointed by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition and another by the right hon. Gentleman the leader of the Liberal party.

The timetable will not be in the hands of the Government in any sense. I have expressed the hope that it can be done within six months, and I believe that the chairman and the committee will seek to meet that target, but I can offer the hon. Gentleman no guarantees, for it is not within my control.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will accept that one of the background elements in the whole matter is the speed with which the role of Members of Parliament and the expectations of them of their constituents are changing, and the way in which the relationship between this place, the Government the European Union and, indeed, the public service in our country is changing. Will he at least give us the assurance that he will think very carefully about also setting up an inquiry into the best way of equipping this great House of Commons to take the country into the 21st century, in light of the way in which so much is changing so quickly?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right about the changing demands on Members of Parliament. Members who have served in the House for more than a few years will acknowledge that difficulty from their own practical experience. There is no doubt that the much greater availability of Members of Parliament and their much greater visibility through a much higher level of media interest than ever before has added to their work load, so I have a great deal of sympathy with what my hon. Friend has to say. However, that is predominantly a matter for the House itself rather than specifically a matter for me, although I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend's underlying proposition.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will Prime Minister confirm that the two Ministers who have resigned did so apparently on the narrow point they had not declared items in the Register of Members' Interests? Will he accept that the issue is much more serious than that? Will he therefore reject the notion that, just because something is in the Register of Members' Interests, it is all right to do it?

Will the Prime Minister also make it clear that the whole purpose of the inquiry is to look way beyond whether we have a Register of Members' Interests or whether people declare what is in it, to the real prospects of trying to find out how to bring back to the country the honour that the House has so long deserved?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman's first proposition was wrong, of course. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) certainly resigned because he did not delare something in the Register of Members' Interests. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) has resigned not on those grounds, but on the grounds that more allegations, as yet unsubstantiated and unexamined, have been made, and on that basis it is clearly difficult for him to continue with his present responsibilities as Ministers for Corporate Affairs. For that reason, he has left the Government. Nothing as yet has been proved against my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton.

Of course there are wider concerns. It is precisely to allay them that I have set up a mechanism which I hope will, when it has reported and is operating, show beyond doubt that many of the wilder allegations and tittle-tattle that have appeared recently have no basis and are, indeed, nonsense. Once the procedures are in place, much of the feeding frenzy that we have seen from time to time over recent years and weeks will be seen to be the utter nonsense that so much of it is.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We shall now move on to the next business.

BILL PRESENTED

FORMER CABINET MINISTERS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS (INTERESTS)

Mr. David Winnick presented a Bill to prohibit former Cabinet Ministers, senior civil servants and senior officials of public departments and public bodies from accepting employment from a company which was privatised when they held office or which had a commercial or contractual relationship with a department or body for which or in which they exercised a relevant function: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 164.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

That the draft Weights and Measures Act 1985 (Metrication) (Amendment) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Weights and Measures (Metrication) (Miscellaneous Goods) (Amendment) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Units of Measurement Regulations 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Drug Education

4.20 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to deal with drug education.

This is a wide subject, and I want to concentrate on one aspect—solvent abuse. More radical steps must be taken to save our children from solvent abuse than those proposed by the Government's Green Paper "Tackling Drugs Together". At present, it is not unlawful to sniff solvents. However, we should note that two schoolchildren die every week from solvent abuse, and many more damage themselves. Solvent-based products are cheap and available, and can be bought with pocket money. Many children graduate to soft drugs. Far too many end up in gaol after decades of drug addiction fed by crime.

We must take a critical look at what is happening behind our backs. It is estimated that 750,000 of our children have tried sniffing solvents, thereby putting their lives at risk. There is not a quiet, pleasant neighbourhood in the country left untouched by children experimenting with solvents. The youngest reported was only seven years old; the youngest to die was just nine.

After road accidents, solvent abuse is the second highest unnatural cause of death among people aged 10 to 16. Even in my constituency—leafy, pleasant and stable Sutton—the practice of solvent abuse is far more widespread than parents and teachers could ever imagine. It is not just an inner-city problem; it is a national curse affecting normal, decent families.

Indeed, it was not until I began to make inquiries among teenagers that I saw for myself the urgency of the problem. With the help of the charity Youth Awareness Programme—YAP—which is run by young people in Sutton to counter drug and solvent abuse, I have managed to get an inside view. Their experiences are backed by another charity, Re-Solv, which is a specialist in solvent abuse.

What I heard was highly disturbing. There is barely a family in Sutton where one child has not experimented with solvents. It is all too easy. Every household has at least 30 domestic products that can be turned to improper use, ranging from aerosols, such as hair sprays, to cigarette lighter refills. Worse, children have no idea how lethal they can be. The number of youngsters who die at first attempt is shocking.

Let us take the case of Jane—it is not her real name—who is aged 14. She attends a popular, well-managed local school which, on the face of it, would not have any such problems. However, Jane says otherwise. Peer group pressure is powerful, and solvent sniffing is widespread. She says, "We are doing it at the back of the class and the teachers don't notice. My first experience was with marker pens. You can get a good buzz from them."

Girls are being increasingly influenced by boys, who are now being introduced into the school. They graduate from marker pens to more powerful solvents. Sniffing then takes place outside school—down a quiet lane or even at home. Jane has now become a voluntary youth worker trying to stop her friends from using drugs. Their response is discouraging. They tell her, "We know what we're doing. Sniffing doesn't do any harm."

[Lady Olga Maitland]

Richard—again, not his real name—aged 15, is trying to do the same at his school and youth club. He said, "They are all doing it, and have been experimenting for years. It is difficult to get them to listen to me."

Olivia, now 18, who attended a Roman Catholic school, told me, "I started at school on solvents before moving on to drugs. It was so easy. It began with, 'Let's have a go on Tipp-Ex.' I started sniffing. I had head-thumping experiences and carried on. It gave me a lift. I liked it."

Then Olivia told me how they learned to get an even better sensation by drinking alcohol at the same time—beer or cider, both of which are affordable. She added, "The truth is, none of us had any idea that by breathing aerosol cans through the sleeves of our sweaters and directly into our mouths we could freeze our lungs and die. I saw it as an easy way to get a high and as an escape from everyday problems."

My teenagers then listed the most popular products they use. After aerosol-driven products come glues, drycleaning fluids, lighter and correcting fluids, not to mention butane gas, used in cigarette lighters and refill canisters. The latter is particularly lethal, and is the single cause of the greater number of deaths.

I congratulate the Government on their proposal to educate children in primary schools on such dangers, but much more needs to be done. Industry has a major responsibility, too, and must be educated to respond. It is, after all, its dangerous substances which cause the damage. Industries should be obliged by law to put a warning label on products that could be misused. I congratulate the British Aerosol Manufacturers Association on taking a lead in issuing guidelines. They must now become statutory.

In turn, the bona fide customer needs to be educated to buy non-solvent-based products. Industry must move to non-solvent-based products wherever possible, and grants for research into substitutes should be provided. The Government must make grants available for research and development into alternative butane-free propellants. In any case, pressure and incentives should be applied to manufacturers to use pump-action cans. Why not subject dangerous aerosols to excise duty, following the principle of paying less for green petrol?

The Government should consider strengthening the existing Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 by establishing an enforcement agency. Pitifully few prosecutions have resulted so far. Retailers must be educated about solvent-based products. Only 43 per cent. of shopkeepers even know which products can be abused.

Every retailer must question and refuse to sell to a child who suddenly buys half a dozen aerosol cans. At the same time, he must be suspicious if there is a sudden and unexplained request for plastic bags which are used to enhance sniffing. If in doubt, do not sell. Make it tough to buy solvent-related products. There should be a ban on all sales of butane gas lighter refills to those under 16 years old. Finally, we should strengthen the Children Act 1989, giving social workers power to take action with young people at risk from sniffing solvents.

I trust that my Bill will have support from both sides of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Lady Olga Maitland, Sir Malcolm Thornton, Sir David Mitchell, Mr. Neville Trotter, Mr. Michael Alison, Mr. Michael Shersby, Mr. David Hanson, Mr. David Amess, Mr. Jonathan Evans, Mr. David Porter, Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown and Mr. Michael Stephen.

DRUG EDUCATION

Lady Olga Maitland accordingly presented a Bill to deal with drug education: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 28 October, and to be printed. [Bill 165.]

Opposition Day

[19TH ALLOTTED DAY]

The National Health Service

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.28 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg to move,

> That this House shares the public alarm at the creeping privatisation of the National Health Service, accompanied as it is by lower accountability to the public, and a diversion of resources into increasing bureaucracy at the expense of patient care.

The national health service holds a unique place in the life and affections of the people of Britain. There could be no more eloquent testimony to its uniqueness and importance than the lip service paid even by the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher—to whom the socialist principles on which the health service are based were and are anathema—or the caution shown by her successor, who claimed only a few days ago in Bournemouth that the health service will not be damaged or privatised,

> "not while I live and breathe."

Fine words, which we are told express good intentions—but we, like the people of Britain, do not give that for the Prime Minister's intentions. Of concern to us is the calamitous effect of his policies, which are producing a two-tier health service with an increasing role for ability to pay, driving us stealthily but steadily towards a privatised health service with diminished public accountability for huge sums of public money, and causing an enormous increase in bureaucracy.

At the outset, I pay tribute to those people who continue, despite the obstacles placed in their way by the Government's gross incompetence, to make our health service work and who strive daily to deliver high standards of patient care. I refer to the staff of the national health service. The Secretary of State, like her Government colleagues, has adopted the dishonest practice of attempting to pretend that any criticism of her or of Government policy is criticism of the health service itself or of its staff. Let us get that out of the way for a start. The staff of the health service are wonderful—the Government are appalling.

The health service remains a service with huge achievements to its credit. It is one within which public servants struggle to do the job for which they were trained, no matter how difficult the Government make it. Those achievements are maintained despite Government policy, not because of it.

The Secretary of State continues to insist that her so-called reforms are delivering the goods. I remind her of the words of the chair of the British Medical Association at its conference in July:

> "There is no longer one national health service."

That is despite the promises that the Government have repeatedly made to the British people. The chair continued:

> "There are 100 purchasing consortia and 400 provider units, each with its own self-serving view of its best interests."

Despite the Secretary of State's claimed confidence in the changes that she has brought about, she has been deeply reluctant to debate them in the House. The Government last initiated a health service debate in November 1991, when the right hon. Lady's predecessor was in charge. The current Secretary of State for Health, who has held that office since the last general election, has never once volunteered to discuss her relentlessly continual reforms—her permanent revolution—with right hon. and hon. Members.

Not only has there been little debate, but there has been no independent evaluation or research into the impact of Government reforms. Ministers are often pleased to quote the OECD report published earlier this year, but even they have admitted that it relies on assumptions and figures supplied by the Department of Health and can in no way be described as independent. We await with interest the Audit Commission report due next year. Meanwhile, the Secretary of State is charging ahead with further changes and initiatives well before that report appears.

Major transformation in the nation's health service is taking place without proper consideration and debate in the House, and without full and proper evaluation even of changes made so far, let alone with full prior consideration of the latest ideas being floated—the application of performance-related pay or local pay bargaining. We are also kept ignorant of the real costs.

In March 1993, we were told that the cost of changes up to that time was £1.2 billion. That was enough, had it been differently spent, to fund up to 1,000 new health centres across Britain or almost to clear the health service's waiting lists. But, since March 1993, there has been silence from the Secretary of State on the cost to the health service of this "permanent revolution". We have managed to squeeze out the news that some £37 million, in total, has been spent on minor consequences of change; such matters as logos, changing note paper and so on. Although that much smaller sum has been spent on the minor consequences of change, it is, of course, the kind of sum that the Government have found for attacking the waiting lists, which are of so much more value to patients.

The first effect of the Government's changes, whatever their cost, is the commercialisation of the health service—the slippery slope to overall privatisation—and not only that commercialisation, but the stealthy increase in private provision itself. I am aware that the Conservative party dislikes the use of the word "privatisation" in the context of the national health service, although it seems to revel it in everywhere else. I am even more aware that, in the course of the debate, some Conservative Members may chide me for daring to use the word in the light of the Prime Minister's assurance that the health service will not be privatised while he lives and breathes. Let me, for the fullness of information, quote what the chairman of the British Medical Association said last week at a meeting of the Caledonian Society. He said:

> "I was delighted by the Prime Minister's assurance in his Party Conference speech that the Government is not going to privatise the NHS . . . I am, nevertheless, somewhat bewildered because the fact is that the NHS is already being privatised."

He goes on to give the example of the first privatisation of clinical support services in the Lister laboratories. That privatisation is causing serious alarm across the health service because it means the privatisation of pathology services, which are so crucial to the provision of a universal national health service.

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

By the way, I would not like the House to miss the fact that this passage about privatisation—again, I am quoting the words of the head of the BMA—concluded:

> "I am driven to the sad conclusion, therefore, that the Prime Minister does not know what is going on or that he is not in control of the situation."

Is the Secretary of State—I wonder—in control of the situation? If she tells us that the health service is not being privatised, she, too, will be subject to the charge that she does not know what is going on.

The number of private beds has risen by two thirds since 1980, while national health service beds have been reduced by a third. That is not a question only of changes in medical techniques, which, I know, is the usual excuse that the Government trot out when we talk about the reduction in the number of beds; it is a shift in the pattern of provision in which the number of national health service beds is being reduced and the number of private beds is increasing. One hundred thousand private patients are now seen in the national health service, mostly in private bed units in trust hospitals—an increase of 12 per cent. over one year. Laings review of private health care makes it plain that almost 19 per cent. of all United Kingdom hospital-based health care is now provided by private hospitals and nursing homes, whereas in 1984 only 7.5 per cent. of hospital-based health care was so provided.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Does the right hon. Lady accept that the number of beds in the national health service has gone down at a rate of—roughly—10 per cent. over the past 10 years, which merely reflects different patterns of treatment and more surgery being done on a day-case basis? Is not it dangerous for her and her colleagues to put out an alarmist story about beds disappearing when, in fact, that is totally inconsistent with today's medical needs?

Mrs. Beckett: I know that the hon. Gentleman has made that intervention in previous debates and I am afraid that I think that he might—if I may say so with deep respect—have been on automatic pilot. If he had listened carefully, he would have heard me saying that my point was not simply that there had been a reduction in health service beds, because I recognise, despite the fact that we would argue with him to what extent that has been part of the problem, that there have been changes in medical care—the point that he was making. I was making a different point, not one with which he is quite so familiar, which is that while the number of national health service beds is decreasing, for whatever reason, the number of private sector beds is going up.

A survey carried out by *The Observer* newspaper and Denplan, a private dental scheme, shows that, in dentistry, 77 per cent. of those dentists surveyed thought that within five years they would treat no national health service patients.

I hear the Minister of State muttering, "Here we go again: we have heard that before." Yes, we have heard it before. I receive complaints at my advice bureaux—I should think that the Minister receives them at his; if not, I hope that people will listen and then turn up—from people who are very worried because they do not think that they will be able to get NHS treatment for their dental needs in the future. They find that very alarming and they do not like the fact that the Government are presiding over such a reduction in health service care.

Perhaps most telling of all, within the private sector the share provided by charitable hospitals has fallen from 57 per cent. to 37 per cent. since 1980, while the share provided by hospitals run for profit—run explicitly as businesses to make money—has grown from 42.5 per cent. to 63 per cent.

In August this year, Peter Griffiths, an advocate of the Government's so-called reforms—a former deputy director of the NHS executive, I believe—was more forthcoming than some Ministers have been about the future as they see it. He made it clear that, in his view, the move by many of our existing institutions from state trust status to, in effect, the status of private health care providers was an inexorable development of existing policy.

Then there is the evidence leaked to *The Sunday Times* in August, and not so far refuted—although perhaps it will be refuted during the debate—that American health care companies are engaged in secret talks with the Government with the aim of taking over parts of the national health service. The Minister of State, I believe, has confirmed to *The Sunday Times* that several American concerns are trying to secure a foothold in Britain, and doctors and academics have already expressed the fear that the managers of the world's most expensive medical system may end up dictating the price of health treatment in Britain.

The hospitals that—it is suggested—have been targeted are the Royal Marsden in London, with its worldwide reputation for cancer treatment, and the Christie in Manchester, which is similarly famous and valued. As I have said, despite those strong rumours we have as yet heard no denial from the Government that such talks are taking place and I see no evidence that anyone is volunteering to give me such a denial today.

Across the board in the health service, we are seeing the commercialisation of a great public service. As research commissioned recently by the GMB union shows, there is no clearer evidence of that commercialisation than the composition of the trust boards appointed by, or in concert with, the Secretary of State. A study of the expertise and backgrounds of those appointed to the boards shows that they are overwhelmingly representative of Conservative interests. One third are directors of private companies—or 25 per cent. in some cases. Others are solicitors and accountants; only a tiny percentage have medical expertise, or expertise in the national health service.

Moreover—as was mentioned here earlier today—66 of the trusts are chaired either by a Conservative or by someone connected with a company that has made a donation to the Conservative party. The party, and Tory front organisations, have been given nearly £2 million by companies whose directors were appointed by the Secretary of State and now sit on NHS trusts. Some trusts, for example, are tarred with the brush of a company—Tarmac—whose interests and expertise have nothing to do with health, but are in construction and road building; although, by coincidence, it is the company which gave £413,500 to the Conservative party between 1979 and 1992.

Tarmac is well represented on the NHS trusts. Brian Baker, chairman of a trust in the west midlands, was the managing director of the company until last year; Lord

Stafford, from another division of Tarmac, is a director of the mental health foundation of the mid-Staffordshire trust.

I must concede that Sun Alliance has an interest in people's growing insecurity about the future of our health service, and in its disintegration. Its former chief executive, a Mr. Addison, is a director of Croydon community trust. Sun Alliance has given a total of £478,000 to the Conservative party. George Kennedy, a director of Kent and Canterbury hospitals trust, was chairman of a division of Smiths Industries. It has donated more than £100,000 to the Tory party. The largest corporate donor to that party, United Biscuits, is represented on the board of the Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children by its chairman, Sir Robert Clarke.

Hon. Members who have retired from the House or from the European Parliament, or who may be active in the House of Lords, can often be assured of a place on one of the Secretary of State's NHS trusts. The beneficiaries of her patronage include Sir Timothy Raison, Sir Robert McCrindle, Lord Jenkin—a former Conservative Health Secretary—Lord Hayhoe, Baroness Cox, Maureen Hicks, Tony Favell and Lord Wade. Only yesterday, I heard that the former Member of the European Parliament for Lancashire, Central—a Mr. Michael Welsh, who presumably lost his seat as recently as June—is now to chair the Chorley and South Ribble NHS trust.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Beckett: I shall be pleased to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Rowe: I thank the right hon. Lady. The tenor of her arguments suggests—

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Only a tenner? You are cheap!

Mr. Rowe: I understand the attraction of apparent illiteracy to certain hon. Members, but it is a pity that they do not understand plain English.

The right hon. Lady's argument suggests that, were she or any of her Front-Bench colleagues to lose their seats at an election, they should not be given any jobs in which their expertise and experience could conceivably be of any public value. Is that really what she means?

Mrs. Beckett: I do not intend to be drawn into that argument. Let me merely observe that I have lost my seat in the past, and no member of the Conservative Government offered me anything. The hon. Gentleman's assumption that we apply the same standards as the Government is not borne out, certainly by my experience.

The hon. Gentleman made a similar point the last time these issues were debated, and I understand from what he has said that his wife has health service expertise. I have no quarrel with people whose political persuasions are different from my own—people across the board, indeed—who have expertise, knowledge and experience that could be valuable to the health service, and who are given positions on NHS trusts. I must tell the hon. Gentleman, however, that anyone who scrutinises the information that has been dragged out of the Government piece by piece will not get the impression that the community, in its broadest sense, could conceivably be said to be represented.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): If the right hon. Lady really wants more of her supporters to join NHS trusts, the best thing that she can do is say that she supports those trusts. Will she take the opportunity today to acknowledge that trusts are working and are good for patients? Will she encourage her supporters, and congratulate them on the good work that they are doing in the trusts?

Mrs. Beckett: That was an interesting intervention. I know that the Secretary of State has made that point repeatedly in the past. She knows that we oppose NHS trusts; nevertheless, while they exist we want them to work in the way that gives the best value to the community.

I am interested to note that the Secretary of State's definition of a person who is fit to serve on the boards of trusts is someone who agrees with her. That is apparent in their membership. Our information is inevitably somewhat anecdotal, because the Government do not publish proper information about the qualifications of those on the bodies concerned. However, I know of many Conservatives with years of experience, much expertise and a record of serious service to the NHS, all of whom have been swept out of sight in those bodies because their devotion to the NHS might outweigh their devotion to the Conservative party, and because they will not do precisely what the Secretary of State says.

What the right hon. Lady has said is very revealing. Yes, making the trusts broadly publicly representative will mean including members of other parties, but it should also mean including people of different shades of opinion from the Secretary of State, who tell the truth about what is happening in the NHS rather than slavishly repeating whatever she says.

The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) has a particular interest in these matters, but the spouses of other Conservative Members have been given positions on hospital trusts. They include the husband of the Secretary of State for Education, the wife of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), the wife of the right hon. Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow), the wife of the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and the wife of the hon. Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner). As I have said, that is just the information that is available to us now.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Is not it grotesquely unfair for the Opposition repeatedly to attack my wife for being appointed to a trust when she has spent all her life working in the health service and [illegible] great deal of service for no payment in the Southend health authority and whom I met when I was taken to Westminster hospital as one of her patients? Is the right hon. Lady aware of anything inadequate about her qualifications for chairing a trust? Is she aware of anything inadequate in the record of the Southend community care trust? Is not it dirty and unfair to mention my wife's name repeatedly when she has had no job other than working in the health service as a fully qualified person?

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

Mrs. Beckett: I am not attacking the hon. Gentleman's wife as an individual or her expertise. I did not know her background, but now I do. I named her because she is one of a string of known Conservative party members and supporters appointed to boards. It is an indication of the way in which the structure of the health service is being packed with people who, whatever their other expertise and experience, are Conservative party supporters. The hon. Member for Southend, East must be well aware that the vast majority of them have no experience in the health service.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Beckett: No, I have not finished.

There would be nothing wrong with people such as the hon. Gentleman's wife having a place on these trusts were they balanced by people of similar experience from right across the community. There would be nothing wrong if people who had that knowledge, expertise and understanding were much more widely represented on the boards. If the hon. Gentleman's wife has any sort of medical or health service background, she is one of a tiny percentage—between 4 and 6 per cent. We are attacking not the individuals but the nature and overall composition of the boards and the Secretary of State's decisions about the people she puts on them.

Mr. Malone: The right hon. Lady cannot have her argument two ways. She refers consistently to the wives of hon. Members and then concedes that they are perfectly well qualified to serve on boards. Will she undertake to the House that she will stop referring to them in the future? That would be the decent thing to do.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister is missing the point, no doubt deliberately. My point is not that these are people with or without expertise in the health service. My point is that the only people appointed to serve on these boards have a known political allegiance or have no knowledge or understanding of the health service.

Mr. Malone: The only people?

Mrs. Beckett: Not the only people but the vast bulk of them. There is a tiny number of people of a different political persuasion. There is a sprinkling of Liberal Democrats and a slightly larger sprinkling of members whose political orientation is towards the Labour party. The Minister knows perfectly well that what we are saying is true. He knows, too, that this information has had to be dragged out of the Government inch by squealing inch. He knows that the boards are packed with people who can be relied upon to do the Secretary of State's bidding. If the Government have so little to hide why have not they been prepared to publish these lists until we dragged the information out of them?

Sir Teddy Taylor *rose—*

Mrs. Beckett: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I want to go on to a different point. I have sympathy for him, but he has made his point.

Sir Teddy Taylor *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. If the right hon. Lady is not giving way, the hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mrs. Beckett: I would give way to the hon. Gentleman if I had not already done so.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) has revealed in a survey, almost £20 million a year is being spent by the national health service on payments for these chairmen and non-executive directors of trusts. This morning on the "Today" programme the Secretary of State was sniffy about our concern over these issues. If I recall correctly she said that they were receiving "insubstantial sums". Well, I recognise that for people in the position of some of the directors involved, the sums they receive—£15,000 or £20,000 for the chairman of a trust—may not be regarded as substantial. I remind the Secretary of State that although a non-executive director on a trust can hope to earn £12 an hour for an eight-hour week working for that trust, a nurse on the middle range of pay can expect to earn £5.79 an hour for a long 40-hour week.

Although it is claimed that everything about the appointments has been open and above board, we all recognise that that is not the case. If declarations of interest were made initially, they were certainly unpublished and had to be dragged out of the Government by my hon. Friends who preceded me in this post. Now that they are being published, we see how little experience of and contact with the NHS some board members have had and we are starting to see some more direct conflicts of interest. The chair of Trent regional health authority, which covers the area that I represent, is a board member of a company called Takare plc, the business of which is nursing homes. Therefore, it has a direct financial interest in reducing the role of the national health service.

My predecessor wrote to the Secretary of State, who was too busy to reply. One of her junior Ministers replied, shrugging off the concern. The Minister offered not his own view about whether there was a conflict of interest but said that Mr. Ackroyd believes that

> "there is very little risk of any conflict of interest arising between his position as Chairman of Trent Regional Health Authority and as a Director of Takare".

He would say that, wouldn't he? I have heard that before.

In that context, the Government's announcement that they will finally respond to demands from the Opposition and set up some sort of independent body to review and monitor standards in public life is welcome, but it remains too little, too late. It is not clear to me that it will address, or that there are other steps to address, the questions that I put to the Secretary of State this morning. We want to hear from her whether the Government propose to establish a central register of quangos so that we know of all the bodies that exist. We want to know whether the Government propose to establish a register of the names of every board member of each quango and the qualifications of those members for board membership. We want to know whether the Government intend that the same standards as apply to surcharge and other safeguards in local government will apply to quangos, because, even more than local government, these bodies are involved in the use of public money and it is right that they should be dealt with in the same way.

The Secretary of State sometimes seems to imply that because, by the standards of those involved, the money is so slight, it does not matter that it goes overwhelmingly to people involved with the Conservative party. Although she tries to pretend that there is no real problem, the Government have already made some changes in the way that the matter is handled by insisting that interests are declared. Today, it appears that perhaps they are making more. The concern that is reflected in those changes is felt much more widely outside the ranks of the Government than they sometimes recognise. The Conservative leader of Wandsworth council, in putting forward a proposal opposing the closure of Queen Mary's hospital in Roehampton said that

> "health care decisions are too important to be left to unelected quangos."

I did not think that I would ever agree with the Conservative leader of Wandsworth council. Clearly, today is a first.

Apart from the accountability of public money, we are concerned about its use. We want to see the money used in the front line to provide the maximum and best possible patient care. Under the Government's waiting list initiative, trusts are being encouraged to use the private sector even though the cost of treating patients there is, on average, £1,552, which is more than five times the cost in the NHS. For a high level of psychiatric care the national health service cost is on average £46,000 a year whereas, according to the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, some private hospitals are charging £70,000 or £80,000 a year for similar care.

Of course, those are rough and ready approximations. However, there seem to be some strange exceptions to the pattern. For example, the Health Care International hospital in Clydebank has received £40 million of public money, which has doubled from an initial estimate of £20 million, and that was enough, to treat patients from beyond these shores and, it was claimed at the time, create 4,000 jobs into the bargain. That project, however, has employed only 400 people. I understand that, far from treating patients from overseas, as was intended, the hospital is treating patients from Birmingham and Manchester on a cut-price deal basis. I shall refrain from wondering whether the geographical origin of someone in Clydebank is a matter of concern. What really worries Opposition Members is the widespread rumour that such sums of public money have already been spent on a hospital that everyone in the locality concerned with health care said was an unnecessary investment and that the Government are coming under pressure to put in further public money to rescue a collapsed private sector initiative.

The Secretary of State keeps telling us how open, honest and transparent the Government are in their NHS policy, so I am sure that it is an aberration that the eight questions tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) came back to her yesterday without a substantive reply on what is happening in relation to the hospital or the Government's intentions.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): The Secretary of State is not listening.

Mrs. Beckett: I am sure that she does not wish to take heed of the question that I am directly putting to her. I hope that she will tell us that the Government have no intention of putting further public money into a purse that has already had far too much of it.

The Secretary of State says that she has declared war on bureaucracy. It is obviously serious because she has taken on thousands of bureaucrats to help her fight it. There has been a 57 per cent. increase in the number of practice managers, but the number of general practitioners has decreased. The number of health managers has tripled, so we have a huge standing army of non-medical staff being paid large sums of money to think up new ways of saving money.

I can provide the Secretary of State with one new way of saving money without any difficulty. The Government should abolish tax relief on private health insurance. If they did that, £85 million could be available at a stroke. That would go a long way to restoring free eye and dental checks, which would be of far greater value to most of the British public.

In 1989, there were 4,540 managers in England, whereas in 1993 there were 20,000. Manager numbers are rising by 13 per cent. a year, but the number of nurses is falling by 1 per cent. a year. Department of Health expenditure on management consultants totalled £20 million in the days before this permanent revolution, but it was £66 million in the last reported year of 1993. It is being suggested that the cost of local pay bargaining that is under consideration could run to an extra £40 million in new bureaucracy. The Secretary of State's permanent revolution has led to an explosion of bureaucracy and waste, which is associated most directly with trust management and with GP fundholding.

I see the Secretary of State, presiding as she does over this permanent revolution, as the Madame Mao of the health service. She attacks the authority of medical staff. She banishes or sacks people who disagree with her. Parliament and the public have to seek information through a system of Chinese whispers. She turns for support to the now highly politicised managers of the health service—a group of involuntary Red Guards who are obliged blindly to follow the dogma of the internal market. Increasingly paranoid, she and her Ministers treat the medical profession as conspirators and as harbingers of counter-revolutionary values, rejecting their advice and tossing aside their experience and judgment.

Despite what the Secretary of State said at health questions, it is known that gagging clauses are widespread in contracts issued by health service trusts and that people who dare to speak out risk disciplinary action. Evidence has been found of telephone bugging. All hon. Members hope that that was an exception. As Dr. Brian Boughton, a senior consultant of the South Birmingham health authority has observed, there is now a climate of fear among staff in the health service and especially among those staff who are critical of the effects of Government policy on patients. In a rather sinister phrase, he told *The Birmingham Post* that

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> "these people are being removed from the scene."

That was certainly the experience of Ian Mahady, the clinical director of obstetrics at Burnley general hospital. He is a highly respected and experienced senior consultant who happens to be critical of the Government's reforms. He was sacked and asked to clear his desk within three hours.

The proposal for performance-related, locally determined pay is another step in the permanent revolution, which, against this background, can be guaranteed only further to weaken morale. We hear that Ministers have had to put those plans on ice because the national health service trusts announced that they were not ready for the move. It is clear yet again, and particularly clear if that was the reaction of the trusts, that the proposal has been bandied about without thought or consideration, let alone debate.

The chairman of the Federation of National Health Service Trusts, Rodney Walker, has said that managers are confused and uncertain and that

> "it is one thing for Government to set the agenda and say there you are then, but it is a quite another to embark individually from scratch on such a profound course."

That was yet another criticism from someone who was trying to make the Secretary of State's changes work and an example of what is happening in practice.

Perhaps the most succinct critique of the Secretary of State's role came from the *Daily Express*, normally a slavish supporter of the Government. An editorial written during the Conservative party conference deplored the brutality with which the Secretary of State was destroying our health service. It stated:

> "We don't want our centres of excellence, our Guy's and Bart's hospitals, chopped up and sown together again under some new name which satisfied the demands of Virginia's managers on tightening up resources . . . Imagine the uproar if she were to become Education Secretary and decide to do away with Oxford and Cambridge." *[Interruption.]*

No heckling please.

The editorial continues:

> "The NHS is not about numbers. It's about people and people don't want managers to decide where and when they are going to have their hip operations. They want doctors and nurses and hospitals near to where they live, where staff are not too tired and overworked to give them the treatment they deserve."

We want the outcome of the debate to be that the Secretary of State and her colleagues stop tinkering with our health service and start listening. They should stop repeating bogus statistics about the number of people treated, like some demented mantra, believing that, if chanted long enough, it will ward off evil reality. The Secretary of State knows that episodes of consultant care are distorted by patients going for an operation from one ward, coming back from it to another and being counted twice. The figures mean nothing and the Secretary of State is aware of that.

Opposition Members ask the Government to start listening to passionate words like those of Dr. Macara of the British Medical Association. The Government must hear these things, but they seem to go in one ear and straight out the other. Speaking about our health service last July, Dr. Macara said:

> "There is despair in the air today. There is despair about the mood of alienation and demoralisation in the NHS."

He goes on to say:

> "Co-operation has been supplanted by commercial competition. There is an uncontrolled ill-managed internal market pitting purchaser against provider, fund-holding GP against non-fund holding GP, GP against consultant, junior against senior, hospital against hospital, and all to serve a perverse philosophy of winners and losers . . . Money does not follow the patient"—

the Government's justification for the changes—

> "the patient has no choice but to follow the money until it runs out."

Later in his remarks, he says that

> "we must all face the facts. Government must acknowledge that their 'huge national experiment', as the new Chief Executive of the NHS has described it, has failed them and failed the nation."

Opposition Members oppose both the commercialisation and the fragmentation of our health service. Since the NHS trusts and GP fundholdings are agencies of fragmentation, we oppose them and wish to see them replaced. Like the British people, we reject the drift towards privatisation and we are appalled at the attitudes that it is already engendering—attitudes such as that revealed in July concerning the business plan for Charing Cross hospital. When that hospital decided to try to poach the leading consultant from the Royal Marsden, Mr. Nicholas Breach, one of the criteria taken into account was that that act would

> "assist in destabilising a competitor."

What kind of attitude is that in a health service that is supposed to be providing patient care? I will tell the Secretary of State—it is an attitude fostered by everything that the Government have done by introducing their reforms.

We are engaged in the process that the Government have shirked; a process of thorough and lengthy consultation, which includes representatives of patients and staff at every level. When our consultations are complete, we will come forward with proposals to re-establish a health service that can provide access to treatment on the basis of medical need rather than ability to pay. We will re-establish a health service that is available in every part of Britain because that is what the British people expect of our national health service and what this Government have put at risk.

We in the Labour party created the NHS and that is why we can be trusted to modernise it, but only a new Labour Government can give Britain the new health service that it needs.

5.10 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> 'notes that since the introduction of the Government's health reforms the number of patients treated has risen, waiting times fallen and quality of care improved; welcomes independent support for the reforms from sources such as OECD; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to continue policies which uphold the values and ethos of the NHS, further reduce administrative duplication and waste and deliver a flexible service able to respond to the changing needs of patients.'.

I warmly welcome the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) to her new responsibilities. I must say that the literature does not bulge with her previous utterances on health. The best that can be said of her speech today is that she was making up for lost time. The second best thing that can be said is that she has been given her new job as an essential political sweetener, as Barbara Castle might have described it, for the trade unions.

True to form, as Opposition Members will soon realise, the right hon. Lady, sponsored by her trade union, spoke at length about staff, but spoke not once about patients. That is always the case with Opposition Members who are sponsored by people who work in the railways or in the health service. Those hon. Members are blinkered to the needs and interests of patients.

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I should like to make some progress, but I shall then happily give way.

I had hoped that today might have proved third time lucky, because as long as I have been at the Department of Health there have been three Labour party spokesmen on health. I kept hoping that the Opposition might offer a policy, but from what we have heard today they are off consulting again. It is a great tragedy, however, that the right hon. Member for Derby, South did not take the opportunity here and now to say that she supports trusts and recognises their work and the fact that they are doing good for patients. It was her predecessor but two, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who said that he did not believe that trusts would treat more patients. That was the test that he set at that time and they have passed it, because they are treating more patients than the numbers treated under the old system. Let me give the right hon. Lady a small piece of advice: she should take the opportunity to modernise the health service, accept the world in which we live and support the trusts and the work that they are doing.

The right hon. Lady began by challenging the Government's commitment to the NHS. Perhaps I could remind her of some facts. Under the Government, NHS spending has risen from £7 billion to £37 billion, a 64 per cent. increase. That is a remarkable figure. More than that, a new multi-million pound hospital project has been completed, on average, once every eight days.

The right hon. Lady wondered how anyone with any experience of the construction industry could have any part to play in a trust. Let me tell her the answer. Because we have one of the largest capital and building programmes of any organisation, we certainly need people with skill and expertise in the construction industry.

Ms Armstrong: On that specific point, is the right hon. Lady aware that patients and prospective patients in my constituency are now facing the worst of all worlds with the rundown of their hospital at Shotley Bridge? Now her Government have delayed the building of a new hospital, which, in any event, is 14 miles away, because they have said that private companies must make a successful bid to plan, build and manage all but the core services of that new hospital. That will inevitably lead to a delay of at least a year and, in the meantime, the trust has said that services at Shotley Bridge must continue to be wound down. Is that looking after patients and their needs?

Mrs. Bottomley: I regret that I gave way to the hon. Lady at that moment, because I shall address later that precise issue of the private finance initiative and the importance of considering that option. It would be better to deal with it at that stage in my speech rather than at this particular moment.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) will have to sit there and wait.

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed.

I must ask the right hon. Member for Derby, South to consult her sources again because in the past 10 years alone 8,000 more hospital doctors and dentists have been employed as well as 3,000 more general practitioners—a dramatic increase in their number—and 18,000 more qualified nurses. Let me remind her that while her party cut the pay of nurses and doctors, we have paid nurses 65 per cent. more in real terms and doctors 35 per cent. more. We are proud of our record because it contrasts and compares extremely well with that of any other previous Government.

Above all, I remind the right hon. Lady that that investment has been generously repaid by results. Our policies have delivered a handsome dividend of better health, longer life and higher quality care. Since 1979, life expectancy has gone up by more than two years. In the past 10 years, the number of children dying at birth or within the first year of life has fallen by two fifths and the number of people dying under the age of 65 has fallen by one fifth. Those are dramatic achievements.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Does the right hon. Lady agree that that handsome dividend has been paid just to the private sector? In my local health authority, New River, to date more than £500,000 has been paid to the private sector because there are not enough beds for mental health in-patients in the NHS. As a result, 79 of those patients have been sent far away from their homes. The beneficiaries have been, once again, those in the private sector.

Mrs. Bottomley: What we see from the Opposition is their virulent loathing of the private sector. For all the eau de nil, the modern Labour party style and the Opposition's apparent belief in a mixed economy and working with the private sector, they are obsessed with the ownership of the means of production. That is the only issue that matters. It is the clause IV mentality. It is not a coincidence that Unison sponsored the health debate at the Labour party conference and that Unison voted to support clause IV. It is no coincidence that the right hon. Member for Derby, South is sponsored by a union that wants to retain clause IV. At heart, that is the issue for the Labour party, but the issue that we mind passionately about is benefits for patients. We are proud of all that we have achieved for patients. We are proud that the average waiting time has halved—

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South) *rose*—

Mrs. Bottomley: I am still replying to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), but I would be happy to give way to the hon. Member in a moment.

We are proud of the increase in the number of community psychiatric nurses. We are proud of the improvements in services that are now taking place. Today is a

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good day for the NHS, because new figures from the Government's statistical service show that in the past year alone—

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: If the hon. Member will allow me to complete my sentence, I shall then give way.

Only today, new figures from the Government's statistical service show that in the past year alone, NHS hospitals treated an extra 455,000 patients. That is a 4.7 per cent. increase. It is twice the annual average achieved in the 1980s and five times the annual average increase achieved under the Labour Government. It represents a dramatic increase in the quality of care received.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The right hon. Lady touched on community care by referring to the number of psychiatric health visitors. How many persons are in prison in England and Wales, and what advice has she had from the medical units in those prisons?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will know that I cannot instantly tell him the number of people in prisons. However, I can tell him very strongly that, for more than two years, I have been saying that we should target resources and care on the severely mentally ill. I have also been saying that we need supervision registers, which are really mental health priority lists, to ensure that, with the great expansion in services for the mentally ill—that is a priority for the Department but also a personal priority—we shall ensure that those resources are focused on the most severely mentally ill. In co-ordinating the improvements and tightening up care in the community wherever possible, it is extremely important to co-operate closely with social services and the Home Office.

Mr. Boateng: On benefits to patients, is the right hon. Lady aware that in the Central Middlesex hospital trust, which is not alone, matters are now so bad that the trust charges patients and nurses for using the car park? The only people exempt from those charges are the managers, who have their own spaces. Is not that typical of the level to which she has now reduced the national health service—a service that cares only about money and managers?

Mrs. Bottomley: When the right hon. Member for Derby, South considers other health services, she will realise that the NHS is remarkable in its lack of charges. We have no charge to go to a GP or to hospital and few charges for prescriptions, and we have £100 million more than when the Labour party was in power. It is sometimes appropriate to charge for car parking, not least because many people use hospital car parks for a great number of purposes. Where that can result in further developments and improvements in health care, it makes a sensible contribution. I cannot confirm the precise arrangements at the hospital mentioned by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), but I should be surprised if managers uniquely had free car parking spaces. That would not have my support.

Mr. Rowe: In the long distant mists of time when there was a Labour Government and I was a civil servant working for them in Scotland, there was a hospital called Ninewells hospital, Dundee. In the absence of someone on the board who understood construction, it overran its costs by well over three times. When it was opened, all the consultants insisted on having named spaces in the car park. Those were removed after two months because they simply revealed how seldom they were there.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. My excellent Minister of State, who has experience north of the border, well remembers the example that he gives. It makes the precise point about why many of the appointments in the health service help us to develop our skills in sectors where, frankly, we have not always been as good as we should have been. We have first-rate doctors and nurses, but in many other sectors the NHS has not had the quality and calibre of expertise that we should have in an organisation that spends well over £100 million a day.

It may surprise the right hon. Member for Derby, South to know that the Conservative Members judge the NHS not by who is appointed to it but by the results. We take great pride in those results, which have come about following the reforms that we have introduced. We appoint people to health authorities and trusts for their ability to get the job done, whether they are the wife of the my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) or any other member of society. We want to get the job done and to improve the efficiency of the service and the quality of care to make services more responsive to patients' needs. Our excellent non-executives are helping the health service build on its already formidable record of efficiency.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): As the Secretary of State is interested in results, does she consider it an acceptable result of the health service reforms that in Birmingham, at a time when hospital wards are being shut and beds being closed, heart patients are being asked to travel 300 miles to a private hospital in Glasgow, Health Care International? Do not people have the right to be treated in their own communities where their families can visit them?

Mrs. Bottomley: Once again, the hon. Gentleman has singularly failed to identify what really matters to patients, which is how long they wait. Patients want to be treated as soon as possible. Before the reforms, 200,000 patients were waiting for more than a year. That number is now down to 60,000. We said that we would bring an end to the two-year waiters; we did so. We then said that we would bring an end to the 18-month waiters for hip, knee and cataract operations; we have done so. Moreover, we have extended that 18-month guarantee across the board from next year. In the area where the hon. Gentleman lives, the health authority is going for a commitment of a maximum of nine months' waiting. I should have thought that he would pay credit to all those people who are leading the country and delivering a nine-month guarantee for new patients. Those patients are being offered an opportunity to have their heart operations sooner. If they do not want that, they need not do so. If I lived in that area, I would much rather take the opportunity of being treated than linger so that the hon. Gentleman could satisfy some ideological dogma.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My constituents like not only a short waiting list but, if possible, a short stay in hospital. That applies particularly to women, as long stays in hospital disrupt their domestic arrangements. If they can go to a day hospital, they are absolutely delighted.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I commend to my hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Derby, South a recent article in the *British Medical Journal* about the dramatic change in health care, not just in this country but in every country in the world. The rapid advance of micro-invasive techniques, endoscopy, new scanning techniques and new medical treatments mean that people need not automatically put on their pyjamas when they go into hospital but can be treated on a day basis and return home.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: As they are in Lancaster.

Mrs. Bottomley: As they are in Lancaster, as my hon. Friend says.

However, we must have a service that is forward looking, responsive and flexible—

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall try to make some headway now. I have already given way twice as much as the right hon. Member for Derby, South did, and I shall try to come back to the hon. Lady in a moment.

The NHS is world renowned for its quality of care, teaching and research. That is important and we intend to build on it. We are recognised internationally as having taken a lead in preventive health with "The Health of the Nation" White Paper, which was commended by Sandy Macara at the BMA conference. I was surprised at the element of the speech which the right hon. Member for Derby, South quoted. It seems to have slipped her mind that he said how much he commended "The Health of the Nation" and that we should make progress. He emphasised the importance of doctors in management, and we agree. He emphasised the importance of looking at effectiveness and outcomes, and we agree. He emphasised the importance of looking at health needs, not only health demands, and we agree. We agree on those and many other sectors, and that agreement and working together have characterised our relationship with the professions in recent years.

It is important that we recognise all that has been achieved, but also that we build on it and seek further improvements. Our family doctor service is seen across the world as a model of its kind. That is important and we shall build on it. The NHS is facing a medical and technological revolution that will dwarf the management changes that have taken place. New techniques, new drugs, an aging population and rising expectations all place immense pressure on the service. They will dictate new patterns of care, new challenges and new ways in which we view the health service and its achievements.

We need a flexible service, able to respond to those challenges—not clinging on to the past, but moving to the future. We need to liberate the innovators; to release the talents from our doctors and nurses, our technicians and scientists. That is the aim of our reforms, and that is the dividend for patients that we have been delivering.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose*—

Mrs. Bottomley: I am tempted, but I shall not give way. I must make headway.

Dr. Jones: I want to make an important point.

Mrs. Bottomley: If I do not make headway, other hon. Members will not be able to speak and I shall be severely rebuked later.

I give the right hon. Member for Derby, South credit. She is at least conscious of her limited grasp of what has been happening in the NHS. When asked by Matthew Parris on BBC "Breakfast News" this summer whether she would keep any elements of the Government's health reforms, she replied:

> "Yes that's a good question Matthew. I am trying hard to think whether there are any I would wish to preserve. I can't call one to mind at the moment, but don't hold me to that because I might realise afterwards that there was something that they have done that has been beneficial."

Conservative Members would be glad to help the right hon. Lady out of her difficulty. Scores of changes to the health service are beneficial to patients. We shall let pass no opportunity to tell her about them.

The right hon. Lady has been given an onerous brief by the Leader of the Opposition—to modernise her party's policies, to make them more positive and to bring them up to date with the reality of the new NHS. Oh dear; no wonder we are told that she is so miserable, and no wonder she has had such difficulty today.

The right hon. Lady's predecessor, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), spent two and a half years deciding what he opposed and fudging what he supported. He opposed GP fundholding. I wonder whether the right hon. Lady will hold that opinion. Seventy-four per cent. of patients in the area where she lives already have the benefit of GP fundholding. There is only another 25 per cent. to go and they will all have a top-tier service—but no, I suppose that it has to be equal misery for all in the right hon. Lady's book.

The right hon. Lady's predecessor opposed competitive tendering. He opposed pay beds in spite of the new modern Labour party. Then he went to Blackpool, boasting at the Labour party conference that a Labour Government would abolish trusts. He lapped up applause from union delegates. He basked in their admiration for his dogged refusal to accept the Tories' agenda. What was his reward for that ideological triumph? Two weeks later, he came fourth from bottom in the shadow Cabinet poll and was sacked from the position of shadow Health Secretary by the Leader of the Opposition.

Oh dear. It falls awkwardly to the right hon. Lady, who scarcely has a reputation as a moderniser of her party, to pick up the pieces, but she has frankly inherited a time capsule. While all around her is going forward, she looks backwards to the old days. In the meantime, independent commentators, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, recognise that Britain, whose NHS has long been the envy of the world, is now setting the pace in health care reform. The Labour party wants to

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go back to the oppressive, centralising state control that has been rejected, not simply here, but throughout the world.

The challenge is to seize the reforms and to build for the future. I suggest the following to the right hon. Lady:

> "Central planning was not a conspicuous success in the health service; decentralised sources of information close to local needs, like GP fundholders, may provide a better base for long-term decisions than a centralised planning agency."

Those are not my words, but those of Professor Julian Le Grand, the founder of the Socialist Health Group and one of the foremost advocates of our reforms.

The right hon. Lady will have to decide whether she will abolish 419 trusts when almost every hospital is now a trust, and doctors, nurses and managers are using the freedoms of trust status to innovate and to improve benefits for patients. Is she serious about abolishing fundholding? Does she believe, for example, in decentralisation, or is she more interested in the doctrinaire pursuit of uniformity over diversity? Is she really committed to patient power and patient choice—there has been no evidence of that today—or is she simply a poodle of the trade union movement?

I challenge the right hon. Lady: if her commitment to patients is genuine, she should renounce her sponsorship by the Transport and General Workers Union, so that we may be sure in whose interest she is speaking. Does she want to? No; there is silence.

The right hon. Lady resorted to the old scares and smears about privatisation. She produced no new evidence—simply peddled more of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister described as the most insidious lie in politics. That privatisation scare story, which she regurgitated today, discredits the Labour party and dishonours the truth. Labour Members have been running it for years; they paid the electoral price for it in 1992 and they will pay the price again.

Mrs. Fyfe: The right hon. Lady claims that Opposition Members are wrong to say that the health service is being privatised. What else does she call it when the Secretary of State for Scotland gives £30 million and more to a private hospital that is allegedly built to take overseas patients and, when it fails to succeed in that objective, survives by moving in patients from Manchester, Birmingham and anywhere else that it cares to dip into when it cannot obtain patients of its own from overseas? How can one plan for a national health service and national health service care of patients when that is allowed to happen?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that the hon. Lady knows that there is everlastingly a call for inward investment in Scotland, and it was in that context that the Secretary of State made that decision. It was not money that came from the health budget, but the hospital is providing health care for many NHS patients, and I care about patients. The Labour party's real agenda is not about patients; it is not about the so-called public alarm. It is about trade union power; it is about the old clause IV preoccupation.

Let me make it clear, as the Prime Minister did at Bournemouth, that the Government will not deviate one dot or comma from the fundamental underlying principle of the NHS. Care is provided for everyone on the basis of clinical need, regardless of ability to pay. However, where there are benefits to be gained for patients from working more closely with the independent sector, we will pursue those benefits. Where there is scope for innovation, flexibility and choice, we will let those qualities have their head. When we can secure additional investment in the NHS through private finance, we will seek to reap those opportunities soon.

We spoke during health questions about the importance of the private finance initiative. We welcome the extra resources that result from that initiative. We want a modern service for patients. We also welcome the £1 billion of efficiency savings that have been secured as a result of market testing.

Ms Armstrong: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have already given way to the hon. Lady, and it was not very rewarding.

The Labour party would deny NHS patients that money and the benefits from it. The price tag of that is all for the Labour party's blinkered dogma; another little sweetener promised to the unions. The Labour party must make up its mind. Who was it, as I said earlier, who said that the Government had to ensure that the public and private sector worked together? I may have given the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) the credit, but I was quoting the Leader of the Opposition. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand if I have promoted him in that short space of time—not before time.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It happens all the time.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): The Secretary of State was reaffirming the Government's commitment to equity—to equal access to care. Would the Secretary of State care to say why there are such wide differences in health among people from different social classes in different parts of the country, why those health inequalities are widening, and what the Government intend to do to narrow them?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman needs only to look at "The Health of the Nation" strategy. That is designed precisely to ensure that we consider variations in health, so that we can make progress. I do not accept the view almost espoused by the Labour party that somehow it is so distressing for the healthier to become more healthy faster that one would rather hold them back than see progress throughout the range.

There have been major improvements in maternal and child health for all social groups, for all income groups and throughout the country. That is the significance of the distinction between the purchaser and the provider—that the health authority is tasked with assessing health need and setting priorities. It is one of the many reasons why we would never turn the clock back to a monolithic, bureaucratic health service, as espoused by the Labour party. It does not allow the flexibility for local strategies and approaches to tackle the specific health needs of different parts of the country.

When looking at its agenda, the Labour party will have to come to terms with fundholding. I have already said that in the region of the right hon. Member for Derby, South, 74 per cent. of patients benefit from a GP fundholder. We recently announced that we shall extend the scheme—lower the list entry size, widen the range of services available and introduce new community fundholding schemes—to give even more practices the chance to experience its benefits. We have pledged to level up and extend the benefits. We will deliver that pledge to the patients of this country so that they see similar improvements.

I would commend to the right hon. Lady the new, independent evaluation of fundholding by professor Howard Glennerster. A first-wave fundholder states:

> "For the first time, we had managed to get to talk to consultants about the standard of care they were giving our patients".

That is the essence of the scheme—clinicians talking to clinicians about patient care.

Fundholding is rewriting the rules in the patients' favour. That marks, as Professor Glennerster states,

> "a shift in the balance of power back to general practice for the first time this century".

General practitioners like it, patients like it and we like it.

Mr. Malone: Labour Members do not like it.

Mrs. Bottomley: They do not like it.

Nowhere is the Government's commitment to patients more obvious. Nowhere is it having a more dramatic practical effect. The Labour party takes a vindicative approach and always wants to level down, not up.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I am grateful to the right hon. Lady and want to pick up something that she said earlier when talking about the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). The Secretary of State said that 74 per cent. of my right hon. Friend's constituents came under GP fundholders and that soon all of them would have a top-tier service. Will she explain what that means? Does it mean that other people do not receive a top-tier service?

Mrs. Bottomley: The key point about GP fundholding is that when the GP is in control and autonomous, and has control over the budget, he is able to secure improvements and has a flexibility and responsiveness which, with the best will in the world, is almost impossible to achieve unless he is in the driving seat. GP fundholding is a voluntary scheme, but we have made it as simple as possible for more GPs to join.

I simply commend again Professor Howard Glennerster's book in which he talks time and again about the commitment of GPs who come into fundholding and the benefits that they have been achieving, not just for their own patients, but for all patients in primary care. Their relationship with the hospital has also benefited.

The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) should talk to Dr. David Colin Thomé in Runcorn who fought as a Labour candidate in a previous election. He is a champion of fundholding and has pioneered changes and improvements for patients. Were the hon. Gentleman to spend time talking to that doctor it would be difficult for the hon. Gentleman to come away with any other view than that the future lay in fundholding and all GPs should pursue that option.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I recall calling to my right hon. Friend's attention the fact that in my district the hospital fundholders had carefully husbanded their resources. When the trust was beginning to run out of funds at the end of the year, the patients of the fundholders were still able to be admitted. My right hon. Friend was good enough to give the hospital another £250,000 to catch up, but it was because the fundholders had carefully spread their resources over the year that their patients benefited.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has it. With that, I will try not to take any more interventions.

The important subject that we have been debating today is that of accountability. The Labour party has failed to grasp the fact that, under the old system, accountability went by the board. There was little information, less transparency and an opaque and impenetrable bureaucracy where no one knew what was happening or what anything cost, and few people even bothered to ask. Decisions were taken, not just behind closed doors, but behind closed doors tens or even hundreds of miles away. There has been a dramatic change—health authorities and trusts have clear and separate roles and identities.

The patients charter sets out for the first time patients' rights in the NHS and their means of redress if things go wrong. We have opened up the service to independent, external scrutiny through the Audit Commission. We have thrown the light on the health service. We have dramatically improved openness and the information available throughout the service.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham) *rose*—

Mrs. Bottomley: We have reinforced our deep and abiding commitment to the values and ethos that underpin public service in the NHS. We expect from the service the highest standards of both personal and corporate conduct. That is why when Sir Adrian Cadbury first published his report, I invited him to meet me and a number of leaders in the health service to discuss the principles of corporate governance. I believed that they were appropriate to the NHS and took steps to introduce them. In April this year, after widespread consultation, I issued codes of conduct and accountability for trust boards and their members that closely followed the Cadbury principles. They represent a landmark for the health service.

For the first time, we have set out the need for audit and remuneration commitments to ensure the proper stewardship of the vast resources at the disposal of the health service. For the first time, we have required members' relevant interests to be declared and established in registers of those interests. Throughout the years of health appointments, which have changed little since 1948, we have never before had registers of interests and proper codes of accountability and conduct. Those codes have been widely welcomed by Sir Adrian Cadbury, the Audit Commission, the Public Accounts Committee and, not least, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who chairs that Committee.

The Labour party talks a lot about accountability in a sort of Islington dinner party way. But when it comes to the accountability that really matters to patients, it changes its tune. We have increased accountability by bringing decision making closer to patients through local health authorities and trusts. The Labour party resisted it. We have set in hand an information revolution throughout the service—through annual reports, annual accounts, access to medical records and other means. The Labour party carped and criticised. We published the information that patients and the public want about their local hospital in performance tables. The Labour party poured scorn on

[Mrs. Bottomley]

that initiative. Time and again when we make information available the Labour party does not seem interested in what the patient wants to hear.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South made a number of disparaging remarks about appointments to health authority trusts. I am sorry that she comes to the job so encumbered by that prejudice. I am sorry that she finds it necessary to attack non-executives with business backgrounds in the same way as she goes for knee-jerk attacks on managers. We need the skills of a great range of people to deliver the improvements in patient care.

When we consider the number of patients being treated now, we have to pay tribute to all those whose different talents, skills and expertise have made that possible. Sir Adrian Cadbury took a similar view; his report welcomed the role of strong non-executives who bring the insight of an outsider into the NHS. We endorse his view. Anyone who knows anything about running a service that spends £100 million a day would endorse that view.

If the right hon. Lady wonders why she can identify fewer of her supporters on NHS trusts, I have already today made the reason only too clear. If she constantly denigrates and attacks the non-executives on NHS trusts, what encouragement is that to members of the Labour party who want to undertake that sort of public service? Can the lack of supporters on NHS trusts be anything to do with the Labour party's history of putting the frighteners on its members who seek to serve on trusts—as we saw before the last election? Is it any wonder that the hon. Lady cannot succeed in getting Labour members onto trusts when she pledges to abolish trusts given half the chance?

The right hon. Lady and the Labour party politicise trusts by making them part of the party political debate. Everywhere else they are part of the landscape, not part of the debate. Unlike the Labour party, we appreciate the talent that is brought to the trusts by non-executives and leaders of the profession such as Dame Margaret Turner Warwick, a former president of the Royal College of Physicians and now chairman of the Royal Devon and Exeter trust.

My challenge to the right hon. Lady is to turn the clock forward and to recognise that trusts are good for patients and staff. She must recognise that there is a place on health boards for people of genuine merit who will bring to them their skills, experience, energy and commitment. She must accept that serving on a trust is like being a magistrate—it is something in which people of all political parties should be engaged as a form of public service. That is not a party political statement: it is a statement of fact.

Let me now reveal some of the Labour party's hypocrisy. The policy of appointing chairmen has changed very little since 1948. We have reduced, and are reducing, the number of appointments as we streamline authorities and boards and make them decision-making groups. Does the right hon. Lady know which party, before our reforms, nominated three disqualified Lambeth Labour councillors to the West Lambeth health authority? Which party put forward its three prospective parliamentary candidates as its nominees for the Greenwich health authority?

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich) *rose—*

Mrs. Bottomley: Which Secretary of State sacked—

Mr. Raynsford: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State to decline to give way to me when naming for the second time today an hon. Member of this House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is entirely a matter for whoever has the Floor to decide whether to give way.

Mr. Raynsford: She is frit.

Mrs. Bottomley: No; she has given way much more often than she ought to have—

Mr. Raynsford *rose—*

Mrs. Bottomley: However, in the interests of neighbourliness to my husband, I shall give way.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Secretary of State think it right that people who have been proposed perfectly legitimately by a local authority, and who have a deep concern for that authority, should be replaced, for health authority membership, by double glazing salesmen—because that is what her party did? Does she think it right that the Greenwich health authority subsequently reduced the health situation there to chaos—so much so that when her appointee in the region visited recently he had to recognise that the whole system was not working, and the chair and chief executive of the local healthcare trust have had to be replaced? Is the right hon. Lady proud of that record?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is being extremely mischievous. He must know that Rosie Barnes, a former Liberal Member of Parliament, serves in his part of the world. He may also like to know that two Labour councillors serve on the Leeds community and mental health trust. Of course there are times in particular hospitals when certain management issues need to be tackled and some key people need to be replaced—that has nothing to do with the system of appointments—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The House will be aware of my views on seated interventions. The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) has been allowed to intervene; I do not expect sedentary interventions to follow.

Mrs. Bottomley: I had expected the hon. Gentleman to deny that the Greenwich authority proposed three prospective parliamentary candidates as its nominees for the health authority. I wonder what their agenda would be? David Ennals, a former holder of my office, sacked 32 health authority chairmen purely and simply because they did not support the Labour party. Where is the integrity, the accountability or even the common sense in that?

We believe that the service benefits greatly from its non-executives, whatever their party. That is why we are establishing an even more transparent and accessible system. We are widening the pool of candidates, drawing in people from an even broader range of backgrounds and expertise. We have already greatly increased the number of women on trusts and in health authorities, and we have encouraged people from black and ethnic minorities. We are advertising widely for applicants, and independent panels of trust and authority members will sift and scrutinise applicants to ensure that the best people continue to be selected.

I share the Prime Minister's absolute commitment to the highest possible standards in public life, and we shall participate fully in the committee that he has announced today, but I believe that it will be found that the systems that we have set in hand in the health service are models to follow. If they need modifying in any way we shall not hesitate to modify them. Already, we have embraced the Cadbury principles, we have opened up our system of finding people to serve as non-executives, and we have made enormous progress. We need only one thing more—we need the Labour party to take the frighteners off the people who serve on the trusts and to support them.

The real dilemma that the right hon. Member for Derby, South faces is how to tackle the feud raging in the Labour party over who should run the health service. She should act now to stop that feuding. She must say what her policy is. Does she seek to re-open the 1948 debate? Does she favour a local authority takeover of the NHS? Such a takeover would be deeply unpopular. Who believes that Derek Hatton running Merseyside would have had anything like the success of Sir Donald Wilson? Perhaps the right hon. Lady has a lingering affection for David Bookbinder in Derbyshire? We believe that the task of the health service is to serve patients, not to get tangled up with local authority control and involvement.

This was the old battle that Nye Bevan fought with Herbert Morrison, and it would be a great shame if the Labour party reopened the feud—but that is the problem that the right hon. Lady will have to deal with urgently in her party. Her predecessor was clearly moving in that direction, and we wait for the uncertainty to be resolved.

The Royal College of Nursing has said that it believes that equity, one of the founding principles of the health service, would be undermined by local authority control of health services. If the right hon. Lady will not take my word on the issue, let her listen to Christine Hancock, who has said that such a proposal would at best block progress towards achieving the highest standards of care and equity throughout the service and at worst be the end of a national health service.

So if the right hon. Lady wants to reopen the wounds that were patched up in her party 40 years ago, let her say so—but let her also recognise the massive increase in bureaucracy that such policies would bring about. Let her confirm that, while the Government are abolishing regional health authorities, a Labour Government would bring them back. Let her come clean about her party's proposals for regional government; bureaucratic tentacles would then be wrapped around the health service. Let her admit that by abolishing trusts the Labour party would be reinventing the old command and control bureaucracies that we have swept away.

We will take no lessons from the champions of bureaucracy in the Labour party. They are committed to cumbersome regional bureaucracies; we want to sweep them away. We have cut the number of health authorities by 70. We shall reduce their numbers further by enabling family health services authorities and DHAs to merge. We have also reduced the number of regions, before their abolition.

Over the past year alone, administrative savings at regional and district level have led to an extra £34 million being invested in patient care. During the summer, I visited every region and spoke to every trust and every health authority chairman, and I heard about the savings that are already being secured: £4.7 million in Northern and Yorkshire, £6 million in South West, £15 million in the two Thames regions—all by streamlining.

I have already mentioned Sir Donald Wilson in the north-west saving £8 million by streamlining and investing the money in better primary care in Liverpool's most deprived area. I cannot remember when Liverpool last saved £8 million for anyone.

All trusts must be accountable for what they spend on management and for how they spend it. That is why I announced that all trusts will publish their management costs in their annual reports so that the public can see and compare the figures. They will be published alongside the performance tables so that people can see the added value that management is bringing to the NHS. That is better than indulging in knee-jerk attacks on managers.

All I ask is that we are judged by our results. The achievement of the reforms has been to put the right structures in place for a flexible and responsive service. The reforms have been tried and tested in practice and endorsed by independent evaluation, by the OECD and by experts and commentators. All over Britain, NHS staff have worked hard for those changes. They take pride in their work and want to realise the full benefits. The last thing that they want is the Labour party's recipe for a return to a centralised and inefficient bureaucracy.

Our policies are delivering results by which we shall be judged. We are prepared to be judged by the 3,000 more patients being treated every day in trusts, by the growth in childhood immunisation, by the improvement in the health of the nation, by the innovations in quality care which are to be seen in our health centres and hospitals. We are also prepared to be judged on our record in reducing waiting times, junior doctors' hours and the size of GP lists.

We offer progress for patients. Our policies present a chance to tackle the problems which remain and to rise to the challenges and pressures that lie ahead. Labour is backward and inward looking. It looks back to the failed structures of the past and inward to its own vested interests. It is the old Labour party with old, failed and discredited policies. We have created a new national health service for a modern world, and I commend it to the House.

6 pm

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): Many facets of the health service worry hon. Members, and some of those worries have been mentioned in the debate. Since my election in June, I have had the opportunity to talk to many people who work in the health service in Newham and to patients who depend on it, and I have discovered enormous unhappiness about the state of the service. People are worried about the unexplained and steady rise in emergency hospital admissions. They are worried about the falling number of visits to dentists and opticians, because that means that problems which would have been found in check-ups now go undetected until they are far more serious.

[Mr. Stephen Timms]

People are worried about proposed changes to the rules for pharmacies, because it is widely felt that they will drive many local chemists to the wall. Health officials are frustrated by restrictive rules on new medical premises, which are delaying improvements to primary care in London.

Above all, people feel that enormous decisions are being made by an invisible and anonymous bureaucracy which could not care less about what people think. The Prime Minister's pledge a couple of weeks ago that the health service would never be privatised has been mentioned in the debate. Will the Secretary of State stop the bureaucrats behaving as if the health service has already been privatised?

People want the Government to listen. The August King's Fund report hit the nail on the head about the effect of the changes in London. Dealing with the Government's policies, it stated:

> "The effect on public confidence has been severe. Patients have a confidence in their nurses and their doctors that they do not have in the managers and politicians. With tense negotiations continuing behind closed doors, most staff simply do not know where they stand. Public confidence has plummeted."

Just after I was elected, I contacted the local health care trust to inquire about the delay in carrying out an operation for an elderly constituent. The reply took some time, and when it came it was just an apology that the trust could not tell me anything. The operation was contracted out to a different health care trust, and although the patient had seen the consultant in our local hospital and was, as far as he was aware, a patient there, it could provide no information at all about when the operation would be carried out. People inside the service do not understand what has happened, let alone the patients.

A much more serious issue has arisen in east London about the future organisation of community health services. The City and East London family and community health services, or CELFACS, was set up to manage community health services in the short term after their separation from the new acute trusts, and to review the long-term options for their management. Nobody was too surprised when, no doubt after due and careful consideration, CELFACS recommended that the best option was for it to run the services.

The proposal went out to consultation and overwhelmingly, those who were consulted preferred an alternative structure with locally based trusts for Newham, Hackney and the City and Tower Hamlets. Their experience was that the CELFACS organisation was an unresponsive, top-heavy bureaucracy and which adopted a narrow and inflexible approach to services, which has failed to reflect the different needs in the different areas of east London. In the view of those involved, it is not an appropriate body to run community health services for so large an area.

I know that, in Newham, staff put in enormous effort on top of their existing heavy work loads to develop the local trust proposal, and the same happened in Hackney and the City. However, it was clear that, despite local strength of feeling, CELFACS had, quite properly, strong support from a small number of senior health managers, which, of course, included those who were running CELFACS.

The issue went to the district health authority, which voted narrowly for the locally based trusts. The voting was four to three, all the non-executive members of the authority supporting the locally-based trusts while all the managers, the executive members, favoured CELFACS. One might have expected that that would be that, but the matter then appeared on the agenda of the executive committee of the regional health authority, comprising only authority managers. Predictably, they overruled the district view and recommended the CELFACS option. We gather that that has been forwarded to the Secretary of State as the final recommendation.

The Secretary of State alleged that Opposition Members denigrate non-executives. I do not denigrate them at all, and in the instance that I have cited, they were certainly carrying out their task conscientiously. But they were overruled by managers who are a step higher in the bureaucracy, and who have forwarded a different view to the Secretary of State.

I hope against hope that the Government will not simply rubber-stamp the view of the regional executive, because that would unleash a tidal wave of cynicism among the practitioners on which the services depend. It cannot be right to impose on those who will deliver the services the views of a small group of managers for what, as far as I or anyone else can establish, is no good reason.

Is it not time that the Government adopted the motto, "Front Line First", not just for defence but for other public services? Constantly consulting the front-line providers and then ignoring them, preferring instead the views of managers, is terribly damaging to the services. That process is not the right way to make decisions about our vital public services. It is not so much the decision that is the problem as the transparently unacceptable way that it has been arrived at.

At the start of my speech, I asked what the Secretary of State proposed to do about managers behaving as if the health service were already a private corporation. I hope that, at least in this instance, she will overrule them.

Finally, I should like to address the issue of decision-making on the allocation of resources. I welcome the publication last week of the long-awaited York university report, with its recognition at last of the need for adequate funding for deprived areas, reversing the recent trend to take resources away from them. Earlier this year, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) asked the Secretary of State which were the top 10 deprived health areas in London. My hon. Friend was told that my borough of Newham is the most deprived.

All the key indicators show that the severity of health problems in Newham justifies additional resources. Those problems relate to perinatal mortality and infant mortality rates, the standardised fertility ratio, the hospitalisation rate, the rate of HIV infection affecting children and families, income levels, and simply the need to provide translators to communicate with many people in the borough who can speak no English.

Government figures show that Newham has the most severe deprivation in the country, but its capitation has been cut, while capitation to other parts of the same region with much better starting points in terms of quality service provision has been raised. I have no problems about raising the funding for other areas, but it should not be done at the expense of areas that are acutely struggling.

In publishing its research, York university rightly commented that the old formula produced in the early 1990s has resulted in a shift of resources away from poorer and sicker areas. Our family health services authority, the City and East London authority, has the highest level of deprivation in the country, but the FHSA spending per head in Newham was less than in Dorset, Cornwall, the Isle of Wight or Lincolnshire. Our services have far greater needs to contend with, yet they have been allocated fewer resources. That problem has been made worse since 1990. Again, that cannot be right.

I am delighted that the research by York university has vindicated what we have been saying for a long time. Can the Secretary of State now assure us that the findings of the York research will be implemented in full, allocating additional resources to the inner city areas where they are needed? Will she refute reports that efforts are being made to find ways of avoiding the implementation of the York university recommendations?

What will be done to put right the distribution of resources for primary care? Precisely the same problem exists there, with poorer and sicker parts of the community receiving inadequate resources. Is that problem now to be addressed?

People must be able to see who is making the decisions that affect their health service and to know the reasons for decisions that affect their lives and their futures. Inexplicable decisions cannot be allowed to continue descending anonymously from invisible layers of bureaucracy—a faceless, bureaucratic brick wall.

The country desperately needs the Minister to go some way to dispel the tide of cynicism and despair which, as anybody who speaks to those involved will report, is engulfing the health service; to acknowledge there are real problems to overcome instead of simply continually telling us that there is not really a problem at all; to make it clear that the Government are listening to what people are saying, not simply dismissing it; and to announce that the Government are prepared to change their mind where plainly they have been wrong.

6.11 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in today's important debate. We live in a country with a health service which is the envy of the world, where care is universally available and provided economically, where standards are improving and waiting times are falling, as measured by every available parameter.

Yet Opposition Members do nothing but criticise and demean, destroying morale in the service and damaging the confidence of the public. Today, we are seeing a new tactic, calculated insidiously to undermine the jewel in the crown of world health care: criticism of the innovative ways in which the health service is seeking further to increase the funding available for patient care, and criticism about accountability and management and its costs.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already clearly explained in national terms the misrepresentations in the Labour party's assertions, but I should like to explore and answer those issues using a local example.

My constituents use the services of East Hertfordshire NHS trust, a second wave whole-district trust which, since its creation in April 1992, has offered high-quality care economically and efficiently. It has innovatively developed its facilities, and has expanded the capital available to it by partnership with the independent sector.

For example, the trust required a magnetic resonance imaging scanner, the latest technology for visualising internal body structures. A partnership was established with a private company, and a new unit was built in the grounds of the Queen Elizabeth II hospital. Scans are now rapidly available to health service patients more cheaply than the trust could otherwise have obtained them.

The company involved is contracted to provide the latest upgrades in equipment at no cost to the trust, and the trust receives a share of the proceeds of the work that is undertaken. For health service patients, therefore, the huge benefits of rapid access are obvious, while for the trust there is the availability of a major clinical resource that it would not otherwise have. That is not the creeping privatisation which the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) presages, but a valuable symbiotic relationship for mutual benefit and better patient care.

Opposition Members should never forget that the health service exists to provide care for the people of Britain, not to act as a sounding board for those who would use alarmist statements for political ends.

The Opposition parties claim that, in some way, the trusts and general practitioner fundholders are not accountable. Such an accusation is entirely without foundation. The trusts and fundholders are accountable, both to the populations they serve and to the principles of ethical activity that govern all business behaviour.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): How?

Mrs. Roe: I shall explain.

Trusts are monitored by regional health authorities, and their activities are examined in great detail by both internal and external auditors. The chairman and non-executive directors of the trusts, who are local residents, monitor executive activities and decisions. Trusts must publish an annual report, and the public have access to the senior management teams at a statutory, publicised annual public meeting, where they can question the report and ask about any other issues of interest and concern.

Mr. Steinberg: If, at one of the meetings, the general public, after seeing the information, decide that they do not like the membership of the trust or the way in which the trust is being worked, can they get rid of the members of the trust?

Mrs. Roe: I fear that the hon. Gentleman has never attended one of those meetings. The people who attend them in my area find that they get satisfactory answers, and that the queries they raise are investigated. Furthermore, patients who have any cause for anxiety can write directly to the chief executive of the trust, who has the responsibility for investigating and personally responding to any complaints or worries.

As for fundholders, they are accountable to their family health services authority and to the regional health authority, they undergo statutory regular examination of their financial activities by auditors and, most importantly, they are accountable to their patients with whom they work all day and every day.

Such public sector accountability is comprehensive and effective, and compares favourably with the accountability, for example, of many trade union organisations,

[Mrs. Roe]

which work furtively, espousing individual rights on the one hand while stoically maintaining secret block voting and decision-making on the other.

In addition, the trusts and health authorities work within the codes of conduct expected of the most ethical businesses. Public organisations must be open and accountable, and everything they do must stand the test of public scrutiny.

The Government recognised that requirement and are to be congratulated on their vision and determination to introduce the principles of Cadbury into the medical services. The code of conduct and accountability, which was published last spring, defined the information for the annual report, outlined the decisions to be taken at board level, reviewed the mechanism for financial and performance reporting, and introduced a declaration and register of interests.

For the Opposition to declare that there is anything less than openness and full accountability within the health service is to fail to understand the high and ethical standards demanded of and received from the trusts, the fundholders and the health authorities.

A business with a £37 billion turnover needs effective management. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already informed the House how that has been achieved nationally and how the Labour party propaganda has been used in an attempt to disseminate misinformation about management costs.

I am in accord with the former shadow spokesman for health, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), when he stated in the *Health Service Journal* earlier this year:

> "Managers—at whatever level—are not the enemy but the lubricant of the service".

They administer and deliver the service economically and more effectively than anywhere else in the world.

Again, I can cite the East Hertfordshire NHS trust used by my constituents. Its team of senior managers account for only 2 per cent. of the pay bill. Using the much broader definition of "management" as described by the Audit Commission, the trust has recently been examined and found to have total management costs of 5.9 per cent.

That figure—among the lowest in the North Thames region—compares with an average figure of between 7 and 8 per cent. for trusts and, using the same criteria, an average figure of about 14 per cent. for an industry with an equivalent turnover. Therefore, since the introduction of the reforms, there has been a doubling of the increase in the number of patients treated in the secondary care sector, in the face of management costs about half that of industry. Surely that is a truly remarkable success story.

Our excellent health service is not in decline, not overmanaged, not unaccountable, not subject to insidious privatisation; it is developing, expanding, introducing innovative and exciting ideas, and working with the independent sector to expand further the facilities available for the population.

It is doing all that in an open and accountable way, with management costs that are modest by any standard and on which there is continued pressure for reductions to ensure that an ever greater proportion of national health service funding goes into clinical care. There is no public alarm about the health service, just a genuine belief among the overwhelming majority of the population that the care they are receiving is continuing to improve.

To fail to consider the care and treatment of patients and to use tactics designed to alarm and confuse is a cheap trick by the Labour party. Let Opposition Members whinge and whine, bereft of genuine cause for criticism or complaint. For me, the health service is a source of great pride; for my constituents, a service which is ever better; and for the country, a universal provider of care that is second to none.

6.22 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I do not think that the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) is right in her assessment of the changes in the national health service. However, I do not think that she is wholly wrong, either. She was right to say that some benefits have resulted from the administrative changes over the past few years. She was certainly right to say that the issue is not the involvement of the private sector, provided that the treatment for the patient is free at the point of delivery. That is the important factor. Nor is it bad to separate the purchasing and providing provisions. That is a sensible change which can be built upon.

The hon. Lady takes a keen interest in those matters and does a sterling job in her role on the Select Committee on Health. However, I am sure that, in the quietness of her own thoughts, she would accept that the implementation of some of the changes could be improved—and, in some cases, improved significantly. The Government were wrong to try to achieve their targets within the time scale that they set themselves. The computerisation programme and the introduction of new technology, which I support, were done at a speed that anyone with an understanding of the implementation of some of the systems knows was wholly unrealistic. Because of that, some of the aspects of implementation have been more chaotic than they should have been. The Government should have made greater use of a system of pilot schemes. Different parts of the country could have tried different things in different ways.

I hope that I carry the hon. Lady with me in saying that not every part of the country is necessarily always best served by trusts. Some elements of the centralised system have a coherence that the local delivery of services through trusts may not yet have. The jury is still very much out on that. If the hon. Lady is to be confident in her assertion that the new system is serving the interests of local people best, local people should have been given an opportunity to say whether they wanted to try it.

I am not aware of any of the consultation processes, which are part of the statutory legislation, ever succeeding in persuading a trust applicant that it was wrong. I know that from my local experience— *[Interruption.]* The Minister may want to put me right on that when he replies. If there has been a public consultation on whether a trust should be implemented, which then showed that that trust was not wanted by the local community, which then resulted in the trust application being abandoned, I should be pleased to hear about it. I am not aware of the consultation process resulting in such an outcome.

I know that the Minister takes a keen interest in the Borders because he is always visiting his weekend cottage in God's own country in Roxburghshire. He is very welcome when he comes.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Minister did not make the same mistake as the hon. Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat).

Mr. Kirkwood: I shall not be tempted down that road.

The Minister knows that the Borders health board is going through a process of public consultation on whether there should be twin trusts to provide health care in south-east Scotland. I have to tell the hon. Member for Broxbourne—her writ on the Select Committee does not run north of the border—that there is widespread fear that the implementation of twin trusts would not improve local health care. We have a very high quality of health care, mainly because of the standard of care produced by the professionals who work in the service. The health council carried out widespread consultation and there was a unanimous view that local people did not want any change.

The hon. Lady is a fair person. The health council is an objective body with no Labour party axe to grind. If the result of its consultation is that local people want their local health provision left alone, surely she accepts that it should be left alone. If a case cannot be made and if the public cannot be carried, they are entitled to keep the existing system and not have it replaced by the trust system. Otherwise, she would be sentencing every part of the country, whether it likes it or not, to the implementation of the new machinery. That would be wrong.

The Government may well have a case on the provision of trusts and they may, in certain circumstances, improve health care—that might be true in inner-city centres—but I am not convinced that they are necessarily good for every part of the country. The local people should be allowed to have their say on that.

The hon. Lady's investigations as part of the Select Committee are important in these matters. She will know that there is at least a question mark over the state of morale among nurses, doctors and health care professionals generally. The pace at which the reforms were implemented may have been responsible for some of that. I do not have a Labour party axe to grind— *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) will have to wait for a long time before I do. I do not have any ideological hang-ups, but I believe that there are considerable concerns among health care professionals and that their morale is low.

The Government's attempt to measure procedures, episodes and treatments by volume is a mistake. Of course, it is an important indicator, which must be taken into account, but the quality of outcome is also an essential part of the process of trying to evaluate whether the system is working. We tend to forget that aspect. We have just been trading statistics about the number of staff in place and the number of patients treated. I accept that there have been signal improvements in some areas, particularly waiting lists, which were far too long to start with.

The argument about private versus public is sterile. We are spending far too much time looking at the mechanism when we should be spending more time looking at the quality of health care and the way in which it is being delivered. The debate is obsessed with structures.

My final point to the hon. Lady for consideration in a quiet moment is that she is wrong to say that power has been devolved from central command all the way down to patients. Power has been devolved down the line and is now in the hands of providers, but they are not necessarily the same as patients. We have a long way to go to persuade people that, just because there is more empowerment at the level of provider, we can be confident that that meets with the accords, wishes and needs of local people. I am sure that outside the confrontational atmosphere of the Chamber, the hon. Lady will acknowledge that there is some truth in some of the things that I have said in response to her interesting speech.

I declare an interest. I am a member of the Royal College of Nursing panel and have been for a number of years. It is one of the more fulfilling aspects of my work in this place. I get to meet real people who work at the front line of the NHS, a contact from which I benefit. I am also grateful for the expertise and briefings from which members of the panel from both sides of the House benefit.

The Royal College of Nursing rightly identifies the future of long-term care for older people as being one of the issues that comes into the category, or could come into the category—I know that such loose language annoys Ministers—of creeping privatisation. There is much confusion at present about who should pay for continuing care for the elderly. We all know that in recent years there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of NHS continuing care beds and, as a result, a rapid growth in private nursing homes.

There has been an absence of any sensible, coherent and orchestrated debate at the hands of the Government. That is a dereliction of duty. I do not run away from the fact that tough decisions have to be made. They may involve getting the community at large to face up to family responsibilities more rigorously than happens at the moment. Those are not easy questions, but the Government have introduced the changes by stealth. That is not in the interests of arriving at a national consensus on how to cope with such matters.

The Government are sloughing off responsibility and increasingly local authorities are expected to take responsibility for continuing care. As a direct result, more patients previously funded by the NHS are now to be means-tested and needs-assessed before they have any guarantee of continuing care.

The lack of clarity in the past few months about who should fund continuing care is causing much anxiety, particularly for elderly and disabled people and their relatives. Those anxieties were fuelled by the draft guidance that was published in August 1994 by the Department. It proposes that local authorities and health authorities should, between them, decide which elderly people are eligible for state-funded continuing care and which are not. That is an abdication of responsibility.

The Government should give a much clearer steer on what they expect to happen in such circumstances and what the future will bring. The RCN's particular worry is that continuing care, if it consists of anything, consists of intensive nursing. It is right to say that that should be the clear responsibility of the NHS. The draft guidance, in describing the elements of continuing care, talks about the NHS focusing only on medical needs in future. It fails to acknowledge the crucial contribution of nursing to the continuing care process. The Minister may not have time

[Mr. Kirkwood]

to deal with that question tonight, but I hope that he will address it seriously. It is a legitimate question, which is not being properly tackled.

I welcome the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) to her new position. The health portfolio can in no way be described as middle-ranking. Health is a crucial issue and the right hon. Lady is an experienced parliamentarian. I have enjoyed doing business with her in the past and I look forward to continuing that relationship in future. The Secretary of State was a bit churlish in her welcome to the right hon. Lady, but that is a matter for her.

The right hon. Lady made some important points about the need for more accountability in trusts. I was interested in the experience of the hon. Member for Broxbourne, who has for some time had a trust in her constituency, an experience which I do not share. Leaving aside the party political arguments which are valid and will continue, urgent efforts need to be made to satisfy the public that there is genuine accountability in some of those bodies.

There is a wider concern. There are ways in which the need for accountability could be addressed by creating more user groups and voluntary organisations and in which the independent sector could take a more direct interest in trusts. More than anything else, greater accountability could and should be achieved by making trust meetings more accessible. They should always be held in public. I cannot for the life of me understand why health boards, trusts and so on are allowed to meet in private. That is a dereliction of duty on their part and an abdication of democracy.

Annual reports and annual meetings are valuable and welcome, but the trusts should make far more effort to achieve a much more open style of management. It is up to them. Unless the Minister tells me that they are precluded in some way from adopting an open style of management, they have the power to do so. They have a responsibility not just to feed information up and to be accountable to the Secretary of State but to reach out and contact the public whom they seek to serve. People with more direct experience of trusts in the constituency can put me right if I am wrong, but I see no evidence of that.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South referred to the increase in bureaucracy. To a certain extent, that is inevitable. If there are purchasers and providers, there are now two sets of management where previously there was one, so there must be an increase in management. The right hon. Lady contrasted the 2 per cent. drop between 1992 and 1993 in the number of nurses and midwives with the 13 per cent. increase in senior managers during the same period.

I was disappointed that the Government did not do more to encourage health care professionals to go into those management roles. If more doctors and senior nurses had gone into trusts as managers, many of the public fears that we are now experiencing and with which we are having to cope would have been substantially allayed. Bureaucracy is a matter which should be addressed.

I fear that the climate of fear, to which reference has been made, is creeping into the national health service in a way that I would never previously have thought possible. Members of staff are beginning to say that they would like to come to my public meetings and say what they think, but they have their jobs to consider. Such a suggestion would have been strange, foreign and unheard of 10 years ago. However, such people now fear for their jobs and that is a bad thing.

Finally, I make a plea to the Minister, who I am glad to see is making assiduous notes. I am also pleased to see his colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). I have a completely lunatic situation in my constituency. Recently, the Borders health board entered into an arrangement with a bona fide, non-profit-making partnership to run a nursing home, using an NHS hospital at Drumlanrig in Hawick that looked after old people. The Minister knows what I am talking about. The board signed a contract with the non-profit-making organisation to deliver residential care in that NHS hospital, which, apart from a couple of acute beds, was denied to the health service.

As part of that contract, the organisation undertook to build a 36-bed residential unit costing millions of pounds. It was to be a state-of-the-art and most welcome addition to the town's residential care needs. The week that it opened, the health board announced that it was beginning consultations on a number of options, the preferred one being to turn that residential home into a community hospital.

However one explains the management processes, from St. Andrew's house to the health board and local care in Hawick, that development makes no sense. The town has waited years for that brand new home, providing 36 places and state-of-the-art care, yet the week that facility opened, the health board said that it wanted to turn the home into a cottage hospital.

The Minister of State has not been in his job long, but I know that he has close connections with health care professionals and meets them most weekends, if he gets home at weekends these days. One does not need to be an expert to know the difference between a cottage hospital and a residential home. It is scandalous to suggest such a proposal, and that a town the size of Hawick, with 18,000 souls in the immediate vicinity, should be denied a custom-built primary care cottage hospital for the future. If Ministers are to be believed, primary care is the aspect that will be enhanced and developed in future. To provide a town the size of Hawick with a cobbled-together arrangement, with a residential unit being converted the week that it is opened, makes no sense.

I hope that Ministers from the Scottish Office—and I note that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is taking an interest—will investigate that matter and can give an assurance that the Borders health board will be given the opportunity, facilities and capital consents that it may require to ensure that Hawick will have both the residential care unit and the cottage hospital that it needs in the years ahead.

6.42 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) made a thoughtful speech, and I will take up his point about guidance relating to long-stay patients. I had a similar problem in my constituency.

Leicester has seen the closing of the Carlton Hayes and the Towers long-stay mental hospitals. Members of the Carlton Hayes action group visited my surgery to express their concern about the future for long-stay elderly patients and about the Department's so-called guidance. Their fears were allayed because the health authority's chief executive displayed sensitivity, met patients and their families, and was able to interpret the rules in a way that neither offended the patients' long-term hopes nor breached the guidance, to reach a compromise that was entirely within the rules.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that there should be openness and contact between health authority managers and patients and their relatives. That point was well made, and was well satisfied in the case that I cited. I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister the sensible handling of that problem by the chief executive of Leicestershire's health authority. That problem was solved thanks to sensitive and sensible behaviour by all parties. I am grateful to the Government for providing rules that allow for flexibility.

It is the duty of all who comment on the Government's behaviour and reforms to consider what has been achieved rather than to put up Aunt Sallies. I will outline some of the good developments that have occurred over the past few years thanks to the reforms. National health trusts treat 3,000 more patients every day than before the reforms were introduced. Since April 1991, the number of hospital in-patients has risen by 1.3 million a year, and out-patient attendances have increased by 2.1 million. The population of Leicester is about 650,000, which gives some idea of the scale of the increase in in-patients.

Since the reforms, the number of people waiting for hospital treatment longer than one year has fallen from 170,000 to fewer than 65,000, and the average waiting time has been cut by half. A survey by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts in June showed that nine out of 10 patients who had attended hospital the previous year had found the service very good, good or average, and three out of four had found it to be very good or good.

I conducted a similar survey in m\y own constituency, by having questionnaires delivered to every household—and I have approximately 79,500 electors. There was a large number of replies, and the proportion of respondents saying that they were pleased with the performance of the NHS was even higher than nine out of 10. I hope that it is accepted by the House that patients are happy with the conduct of the health service. Members of the public and others nationally and internationally have also commented favourably.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the comments of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. I will quote a short passage from page 65 of its July report:

> "The command and control system of the NHS lacked flexibility, incentives for efficiency, financial information (and hence accountability) and choice of providers of secondary care . . . Consultants with lifetime positions in hospitals had little incentive to run a service more effectively. There was little incentive to use buildings economically as they had always been paid for by the Government . . . reliable per unit capital costs were generally absent."

It added that

> "the reforms opened up possibilities to overcome some of the weaknesses of the old NHS"

and highlighted the improvements introduced by NHS trusts and GP fundholders, who

> "do seem to have done a better job of purchasing than district health authorities."

It reported also that

> "recent national attitude surveys suggest some increase in satisfaction with the way in which the NHS is run, both among recent users of the service and among the population as a whole".

That is confirmed by my local survey.

My right hon. Friend mentioned also the remarks of the founder of the Socialist Philosophy Group, Professor Le Grand, who made this clear:

> "Central planning was not a conspicuous success in the old health service; decentralised sources of information close to local needs, like GP fund-holders, may provide a better base for long-term decisions than a centralised planning agency."

I could not agree more. Professor Le Grand thinks also that "many, perhaps most" health policy analysts believe that the reforms have been a success. That view was attributed to him by *The Times* on 6 April.

I suggest that the general picture is one of satisfaction and approval of the way in which the national health service reforms are delivering care to patients. The Government spend huge sums of money on the national health service on the taxpayers' behalf—£100 million a day. That is why a strong management is required to improve efficiency and services for patients. Some £1.5 billion in cumulative efficiency savings has been realised since the mid-1980s, when the Government began strengthening NHS management.

The Government have taken tough action and will continue, I trust, to eliminate unnecessary administrative duplication and waste in the national health service. I trust that before very long we shall see the abolition of regional health authorities and the merger of many district and family health services authorities. I am pleased to note that already the number of regions has fallen from 14 to eight, and when eight regional offices replace the regions, they will employ a total of 1,080 people, as compared with the 3,900 employed in 14 regions two years ago. In the past two years, the number of district health authorities has been reduced by 70 to 111. That has meant that administrative savings at regional and district level have released a total of £34 million to date. That money, instead of being spent on teacups, trolleys and filing cabinets, can be spent on direct patient care.

Earlier this month, my right hon. Friend announced that NHS trusts will publish in their annual reports how much they spend on management. To enable the public to see and compare those figures, they will be published alongside NHS performance tables.

A further improvement is that general and senior managers now account for only 2.6 of the NHS work force and 3 per cent. of the wages bill. The vast proportion of the NHS wages budget now goes on staff who provide care directly to patients. For your information, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the proportion of NHS staff who provide care directly to patients has increased from 60 per cent. in 1981 to almost 66 per cent. now.

One further improvement is that, earlier in the year, the Government published codes of conduct and accountability for NHS boards and other members, covering such areas as remuneration and declaration of interest. All trusts and health authorities have been requested to incorporate those matters in their standing orders.

The whole flavour of the national health service reforms and the whole purpose behind them is to increase the priority of the patient as opposed to the providers of the service. We now have 419 NHS trusts in operation and there are good examples of those trusts in my own

[Mr. Edward Garnier]

area of Leicester. We have the Leicester Royal Infirmary trust, the Leicester General Hospital trust and the Glenfield trust. The three major acute hospitals are now all under trust management. Furthermore, the Fosse trust covers the community hospitals and many of the GP practices. The system is working and it is seen to be working, but the ultimate test of the success of the new arrangements is whether they have increased the quality and the quantity of patient care. I would suggest that that is precisely what they have done.

Since April 1991, when the trusts began, the number of hospital in-patients has risen by 1.3 million a year and the number of out-patient attendances by 2.1 million—figures which I mentioned at the start of my remarks. In daily terms, that means that 3,000 more patients are treated every day. If that is not a benefit of the reforms, I do not know what is. Since April 1991, the number of patients waiting over one year for hospital treatment has more than halved, to under 65,000. That means that, since March 1988, the average waiting time for all patients has been cut by half—to 4.6 months in March 1994. Waits of more than two years have been all but eliminated, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to confirm later. No one now has to wait for longer than 18 months for a hip or knee replacement or a cataract operation and 80 per cent. of patients are seen within 30 minutes of their appointment time, as set out in the patients charter. I can confirm that national figure from my visits to my local major hospitals, where one can see that the waiting times have been vastly reduced in the past few years. One can now go to hospital and expect to be seen at the time at which one is booked in to be seen—and that is under a national health system, not a private BUPA system.

At the party conference earlier this month, my right hon. Friend announced that a new expanded patients charter will offer an even greater dividend for patients, with a new national standard for out-patient appointments and a maximum 18-month waiting time for every operation. Already, half the total number of patients are seen immediately; half the remainder are seen within five weeks; almost 75 per cent. are seen within three months; and 98 per cent. are seen within a year.

Those improvements are a direct consequence of the Government's reforms. They flow from the reforms because the new system involves the devolution of decision-making power to local level: they give doctors and NHS managers living in the community the freedom to innovate and to improve patient services. The whole system is driven by the district health authorities and the GPs at local level—those who control the money that the trusts receive. They are developing ways in which to respond more closely than ever to the needs and wishes of the communities that they serve. The GP fundholding initiative in particular has involved a devolution of power to those closest to the patients.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does my hon. Friend agree that often when criticisms are made—and there may be some legitimate criticisms of some of the changes—it is also said that everything was perfect in the past? For example, people say that access to information was excellent and that identifying who was responsible for what was very easy, when in fact quite the reverse was true? In many senses, breaking everything down and devolving it has made it much easier to identify who is responsible for the treatment and—now that the accounts are published—where the money is flowing. Does not my hon. Friend agree that that has been a massive improvement?

Mr. Garnier: Yes, I do agree, and I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. The responses to my survey in my constituency underline the point that my hon. Friend has just made.

I wish also to commend the Government for providing better accountability in the national health service. That subject has been mentioned also by Labour Members, who have complained that that is not the case. I beg to differ from them and will seek to persuade the House that there is better accountability. The NHS reforms have already led to significant strengthening of the accountability of the health service to the patients whom it serves. That is the whole point of the national health service. It is there for the patients. It is not a job provider; it is a patient carer.

The patients charter sets out in black and white the rights enjoyed by patients and the means of redress when things go wrong. The split between the providers of health care and the health care commissioners, to whom hospitals are accountable and whose role it is to promote the interests of patients, means that the service is now largely patient driven. Again, I have seen that in my constituency. I see it at my advice surgeries, where people thank me—quite unnecessarily, because I have not done anything—for the good work of the national health service in our local hospitals. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] Hon. Members may scoff, but that is a fact. I am not in the business of misleading the House. Constituents of mine have come into my surgery time after time to commend the work of the national health service. It is fair to say that even the Opposition nowadays agree—the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire certainly agrees—that there is a case to be made for, and even a case for accepting, the need for a split between purchasers and providers of care.

Hospitals are now much more accountable for the use of taxpayers' money through their contracts with health authorities and GP fundholders. Under the old system, few hospitals knew what individual treatments cost, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) has just pointed out. Few felt the need to know because they were not held properly accountable. Most people simply did not know how to find out information; there was a great black wall of bureaucracy which they could not penetrate.

Mr. Turner: Talking of bureaucracy, the hon. Gentleman will have heard this week of the record pay-out in respect of a very serious accident that happened to a young man in Wolverhampton. Some £2 million of compensation has had to be paid or is to be paid. It has taken 14 years of bureaucracy for that case to be heard and settled. Is that the accountability in the health service and the lack of bureaucracy about which the hon. Gentleman is telling us? It has taken 14 long years—a scandal—for that case to be heard and dealt with. Where is the justice, accountability or lack of bureaucracy in that case?

Mr. Garnier: With respect, I think that the hon. Gentleman must be taking part in a different debate. What is more, 11 of the 13 years to which he referred—or however many it was—were pre-reform. But I digress: I will not be diverted by the hon. Gentleman. I have no doubt that, if he has a sensible point to make, he will try to catch your eye in due course, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I see that the hon. Gentleman is now leaving the Chamber. No, he has returned, and is approaching the Front Bench. I am delighted that his intervention has led to instant promotion; I trust that he will go further.

Decision making has been devolved to levels much closer to the patient, particularly—as I suggested a moment ago—to GPs, through fundholding. As I was saying before I was interrupted, those making the decisions are better able to assess patients' needs. More information is available to patients and the public than ever before, enabling them to make more important decisions.

The Government's NHS reforms allow the Government and NHS managers to listen to the needs of the public. They have listened to those needs, as is clear from the example that I gave the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. I have no doubt that Ministers have that at the forefront of their minds. I am much fortified by the assurance given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the Conservative party conference that the national health service was safe for as long as he was alive and breathing: he is a young man, and I wish him a long stay in office.

I am certain that, when the time comes, the national health service will be available to me in my old age. I trust that the Minister will continue his good work, and ensure that the public still have the confidence in the NHS that my constituents have shown—as I have no doubt they will.

7.1 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): The gigantic programme of change brought about by the health service reforms will have implications for nearly every patient and member of staff. In Durham, the merger of the district health authorities, the abolition of the regional health authority and the plans for a new district general hospital represent an era of change unprecedented since the formation of the national health service.

I am delighted that there is to be a new hospital in the city of Durham, and that the new regional office will be sited there as well: that will create many welcome jobs. But what is going on behind the scenes of these changes? Will these major developments enhance the range and quality of hospital services locally available to the people of Durham?

The changes are market led, not customer led. The internal market is rapidly reshaping the health service, fundamentally changing the nature and quality of services and undermining the ideals that underpin the NHS—that health care is available to all, that money does not buy better or quicker treatment and that patients are treated locally if that is what suits them best.

Let me refer specifically to the proposed new Durham hospital. I hope that the Minister will take careful note of what I am going to say. I am disgusted and outraged by the latest decision on how the hospital is to be funded.

Soon after I was first elected to Parliament in 1987, plans for a new district general hospital were discussed—although the hospital had been proposed even earlier. Capital expenditure in Durham district health authority had been miserly over the years in comparison with that of other district health authorities in the region. For example, Durham was among the bottom six of 16 districts, with a spend of less than £15 million in 1989; only £2.5 million extra was spent between 1982 and 1989. In contrast, Newcastle district health authority was allowed to spend nearly £59 million in 1989, £9 million extra being spent between 1982 and 1989.

Even if we add the capital expenditure of North-West Durham district health authority—which is now part of the new Durham authority, and which was bottom of the table with a total spend of only £3.8 million in 1989, with virtually no increase since 1982—it is clear that both authorities have been allowed very little capital expenditure over the years.

Until a few weeks ago, it seemed that at last—after seven years—the hospital was ready to be built. Detailed business plans were drawn up and it was a case of looking to the Government for the capital expenditure. However, the Government have dashed hopes that funds for the proposed North Durham hospital would be approved by the end of the year. They are now insisting that a private sector bid for planning, building and running all but the core medical services must be included with the business plan. That is completely contrary to what the authorities had already been told; the decision, which is now expected to delay the bid for over a year, has ruined the plans for the hospital and delayed them even further.

The business plan had been prepared at a cost of about £500,000. It had forecast the start of building work by 1996, with patients being admitted by 1999. Not only have the plans been delayed, however; they have been forced down the road to privatisation. The hospital managers of North Durham acute hospital trust hoped to receive the plans for go-ahead this year and hoped that the first phase, costing approximately £44 million—building next to the existing hospital—would start even before 1996. For the hospital authorities now to be told that their plans have been dashed, and that a new financing system is to be introduced, is a scandal and a disgrace, and has set the hospital back further.

Not only has the new hospital been delayed; all the money spent on plans—including the business plan—has been a complete waste. For the Government to insist that private money builds a hospital is nothing more than privatisation of that hospital, and privatisation of the health service in Durham. Whichever way we look at it, if the private sector builds the hospital the private sector will expect to profit from it after it is built. That means that the private sector will run the hospital, and that therefore the hospital will run on a basis of profit rather than health care.

If the hospital is not making a profit in certain areas, its owners will insist that the managers drop the service concerned and dictate where profitable services may be found. That could lead to a cut in non-profitable services, such as care for the elderly, and to decisions on medical care being taken not by doctors and consultants but by property developers and business men. If that is not privatisation, I do not know what is.

So much for the Prime Minister's statement at the Tory party conference that the national health service would never be privatised while he lived and breathed. The proposed new North Durham district hospital is being used as a guinea pig for new financing arrangements, and my constituents will have to suffer—now and later. I ask the Minister to meet me, along with other hon. Members, in

[Mr. Gerry Steinberg]

the Durham area, to discuss the new proposals; I should be grateful if he would give me some indication of his response this evening.

Mr. Malone: I should be delighted.

Mr. Steinberg: The speed of the Minister's response has taken my breath away, but I am glad that he has acceded to my request.

Under the new regional structure, the NHS executive's new regional offices will be responsible for purchasers and providers of primary and secondary care. The executive, with its single structure of regional offices—each with no more than 135 staff—will take on responsibility for all policy development in relation to the NHS. At local level, health authorities will evaluate health care needs. Major objectives will be delivered through corporate contracts between health authorities and the NHS executive.

Trusts are primarily accountable to purchasers for the delivery of care through NHS contracts. They will be held to account by the provider arm of the NHS executive regional offices for meeting their statutory financial duties: in other words, there will no longer be any democratic accountability in local health care provision. There will be limited direct monitoring by regional offices of certain non-financial aspects of trusts' performance which cannot be pursued through NHS contracts, including national policy initiatives such as Opportunity 2000 and junior doctors' hours.

Once regional health authorities are abolished, all appointments to district health authorities, family health services authorities, new health authorities and trusts will be formally made by the Secretary of State. Far from localising decisions, we will see a considerable move of power to the centre and political domination by the Secretary of State.

With the abolition of RHAs, the emphasis will shift from a regional picture to the performance of individual health authorities and trusts which are unaccountable. National health service executive headquarters will establish an accountability framework for the NHS to be set out in a statement of responsibilities and accountabilities. Chief executives of health authorities and trusts are to be designated as accountable officers who will be accountable to Parliament for the use of all funds in their charge. Purchasers will provide information to those interested in their activities, including Members of Parliament, the public and the press. By any stretch of the imagination, that cannot be a democratic or acceptable system of accountability.

Undoubtedly, a hospital trust has the financial interest of the hospital ahead of the health needs of patients and the pay and conditions of staff. There is already a trend towards low-paid, casual work and job insecurity. The cost-cutting measures of the market depress pay levels and by that means providers can offer cheaper services to purchasers through being more competitive.

The rosy picture of staff morale in Durham hospitals painted by the Secretary of State is not familiar to me. Recently, we saw the regional health authority attempt to buy off nurses in a grading dispute. The health authority offered a blanket £700 to each claimant in exchange for dropping the claim. It is nothing more than a cash-oriented scam. Many of the nurses waited years for a fair hearing at a grading appeal to recognise their additional responsibilities. In today's health service, there appears to be little scope for fairness. The health authority did its sums and pressed nurses to drop their claims in an unprincipled attempt to cut its losses. The nurses were given a deadline to accept the offer and were advised that refusal could result in a two-year wait for their grading appeal to be heard. Many nurses accepted the cash offered rather than face a further delay. Almost 2,000 of the nurses had already been waiting for five years.

That action is further evidence of the abandonment of long-established public service traditions in favour of the "money talks" philosophy that we see in the health service under this Government.

One of the first staff-related decisions made by the acute hospital trust in Durham was to replace skilled staff with cheaper and fewer staff. Staff are being treated as disposable units and are being used to make savings by reducing wage costs and job security. Auxiliaries, ward clerks and ward aids were replaced by what are called team assistants. The team assistants are to be recruited from jobcentres and are not required to have any previous experience in the health service. They will receive in-house training, but the complete training course lasts only 11 months or even less for successful students.

The new post will be more qualified than an auxiliary but less qualified than an enrolled nurse and most post holders will have no previous experience in the health service. The new post holders will not be offered Whitley council employment and service conditions. Their conditions will be imposed upon them. For example, they will have only seven weeks holiday a year, including time off for sickness. Any further absences after seven weeks will mean a loss of pay. Given the nature of the work and the stress involved, that is an erosion of the rights that they have enjoyed for years. I do not see that as progress through reforms.

A further erosion of their rights is that the 37-hour working week will be stretched to six days instead of five. Although that means shorter shifts, it means that an extra working day will be imposed for the same money. There is to be an overall pay decrease and special duty payments have been scrapped for night and weekend work. There will be no pay structure except at the whim of management with increments being awarded on merit. A bribe will be offered to the present work force with a one-off payment if they sign away their Whitley conditions.

A system of internal rotation has been introduced where nurses who previously worked only night shifts must now work day duty and vice versa. That is all at the whim of the sister in charge of the ward. To make matters worse, nurses who did two complete night shifts are now being forced to do five nights with four hour shifts, finishing at one o'clock in the morning. That means that nurses have to return home alone in the early hours of the morning. That is unsafe and has been forced upon them. The nurses who gave me this information pleaded with me not to reveal my source because they believed that they would be sacked.

At a meeting, the chairman of the hospital trust indicated that workers' rights were important. However, it seems that the new system is being imposed without real negotiation and will be implemented regardless of trade union opinion. The guarantees given to me seem worthless. I wonder whether the guarantee that he gave about not sacking anybody who spoke to me rings true. I would not dare take a chance and reveal any source of my information.

Secrecy surrounds the appointment of board members to the newly formed health trusts in county Durham. I was notified of the trust membership of the community health service, acute hospitals unit and the ambulance service. I was not objecting to individual appointments, but I inquired about the process of selection. I was particularly interested in the full list of nominations that had been received for trust membership so that I would be able to judge the criteria upon which the successful board members had been appointed. I was astounded to be told by the management of each service that the list of nominations was privileged information and could not be released. That is disgraceful.

Those boards will run the vast majority of health services for the people of Durham, yet I am told that secrecy surrounds who was considered and how the appointments were made. That contrasts dreadfully with local government, where councillors are selected by the people and all nominations are open to public scrutiny. The chair of the ambulance trust in Durham is a very nice lady. I have met her and I got on very well with her. However, she is a failed Tory candidate for local government. How and on what grounds was she appointed? What are her qualifications? We do not know because they will not tell us. Her qualification is that she is a supporter of the Tory party and she was appointed on that basis. That is scandalous.

In my constituency, there has not been a single Tory elected to the district council, which consists of 49 councillors, or to Durham county council. However, two of the ambulance trust members are Tory party members. That is a slap in the face for the people of Durham, who consistently vote against Tory representation. They do not want the Tories, but they are lumbered with them.

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that in an area where one party is dominant, such as in Durham and in some parts of the country where, until recently, the Conservative party might have been dominant, nobody with a different political affiliation should be appointed to hospital trusts or any other body responsible for the health service? Is he saying that because the people in Durham are silly enough to vote Labour, no Conservative should be appointed there, even though some people in Durham do vote Conservative?

Mr. Steinberg: The people who vote Conservative in Durham could probably be counted on one hand. I am saying that it seems strange that in an area that predominantly votes Labour, two Tories are placed on the board of the ambulance trust and one is made its chairperson. I am not against those individuals. In fact, I get on well with them. One was the leader of the Tories in Durham. My point is that when I asked for information about how and why those people had been elected, I was told basically to mind my own business. I can assume only that they were appointed because they were Tories. I would have been satisfied if I had received an explanation of why they had been appointed or if I had been given their credentials for serving on boards. The system as it stands, however, is non-democratic and unaccountable and, therefore, it must change. It is perceived that the appointments of those people are a political favour. I am sure that Conservative Members cannot be happy with such a position.

Mr. Rowe: I have a lot of sympathy for what the hon. Gentleman says. There is great deal to be said for being entirely open about trust appointments. In the early stages of the trusts, there is bound to be a presupposition that people who approve of trusts rather than those who do not will be appointed.

Mr. Steinberg: That is a fair point. I was asked by the chairman of the regional health authority whether I would be prepared to propose nominees for the trust board. I duly nominated a number of Labour party members who would like to serve on trust boards. That was the last that I heard of the matter. No reason was given as to why they were not picked or why the Tories were. That must lead to suspicion.

Mr. Duncan Smith: May I press the hon. Gentleman on this point? He said that he nominated a number of Labour party people. When he nominated them, did it occur to him whether those people would do an efficient job?

Mr. Steinberg: I assure the hon. Gentleman that one of the members who I nominated was the former vice-chairman of the district health authority. He had been removed by the Secretary of State when the new district health authority was set up.

Mr. Bayley: Purged is the word.

Mr. Steinberg: Sorry, he had been purged. I nominated someone with a tremendous amount of experience.

My relationship with the trusts is excellent. I work well with them, but they are not accountable. We do not know why the appointees were chosen and we do not know what their qualifications are for holding their positions. That is an unhealthy state of affairs. It can be put right only by a more accountable system in which trust members are elected by the people whom they serve. They should not chosen by the Secretary of State for Health purely on the basis of the political party that they support—in this case, the Tory party. I do not wish my views to be taken as a personal slur on any trust appointees, but I believe, as a matter of principle, that greater public accountability is needed in this process.

Patients do not have the freedom to attend a hospital of their choice. General practitioners cannot refer them to the consultant of their choice. I should like to give an example of an appalling problem that occurred in my constituency. A 70-year-old lady had a heart attack and she had to bussed to the next county to receive emergency treatment. When she became ill at midnight, she was attended by what I call a night-shift doctor from the GP's practice who was unable to obtain her admission to the local hospital. It refused her admission because it did not have a bed for an old lady who was having a heart attack.

Her husband's wish to accompany her to an accessible hospital led to an inquiry in the next county, but that was also refused. Eventually, the ambulance took her to a different hospital in the county unaccompanied by her husband. Ambulancemen told the old gentleman that if he went with his wife at 1 o'clock in the morning, they could not get him back home. He had to wait at home while his

[Mr. Steinberg]

wife was shipped off to the end of the county. That is an outrageous and intolerable position. An elderly man was left grief stricken while his wife was shipped off to the other end of the county.

Unfortunately, that is likely to be regular occurrence now that the hospital has been granted trust status. That is the sort of health care that the reforms have brought. Durham's hospitals should care for the people of Durham. The Government have wasted millions of pounds on expensive management studies and bureaucratic procedures in the health service, yet they have got the basic things wrong. Why should elderly people be treated like second-class citizens? Things are going from bad to worse.

There is little distinction between private and national health care. No patient can be accepted by a trust hospital unless someone pays the bill. We are assured that the health service will not be privatised, but few people believe it.

7.24 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Durham is a long way from my constituency, but I note that my hon. Friend the Minister, whom I welcome to his new post, has already acknowledged the points that have been raised and shown his willingness, and that of his colleagues, to listen to them. That is the new listening national health service, if I can call it that.

A distinguished medical colleague said to me recently that

"treating patients is a great deal easier than running the national health service."

As a physician, I acknowledge the difficulties addressed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

When I became a medical student 30 years ago, I could not possibly have imagined the nature and pace of change, either professionally or administratively, especially in the past few years, but changes there had to be. For far too long, the NHS thought itself immune from challenge. Indeed, any challenge precipitated the wheeling out of Nye Bevan and was portrayed emotionally as a betrayal of the ethos of those people who set up the NHS.

Those of us who worked in the NHS knew otherwise. Paternalism, from consultants downwards, had too often turned into a patronising attitude. Patients were led to believe that they should be grateful to be treated at all. Often, scant attention was paid to the timing of their appointments and admissions and they were often treated less well as people than one would expect. If that sounds over-critical, I should balance it by saying that those same patients received some of the best medical, nursing and ancillary treatment in the world.

The publication of the White Paper "Working for Patients" was the watershed. New thinking had to be applied to a service which, as everyone had come to recognise, was subject to unlimited demands and that, paradoxically, increased in line with further medical and surgical sophistication.

As new treatments became available, waiting lists inevitably increased. General practitioners felt frustrated and hospitals were overstretched. Hospitals often found themselves in the wrong place because of demographic movements and changes in catchment areas. Rationalisation, particularly in London, was long overdue. Therefore, the Government, introduced new concepts, initially perhaps rather tentatively, which soon gathered a momentum of their own.

The achievements are worth restating. NHS trusts forced the introduction of proper management techniques and accountability. No longer were investigations ordered without regard to cost and usefulness. No longer were waste and poor stock-keeping tolerated. Attention was at last paid to the cost of stays in hospitals, which was linked appropriately to the development of day surgery, a theme that I have developed in the House before. Lastly, compulsory competitive tendering, introduced by the Government, promoted efficiency and ensured that the maximum resources were available for patient treatment.

GP fundholders were another great innovation. I remember attending highly charged meetings in my constituency with GPs who were apprehensive about having to manage their own affairs and about making use of the purchaser-provider split in the internal market. I understood their concerns and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would also have understood them. Like them, I had grown up in the NHS, of which it really was true to say that doctors tended to know the value of everything and the cost of nothing. They certainly knew the value of all sorts of human and scientific factors but few of us knew the cost of anything, whether of a day's stay in hospital, of drugs that we prescribed, of dressings that were applied by staff or of investigations for which we daily wrote forms.

Hon. Members know that the waves of NHS trust applications gathered a momentum of their own. I welcome the announcement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health at the party conference that, in response to demand, the threshold for GP fundholders would be lowered to 5,000 patients on a list. Those changes truly represent market forces at work as doctors and, more importantly, patients see the benefits of the reforms. I can speak personally of those benefits because I and all four members of my family have been in-patients under the NHS at Bart's hospital during the Government's term of office.

Who did nothing but carp and criticise? The Labour party and, I am ashamed to say, my union, the British Medical Association. The classic socialist arguments were trotted out. The changes were described as creating a two-tier service as though all those benefiting from fundholding practices should be deprived simply because if everyone cannot benefit, no one should benefit. I suspect that that type of egalitarian thinking will survive in the Labour party long after any cosmetic surgery has been carried out on clause IV. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) appears to be nodding in agreement.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Our argument is that everyone should be treated the same.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: That is our aspiration as well. The hon. Member was obviously not listening to what I said. The Labour party has always maintained that one cannot have a two-tier service during a transition that provides a one-tier levelling up. Over the years, socialism, on the contrary, has persistently been all about levelling down.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I must say that what the hon. Gentleman said did not sound like that to me. When he talked earlier about the difference between value and price, which was more important to him?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I know that the hon. Gentleman was listening attentively, so he will know that I was talking about human values as opposed to financial costs.

It is interesting to consider the attitude of the BMA in this saga. On Saturday 6 August, the *British Medical Journal* published a leader entitled:

"Where now for the NHS reforms?"

I suppose that as the BMA is producing its own magazine, it is not at the mercy of anyone else and its staff can write the sub-headings to any articles. The sub-heading to that leader was:

"Making them up as they go along."

If that sub-heading does not make that leader a political tract at first sight, I wonder what it does. The article stated:

"For many managers and professionals in the NHS, this has meant a period of learning by doing in which the importance of GP fundholding, NHS trusts, and similar initiatives have been discovered in the process of making the reforms work. Where these changes will take the NHS is unclear even (or perhaps especially) to those at the heart of government . . . To this extent, the changes introduced by *Working for Patients* are out of control, with developments being driven from the bottom up not from the top down.

And yet. Despite the overwhelming evidence of confusion and inconsistency at the centre of the NHS, there are those who argue that the reforms are guided by a master plan".

That is a load of gobbledegook, unworthy of the usual stringent editing of the BMJ. The BMA cannot have it both ways—it cannot criticise reforms instigated from the bottom up while, on the other hand, accusing the Secretary of State by implication of imposing some master plan from above.

The article in the BMJ asked

"What should be done? Firstly, Ministers should assess the founding principles of the NHS for their relevance today."

I do not know how good the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) is at her history, but I did a bit of research and found out that one of the main criticisms levelled by the Labour party has been directed at the Government's theme of money following the patient. I challenge any of the health intellectuals on the Opposition Benches to give me the provenance of that phrase. I am met with a lot of blank faces, so let me educate those hon. Members. That phrase came straight from Nye Bevan, who, when speaking about local hospitals, said:

"the endowment of that local hospital follows the patient"—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1946; Vol.426, c.470.]

I recommend that phrase to the Opposition and I hope that the concept of money following the patient will no longer be criticised as a Conservative philosophy.

Mr. Bayley: When Nye Bevan was speaking, the money did follow the patient because the doctor could refer the patient to any hospital. The funding that that hospital received depended on the number of patients that it had. Now, of course, money does not follow the patient. The doctor sets a contract with various providers and the patient cannot exercise choice by going to whichever hospital he believes is the best—that is the nature of the internal market.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: The hon. Member is obviously not an expert because he knows nothing about extra-contractual referrals.

We have heard cries from the Opposition about creeping privatisation and commercialisation, despite the categorical assurances of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that the Government have no intention of privatising the NHS.

My health interests are registered in the Register of Members' Interests, about which we have to be so careful nowadays, and I am proud to be associated with a public company that is working closely with local authorities to deliver an excellent standard of community care. It allows patients to be treated with dignity in the best possible environment. I also greatly welcome the fact that the company is competing not only with other companies but with in-house services.

The new-look Labour party may admit to synergy between the public and private sectors in the NHS, as it does in other sectors. I challenge the Opposition to come clean. What do they really believe about co-operation between the private and public sectors?

I do not know whether the right hon. Member for Derby, South believes that there is a place for the private sector in the NHS. However, I recently found out that her predecessor, now disposed of, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) did not seem to have any qualms about such co-operation. *Dental Practice* reported that, last year, the hon. Member opened a dental practice called Shiregreen, in Sheffield, within the largest public housing scheme in Europe. The magazine described how a private patient suite and private office were located on the first floor of that practice. I hope that when the right hon. Member for Derby, South replies to the debate she will clarify her party's views on such co-operation.

Mrs. Beckett: I opened the debate; I will not be winding it up.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Perhaps she will clarify her party's views in due course.

What I find most frustrating in any debate on the NHS—we have all heard the interminable debates that have gone on—is the lack of good news that is described as such. In my constituency I have several good examples of such news. The St. Helier NHS trust, together with St. George's Hospital trust and the Kingston Hospital NHS trust, is responsible for the care of my constituents. It is an extremely successful trust and it is proposing possible new plans under the private sector finance initiative to transform the delivery of health care in south-west London. That is excellent news in itself and it may involve other hospitals, but it would be wrong of me to mention those in other hon. Members' constituencies.

Atkinson Morley's hospital in my constituency is recognised as a centre of excellence throughout the world and it is quite possible that it may find its eventual home within the new set-up pioneered by the St. Helier hospital trust. I commend that trust for the work that it is doing on that project.

[Dr. Goodson-Wickes]

Nelson hospital in my constituency is a small, old-fashioned hospital which is held in enormous affection by my constituents. Its obituary notice has been written prematurely many times. At last, there is a proposal before the local council for that hospital to benefit from an entirely new build. I submit that there could hardly be a better index of faith in its future.

The new plans incorporate increasing the number of out-patient consulting rooms from seven to 10 and the number of places for day treatment for the elderly from 20 to 30, and doubling the operating theatres from one to two. Moreover, my constituents will benefit from locally available physiotherapy, occupational therapy and x-ray facilities.

Mr. MacShane: I can cite examples in Rotherham of an increasing number of beds and positive work accomplished in the NHS. What concerns me and should concern the Minister of State who will wind up, as he is a former journalist and Scottish editor of *The Sunday Times*, is the fact that when consultants, physicians and nursing staff in Rotherham district general hospital tell me things and I say that we shall discuss them publicly, they say that we cannot. That is a gagging of discussion inside the NHS by a Government who talk about decentralisation and improving information flow but who will not allow the people who know about those matters to express their views in the public domain. I am happy to represent the staff of Rotherham hospital, but I should prefer the Government to lift the gagging and allow consultants, doctors and nurses to speak for themselves in public debate.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I cannot speak for the hon. Gentleman's constituency of Rotherham. I can simply say that once the plans servicing my constituency are worked out, they will go to full and very public consultation. I imagine that that pattern is reproduced elsewhere.

A recent MORI poll shows that doctors are the most trusted profession. At the other end of the table, politicians are the least trusted. I believe that politicians are now on a par with journalists and, in the light of recent events, I am not certain whether the position at the bottom of the table has changed. Those of us who are both physicians and politicians must be somewhat schizophrenic. Speaking as a doctor and a politician, I welcome the reforms, knowing them to be for the benefit of the only person who matters in all our deliberations—the patient.

7.41 pm

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I, too, am pleased to take part in this debate and should like to record my interest as an adviser to the Royal College of Nursing. Like the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who spoke earlier, I am a member of its parliamentary panel.

Such is the collapse of public confidence in the Government's management of the health service that every week my constituents come to my advice services or write to me to express their fear and fury about what is happening. The Secretary of State prefers press conferences to Parliament and a mantra of statistics and jargonese that causes bewilderment to even the most hardened bureaucrat or journalist. Recently, when she appeared before the Health Select Committee and was challenged about where support came from for her health reforms, she conceded that some members of the public may be "counter intuitive" to the changes. However, she went on to say that trust chairmen were always telling her how wonderful the NHS reforms were. Too right, as she appointed them and rescued many of them from oblivion after a general election defeat.

It is because the NHS now seems to be run by a deadly combination of the Secretary of State's fantasy and a new breed of bureaucrat that patients and the public—that means all of us—are so alarmed. If public confidence in the national health service is as high as Conservative Members would have us believe, why has there been such a sharp increase in the number of people taking out private health insurance?

Another major aspect of our debate today is the increase in bureaucracy. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) has already referred to CELFACS. A constituent of mine recently sent me a list of vacancies within the corporate services for CELFACS. Anybody who believes that the patient is still at the heart of our national health service should take a look at the 31 job descriptions, which include the assistant director of financial management; the assistant director of financial services; the financial accountant; the finance manager; the contracting systems and development accountant; the debtors' cash management accountant; the assistant management accountant; the public relations manager; and the press and public relations assistant. CELFACS has advertised 31 jobs, not one of which refers to patients in its job description.

Mr. Malone: That is a pretty stupid point to make. Advertisements for jobs for clinicians appear in another source called the *British Medical Journal*. If the hon. Lady is talking about over-management in the service, does she accept the fact that only 2.6 per cent. of those employed in the service are in management? That is a pretty small figure for a service that runs at a rate of £32 billion a year.

Ms Jowell: Given that the Health Ministers claim the NHS to have the patient at its heart, the fact that City and East London Family and Community Health Services has produced 31 job descriptions, none of which refers to patients, makes my point.

I recently received a letter from a local GP practice that serves many of my constituents. It said:

> "On Monday evening the 10th of October 1994 at about 6.00 p.m. one GP trying to get an emergency admission for an elderly patient was told by the Registrar on call that there were no available beds at King's or Dulwich and that some eighteen patients were currently waiting on trolleys. Our patient was admitted to a ward at Dulwich at 5.00 a.m. on Tuesday the 11th of October. This practice of holding people for hours on trolleys in A&E seems to be commonplace and acceptable to the hospital but we do not believe that ill, elderly or vulnerable or distressed people should ever be treated in this manner."

Another reality that the Government systematically avoid is the well-documented crisis facing London's mental health services. During the summer, we heard from the Royal College of Psychiatrists that bed occupancy is running at a staggering 130 per cent. I pay tribute to the excellent work of the Mental Health Foundation in systematically analysing and providing data on the scale of the crisis facing the mental health services in London, with which all my hon. Friends who represent London constituencies deal daily.

A constituent of mine who is a mental health worker wrote to me recently:

> "The bed situation in London is terrible. Our patients are frequently referred to private hospitals where they are known as 'outliers'. I understand that the bed in the private sector costs £500 a night which is more expensive than an NHS bed and the NHS has to pay for the bed.
>
> However, all our patients who go to these hospitals complain that the care they receive is poor. Their medication needs are just about met but they are excluded from group and occupational activities and the staffing ratios are poorer than in the NHS. More importantly they are patients we know well who have been treated by a team they do not know and over whom we"—

the people who know them—

> "have no control."

In south-east London, more than 43 per cent. of spending on medium secure beds is now in the private sector. Often, beds are more than 100 miles away, making a mockery of community-based care. A private bed costs between £80,000 and £87,000 a year and a national health service bed in a medium secure unit about £70,000 a year, but with a much wider range of support services. The situation in south-east London is critical, with four times the national average number of people suffering from serious mental illness.

I shall happily give way if the Minister will now give an undertaking that the bid by the Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham health commission for an additional 45 medium secure beds for south-east London will be funded when the bid is considered by South Thames regional health authority. I see that he is not rising to his feet to give the people of south-east London that assurance.

For those who doubt the oppressive hand of bureaucracy, I shall quote the words of a local general practitioner:

> "In the inner city most of us do not have the premises to promote the Government Policy, and where the premises are available the time factor is still a problem. We are having to spend more and more of our time in form-filling and every week we are bombarded with new forms and charters.
>
> Instead of treating patients we are subjected to magazines from Health Authorities and Hospitals who are fighting for our custom with pretty pictures of their staff. All this bureaucracy costs money, but obviously the patient . . . is the least person to be considered."

Waiting lists for treatment are lengthening. If I take again the example of my area, that covered by the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham health authority, as the number of available beds decreased between 1991-92 and the present by nearly 400, so waiting lists increased by 1,700, with an especially marked increase in the number of patients waiting up to one year.

That illustrates another piece of illogicality in the Government's policy about which they have chosen to do nothing—the problem created by the substantial increase in the number of emergency admissions. It is a national problem, which is biting especially hard in London, where hospitals are reporting as much as a 17 per cent. increase in emergency admissions.

A constituent who contacted me earlier this year had his hernia operation cancelled five times. He was suffering increasing pain. The explanation that he was offered by King's went as follows:

> "Mr. D. was placed on the waiting list on the 9th of November 1993 and was first offered a date in December for his operation which unfortunately had to be cancelled as did two subsequent admissions planned for early February 1994 due to the extreme pressure on beds caused by very high numbers of emergency admissions and continuing problems caused by beds occupied by patients awaiting assessment by social services unable to be discharged."

As the proportion of emergency admissions increases and the proportion of elective admissions decreases, hospitals need more beds to deal with the fluctuation in demand that is an inevitable part of handling pressures arising from emergencies.

In south-east London, bed occupancy regularly runs at between 96 and 98 per cent. That places an intolerable burden on the hospitals, which is evidenced by long trolley waits and the cancellation of patients' operations. By general consent, 85 per cent. bed occupancy is regarded as a manageable target.

Such a situation completely disrupts clinical priorities. Increasingly, patients will be referred as emergencies, because that is felt by GPs and patients alike to be the only sure way of getting into hospital, even if it involves the prospect of a long wait in casualty. It means that elective patients will wait longer, as evidenced by the figures provided to me by my local health authority.

The prospect is that there will be two routes whereby patients will be treated electively. They will be treated if they hit the 18-month wait that requires them to be admitted by the patients charter, or if they suffer from a condition that can be treated by day surgery, which is cheap and offers high-volume turnover. Patients are therefore confronted by the absurdity that their bunions may be treated—because they can be operated on on a day surgery basis—but they may have little prospect of getting their hysterectomy done on an elective basis until they become an emergency, or until they have waited for 18 months.

Long waits are tackled only at the expense of patients who have waited for a shorter time. That is a complete abandonment of the principle that patients should be treated according to their clinical need. It is not even as if the hospitals do not have the capacity to treat the patients. The problem arises only because their capacity is determined artificially by the purchasers and the contracts that they negotiate, not by the length of the waiting lists or the number of patients who need to be treated.

Even where it is shown that hospitals could produce another 10 to 12 per cent. in activity, which would make a substantial inroad into increasing the number of patients treated and therefore taken off the waiting list, and even though the hospitals have the capacity, they are prevented from treating those patients, even where they could do so at marginal cost. So a hospital that is "over-performing" by, for example, 10 per cent., but overspending by a fifth of that—which is increased productivity even by the Government's standard—is forced into the madness of closing wards to reduce expenditure instead of opening them to deal effectively with the increased demand. Why? The answer is, because the purchasers have no more money.

[Ms Jowell]

Such is the public apprehension and fear that nothing is now safe from the Government's arbitrary hand, that the Government have succeeded in turning "save our" into the two most potent words in the nation's political vocabulary.

Guy's, just the other side of the Thames, is a world-class hospital and pivotal local hospital, yet for the past eight months it has been blighted by the prospect of its accident and emergency department and acute services being stripped away. Philip Harris House, with its state-of-the-art facilities, is confronted by the prospect of never opening for the purposes for which £140 million of public and charitable money was raised. Dulwich hospital, a much-loved local hospital used by my constituents, is threatened with closure at the same time as people wait on trolleys at King's along the road because there are no beds to which to admit them.

This debate is yet another opportunity to ask Ministers to listen; to ask them to venture out of their world of fantasy to accept the reality that confronts patients and staff every day.

Let me finish with an especially brutal piece of reality, which recently came to me in a letter from another GP who serves many of my constituents. He said:

> "I was in H.M. Forces when the National Health Service commenced and could not wait for demobilisation to join, I wished to be part of this brave new world. Sadly, in August"—

this year—

> "I was glad to leave the National Health Service disillusioned and demoralised at what the present Government has done to my dream."

7.58 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am somewhat between a rock and a hard place. If I do not make it absolutely clear that I am married to a non-executive director of a health trust I shall rightly be castigated for having concealed that material fact from the House. If I make that fact clear, I shall be given hell when I get home because my wife—who has spent most of her professional career working in the national health service, who currently holds a senior position in the Centre for International Child Health, who has made her way in the health service entirely due to her own efforts and who has earned a considerable reputation therein—will tell me that I have no business dragging her name into a debate on the health service as though she were some sort of appendage of mine.

My wife is a non-executive director who obtained her position entirely on her own merits in a trust that has behaved in an exemplary way, which should be widespread throughout the nation. The trust advertised for non-executive directors and had a thoroughly open selection procedure as a result. That is the right way to proceed and I hope that it will become a widespread practice. As trusts become established, the public interest in them grows and popular support for them grows. We can expect good people to apply for positions on trusts.

As always, I listened with great attention and care to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), who made an eloquent and telling appeal for her constituents. Her speech suffered from only one weakness in that it had no historical perception. I used to live in the constituency that the hon. Lady currently graces. I vividly remember that a number of people whom I knew, including my daughter, went to local hospitals and found them in considerable difficulties—one of them was not particularly clean—which meant that visiting them was not a happy experience.

The idea that financial constraints leading to the closure of beds or wards is a new phenomenon resulting from the reforms is a joke. Of course it is true that, in a health service the size of ours, which has growing difficulties for a variety of reasons—the instability of family life, the growing violence on the streets, the enormous increase in the use of drugs—inner city areas come under immense pressure. Far from blaming the shortcomings on the reforms, we should realise that the reforms present the only way of meeting the vastly difficult challenges that have not been satisfactorily met under the old system.

Ms Jowell: I have to correct the hon. Gentleman. Both King's College hospital and Dulwich hospital have beds that are closed only because the purchasers do not have the money to fund their being open.

Mr. Rowe: I understand that perfectly. I am saying that that phenomenon is not a direct consequence of the reforms, but existed long before the reforms. The demands on the national health service have always outstripped supply and always will. At some stage, some form of rationing, however it is done, has to be introduced. One method that used to be used across the nation was to close wards and make doctors and others useless. If that still happens in some parts of the country, I very much regret it, but it has diminished considerably and is not nearly as common in my part of the country as it used to be, largely as a result of the reforms.

I approve of the reforms for many well-rehearsed reasons. They have enormously increased the transparency of the costings. We have a much clearer idea of where the costs lie in the national health service. It is not enough emotionally to suggest that because we know where the costs lie we are somehow uncaring. In the old days, because one did not know where the costs lay, it was a matter of pot luck whether a health authority spent money on one thing or another. At least now it is possible to make rational decisions about the likely demand for services and to go for as good a deal for the national health service as possible.

I approve of the reforms and believe that we have a much tighter management as a result. I can give one small but telling example. Before the reforms were introduced, beds tended to belong to a specialty. If there were empty beds in one part of a hospital, there was a complicated system of negotiations about whether some other specialty could use those beds. It is now accepted that the beds belong to the trust and, as a consequence, there is much better and more effective use of them. In the trusts that I know well, there is infinitely greater co-operation between the various clinical directorates than there was under the old system, where many consultants were prima donnas for whom bed ownership was one of their status symbols.

In many parts of the country—certainly in my constituency—there is now better co-operation between the social services and the trusts. The hon. Member for Dulwich may have an added problem because her local social services are not adequately managed and have not forged the sort of links with the hospitals that make it easy for patients to move satisfactorily from hospital into community care.

Ms Jowell: The hon. Gentleman is well versed in the working of the community care reforms, so he will understand the particular problems that the London borough of Southwark has in two respects. First, it has among the smallest proportion of long-stay beds for elderly people, whether in the private or voluntary sector, of any authority in the country. Secondly, the Government's stricture that 85 per cent. of special transitional grant be spent in the independent sector discriminates heavily against inner city authorities such as mine, which has virtually no private domiciliary provision. People stay in hospital simply because there is not adequate support for them when they go home.

Mr. Rowe: I accept what the hon. Lady says about her constituency. I wonder whether some of the difficulty of obtaining private sector provision within the local authority stems from the endemic hostility to the private sector that characterises boroughs such as hers. One aspect that is not a direct consequence of the reforms but has enormously helped the reforms in Kent, has been the evolution of doctors' co-operatives such as Meddoc and Maiddoc for the provision of out-of-hours service. That has not only enormously improved the provision of out-of-hours service, with tremendous public acceptability, but has meant that GPs have become accustomed to working together. In my part of the world we are seeing some exciting developments as a direct consequence of the GPs' growing confidence and trust in one another.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), who is not in his place now, but has been here for most of the debate, spoke in Question Time about nurses being forced to undertake medical procedures that were putting them under stress. I have no doubt that that is a stressful business for some nurses, but for many more nurses it provides an opportunity to put into practice their professional skills at a level from which they were hitherto barred due to the unwillingness of the medical profession to trust them. The upgrading of the nurses' job and the growing trust in their capacity to do a range of tasks frees doctors to do other things that only they can do.

I believe that the royal colleges should accept this sort of development and should have much more confidence in a more flexible approach to new ways of guaranteeing quality. Sometimes in the past, their ways have been too rigid. For instance, the ratio between the number of consultants and the number of those in grades below consultant needs to be reviewed. Trusts could often make much better use of their facilities if we did away with a rigidly handed down formula for that ratio. A flexible formula would help the reforms to drive forward.

In a smaller and perhaps less significant way, the NHS reforms have been vindicated by the sharp falling off in the number of complaints about the NHS which I, as a constituency Member, receive. Complaints against GPs in Kent have remained remarkably static, although there has been a slight increase this year. I believe that the trusts have responded much more swiftly and effectively to patient complaints than did their predecessors.

One of the troubles with our parliamentary system is the built-in need for the Opposition to see the glass as half empty and for the Government to see it as half full. In the complicated, difficult and challenging environment of the NHS, the Opposition should be much more generous about what is going well and we, perhaps, should be even tougher on what is going wrong.

I am encouraged to discover that the proportion of staff delivering direct care rose from 60 per cent. in 1981 to 66 per cent. this year. The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) went on and on about the number of managers in the service, but she failed to say whether clinical directors are to be regarded as managers, or whether nurses who have taken on the management of their peers are to be regarded as managers. I think that practice managers in general practices often take a tremendous load off doctors, leaving the latter free to do what they want to. I do not therefore regard such management statistics as either valuable or threatening.

As for Doctor Macara's anxiety, it is interesting to note that although Bevan, the architect of the NHS in legislative form, felt that he had been held over a barrel by the consultants, at this moment it happens to suit the Labour party to take up that same vested interest and support it to the hilt whenever it wants to complain about how the reforms are working.

An Opposition Member—I forget which one—made a great song and dance about some of his patients having to travel 14 miles. I have spent most of my time in Parliament pressing for the reform of NHS hospitals in London, because constituents of mine, far from having to travel 14 miles, need to go as far as 55 miles for care because of the gross over-provision in London of many services that could easily be delivered locally. Thanks to the reforms, we are at last getting a better deal for Kent than ever before.

On the whole, I think that fundholding is good for patients. There has been a remarkable diversification and generous provision of a variety of services for patients. This has been good for GPs, who have suddenly discovered that they really have a say in the purchase of health care—but I urge the Minister to be careful. It is a worrying fact that the number of GP trainees in Kent has fallen and that, from being top choice, the job of GP has moved well down the ladder. That is partly because of the general upheaval in the service, but it may also have something to do with how fundholding is perceived. We need to take a careful look at that.

We need also to take care lest some of those who are considered for fundholding in the next wave prove not to be up to the standards required to run their own show that we would expect. It would be a grave disservice to the fundholding initiative if, in our enthusiasm for spreading what has been widely accepted by the first wave, we find ourselves rushing into the next wave too quickly.

I have one final anxiety about fundholding. I get the impression that the Government have been slightly surprised by the enormous popularity of fundholding and the drive to increase the number of fundholders. The consequences for trusts and for purchasing authorities have not been completely thought through. Some of my local trusts have been operating extremely well with relatively slim budgetary surpluses. Just as a roll-on roll-off ferry does not need much side-slip to go over, if one of the big co-operatives of fundholders suddenly decided to take its services elsewhere, that could cause quite a severe list in the ferry, or trust.

[Mr. Rowe]

I am whole-heartedly behind the national health service reforms and I am entirely in favour of fundholding, but I hope that the Minister can reassure me that he will watch carefully to see that well-managed and effective trusts are not suddenly blown off course by a shift in GP fundholding purchasing.

8.17 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I am pleased to be able to take part in this debate, especially after the long recess. I feel rather sad and a little angry about the somewhat sanctimonious contribution by the Secretary of State today. In many ways, it was not worthy of such an important subject.

Several speakers in the debate have shown great expertise. We have heard from GPs and from people with backgrounds in nursing and social services. I do not pretend to have that sort of expertise. What I can do, however, is to bring some of the concerns expressed by my constituents to this Chamber.

Of all the subjects that are causing concern at the moment, the plight, or fate, of the NHS is uppermost in most people's minds in my constituency. My constituency and the adjoining one, Easington—I see my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) in his place—were classified in a study carried out not long ago as two of the five worst areas in Britain for long-term illness. Taking 100 as an average, the Easington area was allocated 191.24 and the Sunderland area 154.61. That is the paramount factor in people's perceptions of the sort of service that they are getting. It may not seem too bad when bed cuts are prophesied for areas where standards of health and of living are reasonably high. But that is not the case in Sunderland or anywhere in the north-east.

[illegible] all know that the regional health authorities and hospital trusts have become much more oriented towards public relations exercises than they are towards service to the public. That is most noticeable in my part of the world. There is a plethora of glossy magazines, and rather poor stories are gilded as much as possible, but the health authorities and the trusts are signally failing to persuade the public that what is proposed is for their benefit.

People's suspicions have reached great heights in the north-east. Fairly recently a petition carrying 11,000 signatures of people opposing the regional health authority's proposals was presented to Sunderland health authority. That petition speaks for itself. The signatures were obtained not by people going from door to door but by people standing in a marketplace on a Saturday, talking to people at random and explaining the situation.

Following consultation, there was a public meeting on 29 September. I had the good fortune—or the misfortune, depending on how it is viewed—to attend that meeting, and I was rather sad to learn that, in essence, the public consultation exercise had been a total sham. The House may be interested to know the sort of people who supported Sunderland health authority's proposal to do away with 200 hospital beds. It was supported by Sunderland university, which is a quango; by the Cumbria ambulance trust, another quango; by the Freeman hospital at Newcastle, which is also a quango; by Priority health care, Wearside, which is one of its customers; by South Tyneside health care trust, a quango; by City hospitals trust, Sunderland, another customer; by Durham health commission; by Easington joint commissioning board, which is another quango; and by the South of Tyne health commission, which is yet another quango.

All the other bodies that were consulted objected to the proposal, but no one has taken the slightest notice of them. As the business plan was being proposed at the meeting of Sunderland health authority on 29 September—I call it a business plan because that is what the health authority calls it, with no mention of patients—the general practitioners' representative, Dr. Pam Wortley, said that GPs were concerned that if the 200 beds were phased out, there would be no practical alternative but to improve primary health care facilities.

One of the rather worrying factors mentioned by Dr. Wortley was that many more GPs would be needed to deal with the increased need for primary health care. In principle, that is excellent—no one would dispute that—but in Sunderland recently there were 30 vacancies for GPs and only 14 were filled. Many members of the public who attended the meeting were shocked by what Dr. Wortley said.

The basis of public disquiet is that there do not seem to be any good alternative proposals. Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith used the immortal term, "Wait and see", and that is what Sunderland health authority is telling Sunderland's citizens. That is not good enough and it is unacceptable.

All sections of the public were vehemently opposed to the authority's proposals, but the impression is that bodies of people, whether they form hospital trusts, regional health authorities or local commissions, have been appointed to carry out the instructions of the appointer. That is what it is all about and it does not matter what political party the appointees belong to or how admirable or knowledgeable they are: they are placed there to do as they are told.

In the north-east, the various quangos are staffed by a pool of interchangeable people, some of whom sit on more than one quango. Someone can be a member of a hospital trust and of a regional TEC or a member of Tyne and Wear development corporation and the chairman of a hospital trust. The Secretary of State spoke about Islington dinner parties. I do not know about those, but I know a clique when I see one, and that is what this business is all about. People recognise that and they find it totally unacceptable. Political ramifications have nothing to do with it: I am talking about people who congregate to form a clique that is undemocratic and answerable to no one in the locality. Generally, they are fairly well paid for their services. I agree that the idea of public service is admirable, but in this case such service is also paid for, and that sweetens things a little.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because it is difficult to take part in a debate while carrying out the duties of a Whip. My hon. Friend mentioned Easington joint commissioning board. Perhaps I could relate an incident that occurred some months ago, and which has not yet been resolved. An infirm lady of 77 was discharged from Ryhope general hospital into the community. Twice a week, she has to take a taxi costing £2 to a private residential home, where she pays £3 for a bath. She is then turned out into the street and has to take a £2 taxi ride back to her home. The matter has been raised with the joint commissioning board but we are no further forward. Of course the board has established working parties between itself and social services—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I am feeling fairly tolerant, but the hon. Gentleman is going on a bit. Interventions are supposed to be brief.

Mr. Cummings: Those are the problems that we encounter when dealing with quangos, joint commissioning boards and other bureaucrats who take no notice whatever of elected representatives.

Mr. Etherington: I appreciate the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Easington because people in his constituency make full use of the facilities in Sunderland that I have mentioned. I am pleased that you exercised tolerance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although I have no doubt that it will shorten my speaking time. The story told by my hon. Friend is but one of many gruesome tales. People perceive what is happening because of the bureaucrats, the great and the good, who are appointed by the Secretary of State for Health.

I should like to read a short extract from a letter by Dr. R. N. Ford, the chairman of Sunderland local medical committee. He is almost a model of moderation and his letter was published in the *Sunderland Echo* on 7 October. That letter states:

> "I can assure you that local GPs have been very active indeed.
>
> We decided to pursue a policy of quiet but firm diplomacy in our negotiations with Sunderland Health Commission and the Sunderland Hospitals Trust management in the hope that this would prove to be in the best interest of the patients under our care.
>
> Unfortunately, we now believe that this has been unsuccessful, and our views have gone essentially unheeded . . . now we have the issue of bed closures looming.
>
> For your information, GPs are overwhelmingly opposed to the business plan proposed by City Hospitals, and in particular to the savage cuts in bed numbers."

For the benefit of Conservative Members, I should say that Dr. Ford is not some unreconstructed Marxist but a general practitioner in a responsible position looking after other GPs and the interests of patients whom they serve.

I know that time is short and that two of my hon. Friends wish to speak, but I should drew attention to one important factor that came to light recently. When the local hospital trusts were trying to point out how little they spent on bureaucracy, they cited two figures that made it appear that very little was being spent on management and administration. However, one can work out from the numbers employed that it costs £24,000 to employ a member of the nursing staff, with all the services that such staff provide, and £38,000 for the provision of one member of staff in management. That throws a different light on matters.

We have a contrived market which hides the fact that Britain does not spend enough on health care. We spend far less than many of our European Union competitors and about half what is spent in the United States. Of course, if money is well spent, what matters is not always how much is available but how the sum is used, and, by and large, the national health service has been successful. No one would suggest that we should never look for improvements, but we should not do so by contriving an artificial market, by creating more management jobs and well-paid jobs in hospital trusts and by setting up a bureaucratic unaccountable quango.

Having followed developments in Sunderland fairly carefully, I have reached the conclusion that hospital trusts are behaving like asset strippers by closing down premises and moving everything into one unit. Sunderland general hospital has tremendous parking problems. There are many complaints from people who live locally who cannot get into their homes during hospital visiting hours. That has not been helped by the fact that the quango has decided to charge people who visit the hospital for the pleasure of using the car park. Yet the trust is considering extending the premises and putting more hospitals on the same site. That makes no sense whatever and is causing public disquiet among those who live in the area and those who have the misfortune to travel there by motor car. The reason given for charging for parking was to improve security. That has not been successful. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) was told today that his wife's car has been stolen from the car park where security is costing so much money.

We are dealing with a business where patient care is very much secondary.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject, does he agree that one of the main concerns about the radical changes taking place in Sunderland hospitals stems from a feeling that there are not the facilities at the general hospital to deal with the greatly increased demand and also that there are not the facilities or resources to provide the community care that will be necessary if those extremely radical plans are carried out?

Mr. Etherington: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who has been very active on the subject, as have other neighbouring Members. I can do no better than to quote to my hon. Friend what Councillor Louise Bramfitt, who is chair of the social services committee of Sunderland city council, said recently. She asked whether the money to be saved from the bed closures would be handed over to the social services department. We all know the answer to that: probably most of the money will find its way back to the Treasury. That is also causing concern.

I will finish off with one personal matter. Recently, an old uncle of mine who is 84 years old had the misfortune to be knocked over. He was taken to Sunderland general hospital, where both the treatment he was given and the way in which I was received when I visited him in casualty were absolutely superb. I can pay no greater tribute than to say that no person on earth does a better job than someone who looks after the health of others and protects their lives. It was magnificent.

I was not so pleased when it was time for my uncle to come out. I did the reasonable and civilised thing and offered to take him home. The sister on the ward was only too pleased to accept my offer, but I still had to pay to park to save the trust a little bit of money. That was deplorable and should not be tolerated in civilised society. There are many poor people in Sunderland as there is high unemployment. People have enough problems paying for transport to visit their loved ones in hospital without the added burden of having to pay for parking. If the Secretary of State has any heart at all, she will take some action. I hope that she will.

When the Minister meets my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), who happens to be my constituency Member, I hope that he will also meet

[Mr. Etherington]

me, along with my hon. Friends the Members for Sunderland, South, for Easington, for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) and for Jarrow, and everyone else who is concerned about the abysmal situation in Sunderland.

8.34 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I was intending to make a fairly gentle contribution to this important debate, but I am emboldened by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who said that we should be tougher about what has gone wrong.

My hon. Friends the Under-Secretary of State and the Chief Whip know that last November, at the beginning of this parliamentary year, I advised them both that I could not support the Government in any health service debate for the rest of this Parliament, and I shall explain why later on in my observations.

Tonight, I have no hesitation in coming to the Chamber not only to support the Government's amendment, but actually to speak in its favour. I do so though I have much sympathy with some of the comments that I have heard from Opposition Members, particularly the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), who is not here momentarily and who allowed me to interrupt his speech.

I cannot comment on what the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) said about Sunderland, but I certainly share some of his concern about the method of appointment to the hospital trusts and the cliques to which he referred in Sunderland. I am sure that Sunderland is not alone in that experience.

The one feature of the debate that causes me to run fast and furious into the Government Lobby tonight is the reference in the motion tabled by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition and his right hon. and hon. Friends, which talks of

> "public alarm at the creeping privatisation of the National Health Service".

I would not like it to be thought by anyone who cares to read or listen to what I say that, by being silent in this debate and keeping out of the Government Lobby, as I have in every health service debate since last November for reasons that I shall explain later, I could in any way be associated with the claim by the Opposition that there is any such thing as a "creeping privatisation" of the national health service.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in his speech at the Conservative party conference, explained and reiterated his commitment to the national health service, which he explained at the party conference and throughout television, as it was reported widely on the various channels in the late news.

Speaking from personal experience, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

> "Believing, as I do, that the greatest nightmare for millions is that one day they might be old, sick, poor, and uncared for, is it really likely that I would take away from people the security of mind that was such a comfort to my own parents? I can tell you—not while I live and breathe".

I am pleased to echo and quote the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in once again nailing the lie that is promoted up and down the land and has been repeated here. I believe that Opposition Members who sometimes repeat it genuinely believe it. Most of them are not making speeches for the sake of party politics. I believe that the vast majority of Opposition Members who have spoken in this and other debates are committed to the health service.

They believe that the Government have a hidden agenda. I reject that assertion, even though I understand that some of them sincerely believe it. Of course, others know that it is not true; they make their comments for party political reasons after they have posted their cheques to some private health care scheme or paid their subscriptions to their unions, which in turn take out private health care for their members.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was speaking from his personal experience and that of his elderly parents. If my mother were alive today, she would be up in the Gallery thinking, "How on earth did I breed someone who is mixing it with all these people? Why doesn't he get himself a decent job?" Of course, my mother is not there. She was not there when I made my maiden speech in 1983. She was not there when, at the age of five, I went to Filby village primary school. She died of tuberculosis in Norwich when I was three years old, before the national health service existed.

I lost my mother when I was three without ever really knowing her, because in those days tuberculosis was a deadly disease. I was taken away from her and brought up by my grandfather because they were afraid that I would catch tuberculosis, which was an horrendous disease. Of course, if someone had money he did not die—in fact, he did not catch it. [AN HON. MEMBER: "It is the same."] It is not the same.

I am convinced that, if my mother had caught tuberculosis in her late 30s—by which time there was a national health service—rather than in her late 20s, she would have been treated and she would be here today. I apologise to hon. Members for wearying them with a personal story, which does not require any sympathy. I state it merely as a similar experience to that of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It explains my commitment, which I believe is shared by the vast majority of Conservatives, to a national health service free at the point of delivery.

Many of the reforms that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and her team have introduced have been to the benefit of patients. My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) concluded his speech by saying, "I speak as a doctor, and I speak as a politician." I speak as a patient and as someone whose uncles and aunts—brothers and sisters of my late mother—have benefited from the national health service. I speak as someone who would not dream on principle of taking out a private health care scheme. I do not believe in them, but equally I do not believe that we should stop them.

I believe in a society in which those who, rather than buying a new car, want to take out additional personal health care insurance, are encouraged to do so. That happens with Labour Members as well as Conservatives. However, that is not for me. My national health service hospital is good enough for me, it is good enough for my constituents, and it is doing a great job.

I recently had a letter from a constituent in which he voiced his concern about the Government moving towards privatisation of the NHS. There is a fear throughout the country that we have that agenda. He was concerned because he had read an advertisement for a private health care scheme that said, "Don't wait in the queue. Avoid long waiting lists." He interpreted that as meaning that private health care patients were taking a higher place on the waiting list at our local hospital, with the result that he was having to wait longer.

In fact, the James Paget hospital, which serves the Great Yarmouth, Waveney and Mid-Norfolk constituencies, has just six private beds. It is a large hospital, which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has visited at least twice during the past three years. He knows that it is a great hospital. Those six private beds are not available to the NHS, but they do not keep NHS patients out of hospital. Instead, they bring a profit of £250,000 to my constituents who use NHS facilities at that hospital.

I wish that we made more of the fact that private health care is something for those who want it. We should not say that, because many of us cannot afford it, no one should have it. Those six beds bring in a profit of £250,000—

Mr. Bayley: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how much it costs to treat patients in those private beds? I ask that because the Government are unable to give figures for the cost of treating NHS patients. How can the hon. Gentleman tell whether that £250,000 is a profit or a loss when set against costs?

Mr. Carttiss: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question now, but I will find out the answer and let him know, because it is an interesting point.

I am quoting the figure given in a letter from the chief executive of the James Paget hospital. He specifically refers to £250,000 in the hospital's budget that is profit from the use of private facilities at the hospital. That sum is then reinvested in direct patient care services. He writes:

> "This is another way of saying that if we did not have that sum then the services at the James Paget Hospital would have to be cut by that same amount."

Marrying the private and public sectors is a recipe for success, which I believe is to the advantage of everybody. That is certainly true in my constituency, as can be seen from that example. However, in supporting that, hon. Members should not assume that the Government are intent on privatising the NHS, as the Opposition's motion suggests.

I said earlier that I had some sympathy with the comments of the hon. Member for City of Durham. I also picked up one or two points made by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North about hospital trusts. I welcome the Government's statement that they will continue to appoint the best possible people to trusts. There is a great deal of nonsense about whether they are Conservative or Labour. There must be some political balance, but the important factor is to get the right people.

I was sure—the hon. Member for City of Durham more or less admitted it—that the hon. Gentleman had a good relationship with the two Conservatives on his local ambulance trust. He acknowledged that they were very good. I have a good relationship with the Labour members of my local hospital trust, who do a good job.

The local Labour party opposed setting up the trust, but, the next thing I knew, the wife of the chairman of the British Medical Association's local branch—a Labour councillor and a former nurse—was one of the first people in the Labour party to accept an appointment to the trust. We welcome one sinner who is converted rather than 99 already on our side.

Mr. Bayley: Let her speak for herself.

Mr. Carttiss: That lady did not have to accept the appointment if she was so solidly opposed to the trust. I am trying to make the point that it is good that there are Labour members serving on the trust. She was selected by the other trust members not because she was a Labour councillor, not because her husband was chairman of the local BMA branch, but because she was identified as a young woman who could contribute to the hospital trust. I welcome that. I wish that we heard more speeches from the Opposition of the kind made by the hon. Member for City of Durham, who paid tribute to the fact that some people were doing a good job, and that his objection was to the way in which they were appointed rather than to who they were. That is an objection which I share.

The Department of Health is drawing up new guidelines with a view to implementing them across all regions next year. The system will be transparent and the procedures clear to potential candidates for membership of NHS trusts. It will be accessible to people from a wide range of backgrounds. I understand that there will be advertisements at regional and local level to allow access to vacancies. I hope that the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) will pursue that point further.

There is much to be done about NHS trusts. A man has just been appointed to the Anglian Harbours NHS trust in Great Yarmouth and Waveney, replacing the Tory chairman, who was a county councillor. That is an example of the Government dispensing with the services of a first-class Tory councillor and producing someone from goodness knows where. No one in Yarmouth and Waveney, including the two Members of Parliament, has ever heard of him. I was sent his name and asked for my comments. I said that I did not know him, and therefore did not think that he was suitable, and asked what was wrong with the existing chairman.

The chairman of the Anglia and Oxford regional health authority—we have a huge region looking after my constituency, based in Oxford—decided that that man was the right one for the job. He may well be, but that is not good enough for me. *[Interruption.]*

I see the Whip indicating something, but I will ignore him, because I have not made the point that I came here to make. That is that, having dispensed with the nonsense in the Opposition's motion about creeping privatisation, which brings me back on side with the Government tonight, I come now to another phrase with which I do have some sympathy—lack of accountability.

Everyone in Great Yarmouth and Waveney was consulted about the proposal to merge half the Great Yarmouth and Waveney health authority with the Norwich health authority in order to complete the new purchasing body. Waveney, which had been united with Yarmouth as one health authority or grouped hospital administration unit ever since the NHS was set up, was taken away from the Great Yarmouth and Waveney health authority, and placed with Suffolk health authority. That was interpreted locally as meaning that hospital services for people in Lowestoft, represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter), would have to go to Ipswich. That was never a reality.

[Mr. Carttiss]

Repeated reassurances on that point were given, but 90 per cent. of the bodies and people consulted last year came down in favour of the Yarmouth and Waveney health district continuing. As a secondary fallback position, those people were prepared to accept, as part of the general reorganisation of district health services, the merger with Norwich.

In October, I brought to the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) a deputation of doctors and clinicians and other people, to present the virtually unanimous view that merger was okay, but that there should be no separation. My hon. Friend rejected that. On 8 December, in an Adjournment debate, we repeated our claim.

On 3 March 1994, with my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney, I brought another deputation from Great Yarmouth and Waveney, and pleaded with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to reconsider his decision. One reason for that decision had been the need to relate the health service purchasers to the providers of social services. The argument was that the boundaries of the health authorities had to be related to the social service providers, Suffolk and Norfolk county councils.

I told my hon. Friend that the Local Government Commission was coming to Norfolk and Suffolk to review the future of local government, and that there was a strong possibility that it would recommend the merger of the Great Yarmouth borough council and the Waveney district council as a single-tier authority and a social services provider. We asked the Government to wait for the Local Government Commission's report and the response to it.

In July, the Local Government Commission recommended five unitary authorities in Norfolk, one of which was to be the Great Yarmouth and Waveney authority, crossing the county boundary. There we had the possibility, if the Local Government Commission's original recommendation was accepted, of a new social services provider, knocking on the head one of the arguments that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary had advanced for separating the two. That is the sort of nonsense that gets the Government a bad name and which underlines the lack of accountability of the decision makers.

If the population, the chambers of commerce and the district bodies had been split half and half in favour of the Minister's proposals, or even 40 per cent. in favour and 60 per cent. against, my hon. Friend could have said that the 60 per cent. were people who did not know what they were talking about. But in Waveney and Yarmouth the decision was almost unanimous, that the authority should continue to be one district, albeit merged with Norwich. My hon. Friend rejected that.

Where is the public accountability in that? Where is the public accountability in the appointments that my hon. Friend has made to the East Norfolk health commission? Where is the public accountability in sacking the first-class chairman of the Anglian Harbours NHS trust, who happens to be a Conservative county councillor, and replacing her with someone who is completely unknown?

I fear the same debacle that we had when a complete unknown was appointed to be chairman of the James Paget hospital trust. He was a man resident in the constituency of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder). No one in Yarmouth or Waveney knew him. What did he do? He gathered together all his friends, none of whom lived in Great Yarmouth or Waveney and only about two of whom had any connection with the catchment area of the health service provision at the James Paget hospital.

Within a few weeks, the then Minister for Health, who is now my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, wanted to sack him. Eventually, happily, the man resigned, in much the same voluntary way as my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) did today.

We are getting more accountability, but not enough. Therefore, I welcome the statement made my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon about examining all these matters. Why on earth is there such a fuss about a published list? My right hon. Friend stood at the Dispatch Box and announced half a dozen members of the Labour party. Opposition Members asked how we know that they are Labour members. The answer is obvious.

Why not have a full list? What is so secret about the people who sit on quangos? I do not take the view that they should be elected, or that they ought to be in local authority service. After all, the Crossman reforms, which the Conservative party implemented, established area health authorities based on counties, and district bodies within them—which took from the county council of which I was a member responsibility for all sorts of health matters that were previously the remit of elected councillors.

I do not need any lectures from Opposition Members on elected bodies, because the Labour party's Richard Crossman was the father of previous health service reforms that took some health service responsibilities from local authorities.

Nevertheless, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will devise a more effective and transparent method of appointing people to health service trusts, with chairmen and existing trust members having some involvement—rather than waft a name out of a hat and telling me, "We've taken note of your comments but we will appoint this man willy-nilly."

Let there be public consultation. If 90 per cent. of the local population, doctors and others working in the service are against a regional health authority proposal and Members of Parliament, irrespective of their party, urge my hon. Friend the Minister not to abandon his plans but to leave them for a year—to see what the Local Government Commission produces before making a decision—and he still ignores us, he will have to unscramble everything again if a Great Yarmouth and Waveney social services provider emerges from the current review.

I want to continue speaking, but other hon. Members wish to contribute—and my Whips are nodding me down because they do not like anything that remotely resembles the truth. The real test of friendship and loyalty is to tell one's friends when one knows that they have gone wrong. On this particular issue, my hon. Friends know that they have gone wrong—but I will be happy to enter the Government Lobby, knowing that Opposition Members are more wrong than we are.

9.1 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I do not regret having been in the House since 2.30 pm this afternoon so that I could make the point that both the motion in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends and the Government amendment refer to patient care and the needs of patients. I do not see how we can accomplish those objectives if we do not, before the end of the debate, address ourselves to the enormous problems of care in the community, which are staring us in the face, and which did not invite even one word from the Secretary of State for Health.

Many years ago, we were told by the National Audit Office that community care was in a state of chaos. That led the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, to establish the Griffiths committee, which confirmed that view and reported that the one option that was not tenable was to do nothing. Not only are the Government saying nothing, as we have seen today, but they are doing nothing—and that is entirely unacceptable.

To throw community care to market forces, which seems to be the Government's approach, is to destroy the concept of community care, is absolutely repugnant and is a great disservice to the people of our country. It is not as though the Government lack information. The letters that right hon. and hon. Members receive from constituents and representations made at surgeries show grave concern. Individual, family and community experience is something that the House cannot ignore.

Recently, I received a letter about the morale of consultants at Monklands district hospital, which serves my constituency. Having listened carefully to the Minister's reply this afternoon to my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) and to the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), I am reluctant to reveal the names of those who wrote to me. They are enormously respected in my community—*[Interruption.]* Much more so than the Minister of State, who interrupts from a sedentary position. I should be happy to give way if the Minister wishes to challenge my evidence. The evidence is that consultants in Monklands district hospital, in common with their colleagues in district hospitals all over the country, are experiencing a decline in their morale and greater and greater demands, which they are unable to meet. They reject utterly the Government's approach to performance-related pay and it being imposed on them while those increasing demands continue. I say to the Government—

Mr. Malone *rose*—

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to the Minister in a second because, given the late hour, I want to go on to deal with the issue of care in the community. The Government may ignore the points that are being made in this debate, but the British people will not.

Mr. Malone: If the consultants in the hon. Gentleman's constituency are against any form of local pay arrangements that perhaps allow different levels of pay to be introduced, can he confirm that they are also against the merit awards system, which consultants elsewhere in Britain seem to back?

Mr. Clarke: I said very clearly that the consultants in the Monklands district hospital, which serves my constituency, are overwhelmingly opposed to performance-related pay. If the Minister, in his reply, can tell us how one can relate performance-related pay to accident and emergency units, or to the time that consultants in psychiatric units have to give to their patients, and one can make some kind of division between them and other departments, I would be very interested to hear his view. But I must tell the Minister that there is not a consultant in the country who would believe a word that he would say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) has established a very distinguished tradition in the House of bringing to the Floor of the House and to its Committees the realities of what is happening outside. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has twice warned the Government about care in the community. I am delighted to see the Secretary of State for Health—she no doubt came in when she saw my name on the annunciator and realised that it was not the Chancellor of the Exchequer who was speaking—so that I may repeat that the Royal College of Psychiatrists has warned twice that the present system of community care simply is not working.

Let us look at the evidence, not only that of our mailbags and what we see in our communities, but of the fact that, in three years, there have been 34 murders by patients who have been involved in psychiatric care in the preceding 12 months. We know of cases, such as that of Jonathan Zito—

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *rose*—

Mr. Clarke: Would the hon. Lady wait for a second, as I would like to finish the point? There have been cases such as that of Jonathan Zito, who was a musician in the London underground. Those circumstances were followed by a report by Jean Ritchie QC, in which we saw that Jonathan Zito's death—it could have been avoided—clearly took place because proper assessment of the person who had killed him had not been acted on and that tragedy occurred.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is important not to inflame unduly anxiety about care in the community? The Royal College of Psychiatrists has not in any way suggested that there has been an increase in the number of homicides proportionately from severely mentally ill people. Every homicide is serious in itself, but there is no suggestion that there is an increasing trend. Does he agree that the Ritchie inquiry about Zito suggested that we needed better co-ordination and a more assertive approach to the supervision of mentally ill people in the community? That is exactly what the supervision registers and the guidance on discharge from hospital are doing and that is precisely the intention of supervised discharge, which we hope to introduce at a later date.

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely that the recommendations of the Ritchie report ought to be taken seriously. However, I must say bluntly to the hon. Lady that I see no comparison between those recommendations and the policy that she is pursuing. I want to continue to cite other cases because the right hon. Lady appears at the Dispatch Box, and on the "Today" programme, I think, every second morning—almost as often as the God squad—and the tragedy is that she does not relate what she is saying to the real world. We have case after case in our constituencies such as, for example, that of Ben Silcock and Tony Sarumi, who found themselves in the lions' cage at London zoo clearly because assessments were being made and nobody was acting on them. As I did the Secretary of State the courtesy of listening to her intervention, she might just listen to a word or two of the remainder of my speech.

[Mr. Clarke]

I am appalled by the Government's complacency, which is personified by the Secretary of State and made even worse by the Minister. In September, the Government—not the Opposition—appointed a mental health task force, and received its report. The task force said that services in London were overstretched, and that vulnerable patients were being discharged.

In a leader entitled "Care Beyond the Cages", *The Guardian* said:

> "The problem is not confined to London. Every major conurbation is facing the same challenge: Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Glasgow."

We all know that to be true. Even *The Sunday Telegraph*—which does not rush in to support the Labour party or the trade unions that the Secretary of State derided, ignoring the fact that hundreds of thousands of their members are keeping the NHS afloat at this very hour—said, in a moving account of the story of Mary Batchelor and Graham, her schizophrenic son:

> "There is a big gap between what the Government says is happening and what they see is happening."

That is what this debate ought to be about.

Earlier, I asked the Secretary of State a clear question. I asked her to tell us the number of people who are mentally ill and in prison in England and Wales. She said that she did not know. I am very glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) takes her duties more seriously: she does know, because she put a question to the Government which was answered on 18 October. The answer stated that 19.2 per cent. of the sentenced population had some form of psychiatric disorder.

What does that mean? It tells us what is happening in Britain today—in England and Wales, that is; it ignores the problems that we are having in Scotland. I welcome the presence of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who is much more civilised than those whose company he currently keeps. I say to Ministers that for the Secretary of State to ignore the fact that 6,800 mentally ill people are in prison because the courts simply cannot find anywhere else to put them is an absolute disgrace, which cannot be excused even by her Mary Poppins-style sweetness and light on the "Today" programme.

The current position contrasts starkly with promises given during health debates. I recall the Secretary of State's contribution to some of those debates, as a junior Minister. What was said when we debated the National Health and Community Care Act 1990, and even when we debated the Children Act 1989, and the glossy documents produced by the Government could not be more different from what we are seeing now. There was, for instance, the crucial issue of assessment, followed by the provision of services; the Secretary of State does not seem to have taken that on board.

There is no excuse. The Secretary of State will recall being visited in Richmond house by some of my hon. Friends, and members of another place who are interested in these matters. I went along with Brian Rix—now Lord Rix—Lord Ashley, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), to support the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. As the right hon. Lady will recall, we argued then that the legislation that the Government were producing was no substitute for sections 1 and 2 of that Act, which meant that there would be real representation, and that the patient of the advocate concerned would have a say in what happened to him. We have heard nothing of that theme from a single Conservative Member today.

The Government talk about voluntaryism, but ignore the views of the voluntary organisations. As recently as yesterday, Enable, which was recently called the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped, and Scope, which was until recently the Spastics Society, reinforced strongly the arguments that still hold for the implementation of sections 1 and 2 of the 1986 Act. I will explain why. In spite of the slogans that we have heard from the Government, there are those who are committed to the rights of citizens regardless of whether a charter exists. Why are not patients having a say? Why is there no real advocacy? In the limited time available, I shall relate one important story about advocacy.

When I was involved with many others in trying to get the 1986 Act on to the statute book, I visited one of the most excellent community care projects in Glasgow. I met two ladies who had once worked in the shipyards but who had spent 15 or 20 years in a hospital which was described as a hospital for the mentally ill. By that time, they were living in nice flats with privacy when they wanted it but support when they needed it. When I asked them what difference they saw between the hospital in which they had spent many years—I concede that it was a Victorian building—and where they were living now, one of the ladies said, "They dinnae gie ye jags." To interpret that for the benefit of non-Scottish Members, it means that they were not given injections. People are entitled to know what medication they are being given. People or their advocates are entitled to know what is happening and why. Yet, time after time, the Government give the impression that they support the principle while they do not provide the resources necessary to put those principles in operation.

Following the Government's legislation, the balance of NHS and community care has shifted away from institutional care. We have seen closure after closure. However, we have not seen provision within the community of the support that is necessary if community care is to work. Some 85 per cent. of people with learning difficulties are living in the community and increasing numbers of elderly parents are looking after younger people with learning difficulties.

What of assessments? I plead with the Minister to take on board not just my view but the view of the Carers National Association, which has already told us that, although assessments are taking place, there is no action in response to the needs that are being assessed. We find young people with learning difficulties leaving school at 19 and being placed beside much older people. We find local authorities trying to deal with discharged patients and councils, which are themselves under financial seige, are cutting back on facilities such as day care services and respite care and having to introduce charges which are repugnant to them.

We are seeing a mockery of care in the community and joint planning. It will not be helped in Scotland by the fact that when the local authority boundaries are introduced in January 1996 they will not even be coterminous with the boundaries of local authorities. That is unacceptable.

When Griffiths was asked to report and to respond to the views of the National Audit Office, he confirmed that care in the community was in chaos. That tells us something. This is a problem about people, families, communities and individuals. I want to conclude by quoting not statistics but the moving views of Jonathan Zito's widow, Jayne, in that excellent television documentary that we saw a few months ago. She talked about the death on the London underground of her husband, a musician. She talked with courage, conviction and compassion. She was not bitter. She was not negative. All she asked for was better community provision, and that is all we ask for.

9.19 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It is a great pleasure to follow the moving speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who brings an enormous amount of expertise and experience to this important debate.

At the beginning of the debate, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that the national health service had a special place in the nation's affections. The enduring twin achievements of the post-war Labour Government are the provision of universal education and the provision of universal health care. All institutions change over time, responding to changing needs, demography, technological advancement and even economic factors. If that were all that was happening to the NHS, the Conservative party would be able to mount some sort of defence in this debate, but that is not all that is happening.

As my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) said, the driving engine of Conservative party health service reform is political philosophy, not practical experience, common sense or even managerial efficiency. The imposition of a blinkered ideology that is wrong anyway on an organisation like the NHS is bound to lead to nothing but harm. Worse, when theory comes to practice, that ideology sinks into a quagmire of, at best, expediency and, at worst, corruption. Replacing a flawed and old-fashioned framework with a more fundamentally flawed one makes the delivery of the service difficult, unworkable in places and increasingly unfair.

A legitimate case exists for devolved responsibility and accountability. Public resources are not infinite. They have to be managed and prioritised. That is not what Conservative health care reform is about. Under the previous Prime Minister, the Conservative party had clear objectives. She had a clear vision of the future of the NHS. She was the avowed enemy of public expenditure, yet her Conservative party authorised substantial extra expenditure on NHS managers, administrators and accountants.

To use the Government's own figures and taking the period 1988 to 1993, the number of people employed in nursing and midwifery fell by 4.2 per cent. Over the same period, the number of people employed as general or senior managers has risen by 1538.3 per cent., a substantial increase. The Conservative party will say two things about those figures: first, that some of the figures are the result of reclassification; and, secondly, that the health service was undermanaged anyway and there was a case for appointing more managers. Both arguments have some substance.

Mr. Malone: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I should not like his argument to be incomplete. He is making two important points, but there is a third: Project 2000 nurses are no longer included in the figures and there are a substantial number of them. I hope that I am helping to bolster his argument.

Mr. Brown: That goes to prove that one can be too generous in wind-up speeches. I said that reclassification accounted for part of the figure involved in this argument. Only 45 per cent. of the total, however, can be accounted for by reclassification. The transition has taken place over four years yet, last year, the number of managers employed in the NHS increased by 13.5 per cent. The Government are still at it.

The reforms are not driven by managerial efficiency alone. The Secretary of State for Health boasted about cutting bureaucracy, but the 1538.3 per cent. increase in bureaucrats is hardly evidence of that. The real purpose of the purchaser-provider split is to put a price tag on individual transactions. If the state is paying the bill, surely there is less need to have everything individually priced. But of course the original objective of the Conservative party was to alter the structure so that payment by state entitlement could sit alongside payment by private medical insurance or even by direct private purchase. Why should the British citizen want to purchase medical care privately if he is entitled to provision free at the point of need? The answer can only be because private provision will be made better than the state's; will be given more quickly; or, worst of all, will be the only method of getting treatment because the state will no longer provide it. In summary, that is what the Conservatives are trying to do to the NHS.

On BBC radio, in one of her frequent and much-loved appearances, the Secretary of State—[HON. MEMBERS: "What?"] Well, I enjoy waking up to the Secretary of State on the "Today" programme—frankly, I think myself lucky that that is where she is. On 24 August 1994, the Secretary of State said that she had "no views" about whether service should be delivered by the public or the private sector. She is supposed to be in charge of it, but she has no views about the delivery of services. I must tell the House that the author of the NHS reforms, Mark Thatcher's mother, had views. According to her, it should be private, so that she could, as she famously said, have what she wanted, when she wanted it. Other patients would like the same. That right hon. Lady told us that the health service, like the Saudi arms contract, was supposed to be safe in her hands.

Is the NHS safe in the Government's hands? Not according to the Public Accounts Committee, which has produced an important report on the proper conduct of public business. The NHS features prominently in that report. We learn from the PAC that the director of regionally managed services of the West Midlands regional health authority left on redundancy terms, after five years' service with the authority, and was given an immediate pension of £6,462 a year and lump sums totalling £81,837. Some might think that that is all well and fine, but the PAC report goes on to say:

> "The Authority and the NHS Management Executive told us that he should have been dismissed not made redundant."

[Mr. Brown]

Wessex regional health authority managed to waste £20 million of public money in attempting to implement its regional information systems plan, which it abandoned in 1990. The PAC reports uncompromisingly that the money should have been spent on health care for sick people.

It also levelled other criticisms at West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): May I suggest that the PAC should also investigate Health Care International at Clydebank? Up to £40 million of public money has been given to a private international hospital, but. within three months of being opened by the Secretary of State for Scotland, it faces financial collapse. It was funded to provide for overseas patients. I tabled a parliamentary question to find out how many overseas patients it has, but, I was told that information about non-NHS patients is commercially confidential to the company. We put £40 million into that hospital; it promised not to deal with British patients, but just last week 100 patients were moved from Birmingham to Clydebank. Should not that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That was a very long intervention.

Mr. Brown: Nevertheless, it was a very important one. My hon. Friend is quite right that that deplorable scandal should be investigated by the PAC. The Secretary of State for Scotland opened the hospital in June and said that it was an important investment opportunity, which would provide 1,800 jobs. So far, the hospital has employed 400 people, but it has had a maximum occupancy of just 20 patients. That is scandalous and represents a substantial waste of public money. It looks as though the Government will waste more public money digging themselves out of a privatised nightmare that they have created for themselves. That is precisely the sort of thing that the PAC would denounce.

Mr. Malone: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: The Minister has not yet been denounced by the PAC, but he is no doubt anticipating it. Of course I shall give way.

Mr. Malone: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me an opportunity to clear up this matter now. First, it was £30 million that was invested under the aegis of Locate in Scotland. *[Interruption.]* It is important to have put those £10 million more accurately into the argument. Secondly, this is not a health service budget commitment but a commitment by Locate in Scotland, designed specifically to attract jobs to Scotland. When I represented another constituency in a different capacity, Scottish Labour Members were keen to ensure that they devoted a maximum amount of money to projects that would attract jobs.

Mr. Brown: In her opening speech, the Secretary of State tried to gloss over that whole appalling affair as if it were attracting inward investment into Scotland. The Minister of State says that the Government have wasted only £30 million so far and the figure of £40 million is what they are planning to waste to get them out of it. If he thinks that that acquits him of the charges that we are making, his view is unlikely to find a hearing from an impartial audience.

Mr. Burden: Will my hon. Friend comment on my concern that the Minister suddenly seems to know a great deal about this issue whereas, in answer to a parliamentary question that I tabled last week about the cost to the NHS of transferring patients from Birmingham to Glasgow, the Under-Secretary of State answered that that was a local matter and that I should contact Mr. Brian Baker, chairman of the West Midlands health authority. Does my hon. Friend believe that it is acceptable for Ministers to say one minute that they have no knowledge and the next that they have such knowledge? Should not they know how much the national health service is wasting in that way?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend has clearly caught the Minister out, as the investigatory authorities will no doubt do in due course.

The Public Accounts Committee has been hard at work in the Department of Health. On Wessex regional health authority, for example, it says:

> "the Authority acknowledged that a fundamental conflict between their interests and those of Wessex Integrated Systems Limited arose when the Authority appointed a Director of that company, with whom the Regional Health Authority had a contract to supply computer services, to act as Regional Information Systems Manager."

It goes on to point out:

> "The Authority also allowed a secondee from IBM to advise them on the purchase, without competition, of"

— guess what?—

> "an IBM computer for £3.3 million, at a time when it could have been purchased for £0.5 million to £1 million less."

The Conservatives tell us that their new structures prevent such things from happening. It is perfectly clear from evidence produced by the PAC that that is not so.

Let us look at some of the other absurdities. The number of administrative staff in general practice has risen dramatically, yet it has not eased the burden on GPs. Since 1989, GPs are doing a third more administrative work, despite—or perhaps because of—a 40 per cent. growth in administrative staff. Interestingly, Oxford Research shows that GPs who are fundholders cost four times as much as other GPs for health authorities to administer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) spoke about front-line services for community care and other reasons. The money is going on administration, not on front-line services. Adminstrative costs at the Department of Health have risen by 108 per cent. since 1987. The hospitality budget for the Department of Health has risen by 74 per cent., and that is only between 1990-91 and 1992-93. I am concerned not about whether it is spent or underspent but about the fact that it has risen by 74 per cent. in one financial year.

The South-East Thames region managed to beat even that. The administrative costs in its family health service rose by 403 per cent. between 1989-90 and 1992-93. It is a gruesome fact that, this year, 143 health service trusts managed to spend £37 million between them on logos and image-building. The national health service management executive has managed to spend £620,000 of taxpayers' money on writing and distributing pamphlets to other health service managers.

To pay for all that, prescription charges have increased 16 times since the Conservatives came to power. Dental charges will, apparently, increase from 80 per cent. to 100 per cent., further undermining the provision of dentistry in the national health service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms), in an excellent contribution, asked what is wrong with "front line first" as an objective for the health service? If the Government care about front-line services for the Ministry of Defence, why not have front-line services for the Department of Health as well?

However, I must not give the impression that all is doom and gloom, because it is not. According to an Income Data Studies survey in November 1993, the remuneration—I know that the whole House will be reassured to hear it—of chief executives has "escalated rapidly". In one year, the average increase was 8.9 per cent. and the largest pay increase has been at the Guy's and Lewisham NHS trust, where the chief executive received a 33 per cent. pay increase.

Halton health authority in Cheshire paid £228,000 to relocate its new district general manager, and the House will be reassured to learn that only half those payments were deemed to be unlawful by the district auditor. The House will also be relieved to learn that the North Cheshire health authority is trying to recover some of the money. The National Audit Office told us last September that more than £3 million had been wasted in potentially unlawful pay-offs and removal expenses.

The Department of Health has spent more than £1 million on sending national health managers on image-building courses, which it calls "executive coaching".

I know that the House will be interested to learn of the excellent expenditure of public resources at Quarry house, the new management executive headquarters at Leeds. It cost £55 million; it has a swimming pool; it has a £30,000 gym and a £15,000 hand-woven rug, which, I am reliably assured, is not an executive toupee but a £15,000 rug. Thirty thousand pounds a year is being paid on first-class rail tickets between London and Leeds, yet the former Department of Health offices in Elephant and Castle are being kept empty at a cumulative cost of £5 million per year between 1991 and 1997.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West said that the patients did not get the jags. It may be true in the Secretary of State's health service that the patients do not get the Jags, but the chief administrators certainly do—or at least a decent Ford. The amount spent on company cars by the national health service has increased to about £70 million in 1992-93. It is an increase of 31 per cent. on the previous year. The amount spent by trusts on cars, as opposed to patients, has increased by nearly £19 million—from £5.3 million to £24 million.

Those are substantial sums of money. There may be some defence for some of the expenditure, but that is a startlingly dramatic increase.

I must draw my remarks to a close, because I shall no doubt want to intervene on the speech of the Minister, as he has intervened on mine. He will ask what the Labour party would do. Oh—the Government are silent. The Labour party believes in the ethos of public service, based on respect for professionalism, admiration for ethics, even a belief in altruism. We need to renew the methods by which public service is delivered. Management systems must emphasise management, not simply administration. We shall expect managers to take responsibility in the public interest, for the public interest.

Good people can make a bad system work after a fashion. As Conservative health bosses are showing, ill-motivated people can wreck the most carefully structured institution.

I conclude by echoing my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington). The national health service should not be about markets, purchasers or providers. It is an institution rooted in an earlier, less complex, more innocent, age. It is about collectivism. It is a socialist creation, and a socialist institution to the core of its being. The Labour party built it; it is our creation. We intend to keep it safe and we intend to keep it safe in our hands.

9.39 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): I am grateful to enter the debate at this stage when we are suddenly hearing that the great, new-look modern Labour party is going to go back to the start of the health service in the 1940s to instruct us on how it should be run in the 1990s and beyond. Of course, the health service is about a public ethos; of course, it is a health service that is in the nation's custody. Those aspects were all underpinned by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at our recent party conference in Bournemouth. The national health service is not about the sort of collectivist activity to which the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) referred. He made an astonishing admission about his agenda and that of his right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) for the future of the health service.

Although the Labour party may have been responsible for setting up the health service in the late 1940s, it has been under the custody of a Conservative Government for far longer than it has been in the hands of a Labour Government. In the hands of a Conservative Government, it has prospered, new practices have been introduced to make it more efficient and more patient care is being delivered. More importantly—this was conceded by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood)—many of the reforms are widely accepted. I understand that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire differs from the Government on some of them.

Many of the reforms are accepted, not just by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, but throughout the country and the medical profession, as being essential and desirable. They are clearly accepted in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Derby, South, where 79 per cent. of residents are covered by GP fundholders. The right hon. Lady made an astonishing pledge—one of the only new policies that she revealed to the House today—when she declared that she would say to that 79 per cent. of people, "I am going to abolish fundholding." That is one of the right hon. Lady's declared policies.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: If the reforms are widely accepted by the medical profession, as the Minister says, I should draw his attention to the publication, "Senior Doctor", which contains an exclusive survey of consultants and describes the national health service as being on

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

the "verge of collapse". That does not sound like the sort of acquiescence that the Minister was describing to the House.

Mr. Malone: That is yet another exclusive survey that probably relates to a tiny minority of the people involved. We are used to exclusive surveys of a selected 200 or 300 people done by organisations such as the British Medical Association which clearly have an interest in the result. Across the House, the purchaser-provider relationship is accepted as a sensible principle in the provision of care in the health service. It was resisted root and branch by the Opposition when it was first introduced.

I had better warn the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East that GP fundholding is widely accepted in the community and regarded as something of great importance by all those who have taken it up. They see that it is not only a challenge, but a method of delivering far better patient care than has ever been delivered before.

Mr. Burden: Will the Minister comment on the case of Sandwell Healthplan—an independent consortium of GP fundholders—which has gone bust? It rented its premises from the chair of the Sandwell family health services authority—for £19,000 in one case and £35,000 in another. That has been the subject of an internal audit report. Does the Minister think that that is a good advertisement for fundholding?

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman should ask all those involved, who have declared their determination to remain fundholders, whether they wish to remain committed to the general fundholding principle. The answer is that they do.

I shall now address some of the specific issues raised in the debate.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South alleged that the pathology services at Lister hospital were being privatised. The point is that those services were properly market-tested and bidders included an in-house team and another NHS trust as well as a private contractor. When there is proper market testing, as in this case, it is good for the health care of the whole community that the bid which will deliver the best health care for the best value for money should be the one accepted.

I cannot understand the continued refusal by the Labour party to acknowledge that there is nothing wrong with introducing the private sector when it can provide certain services more competitively. What really counts is that NHS patients can be treated at a time nearer their choosing and be given a better service. I am surprised that the right hon. Lady should still be sunk in the old Labour party ideology.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) touched on accountability. There are three threads of accountability running through the service; it is important to note that these things never existed before. The first is the code of conduct, which lays down explicit standards of conduct that are expected of NHS boards. It introduces new measures to help boards fulfil their responsibilities for effective stewardship and financial control—*[Interruption.]* Thank goodness the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) seems to have relinquished his former post. From a sedentary position, he calls this a sleaze charter, even though Sir Adrian Cadbury has commended the code. The hon. Gentleman should think again before making such ill-considered remarks.The code reaffirms the public service values of openness, probity and accountability—they are all extremely important.

The code of practice on openness clearly states that the NHS will provide information unless there are good reasons for not doing so; the reasons are then defined. The code ensures that the public have access to the information that they want and need.

As for appointments, new procedures will open the system to far more scrutiny and provide greater transparency than ever before. We intend to reach people from a far wider range of backgrounds. Everyone is eligible to apply. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, if the Labour party will encourage its supporters to apply for these posts, perhaps even more of them will apply and be appointed. [*Laughter.*] I am surprised that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East should mock. It is important that people of all parties be represented on trusts and boards. They should all be allowed to make their public contribution, and I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should make light of that.

All will be interviewed by panels against agreed criteria. There is no suggestion that there should be any cronyism about it. I welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne had to say about that. Standards of accountability throughout the service are far higher now than ever before.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): While the Minister is on the subject of accountability, he will be aware of the case of Plymouth hospitals trust and Sister Pat Cooksley, who served 17 years as a sister in Derriford hospital and was highly regarded by patients, professionals and workers alike. She objected to a lowering of standards on her ward and was sacked on the slightest pretext. I am sure the Minister will be pleased to know that she has been reinstated by the hospital trust. Does he agree that such outrages would not happen if the trusts were more accountable to local communities?

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman totally misrepresents the facts. The lady has been reinstated and retrained—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong, and if he takes the trouble to find out the facts, he will learn that he is wrong.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked whether any trust applications had been turned down after consultation. I think that he feared that only lip service was paid to such a principle. A number of applications were turned down after consultation. Surrey Heartlands hospital and Manchester children's hospital both had earlier applications for trust status rejected. I hope that that reassures the hon. Gentleman. *[Interruption.]* I have given two examples and I do not wish to occupy the rest of the time that is available to me in giving all the examples that are available.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke about a place that I know, Drumlanrig. As he knows, it provides respite care in the Borders region. There is already considerable capacity for respite care in the area and the health board sees no case for a new purpose-built facility.

I should like to deal with the two points raised by the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg). I happily reiterate my offer of a meeting with him at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss the matter that is of great constituency interest to him. I hope we can arrange that as quickly as possible. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the use of low-grade auxiliaries in place of nurses. The modern health service needs a skill mix that perhaps it did not have in the past. Boundaries are breaking down between professions—for example, between consultants and general practitioners. Consultants often practise minor surgery in the premises of GPs, and that has never happened before.

There is a similar situation in secondary care. The hon. Gentleman will find when he enters an accident and emergency unit that the first person to greet him is a qualified nurse instead of someone who clerks patients in rather than assesses them. The breakdown of those boundaries ensures that the nursing profession in particular is able to exercise its professional skills at higher levels rather than carrying out mundane tasks. That is extremely important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) highlighted culture changes in the health service. He was right to say that Labour would ignore anything that gets better and would oppose any attempt to introduce an assessment of cost in the health service. But cost is important if one is to improve the quality of patient care while being careful about the spending of public money. I completely fail to understand how Labour can continue to ignore that. Opposition Members seem to be stuck in old arguments that have no place in a modern health service.

The hon. Member for Dulwich (M[illegible]well) criticised the number of cancelled operations and said that she had experience of such cancellations in her constituency. Since 1 April 1994, national standards on cancelled operations have improved substantially. Patients must now be admitted for treatment after only one cancellation on the day of admission. The original standard was two cancellations. I cannot comment specifically on the case that she mentioned, but it seems to have grossly exceeded the previous standard. As I say, a higher standard has been set and we view most seriously any failure to implement such standards.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) spoke about Sunderland City hospitals trust. I was rather astonished that he did not mention a 377-bed ward block that was recently opened by the Princess Royal. We can also point to a new dedicated two-theatre day case unit, which opened in March. There is good news in the constituencies and I wish that Opposition Members would sometimes mention that rather than indulging in dirges that give only half the picture. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency, there has been a 6.5 per cent. increase in in-patient and day cases over the past three years, and there are 25 per cent. more consultants than there were in 1988.

I worry that the only response from the Opposition is that those are mere statistics. I was on the "Today" programme on one of the few mornings that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was not. I was told by someone representing the opposite case, "That is all very well for you to say, Mr. Malone. These are simply facts and figures. What do they mean?" Let me say to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North and all other hon. Members who do not think that the facts and figures about improved health care mean very much, that they mean a tremendous amount. In particular, I am delighted to announce that in his constituency no one has been waiting for more than 12 months. I hope that he will recognise that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) made an interesting speech. I returned to the Chamber to hear the second half and I understand that the first half was as interesting as the second. He raised a number of genuine concerns and I should particularly like to address one of them. He was concerned that chairmen and non-executive members appointed to health authorities should be local and locally known. I do not think for one second that the home address of a potential non-executive member is absolutely crucial to whether he should serve on a trust or a board. A whole range of factors is quite properly taken into account. They include local links with the area and any local work or business connections that the person has had in the area.

Our prime concern is, and will continue to be, to ensure that the NHS benefits from the best possible leadership from the best possible pool of talent. On that point, we believe that best practice should be followed. Best practice is often to advertise. I have said before that we wish to extend that to all posts. It is very important indeed that there is a pool of talent available to occupy such important public positions. We can move forward from the best practice which is already in place in my own area—the South and West region—and which I hope can be spread throughout the country.

The debate was not terribly surprising for Conservative Members. We heard the same old arguments from the new team. I am interested to see that on their first outing they do not appear to be allowed out on their own. They are flanked by their predecessors, presumably to ensure that they get the line right. The hon. Member for Makerfield has made a longer and more comprehensive speech from a sedentary position than many who have spoken from the Front Bench this evening.

We were told to expect that on this first outing of the new model Labour party on an Opposition day debate we should be hearing new things. I thought that the new model Labour party was in favour of a mixed economy—but not for health. The new model Labour party is not interested in beggar-my-neighbour policies which ensure that no additional funds from the private sector are to be available for additional health care over and above public spending. Labour is interested only in hiding behind slogans; there is no substance to any of its policies. However, I will move on to the substance of one or two of the policies that we heard.

We hear simply slogans. I suppose that there will be one for the health service. I should not be surprised to learn that it was, "Tough on illness, tough on the causes of illness," and when it came to spending, "Fair spending, not high spending." The veneer has been stripped away in the debate this evening. At bottom, we know that the Labour party is precisely the same Labour party that it has always been, the same Labour party which defends public sector interests and the trade union interests in the health service; it is not in the least bit interested in making any progress.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South gave an interesting message on health policy. Labour's one declared policy is to strip pensioners of their tax benefit for private health care. It is the first time that on a first outing a Labour party spokesman has made a direct attack on pensioners as a specific aspect of policy.

[Mr. Malone]

The whole point of the debate, according to the right hon. Lady, is that the health service is shrouded in secrecy, that we are afraid to disclose details of those who serve on boards and that it is all a great dark secret and a conspiracy. Let me refer to her own constituency. I have here what she would consider to be a secret document, which means that nothing is available to her and that she can obtain no information about who serves on trusts. The secret document is the *Derby Evening Telegraph*. There it is—the new team,

> "The team you can trust".

I can tell the right hon. Lady that there is no such secrecy. Everything is above board and right. The best talent is recruited to run our health service. It is a health service of which we are proud and when it comes to the team that can be trusted, it is not that team over there; it is this team over here.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 297.

Division No. 313] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander (Montgomry)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy

Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. John Spellar

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Iain
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard

Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 259.

Division No. 314] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony
Coombs, Simon
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes, Robert G.
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary

Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander (Montgomry)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Mofln)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Wilson, Brian

Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Eric Illsley

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes that since the introduction of the Government's health reforms the number of patients treated has risen, waiting times fallen and quality of care improved; welcomes independent support for the reforms from sources such as OECD; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to continue policies which uphold the values and ethos of the NHS, further reduce administrative duplication and waste and deliver a flexible service able to respond to the changing needs of patients.

Social Services Files (Wandsworth)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.27 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a case that concerns a constituent of mine. I want to ask the Minister to consider what he might be able to do, especially about access to files at Wandsworth council. For reasons that will be obvious, I shall not name my constituent or any of the other individuals concerned with this case.

I shall provide a little of the background because that is necessary if we are to understand what has happened with regard to Wandsworth. My constituent was in the care of Wandsworth council from the age of 13 under a care order, having been voluntarily in care for some years before that. In 1981, she was placed by Wandsworth into a residential home in Gravesend called Kendall house. Although that home is not the subject of the main substance of my remarks, I want to say a little about the conditions there because they are relevant to the question of Wandsworth council's responsibilities.

It is obvious that the home's regime involved regular and exceptionally high doses of drugs, especially for young people who were regarded as problems. My constituent's dosages included intravenous doses given while she was being held down by both male and female staff. I understand that the recommended valium dose for children and teenagers, even in exceptional circumstances, is in the range of 5 to 10 mg, yet I have been told that, in this case, doses of up to 100 mg were given intravenously. I have read copies of files that show that three or four doses of 20 mg were given in a day. High doses of valium at that age are recognised as contributing to hallucinations and to behavioural problems. By any standards, those doses and their frequency are disturbing. Most people would find the attitudes revealed in the home's files to be unacceptable.

The files are among those to which access was refused by Wandsworth council but which became available through the Council for Social Responsibility in the dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester. It made them available without any difficulty and it had been responsible for running the home, which is now closed. Credit is due to the council for making the information so readily available.

In 1984, my constituent was placed with a foster parent and, shortly afterwards, she alleged that the man had raped her. The way in which that complaint was dealt with was dreadful and Wandsworth council has more or less admitted that since. A letter from the director of social services states:

> "Interpretation of the events needs to be set in the context of 1984, i.e. well before the implementation of today's procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse, including sexual abuse."

That amounts to an acceptance that the standards applied were not acceptable and would not be remotely acceptable now.

The rape allegation was not immediately reported to the police and, worse than that, a few days later my constituent was forced to confront the man, who she alleged had raped her, and his wife without the presence of a social worker. The files show that the social worker was away on holiday at the time. Shortly afterwards, the social services department agreed that, if she did not withdraw her allegation, it would write to the police and ask them to investigate. It is clear from the paper in which it agreed to do that that it had already made up its mind. The paper states:

> "When we receive formal notification from them"—

that is the police—

> "that the allegations will not be proceeded with, because of lack of evidence, the Department's records will need to be amended so that it is absolutely clear that her allegations were totally unsubstantiated and merely a fantasy".

Clearly, the department had made up its mind. It did not believe her and it was not going to refer the matter in any serious way to the police.

That gives rise to a number of questions. Why did Wandsworth social services allow all this to happen? Why were not the police immediately involved in investigating the rape allegation? Why will not Wandsworth council release, or even allow a local councillor to read on a "need-to-know" basis, its files relating to these events and to its investigation into the suitability of the foster parent?

Over several years, my constituent has repeated her story to a number of social workers. I find it astonishing that it was only last year that a social worker in Waltham Forest, where she now lives, suggested that the matter should be taken seriously, that she should see a solicitor and that there should be an investigation into what had happened. The result of that was that Kent police reopened their investigation into the rape allegation and are investigating whether the drugs regime was legal.

The problem all along has been the refusal of Wandsworth social services to make its files openly available to the police or to the girl or her solicitor. The council initially said that it would make part of the files available to the girl and a social worker. But the Kendall house files from which I quoted earlier were not to be included. When the solicitor requested full access, not only was that denied; the previous offer of partial access was withdrawn.

There is no doubt that the council's refusal to make its files available caused serious problems for the police. Some months ago, I corresponded with the police about that and they told me the Wandsworth social services had refused to allow them access to the files, claiming client confidentiality. When the police pointed out that they had full written consent from the girl to examine the files, Wandsworth council persisted in saying that the files were confidential. When the police tried to negotiate a compromise, the council then said that it was acting on advice from its insurance company and intended to deny access on the basis of that advice.

The police inquiry did not have the benefit of access to the files, which made it much more difficult to pursue the inquiry. In a letter sent to me at the time, a police officer involved in the case wrote:

> "From the documents that have come into the possession of the enquiry team, I can see why Wandsworth Social Services do not wish these files to be open to external scrutiny . . . I am troubled that a public service such as Wandsworth Social Services are not open to external scrutiny and the fact that they appear able to hinder and undermine a current criminal enquiry is most unsatisfactory."

Wandsworth will no doubt claim that those problems have been resolved and that social services is now cooperating with the police. In fact, a different argument to prevent access is now being deployed. Councillor McIsaac, a Wandsworth councillor, asked the leader of Wandsworth council specific questions about access to the files. In answer, the leader of the council said that public interest immunity, in the council's interests and in the interests of third parties to whom the file information relates, prevented access to the files. The letter from the council concluded:

> "For this reason, although officers co-operate fully with the Police in being interviewed, answering questions and supplying specified documents on request, files will only be released to the Police when they have obtained a Court Order."

I am at a loss to understand how on earth the police are supposed to know what documents to specify or what questions to ask when they obviously need to look through the files to see if they contain anything to substantiate an allegation.

I hope that the Minister agrees that this is a disturbing case and that it should be possible to conduct a thorough investigation either to substantiate or refute the allegations that have been made. I hope that he will accept that the girl has the right to a proper investigation of her treatment, whatever the outcome. Evidence in the files may back up the allegation. She should have the right to find that out.

If we assume for a moment that the man accused of the rape is innocent, it is not in his interests for stories, from which he can clearly identify himself, to appear in the local and national press. He, too, would obviously be concerned about whether the files were made public.

I do not believe that it is in anyone's interest simply to hide away from investigation or to reach the point at which cases get dropped because it is impossible to obtain full information.

There is no doubt that Wandsworth council is afraid of legal action against it. It is hiding behind the Access to Personal Files Act 1987, the public interest immunity argument and the argument relating to the advice of the third party, the insurers. The 1987 Act was passed because problems about access had arisen. The problem had been recognised well before that, however, and in 1983 Secretaries of State issued advice to local authorities to the effect that the Government shared the increasingly held view that people in receipt of services should be able to see what had been recorded about them. The debate on access to information had already been running for some time and it is clear that, in 1983, it was shifting in favour of open access.

May I make two points on public immunity? First, some of the documents to which Wandsworth social services are still refusing access have become available by other means, so it seems pointless to continue to claim immunity on those. Secondly, the argument about candour, which was put forward when the Act was introduced, has shifted over the years. It was said that the frankness of social services would be inhibited if they thought that what they put on record might be disclosed later. In any case, such an argument should be outweighed by public interest. There is public interest in seeing that justice is done.

If the issue concerns safeguarding third parties, it is possible to do one's best to ensure anonymity so that, when names are mentioned, they are not released. To refuse access on third-party grounds should be extremely

[Mr. Neil Gerrard]

unusual. Again, I thought that that argument had been accepted. When the social services regulations were debated in 1989, the then Minister said:

> "Information may be withheld because of a risk of serious harm to the health or emotional condition of the individual or a third party. We have said that withholding information on that ground would be most exceptional."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 934.]

That was the Government's view when the regulations were introduced.

However, the continued refusal cannot but suggest that there is something to hide. Moreover, pressure has been put on my constituent to drop the case. In direct telephone conversations with senior Wandsworth social services officers, she has been told, "Forget all that stuff from years ago and just get on with your life"—sometimes in a quite unprofessional manner.

Pressure has also been put on Councillor McIsaac, who has been asking the questions in Wandsworth, to drop the case. Whenever the case has been publicised in the local or national press, she has received anonymous phone calls. They have all been abusive and from the same person, asking her to drop the case. It is clearly someone who knows precisely what it is about, because the caller has used the name of the woman involved, even though that name has never appeared in the press.

Will the Minister think seriously about what he can do to ensure not just that justice is done but that it is seen to be done? We have all seen horrendous cases of maltreatment in residential homes. Thankfully, over the years some of those have led to changes in regulations and practice. But we should consider the fact that redress should be possible for victims of past failures of the system. It is simply not good enough to shelter behind the fact that the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 was not retrospective. There may be good reasons for not making it retrospective to reassure individuals and people who had written files expecting them to be confidential, but retrospection was never ruled out as a way of protecting a public body.

I might have some sympathy for Wandsworth social services department's arguments about releasing the files if it made an effort and offered to resolve the problem in some other way. I have seen written claims by the chief executive of Wandsworth social services that they have sympathy for my constituent. Surely the department should look for a way to answer the allegations, help her deal with the traumas that she has suffered and allow her to get on with her life. To respond by simply saying, "Forget the past" is not adequate.

When the woman started to pursue Wandsworth social services, she was and, I believe, still is much more interested in an admission that things had been done wrong, an acknowledgement that she had been badly treated and some apologies than in necessarily pursuing financial redress. The continual stonewalling is pushing her towards court action and financial redress.

Finally, I would say to the Minister that if we are interested in ensuring that local authorities improve, and maintain, their performance in the care of young people, we should not try to protect either them or the insurers who stand behind them from the consequences of disclosure.

10.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard). Given the serious allegations that have been made, I can well understand his concerns. I am glad to have the opportunity to explain the Department's position in relation to the case and on the wider issues that it raises about access to social work records.

First, I shall say something about the facts of the specific case. I shall first discuss the allegation from 1984. That was, as the hon. Gentleman has said, the allegation made by Miss X when she was 16 that she was raped or indecently assaulted by the foster father, living in Kent, with whom she had been placed by Wandsworth borough council. My information is that, when that allegation was made, the police were notified and carried out an investigation. Later, the allegation of rape was changed by her to one of sexual intercourse. I also understand that, as a result of those investigations, the police decided not to pursue the matter further.

According to Wandsworth social services department, that department carried out a separate investigation into the allegations at that time. As a result, a decision was taken that approval should be given for the foster parents to continue to be used by the Wandsworth social services department.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow has made the point, and it has been reported in the press, that the foster parent against whom the allegations were made currently runs a residential home in Kent, registered by Kent county council, which is used by various local authorities for family-based residential care for young adults with learning disabilities.

I understand that Kent social services department, which is the registering authority and which, I understand, made its own placements in the home concerned, is now fully aware of the background to the case. Decisions on the suitability of a specific carer must be a matter for the people concerned locally. Obviously, we would expect all the necessary checks on suitability to be made.

I understand that Miss X raised the issue of the alleged abuse again in the autumn of last year—about 10 years after the original allegation had been made and inquired into by the social services and the police. She asked the Kent constabulary to reopen the matter and the police in turn asked the London borough of Wandsworth whether it had records that might assist the police investigation.

I understand that, at the time of the initial approach from the police, it was unclear whether they were seeking to reopen the case as such or merely seeking to respond to a complaint about the way in which the case had been handled in 1984. It is also not clear to me, from the papers that I have seen, whether, at that time, the Kent police had reviewed their own papers from 1984, relating to the way that the original allegations were treated.

It might be helpful if I now explained briefly the Government's policy on access to social work records.

For many years, all social work records were regarded as the confidential property of the authorities that compiled them. The person in respect of whom the record was compiled had no right of access to it. However, as the hon. Gentleman has acknowledged, social services are one of the leaders in the field of opening up their records to people who are the subject of them.

The blanket restriction on disclosure began gradually to be lifted in 1983, as the hon. Gentleman said, when my Department issued guidance to all local authorities, advising them to allow people access, subject to certain necessary exceptions. Those exceptions included records relating to earlier periods, to which contributions would have been made on the basis that they would be treated as confidential, and material that revealed the identity of a third party.

Those administrative arrangements were replaced in 1989 by the Access to Personal Files (Social Services) Regulations, which were made under the powers provided in the Access to Personal Files Act 1987. Those regulations enshrined similar principles in law, giving a statutory right of access where specified exceptions did not apply. However, as in 1983, the provisions did not apply to earlier records compiled on the basis of confidentiality.

In the case of pre-1989 records, it is for the local authority to decide whether to release the information. In some cases, the law requires local authorities to disclose records. In the case of records that the law does not require them to disclose, it is for them to consider whether they should nevertheless release the records or whether other considerations override such action. They will want to bear in mind the rights and interests of all the parties who might be affected.

I understand that the general policy of Wandsworth council is not to release such old papers. In this case, Wandsworth, on advice, decided not to make the records available. As I understand it, Miss X's legal advisers had indicated that they might be bringing civil proceedings against the council.

It is clearly right for any council to take careful advice on how to respond to the threat of litigation. If Miss X did decide to take proceedings against the council, it would be open to her or her advisers to seek an order for pre-action discovery of documents. An application of that nature would be dealt with on its merits by a court.

Similar considerations would apply with regard to possible criminal proceedings. The police could seek an order for disclosure off the record under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Many authorities, as a matter of policy, prefer not to release sensitive documents to the police other than when a court has agreed that it is necessary.

My understanding is that Wandsworth council has, within the constraints of the considerations that I have outlined, taken steps to respond to the matters that have been put to it. I understand that it has made it clear to the police that, although it has decided not to grant access to the files without a court order, it is happy to respond to specific queries if the police would find it helpful.

The council has also made an offer to Miss X that a member of the council's staff should go through the relevant files with her, although it is not prepared simply to hand full records over to her. As I understand it, both those offers still stand. I have also seen a letter from Kent police to Wandsworth council stating that there is no longer a problem about withheld information, and confirming that the police and council are co-operating fully with each other.

I hope that what I have said has been helpful to the hon. Gentleman in explaining something of the background and the factual position as I understand it. I also understand that the case has now been referred, on Miss X's behalf, to the local government ombudsman, who has decided to exercise his discretion and look into aspects of the handling of the case even though the matters complained of go back some considerable time. I understand that the investigation is currently proceeding. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand that it would be wrong for me in any way to prejudice the outcome of the investigation, which I am sure will be thorough.

Let me refer to the further allegations that Miss X has made about her treatment in the voluntary sector community with education home for children with serious behavioural disturbances in Kent, where she had been living prior to her period in foster care. I understand that it was only recently that Miss X formally complained about that—again, a considerable time after the alleged events took place.

The position with regard to social work records relating to those allegations is basically the same as in the case of the allegations of abuse. But those matters—both the substance of the allegations themselves and the way in which they were handled—have also been referred to the local government ombudsman. The hon. Gentleman has confirmed that the Church authorities responsible for the home have released the files that they held.

In conclusion, as a Government, we are committed to the maximum possible openness of personal records. But obviously there will always be cases—the case raised by the hon. Gentleman is perhaps one of them—where the sort of openness that we would all like to see will, for one reason or another, raise difficulties in the personal social services sector.

There may be problems when intimate and sensitive personal information has been provided by third parties, and when events predate the current legislation. Nevertheless, the maximum openness is what we are aiming for, within the bounds of necessary protection.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 26 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Cottage Hospitals

1. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Tayside health board to discuss with him the future for cottage hospitals in north Tayside.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State met the chairman of Tayside health board, together with other health board chairmen, on 24 June 1994. The future of cottage hospitals in north Tayside was not discussed at the meeting.

Mr. Walker: Will my hon. Friend confirm that no other cottage hospital in north Tayside will suffer the death by a thousand cuts suffered by Meigle over a period of 20 years? Will he further confirm that Meigle cottage hospital will now be used as a day care facility, and that that is now in hand and agreed?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can confirm to my hon. Friend, whose Adjournment debate on this subject I listened to, that a new community health service using Meigle will be established. The health centre will provide a full range of community and primary care services for patients requiring day care, for out-patients and for outreach services to treat and support people in their own homes.

My hon. Friend asks about other community hospitals in the area. The board's proposals focus on the establishment of new community hospitals in Forfar and Montrose. In Forfar, that would allow the centralisation on one site of services currently provided at Whitehills hospital and the Forfar infirmary. In Montrose, the new hospital will replace services at the outdated Montrose infirmary.

Ministers support those proposals, and have therefore asked the health board and Angus national health service trust to prepare proposals for those community hospitals. A decision will be announced once Ministers have received and considered the detailed proposals.

Madam Speaker: Order. Answers are getting very long.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Why was the closure not discussed by the Minister of State and the chairman of Tayside health board? The closure of Meigle represents the loss of yet more acute beds in Tayside, and other hospitals, such as the Dundee royal infirmary, are closing, thereby putting even more pressure on acute beds. What guarantee can the Secretary of State give us that the model being used by the Scottish Office will ensure that there are enough acute beds in Tayside after all these hospitals are closed?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It will of course be a priority for the health board to ensure that there are. There has been full consultation in respect of Meigle, and the news that it will be used for health purposes will be welcome.

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

2. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of COSLA to discuss local services.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. Friend and I will meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 11 November as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters.

Mr. Graham: In his discussions with local authorities, will the Secretary of State raise a question that is causing incredible problems for my constituency and others in Scotland—the demand for the release of green-belt land for building? Many people are spending a fortune trying to stop the onslaught on the green belt. It is costing local authorities and local folk a fortune to pay QCs to fight their case. Surely this nonsense must be stopped and people allowed the peace of mind of knowing that the green belt is no longer under threat.

Mr. Stewart: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his new slimline image. I do not believe that there is a significant difference of approach between what he has said and the position that my right hon. Friend and I take. We are vigorous defenders of the green belt.

Mr. John Marshall: When my hon. Friend meets representatives of COSLA, will he raise the question of corruption in local government? Did he see the headline in yesterday's *Daily Record*—scarcely a Conservative party publication—suggesting that there is to be a second inquiry into Monklands?

Mr. Stewart: Of course, I always read the *Daily Record*. I understand that the police are conducting two inquiries: one into allegations about taxi licences, and the other into more general allegations of corruption. I further understand that it is now in the public domain that a third inquiry is being conducted into allegations of expenses fraud in the Monklands area, but that does not involve elected councillors of Monklands district council.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Minister admit that the private financing of public water services will add between 50 to 100 per cent. to borrowing costs, which the consumer will have to meet in higher bills? Why is he replacing a low-cost, high-quality local government service with a high-cost quango system, which no one in Scotland wants?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is simply wrong. I am aware of the allegations to which he refers, which understate the cost of finance in the public sector, overstate the cost of finance in the private sector and ignore the financial benefits of being protected from financial risk.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister agree that one of the most important local services is residential accommodation for frail, elderly people, whether it be in local authority homes or hospitals such as Lochgreen in my constituency, which is threatened with closure and where, even now, the management are stopping new admissions? Will the hon. Gentleman intervene to instruct the management of Lochgreen that they must not pre-empt the Secretary of State's decision on the matter? Will he ensure that adequate resources are given to the trust to ensure that Lochgreen remains open and is able to make the improvements necessary to modernise its facilities, so that its excellent staff can carry on their work for patients?

Mr. Stewart: I certainly can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that I will look into the specific constituency matter that he raises. I emphasise the Government's commitment to care in the community through the transfer of £106 million from the Department of Social Security, with an extra £55 million in 1994-95. An extra £15 million will be available under the bridging finance scheme, and for long-stay hospital patients, to whom he referred, there is an extra resource transfer of £10 million in 1993-94. The Government's general commitment to care in the community is without question.

Mr. George Robertson: Anyone who has studied the figures produced by Strathclyde regional council on the future of water services, and its view that, under the Government's preferred financing objective, water bills will rise by twice as much as they would have under local councils, will believe Strathclyde regional council, not the Government. Is the Minister willing to give a guarantee that, after quangoisation, water bills in Scotland will not explode to English levels? Why are the Government still hell-bent on going ahead with their plans, which face almost universal hostility in Scotland and which would take water out of locally elected control and place it, like so much else, in the hands of unelected appointed Government cronies?

Mr. Stewart: For the very simple reason that it will result in a much more cost-effective system. I have made it clear why I believe the Strathclyde figures to be misplaced. On the more general question, it is perfectly clear that Strathclyde regional council has more than adequate finance. I understand that it is taking out a full-page advertisement in tomorrow's edition of *The Daily Telegraph*. I think that that shows that Strathclyde regional council has money to burn.

Hospital Beds

3. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future provision of short stay and respite care hospital beds in the north-east of Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Planning of health care services to meet local needs is a matter for health boards, in discussion with local authorities and the private and voluntary sectors, as appropriate.

Mr. Bruce: I thank the Minister for that reply. Is he aware that there is total outrage at the consultation process relating to the closure of Woodlands hospital, which follows the closure of the House of Daviot in Kingseat in my constituency? People are not confident that adequate long-stay and respite care beds will be provided, and people are outraged that they were not given sight of the options until after the consultation process had been completed. Those options included developing the Woodlands site in accordance with a written promise given to me three years ago by Grampian health board. If the Minister receives a reference for the closure of that hospital, will he refer it back for further consideration and proper consultation?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In deciding whether to approve closures relating to those or, indeed, any other hospitals in Scotland, we would want to be convinced that alternative arrangements were in place for patients that were every bit as good as—and preferably better than—the previous arrangements.

Woodlands is running well below capacity as a result of developments in community care; it is proposed that it will care for fewer than 50 mentally handicapped people by early 1995. We shall bear in mind the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Minister aware that the parents of the vulnerable and special patients involved are devastated by the way in which the whole matter has been handled? Does he understand that the consultation process that is currently under way is fatally flawed, because a decision has already been made? If there is to be consultation, it should involve proper discussions with the parents of the patients involved long before any final decision is made. Will the Minister give a categorical undertaking that there will be no transfer until the matter has been thoroughly aired and examined?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As far as Scottish Office Ministers are concerned, no decision has been made. I give the hon. Gentleman an undertaking that these matters will be considered thoroughly, as will his point about dissatisfaction with the consultation process.

Hospital Waiting Lists

4. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the most recent figures for waiting lists for operations in trust hospitals.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): More people are being treated in NHS hospitals than ever before. In the year to June 1994, the number of out-patients treated rose by 2.6 per cent., the number of in-patients treated rose by 1.6 per cent. and the number of day cases treated rose by no less than 18.4 per cent. I am arranging for all the most recent figures for waiting lists to be sent to the hon. Member and published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Griffiths: If the Government's record is so good, why are patients with chronic heart disease having to wait for up to 13 months? Why are heart pacemakers being rationed to 750 a year in Lothian? Will the Secretary of State hold an inquiry into the fact that heart patients are dying because of long waiting lists for treatment?

Mr. Lang: On 30 June this year, Edinburgh Healthcare trust had a total waiting list of nine in-patients, and no day-case patients. Waiting lists in Lothian are very short indeed. There has been a substantial increase of 6 per cent. in Lothian health board's budget. As for waiting lists for individual treatment, it is for each health board in Scotland to find the best and most effective way of obtaining the ever-increasing range of treatments that are now available for the health service.

Mr. Wallace: How many patients in NHS hospitals and trust hospitals in Scotland have been operated on at the Health Care International hospital in Clydebank? Does the Secretary of State accept that there is considerable public concern about the amount of public money that has been invested in that hospital, and would he welcome a National Audit Office investigation of the use of public money for the project?

Mr. Lang: Any investigation of any such organisation that any official body considers it appropriate to conduct would certainly receive full co-operation from the Scottish Office and from me.

I believe that the figure for which the hon. Gentleman asks is small. I see no objection, however, to giving any health board that has the necessary resources and feels the need to benefit patients on its waiting list the opportunity to do so. I think that health boards should be entitled to take advantage of such opportunities.

Mr. George Robertson: Does the Secretary of State not recognise that concern about future hospital waiting lists has a good deal to do with the scandal involving Health Care International in Clydebank? Does he not recognise that, in the light of the long-standing public concern about HCI—which grows with every daily revelation—and his silence on the issue, until and including today, has been seen as suspicious and sinister?

What precisely has been the Secretary of State's role in the whole affair? Will he now tell the House exactly how much public money the Government have allocated to this shaky project? Is it not true that £40 million may be just the tip of a financial iceberg? What will happen to a hospital that was specifically designed solely for overseas patients, and which now threatens to swamp and damage the national health service?

Mr. Lang: The idea that a private sector health care service set up in Scotland, bringing great expertise in specialties that are not readily available around the world, should damage the interests of the health service is preposterous. The Labour party is blinded by its own ideology. It will not accept health care of any sort unless it is offered through the national health service. If health service patients are able to benefit from Health Care International, or from any other private sector hospital, and health boards decide that they can afford to use services in that way, thus shortening their waiting lists and helping patients to receive treatment, those services should be available.

Financial help of about £30 million has been offered for that inward investment project. That should be seen in the context of the fact that some 346 inward investment projects have been secured in the past five years, bringing or securing some 47,000 jobs and attracting more than £2.5 billion of investment to Scotland. HCI is the sort of successful initiative that is creating new enterprise, new activity and more jobs in Scotland.

Mr. Worthington: The Secretary of State should take account of the fact that in 1987, when he and his predecessor authorised the project, HCI said that

"it has been and will"—

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentlemen that it is not in order to quote during Question Time; perhaps he will paraphrase.

Mr. Worthington: I speak in words that are remarkably similar to those used by HCI, which said that it has been and will continue to be the policy of HCI not to market its services to citizens of the United Kingdom. That was its pledge, which the Secretary of State accepted. Its chief executive is now saying that he sees nothing wrong with offering its services to health boards and that it would be "bizarre", to use his word, if the west of Scotland were the only place not to receive its services. Does the Secretary of State intend to keep HCI to its pledge in 1987, and will he give an undertaking that no activity of HCI will damage any hospital in the Greater Glasgow area?

Mr. Lang: I see no likelihood of any activity of HCI damaging any health board hospital. Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that patients who could be treated by HCI and whose health boards would like them to be treated by it should be denied the opportunity to have treatment earlier than they would otherwise just because of the ideological blockage of Labour Members? That would be preposterous. Labour Members should express support for an enterprise that brings 400 jobs to Clydebank and Milngavie. The hon. Gentleman welcomed the initiative when it was announced, saying that

"the development is bringing much-needed employment to a jobs-starved community."

Labour Members should express the wish that the venture should succeed.

Drift Nets

5. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from angling organisations regarding the use of drift nets; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): Various angling organisations, as well as individuals, have made representations recently against the continuation of the salmon drift net fishery off north-east England.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that that salmon drift net fishery is doing great harm to rural economies in Scotland, to say nothing of the damage to other marine species such as porpoises and dolphins? What representations has he made to his colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to have the nets bought out, obviously with full compensation? There are moves in the European Community to have drift netting banned. Is it not time that the United Kingdom supported those moves?

Sir Hector Monro: I note my hon. Friend's strong feelings. I have certainly received strong representations from many organisations and individuals in Scotland concerned about the poor salmon and sea trout returns from the east coast rivers of Scotland. The Scottish Office certainly bears those representations in mind, particularly as it banned drift netting in Scotland in 1962. It will, of course, continue to discuss the matter with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We require scientific evidence, which is provided by the National Rivers Authority. There have been discussions in Europe about banning drift netting, but the European Parliament and the Commission disagree on whether a ban should include salmon. We shall have to wait to see how that is resolved.

Mrs. Ray Michie: May I turn the Minister's attention from the east coast to the west coast, where, as he will know, there has been a serious decline in the numbers of salmon reaching the rivers, especially in Argyll? Does he attribute that, as many do, to the operation of the Irish net fishery off the north-west coast of Ireland, which is catching large numbers of salmon returning home to breed? If he believes that that fishery is responsible in some way, is there anything that he can do about it?

Sir Hector Monro: I note what the hon. Lady says. There has been a general condemnation of drift net fishing, whether off the north-east coast of Scotland or the Irish coast. However, any condemnation has to be balanced with scientific evidence and, as usual, we are holding discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the matter and will consider whether we should make further representations to the Irish Government.

Sir Cranley Onslow: Is my hon. Friend aware that if he would like to tell the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that the sooner the north-east drift net fishery is ended the better it will be for Scotland, he will find many hon. Members representing English constituencies willing to support him?

Sir Hector Monro: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support. I know that that view is strongly held by many keen anglers, including himself.

Mr. Beith: Will the Minister draw to the attention of the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) the scientific study commissioned by the Government, which showed that there was no evidence for the claim that the angling take of fish would be increased by ending the north-east drift net fishery, which is, in any case, being phased out? Will he direct his attention to the need to improve river quality and river flows instead of taking away the livelihoods of working fishermen?

Sir Hector Monro: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says. As he knows, the decision to phase out drift nets through a net limitation order was based on scientific evidence. That is how things stand.

Mr. Kynoch: I know that my hon. Friend is aware of the importance of salmon fishing on the River Dee to my constituency and especially to royal Deeside, but does he agree that the current critically low level of stocks was perhaps caused by, among other things, north-east drift netters? Does he accept that the reduction so far, under the phasing-out process, has come only from the smaller drift net fishermen? Will he urge the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to speed up significantly the phasing out of north-east drift nets to save the economy of royal Deeside?

Sir Hector Monro: I know that fishing on the Dee has been especially disappointing this year, and I can give my hon. Friend the facts. In 1993, the last year for which we have figures, 73,614 salmon, grilse and sea trout were taken by north-east drift nets, which must have had an impact on the east coast rivers. I am aware, too, of the importance of fishing to the economy of Scotland, in terms of tourism and other activities, and we have to bear that in mind as well as the scientific evidence.

Mr. Dalyell: Following his letter to me, reflecting his genuine concern and that of his expert advisers, can the Minister do anything to protect the turtles that are coming to Scottish waters in increasing and significant numbers?

Mr. McMaster: Answer that.

Sir Hector Monro: I am not sure what the salmon fisheries in Paisley have to say on the matter, but I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for the point that he makes.

Concessionary Travel

6. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to encourage single tier local authorities to co-operate to provide cross-boundary concessionary travel schemes for pensioners and disabled people.

Mr. Stewart: I trust the new councils to use their discretionary powers to decide whether to act jointly to establish a concessionary travel scheme in whatever way best serves the interests of their areas.

Mr. Home Robertson: As local authority accounting rules will not allow the new city authorities in Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen to subsidise concessionary travel schemes for people living in neighbouring districts, will the Minister acknowledge the immense importance of maintaining co-ordinated concessionary travel schemes to ensure the continuing mobility of pensioners and disabled people, and will he, even now, amend the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, or will he become the Minister who flings Scotland's grannies off the buses?

Mr. Stewart: I was about to be very courteous to the hon. Gentleman. I was going to remind the House that 16 years ago today he was elected at a by-election and congratulate him on his anniversary, but in the light of his unsporting comments I am not sure that I should do so.

However, the hon. Gentleman raised a perfectly genuine point. Under section 93 of the Transport Act 1985 the new local authorities will have full discretionary powers to act jointly to establish concessionary schemes in so far as they believe that that would be in the interests of their electors.

Deprivation And Poverty

7. **Mrs. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of voluntary organisations to discuss deprivation and poverty.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Issues of poverty and deprivation could be raised by a range of voluntary organisations that my right hon. Friend and I meet in the course of our ministerial duties.

Mrs. Adams: Does the Minister not find it disgusting that while his party has reigned over ever-increasing poverty and deprivation, one of his colleagues appeared on "Kilroy" this week to tell us that he could not live on his parliamentary salary? Will the Minister deplore that statement, and give us a guarantee that the charity commissioners' plan to silence the campaigning voice of charities will not apply in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly look into the specialised point that the hon. Lady raised about the charity commissioners, but I must tell her that our record on voluntary organisations in Scotland is good. They receive about £48 million through the urban programme. Indeed, the hon. Lady's local district council, Renfrew, receives about £6.8 million, and during the last few days, on 13 October, it received a supplementary allocation for the housing revenue account and non-housing revenue account—several hundred thousand pounds altogether. That shows that her constituency has not been forgotten. With regard to the House of Commons matter that the hon. Lady mentioned, my view is that Members of Parliament are perfectly well rewarded; however, that is a matter for the House to debate in due course.

Mr. Wray: Is the Minister aware that the average adult wage in Scotland is £300 per week? Why are 36 per cent. of the Scottish work force earning less than £220 per week? Is it not a shocking state of affairs that 543,000 people, with 342,000 dependants, are on income support? That means that 885,000 people—17 per cent. of the working population—depend on income support. Are the Government considering restoring benefits for 16 and 17-year-olds?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Earnings in Scotland are higher than those in most of the rest of Britain, with the exception of the south-east. Overall disposable incomes have risen by an average of 36 per cent. since 1979. Increases have not been confined to the wealthiest; there have been increases in average income for all economic status groups and all family types. It is significant that this year housing benefit in Scotland will probably amount to more than £800 million. That is evidence of substantial funding for those who need it.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend meets representatives of the voluntary bodies, will he remind them that the safety net today is much better than it was in the period of real poverty and deprivation of the 1920s, 1930s and earlier, and that every pound spent with voluntary bodies is better spent, because society gets a far greater reward for that money than for money spent on, for instance, social work departments?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I confirm that there has been substantial extra help for low-income families. Extra help worth more than £1 billion more a year in real terms than that available in 1988 is available for low-income families with children, and the vulnerable have been protected. For example, after housing costs, the family of an unemployed person with two children is 24 per cent. better off on income support than would have been the case in 1979. The safety net is extremely important, and we regard it as such.

Mrs. Fyfe: If the Government care about children, particularly those living in poverty and deprivation, and about the need for changes in the law to safeguard them and to enshrine rights on which they should be able to rely so that they do not have their childhood taken away from them, why have the Government still not responded to our offer to assist the passage of a Children Bill, for which we have been waiting for the past 14 months, since the White Paper was published? What is the Minister waiting for?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I was a member of the Committee that considered the most recent significant Children Bill. It is a very important subject and we shall obviously consider it fully in the context of the next Session.

Scottish Enterprise

8. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Lang: I plan to meet the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Enterprise next month.

Dr. Reid: When the right hon. Gentleman meets the chairman, will he tell him how disappointed we were that Samsung did not come to Lanarkshire? More importantly, will he tell him how disturbed we are by the reports now beginning to filter out that the package that attracted Samsung to the north of England was not the reported £58 million, but £71 million, the extra £13 million given in stealth being meant to counteract our enterprise zone status and financial assistance? Does he accept that if that was done at the behest of the President of the Board of Trade, it is an absolute scandal which counteracts completely the financial assistance given by the Government, and the implicit and explicit promises of the Prime Minister? Will the right hon. Gentleman give a guarantee that he will investigate the reports if I send him the information relating to them?

Mr. Lang: I share the hon. Gentleman's disappointment that Samsung chose not to come to Scotland. Nevertheless, I am sure that he will join me in welcoming the fact that this extremely important new inward investment was won for the United Kingdom in the face of worldwide competition, because of the competitiveness of the United Kingdom's economy. It is competitive because we resist, for example, such measures as the social chapter and the minimum wage.

I think that the hon. Gentleman will also agree that it is extremely satisfactory that Lanarkshire came so close to winning the Samsung project. That is a reflection of the progress that has been made in making Lanarkshire an attractive place in which to invest, just like the rest of Scotland.

On the figures, the hon. Gentleman knows that the regional selective assistance scheme operates on a level basis across the whole of the United Kingdom, subject to standard criteria. If he can let me have details of any components of the package offered to Samsung which differ from what has been published, I will of course give them close attention.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that over the summer months there was a [illegible] of historic and massive boosts to the Scottish economy from massive inward investment in the central belt and new oilfields off the west coast of Shetland? Does he agree that under a tax-raising Scottish Assembly, all of that would be put in jeopardy and at risk? A tax-raising Scottish Assembly would drive out investment, force up unemployment and create misery for every taxpayer in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the reasons why Scotland is so attractive to inward investors and so successful economically is precisely that it is within the United Kingdom, operating in the stable economic environment that exists right across the United Kingdom. Not only have we been extremely successful in inward investment, but we, as a Scottish nation, are now manufacturing more than ever before in our history and exporting more than ever before in our history.

Dr. Bray: Is the Secretary of State aware that the enterprise zone sites in Lanarkshire are not filling up rapidly with this inward investment? Will he not only investigate the positive discrimination about which my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) has informed the House, but examine whether there are positive measures which could be taken to get the investment flow going into the enterprise zones?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that last year inward investment coming to Scotland was at record levels in terms of the number of projects, the capital invested and the jobs created and protected. This year, the effort is even more successful, with Lanarkshire securing a substantial proportion. An example is the recent further expansion of Motorola at East Kilbride. I will, however, investigate further any specific points that the hon. Gentleman cares to bring to my attention.

Mr. McFall: When the Secretary of State next meets Scottish Enterprise, will he discuss with the chairman the question why that body put £4 million of public funds into one particular hospital and why Scottish Enterprise took £1.4 million in equity in the company involved? Is he willing to see a further £5.4 million poured into this black hole of a project, which is radically different from the one announced and welcomed in 1987? Is there not a question of bad judgment in this? What does the right hon. Gentleman intend to do about it?

Mr. Lang: The application for financial assistance was, of course, appraised in all the normal and conventional ways—and very thoroughly—before decisions were taken. The hon. Gentleman should reflect on the fact that enterprise of all kinds carries with it a certain amount of risk. It is to the great credit of Locate in Scotland that it has brought no fewer than 346 projects to Scotland in the past five years, the vast majority of which are now successfully established, and expanding and generating extra resources. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support the prospects for Health Care International and will hope that it will succeed and continue to provide employment, which is badly needed in Clydebank.

Health Boards (Finance)

9. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairmen of health boards to discuss finance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Minister of State meets chairmen of health boards regularly to discuss a wide range of strategic issues, including those involving finance, affecting the management of the national health service in Scotland. Next week it will take place on 4 November 1994.

Mr. Donohoe: If the Minister was at the Tory party conference and was able to stay awake during his leader's speech, he would have heard him say that the national health service was safe in his hands. Can the Minister therefore tell us why in Ayrshire most patients who go to dentists now have to pay the full price for their treatment? Will he also tell us why in Ayrshire, and in my constituency at Ravenspark geriatric hospital, patients have been transferred to the private sector, which is clearly taking them for profit? How is it possible for the Prime Minister to say that the national health service is safe in his hands?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The new trusts are perfectly free to buy in services if they are in the interests of the patients concerned, are reasonable and are of the necessary quality. There have been significant developments at South Ayrshire hospitals trust, which have been greatly in the interests of the patients. The new magnetic resonance imaging equipment is used, there is a helicopter landing pad to help with patients, a new nurse-led glaucoma clinic, lip-reading classes for patients with impaired hearing, and improved accessibility and choice for patients. With regard to charging, I shall make inquiries into the particular point mentioned by the hon. Gentleman; I will look into the exact circumstances and send him a letter on the matter. Overall, however, the range of services has widened and there have been substantial improvements carried out by the trusts.

Mr. Galbraith: When the Minister's noble Friend meets the chairmen, will he discuss again the issues of poverty and deprivation in Scotland? Does the Minister realise that the major causes of ill health in Scotland are poverty and deprivation and that it is not only the absolute levels, but the relative levels? In other words, the greater the discrepancy between rich and poor, the greater the ill health. Will the Minister discuss with the health board chairmen the Government's role in reducing the gap between rich and poor, which has grown greatly during the Government's reign?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One effective way of being of assistance is by substantial funding of the national health service in Scotland. I can confirm that for every £100 spent in England on the national health service, £122 is spent in Scotland. Of course, health problems are considerable in areas of grave urban deprivation. That is why a record sum has been allocated through urban aid this year to areas of particular deprivation. Those areas are considered with great care whenever applications come in.

Mr. McAllion: More than £4,000 million has been spent on the Scottish national health service, most of it by the Secretary of State's appointees on health boards and NHS trusts. Does the Minister accept that while the establishment of an independent committee to advise on those appointments is a welcome step in the right direction, it nevertheless leaves a yawning democratic deficit at the heart of spending on the NHS in Scotland? Quangos are not made more accountable or more democratic simply by setting up a super-quango to watch over them. Does the Minister accept that only the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, elected by the Scottish people, will close that democratic deficit and that it is not for the Secretary of State for Scotland, but for the Scottish people—and only the Scottish people—to decide how their money is spent on their health service?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment as Opposition spokesman. On the previous major housing Bill, we were the only Scots Members of Parliament sitting in on proceedings so, for me, he is continuing an old role which he occupied in the past. In Tayside, some £245 million is being spent. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, so far as we are concerned, appointments are made on merit. That is why we appointed two persons who claim no affiliation with the Tory party—Campbell Christie and Lord Ewing, who is well known to the hon. Gentleman and who was a Scottish Office Minister a few years ago under the Labour Government. Persons are and will be appointed on merit.

Defence Diversification

11. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with Scottish Enterprise to discuss defence diversification in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: On my right hon. Friend's behalf, on 17 October I met Fife interests, including the chairman and chief executive of Fife Enterprise, together with representatives of Fife regional council and Dunfermline district council, to discuss the implications of defence and other industrial changes for the region. Fife Enterprise is now to put forward proposals to the Scottish Office for a task force to tackle these issues and it has been agreed that the Scottish Office will be represented on the task force.

Mr. Salmond: Has the Minister responsible for industry had time to read Fife regional council's submission to the Rosyth consultation process, which indicates that the Government have underestimated by 500 the job losses as a result of the proposals and that the total impact of job losses in the defence industry since 1991 in Fife alone will be no fewer than 7,000? Does the Minister accept those figures? Does he accept that job losses on that scale strengthen the argument for taking the savings in the defence budget directly into the industry and training budget in Scotland to evolve a proper defence diversification strategy as opposed to just losing the money in the Treasury morass?

Mr. Stewart: I have read the documents to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The major difference is that the Fife document refers to direct military personnel, who I do not think can reasonably be regarded as full-time residents of Fife although there is an indirect consequence to the Fife economy of a rundown involving personnel moving elsewhere.

In relation to the hon. Gentleman's general point, the consequences of "Front Line First" for Scotland are much less than they are elsewhere in Britain. For example, there will be a reduction of 8.2 per cent. in those employed in Scotland compared with a reduction of 13.2 per cent. in the south-east of England and 20.7 per cent. in the south-west. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will include those figures in his speeches. I can also confirm that Scottish Enterprise has a defence initiative to ensure that the consequences of the defence rundown are widely studied; a co-ordinated strategy, involving £25 million over three years, is in place and I believe that it will be highly effective.

Mr. Kynoch: In discussions with Scottish Enterprise, has my hon. Friend had any feedback from Scottish industry about the implications for Scottish industry of a Scottish Parliament as proposed by the Labour party? Is my hon. Friend aware that there is extreme concern in my part of Scotland about the fact that we shall become the highest taxed part of the United Kingdom which will be detrimental to existing industry and inward investment?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I understand from the press that the Labour party is likely to finance its plans by an increased tax on business in Scotland—*[Interruption.]* If that is not the intention, let us have it confirmed in writing. Let us have confirmed in writing the 20 answers to the 20 questions from the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). The trouble with the Labour party is that it is apparently committed to a body on which no Labour Members are prepared to serve and—*[Interruption.]* Well, there are three. How many more? It appears that there are four or five. Is that all? There are only five. What about the rest of them? Labour Members will not answer any detailed questions on how a Scottish Parliament would work or how it would be financed.

Mr. Connarty: When the Minister meets Scottish Enterprise, will he try to get down to some facts about the level of employment in Scotland? In research that I carried out over the summer, Government statistics reveal that there are 55,000 fewer people working in the Scottish work force in 1994 than there were in 1992 at the last peak of employment. Will the Minister discuss with Scottish Enterprise the fantasy of what happens to the young people on Government-related work training schemes? On average, there were 48,000 young people on such schemes last year. When the Department of Employment carried out its survey, after six months only 10 per cent. of survey forms were returned. That means that 43,000 young people have been lost; we do not know what has happened to them.

Will the Minister discuss with Scottish Enterprise, which I believe has now taken on the responsibility, how we can get round the table and design a survey which will follow every young person and discover whether that person obtains employment as we suspect that the vast majority do not get employment after wasting time on Government training schemes?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman has not sent me details of his researches over the summer, but, broadly, there are 155,000 more people in the work force than there were 10 years ago. On the hon. Gentleman's second point, the proportion of those on youth training schemes going on to full-time employment is steadily rising.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Do not the examples of Fife and Rosyth demonstrate how unrealistic it is to rely on the market to achieve defence diversification, not least because the market has only one customer, the Ministry of Defence? Is it not time for a properly co-ordinated Government strategy to manage the industrial change which has necessarily come about as a result of the ending of the cold war?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. and learned Member was not listening to what I said—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members would benefit from listening to my responses. I said very clearly that we are not relying in any sense on the market alone and that we have a clear and co-ordinated defence initiative run by Scottish Enterprise to assist in a variety of ways, through the local enterprise company network, with companies in Scotland to meet their needs, and to have a more diversified customer base.

Unemployment

12. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on levels of unemployment in the west highlands and islands.

Mr. Stewart: The latest unemployment statistics indicate that the downward trend in unemployment in the highlands and islands enterprise area is continuing and has indeed fallen in seven of the past 12 months. In the western isles, the fall in unemployment over the past year exceeds the Scottish average.

Mr. Macdonald: The Minister will know that tackling unemployment in the highlands and islands requires good transport links, particularly for island constituencies and islands such as Barra in my constituency. Many islanders work on the mainland and in the offshore oil industry. Will the Minister confirm that the Government are continuing to monitor the Loganair service between Barra and Glasgow? That service is continuing to cause concern. Does the Minister agree that the bottom line is that that service must be at least as reliable or as good as the previous service?

Mr. Stewart: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of that service. Indeed, he has made strong representations to the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), on behalf of the local community about the reliability of the Glasgow-Tiree-Barra service. I confirm that my hon. Friend and his civil servants are in close touch with the company as a matter of urgency. I am aware that Loganair is working hard on measures to improve reliability. As for the bottom line, I give the hon. Gentleman the absolute assurance that the Government agree fully with him.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: Will the Minister confirm the crucial contribution that the oil-related fabrication industry makes to employment prospects throughout the west highlands and islands? In that context, will he redouble Scottish Office efforts and Department of Trade and Industry pressure on the European Commission, following this week's merger of Highlands Fabricators at Nigg with McDermotts at Ardersier, to ensure that we have a level playing field for fabrication contracts within the single European market? Many of us still believe that the unfair competitive practices in other EU member states are not being adequately policed by the Commission.

Mr. Stewart: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman, first, on the importance of the industry to the part of the country that he represents and, secondly, on the crucial importance of maintaining pressure on the Commission to ensure the level playing field to which he refers.

Youth Recruitment

13. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has ordered a survey of the effects on youth recruitment of the Government's proposed cuts in the civil service.

Mr. Lang: The Government expect civil service numbers to decline in Scotland, as elsewhere. How this might affect youth recruitment will depend on the particular circumstances of individual Departments.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Secretary of State aware that there have been cuts in the finance and insurance industries in Edinburgh and that my constituency, which is one of the catchment areas for that recruitment area, is suffering? It is more difficult now for young people to get started in a career, and many of them are being employed on a temporary basis by the civil service throughout Scotland, not only in the Edinburgh area. The job creation situation under the Government is a laughing stock. They are creating a generation gap in the civil service and unemployment.

Mr. Lang: On the question of generation gaps in the civil service, the hon. Gentleman overlooks the fact that recruitment later in life is opening up in the civil service, and that there are opportunities for entry other than at the outset of one's career. As for the financial sector, that is one sector of the economy which has expanded dramatically in the past decade or so. There are recent examples of several hundred jobs from insurance companies being brought to Scotland which were previously carried out in the south-east of England. Indeed, at present, there are more people in employment in the service sector in Scotland than ever before.

Mrs. Liddell: Does the Minister agree that it is not only in civil service recruitment that young people are being disadvantaged? In view of the promises made by the Prime Minister and other Ministers about extra assistance to Lanarkshire to aid youth employment, can the Minister explain why the budget of the Lanarkshire development agency has been cut by Scottish Enterprise and how that is meant to assist young people seeking new jobs in new industries?

Mr. Lang: I welcome the hon. Lady to Scottish Question Time if, indeed, this is her debut. The budget for Scottish Enterprise has been substantially maintained recently. The actual distribution among different enterprise companies is a matter for Scottish Enterprise, but special resources have been brought to bear on the problems of Lanarkshire recently.

Council House Sales

14. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Scotland since May 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: By the end of March 1994, more than 289,000 houses had been sold by public sector landlords in Scotland to sitting tenants—proof of the great success of the right to buy. Before long, I hope to take part in a ceremony to mark the sale of the 300,000th house.

Sir David Knox: What proportion of the council house stock in Scotland has been sold? If it is still less than the proportion in England, what is my hon. Friend doing to increase sales in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The percentage of public sector stock sold since 1979 is 26.8 per cent. in England. In Scotland, it is 27.6 per cent, so we have decisively overtaken England in the sale of public sector stock to sitting tenants. As well as that, we hope some time next year to be able to say that the 300,000th house has been built since 1979. That is a substantial achievement, much of it by the private sector.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that despite direct representations by 18 Labour Members, the chairman and board of Scottish Homes have refused to allow councils to purchase houses from Scottish Homes? Is he also aware that Peter Mackinlay, the chief executive of Scottish Homes, told my Ayrshire colleagues and me that new town development corporation houses will be able to be sold to local councils as a result of a mistake by a senior civil servant in the Scottish Office? Can we not have the same sort of mistake for Scottish Homes and give tenants in Scottish Homes houses a real choice?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The position with regard to new town tenants is different. In particular, in the winding up of the new towns that will be taking place, there is a smaller than average proportion of local authority stock within the new towns. A further important factor is the need for decisions to be taken before wind-up. That is not the case for Scottish Homes. If special circumstances exist, Scottish Homes can take them into account, but it seems that the hon. Gentleman has not mentioned any special circumstances in this particular matter. I do not think that the civil servants have made any mistake at all.

Drug Abuse

15. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his response to the first report from the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs on drug abuse, HC 62.

Mr. Lang: The Select Committee's report was welcomed by the Government as a helpful contribution to the debate on the drug misuse problem in Scotland. The Scottish drugs task force, led by my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State, has now produced its comprehensive report containing more than 60 recommendations for action in responding to the drug misuse problem. Implementation of the report by the Government will be given a high priority.

Mr. McKelvey: As the task force report outlined a much-needed strategy particularly for harm reduction with regard to drugs, why on earth did the Secretary of State allow the Home Office to delay the implementation and publication of that report by three months? People who are desperately ill need assistance. Not only will their illness continue, but some of them may die while the delay continues.

Mr. Lang: I am happy to reassure the hon. Gentleman that there has been no delay. The report was published as soon as it was ready. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that much of what the Select Committee recommended has found echoes in the task force strategy report, which has now been published. It is important that hon. Members throughout the House should work together to implement the many recommendations in the report, which have been well received in Scotland and which we must all be determined will help us to fight the drugs misuse problem.

BILL PRESENTED

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Tony Lloyd, supported by Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Harry Barnes and Mrs. Jane Kennedy, presented a Bill to make provision with respect to youth services in the community and participation by youth in community development; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 166.]

European Community (Democratic Control)

3.31 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to secure effective democratic control of the European Community by repeal of the European Parliamentary Elections Acts and by making provision for representatives to the European Parliamentary Assembly to be drawn from the membership of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

I gather that the chances of winning the first prize in the national lottery are about 14,000,000:1 and the chances of this Bill becoming law are not much better. That is a shame, because it is a modest Bill—indeed, I would describe it as being one of extreme moderation. It does not seek in any way to reduce the powers of the European Parliament. It does not even seek to reduce the enormous costs of the European Parliament, even though we could point out that it costs almost £1 million for each Member of the European Parliament, compared with a mere £260,000 for each Member of this House.

My Bill does not even seek to tell other nations how they should select their Members of the European Parliament. It would apply the principle of subsidiarity to the way in which each nation chooses to select its MEPs. It would allow us to return to the indirect system that worked so well before 1979 whereby Members of that assembly were appointed from the House and, if I recall correctly, from another place.

I understand that the Bill might cause some problems for the Whips Office. Naturally I am sorry about that. I also understand that sometimes we would be deprived of the presence of some of our colleagues. I am sorry about that, too. Those are matters of deep regret, but we would have to bear them with fortitude, knowing that our colleagues from both sides of the House were in Brussels or Strasbourg exercising their democratic muscle on our behalf.

Some might say that the burden would be too much for already highly overworked Members of the House, but surely in practice, with some of the modest allowances which I understand are available for administrative and secretarial help, it might be no more of a burden than that already borne by some who are members of certain Select Committees or delegates to the Council of Europe or, indeed, both. The advantages would be great indeed.

It is complained that MEPs are out of touch with Westminster. Under my proposals that would be overcome at a stroke. It is complained that Westminster is out of touch with the European Parliament. That, too, would be overcome at a stroke. It is complained that MEPs, with their enormous constituencies, cannot help but be out of touch with their electors. That, too, would be overcome at a stroke.

Some uncharitable Opposition Members might think that my proposals are sour grapes because we lost rather a lot of seats at the latest European elections.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): That is the reason.

Sir Roger Moate: That is wrong. That is not the reason at all. If the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) will reflect for one moment, he will realise that next time round—if we still have such elections—we will win them all back again and many more besides. So, the suggestion is not so outrageous—that is if my Bill fails and we continue to have direct elections.

In his speech at Leiden in September, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—his words are very important and might even appeal to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—said:

> "The European Parliament sees itself as the future democratic focus for the Union. But this is a flawed ambition, because the European Union is an association of States, deriving its basic democratic legitimacy through national parliaments."

That should remain the case. People will continue to see national Parliaments as their democratic focus.

My right hon. Friend also stated:

> "Another clear message is that European people retain their faith and confidence in the nation state."

How right he was. Even the most ardent European integrationist or federalist must understand that there is a serious problem and that something has to change. The intergovernmental conference in 1996 is the time to change it.

What was the turnout in our European elections this year—36.2 per cent? What was it elsewhere in Europe? On 24 July, *The Observer* newspaper stated the case well:

> "The proportion of Europe's citizens who vote in European elections has dropped steadily since the first poll in 1979, when almost two-thirds of the electorate did its duty. This year the official result of 56.5 per cent. was achieved only because voting is compulsory in Greece, Belgium and Luxembourg. Those who did vote were in most cases commenting on national politics rather than saying anything about Europe."

How much more remote, irrelevant and unintelligible will it all be when we proceed to greater enlargement of the Community, which is moving inexorably ahead? There are 567 Members of the European Parliament for the present Community of 12 nations. It will soon rise to 15 or 16 nations when the European Free Trade Area nations join, as I fervently hope that they will.

Most people would accept the inevitability and desirability of early enlargement to the east, incorporating Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltic countries and Slovenia. All those countries are candidates for membership and perhaps for early membership. Other people talk of the possibility of Turkey, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta becoming members of a greater European Community. How unintelligible that supposedly directly elected and democratic Assembly will be for a Europe on such a scale.

As we all know, democratic elections are much more than a means of conferring some form of theoretical legitimacy on Governments. Such elections are about the power of people to change Governments, or the threat of that power changing policies. The voter and even the largest of national groupings within a nation are impotent in a Europe-wide poll. That sense of impotence will only grow as the Community grows. The sense of irrelevance is the real judgment on the fatally flawed and failed experiment of direct elections.

In 1996, if we change the treaty to allow each nation to choose its method of sending MEPs to the Assembly, I do not believe that we will be on our own. I hear that a strong body of opinion in France, which is well rehearsed in the French Assembly, would support the proposal. Other nations—especially the new members—would see the logic of that approach.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear that he will be ready to say no to proposals in Europe which are against British interests. I thank heaven that it is him and not the leader of the Opposition who will lead Britain into those 1996 negotiations. The latter has made it clear that he will never say no to Europe. His route and that of the Opposition—a single currency and the social chapter—will inevitably lead to a federal and centralised Europe. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear that ours is the route to a Community of sovereign nation states. I suggest that my Bill fits logically and completely into that pattern.

3.39 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman seeking to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Kennedy: Yes, Madam Speaker.

In opposing the Bill of the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate), I pay tribute to him on one basis. In the week following the summer recess when the Government have been displaying a new cohesion and unity of purpose and getting their act together, the hon. Gentleman has once again highlighted the deep divisions and disarray within the Conservative party on the fundamental issue of Britain's future in Europe, and what its correct role and relationships should be.

I shall make a number of brief points. The first, and most fundamental, is the fact that we are in the run-up to the 1996 intergovernmental conference. That conference—it has been called "son of Maastricht"—will be the proper forum in which all the relationships, power structures and representative tiers within the European Union shall be reassessed and, in many cases, recast. I would suggest that, logically, this is not the way in which to make such a fundamental change.

Secondly, it is illogical to proceed in the way in which the hon. Gentleman seeks. The aim of the Maastricht treaty to which the Prime Minister—in whom the hon. Gentleman has such apparent confidence, which the Prime Minister will be grateful to have noted—put his name is that we go precisely in the direction in which we are moving, albeit slowly, towards making the various levels of responsibility in decision-making at Union level more representative and more accountable. Many of us believe that we should be going much further than that.

The central problem in what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting is the belief that we can get greater accountability and democracy for the European Union by giving more power back to national Parliaments as a means of trying to scrutinise. That is the fundamental and honourable difference between us. We argue that the approach that we should take to the European Union is to give more, not less, power to the European Parliament and to the elected Members of the European Parliament. They are best able to hold the Commission to accountability, not the behind-closed-doors, secretive Council of Ministers, over which national Parliaments have nothing like the degree of scrutiny or accountability and where a report back on accountability by a Minister at the Dispatch Box is, as we know, ludicrous. It would be much better if we had a more congressional system at European level, and if the power for that congressional system was vested in the European Parliament itself.

On all those bases—and although I pay tribute to the fact that here is a fresh example of complete Conservative disunity and disarray—the House should do the Conservative party a favour and defeat one of its Members who is seeking to cause even more problems for his Government.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business), and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Sir Roger Moate.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (DEMOCRATIC CONTROL)

Sir Roger Moate accordingly presented a Bill to secure effective democratic control of the European Community by repeal of the European Parliamentary Elections Acts and by making provision for representatives to the European Parliamentary Assembly to be drawn from the membership of the House of Commons and the House of Lords: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 28 October, and to be printed. [Bill 167.]

Orders of the Day

Sir Clifford Boulton GCB

3.42 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That this House requests Madam Speaker to convey to Sir Clifford Boulton GCB, on his retirement from the office of Clerk of the House, its gratitude for his many services to this House and to parliamentary government throughout a distinguished career.

In inviting the House to pay this tribute to Sir Clifford Boulton on his impending retirement as our Clerk, I rarely have been more sure that I shall command support in every part of the House, and there can indeed be few for whom such a tribute has been better earned.

Sir Clifford has been a part of this place for 40 years and more, and he has been Clerk to our most senior Committees—Public Accounts, Procedure and Privileges. For the past seven years he has been Clerk of the House. His tenure of that office has been the longest in recent times, but it will be remembered not so much for that as for its exceptional quality, with his outstanding grasp of our often complex procedures, the scholarship he brought to the editing of the current version of "Erskine May", the contribution he has made to the Industry and Parliament Trust and—not least—his help to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and his service to the Association of Secretaries General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. As I have learned myself on visits to other Parliaments, the regard in which he is held extends well beyond our world here in Westminster.

For my part, although I have no doubt that here, too, I will be speaking for many others, in my two and a half years as Leader of the House it has been not only the quality of Sir Clifford's advice that I have valued but the manner in which it is offered: calm, courteous and considered, and set out with a clarity which belies the complexities beneath. Above all, I have valued the impartial balance that he brings to the task and his complete commitment to the House and what it stands for.

I am told that Sir Clifford's main relaxation, stemming no doubt from his background as the son of a Staffordshire farmer, is tending the garden at his home in what he firmly calls Rutland. No doubt in future, with his new-found freedom, he will occasionally take a few moments off to pen a note to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment about the reorganisation of local government.

However Sir Clifford may choose to occupy his time, of one thing I can be sure—that he will leave the service of this House not just with our thanks and our good wishes but with our very great respect.

3.45 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): On behalf of my right hon. Friends and myself, may I associate the Opposition with the remarks of the Leader of the House. I am sure that the whole House will be happy to support the motion of gratitude for Sir Clifford Boulton's many years of service. Sir Clifford, as the right hon. Gentleman has just reminded us, has enjoyed a long and distinguished career, culminating in his holding the highest permanent office in the House of Commons as Clerk to the House—although he is now also known as the Corporate Officer of the House, with a new seal to match the additional title.

All Members of the House, from the newest to the most experienced, have every reason to be grateful to all the Clerks for their advice, both in the Chamber and in Committee. We must all recognise that, in Parliament, knowledge of procedure is an important element of the work of us all, not least because knowledge of procedure really is power in the House. Members of Parliament rely on the knowledge of procedure that the Clerk has, used in an impartial way, to uphold the best traditions of the House. That is what we pay tribute to Sir Clifford for today.

Tradition is certainly the right word. The post of Clerk to the House of Commons dates back to 1363, and it is remarkable to discover that there have been only 44 holders of the office in all those years. Sir Clifford recently received an honorary doctorate from Keele university, the citation for which referred to the Clerks of the House of Commons as

"the invisible men and women of Parliament".

That certainly used to be so, but one of the changes since the televising of our proceedings has been that the Clerks are now visible. I have to admit that I have been asked several times who those people with the wigs on sitting in the middle are. It is easy to answer that they are the Clerks to the House of Commons; it is far more difficult to explain to outsiders what their role involves. It is probably rather like explaining the laws of cricket to Americans.

Sir Clifford has, I understand, been very keen to explain the workings of the House to people outside. I am sure that he has had some success—more than many of us have had—trying to explain to outsiders exactly what his role entails. I know that, in his role as editor of "Erskine May", he has tried with some considerable success to make it a much more accessible volume, and for that all hon. Members should be grateful.

We are all grateful to Sir Clifford for his service to the House, and we all most sincerely wish him well in his retirement.

3.48 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Sir Clifford Bolton has been in the House since 1953. Throughout that time he has been an outstanding servant of the House, carrying out all the Clerks' duties at the various levels in the Clerks Department in which he has served with an exemplary blend of the qualities necessary to that office.

One of those qualities is devotion to parliamentary democracy, involving as it does the rights of the House itself and all Members, groups and parties within it. Sir Clifford has been unfailingly courteous to Members of the House and has maintained that courtesy patiently in the most fraught circumstances. He is also a master of procedure. All around the Commonwealth there are stories of the guidance that he has given. Indeed, there is a story that a Commonwealth legislature was suspended while Mr. Boulton, as he then was, was telephoned in London for urgent advice.

But the duties of Clerk are not confined to procedure, and very much less so since the development of the House's own management, after the Ibbs report. Sir

Clifford has presided over fundamental changes in the management of the House, very ably assisted by the Clerk Assistant. Those changes have included the House taking control of its own buildings—a change from which I am sure he derives considerable satisfaction. But it has involved marked additional responsibility for the Clerk as the Accounting Officer of the House, and he has discharged that responsibility with very great care and faithfulness.

My right hon. Friends and I wish Sir Clifford and Lady Boulton every happiness in their retirement in the county of Rutland, of which they are so rightly fond. Sir Clifford has exemplified, enriched and sustained for the future the best traditions of the office of Clerk of the House.

3.50 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends of the Ulster Unionist party, I take great pleasure in supporting the motion expressing gratitude to Sir Clifford Boulton for the service that he has given to the House. His is an office that demands clarity of thought, integrity and charm, to ensure that the advice given, even if it is not always acceptable, becomes acceptable to the individual to whom it is given.

Sir Clifford possesses all those attributes and has discharged his duties with distinction and great courtesy to all who have gone to him for advice. We are grateful to him for all that he has done and wish him and his family well in future.

3.51 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The motion has the unqualified support of all the political parties in the House. I would like to add the voice of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party in thanking Sir Clifford.

The reality is that, although the spotlight always falls on hon. Members in the Chamber, Parliament could not function without the skill and expertise of the parliamentary staff. Therefore, in thanking Sir Clifford, I would like to wish him a long and very happy retirement.

3.51 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): There is no Committee more in touch with Sir Clifford than the Procedure Committee. It is right and proper that I should give thanks on behalf of the whole Committee—I can see one or two members of it here—for the considerable advice that he has given, the papers that he has produced, the way in which he has been cross-questioned, his willingness to be available, both officially and unofficially, at any time and, indeed, his willingness to try to assist the Committee whenever we have requested it.

Sir Clifford has done all that with charm and an intellectual ability, which is visible in all his work with which I have been associated. Therefore, it is with sorrow that I rise to wish the best to Sir Clifford and Lady Boulton, because one would want them to have a happy retirement. He is retiring a year early. He could serve another year. I assure the House that we are not driving him out. He is going at his own choice, because he wishes to be able to plough some other furrows. The Committee wishes therefore that, whatever Sir Clifford does, he will do it with the same success as he has achieved in the House, and with the same charm and ability. My Committee and I wish him very well.

3.53 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The House of Commons has had some remarkable Clerks in the past, but I think that we will miss Sir Clifford Boulton very much indeed. He has great wit. He has a strong and vigorous application to what is important in parliamentary justice and has never faltered in his commitment to those important facets of parliamentary life, which are so vital today. There is not an hon. Member of the House who has not at some point benefited from Sir Clifford's advice and help, which he gives equally to every one of us, irrespective of our status and problems.

I shall miss Sir Clifford tremendously. As much as for any other reason, I shall miss him because I believe that his strong convictions about the need to defend democracy in the House of Commons are vital to every one of us; but I shall also miss him as a friend. So, I think, will many other people. He is a remarkable man, and I am very sorry that we are going to lose him. I hope that we shall at least be worthy of the real traditions that he has laid down for us.

3.54 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): A short time ago I received a message from the Father of the House, who was particularly sorry that he could not be here. He is abroad, but he wishes to be associated with our tributes.

I am delighted to have been able to convey that message to the House, because I have a high regard for Sir Clifford, as we all do. He has served the House with immense distinction; he is a worthy successor to Erskine May and Rushworth, who took down the most famous words ever uttered in the House—when your predecessor, Madam Speaker, rebuked the Sovereign of the day.

Sir Clifford will leave this place with the affection and gratitude of us all. There has been no more doughty or distinguished defender of Parliament and its traditions.

3.55 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the light of what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), I wish to reflect on Sir Clifford Boulton's generosity to those of us who have held minority opinions from time to time, in terms of both his expertise and his time. We are deeply in his debt.

3.56 pm

Madam Speaker: Before I put the Question, I wish to add my own personal tribute to Sir Clifford. I know him as a man of absolute integrity, devoted to the parliamentary process, and a true friend and servant of democracy. As Speaker, I have been greatly assisted by his wise and sympathetic counsel, and by the support and friendship that he has offered me. He takes into retirement the knowledge of a job well done, and the best wishes of his many friends in the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House requests Madam Speaker to convey to Sir Clifford Boulton GCB, on his retirement from the office of Clerk of the House, its gratitude for his many services to this House and to parliamentary government throughout a distinguished career.

Public Accounts Committee Reports

3.56 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the 55th to 63rd Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1992-93, of the 1st to 39th and 41st Reports of Session 1993-94, and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda on these Reports (Cm 2419, Cm 2446, Cm 2492, Cm 2493, Cm 2555, Cm 2577, Cm 2602, Cm 2618 and Cm 2677) with particular reference to the following Reports:

Session 1992-93

Fifty-seventh, West Midlands Regional Health Authority: Regionally Managed Services Organisation;

Sixty-third, Wessex Regional Health Authority: Regional Information Systems Plan;

Session 1993-94

Eighth, The Proper Conduct of Public Business;

Sixteenth, The British Council Account, 1992-93;

Seventeenth, Pergau Hydro-Electric Project;

Twenty-third, Development Board for Rural Wales: Allocation and Sale of Housing and Car Leasing Scheme.

Our last Public Accounts Committee debate took place at almost the same time last year, when 42 reports were included in the motion. This debate relates to 49 reports and nine Government replies. As usual, a few reports have been specified in the motion, although doubtless many others will be mentioned in the debate.

This has been another exceptionally busy and productive Session for the Committee, in which it will in due course have agreed more than 50 reports. The Committee's work continues to generate great interest. I am very much aware of the burden imposed on my right hon. and hon. Friends by the amount of time that they must devote to that work; it is a great responsibility, for the Committee meets more often than any other Select Committee. We welcome the new arrivals, as well as thanking those who have left. In particular, I welcome the right hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who has become Financial Secretary to the Treasury following the departure of the right hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), who has moved on.

The most valuable aspect of our reports is the fact that they are unanimous, and not concerned with policy issues. We do not examine policy; we examine certain issues in regard to which policy would deeply divide the Committee, but our task is to ask whether the implementation of that policy will produce value for money.

The Committee and the National Audit Office enjoy a very close relationship, which is fundamental and essential. Under the National Audit Act 1983, the Comptroller and Auditor General has complete discretion in choosing his investigations. It is vital that that remains the case: no one should be in a position to debar the Comptroller and Auditor General from examining any matter that he chooses. As a result of that Act, however, the Committee has the statutory power to suggest that certain matters should be included in the programme that the NAO undertakes. I was much impressed with the innovations in the way in which the NAO continues to do its work, which we see almost on a regular basis. That is greatly to the credit of Sir John Bourn and his team.

Bill Jack has retired as Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland and I should like to pay tribute to his work in that job. Committee Members visited the new headquarters of the National Audit Office in Northern Ireland yesterday for the first time and we were impressed with what we saw. We now welcome John Dowdall to the job of CAG for Northern Ireland, although, of course, we knew him in his previous incarnation as Treasury Officer of Accounts there. We give our thanks to Tim Burr, who served us as Treasury Officer of Accounts and who has moved to become a director of the NAO, and to Ian Thomson, the second Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Accounting officers prepare assiduously for the Committee's evidence sessions. Hon. Members know full well the impact that the Public Accounts Committee has in these matters, the burden of the task that we impose on it, the way in which it must prepare assiduously for an investigation and the amount of time that it has to devote to it. That is all worth while in ensuring that public accountability is not only known, but frequently expressed.

I have highlighted the six reports in the motion. They led us to believe that the Committee should deal with a number of serious matters. I have said repeatedly that, in general, value-for-money matters concern the Committee only because questions of probity, accountability, fraud and corruption rarely come before it. When they do, however, they take precedence over everything else. Committee Members have always held that the most important aspect of our work is to preserve standards in public life which we have been fortunate enough to inherit over the years.

In the 1992 debate on the Public Accounts Committee's work of that year, I mentioned the importance of non-departmental public bodies. I drew attention to the fact that the Committee could not approve of the way in which a number of them were undertaking their work and I said that we might need to pursue the matter further.

In the 1993 debate, I said that the problem had become much more serious and that the Committee would be producing a report. I expressed the view that Committee Members felt great disquiet about certain aspects. In January 1994, we produced the eighth report on the proper conduct of public business, one of the most important reports undertaken by the PAC. It is of enormous importance because it shows the need to maintain the standards that we have come to expect over the years.

Committee Members discovered a situation that was rather different from what they had been used to. New people were taking up appointments as heads of non-departmental bodies with new responsibilities. Coming from outside the public service, they had not acquired the ethos within that service or its integrity, impartiality and objectivity, which Sir Robin Butler, in giving evidence to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, thought was the hallmark of the civil service.

Plenty of people came into the civil service not to make money, but to serve their country and to do something for its future. We belittle their role at our great peril. It is most important that we regard their work, in the words of Lord Callaghan, as the bulwark of our constitution. They are the protectors of so many of our rights as they continue their work for Governments of different persuasions.

Throughout this century, our economic standards have declined in comparison with other countries, but our standards of public life must not decline. That is of enormous importance. I can only go back to the early years of this century, but my room in the Committee could have been the room that Gladstone knew in the last century. Over the doorway is the marvellous Victorian word "assiduity". It is a word which constantly haunts us, because we can never be sure that we are dealing with matters as fully and thoroughly as we need to.

One hundred and eighty-four countries are members of the United Nations, but how many of them are free from fraud and corruption? One thinks of the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, Germany, Holland and one or two others. One can think of a dozen without too much difficulty, but then it becomes very hard. We are an unusual country in having the standards that we have come to expect and take for granted. It is crucial that we retain those standards, which is why I am placing great emphasis on the task before us.

The Treasury has a substantial role to play and produced a Treasury minute following our eighth report. It was not as satisfactory as it should have been. I suggest to the Financial Secretary that it should have said more, but I take comfort from the fact that what the Treasury did was better than what it said, because it set out to give the type of response that we wished. Of course, the Departments have gone further, and I shall deal with them later.

The task is to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Public money is very different from private money. People coming from outside can have difficulty in acquiring the standards that we take for granted and which we regard as essential.

I should like the accounts of all non-departmental public bodies to be audited by the National Audit Office, a body in which we all have supreme confidence. It is a tribute to that office that we all agree that it has the very highest standards; but it does not have the power to audit non-departmental public bodies. As second best, I should like the auditors of those bodies to be changed frequently. The National Audit Office's accounts are audited by a professional firm. We found nothing wrong with any of the auditors, but we change them every three or five years. If non-departmental public bodies are not to be audited by the NAO, they should have similar arrangements. One does not want too close a relationship between non-departmental public bodies and their auditors.

The question now is how to deal with the several thousands—the number depends on definition, but one could claim a much lower or higher figure—of non-departmental public bodies, quangos or whatever one likes to call them. Appointments to such bodies should at least be subject to some outside scrutiny, perhaps that of a Select Committee. I have no particular preference, but there needs to be some external observation of how appointments are made.

The relevant Secretary of State makes use of people whom he or she knows, but the numbers of appointees are now so large that, if he or she is using the very highest standards, it will be difficult to find people to fill all the posts. We are, therefore, forced to examine such appointments more closely.

I have already referred to the morale of the civil service. Many of us speak to groups of them and we know that their morale has declined and needs to be improved. At a time of what many people would call root and branch reform, civil servants may become anxious about their future. We need people with ability and integrity producing evidence-driven policies. It is important to ensure that the policies are evidence driven, and, for that to be done well, we need the civil service. Its morale is of enormous importance.

The work of the Public Accounts Committee is valuable partly because every one of the 450 or so reports that I have had the privilege of bringing before the House has been unanimous. That unanimity has not been fudged; it has been genuine, even on issues such as privatisation. That is because we look to the taxpayer. It is the taxpayer who makes our reports unanimous. So many things can divide us, but that, above all else, is what unites us—and that is how we proceed.

I shall deal with the eighth report first, because it brings in a number of aspects to which I want to draw attention. It deals with some matters that were examined in the previous Session of this Parliament. Paragraph 1 says:

> "In recent years we have seen and reported on a number of serious failures in administrative and financial systems and controls within departments and other public bodies, which have led to money being wasted or otherwise improperly spent. These . . . represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years. This was the period following the publication of the Northcote and Trevelyan Report which condemned the nepotism, the incompetence and other defects of the Civil Service and brought about fundamental change. It is from that period that we acquired the principles and the standards which have come to be copied by some countries and admired by many more. It is our task to retain those standards."

Paragraph 5 says that

> "we consider that any failure to respect and care for public money would be a most important cause of a decline in the efficiency of public business."

That is not simply a question of probity. Probity leads to efficiency, and we can never do without either. The report continues:

> "But there is no reason why a proper concern for the sensible conduct of public business and care for the honest handling of public money should not be combined with effective programmes for promoting economy and efficiency."

Our task is to achieve both of those together.

The Committee emphasised that

> "we are not calling for any more detailed rules. Almost every case we have examined involved breaches of existing rules or guidance."

Everything was laid down. We have inherited a splendid set of rules governing such matters. Of course, there is the question of selection, but that is a separate matter. The rules are there.

The Committee said that the framework for those rules

> "must include effective systems of control and accountability and above all responsible attitudes on the part of those handling public money."

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend, but before he moves off that subject, does he agree that the problem with accountability today is that the Government increasingly put such bodies more and more at arm's length, further and further away?

Even the Secretary of State and the Government lose control and lose their responsibility to the House for public money that is being spent in large amounts. I am

[Mr. Barry Sheerman]

talking especially of the new universities which, as my right hon. Friend knows, have a degree of independence and autonomy that makes accountability difficult. Even the Secretary of State will agree that she has no powers to intervene, even when public moneys are obviously being misspent.

Mr. Sheldon: Of course my hon. Friend understands that we achieved something with regard to the university of Huddersfield; I shall refer to that briefly later. My hon. Friend is right; with many such bodies, the problem is to control them. It will be up to the Departments concerned to exercise what control they can. As I have said before, I should like there to be more of a relationship between the auditing function and the procedures carried out by the National Audit Office. That could be one method.

Those put in such a privileged position must fully accept the proper way in which such responsibilities are handled and must accept the standards of the public service in the work that they do.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): The right hon. Gentleman, to admirable effect, is going through much of the work done by the Committee during the year. Before he goes too far down the road of assuming that the areas at which we have looked are failings with non-departmental public bodies, in the context of the report to which he is referring, "The Proper Conduct of Public Business", will he agree that we have found some horrifying examples of mismanagement and misuse of public funds among the traditional civil service of Government Departments? It would give a wholly false picture of the work of the Committee and of the National Audit Office if we assumed that the failures at which we have looked were solely among non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman's point is undoubtedly correct; I shall refer to the British Council, among other bodies that we examined. As I have said, most of our work has traditionally been of that kind and I hope that it will continue to be of that kind. It just happens that, this year, we came across a number of issues of a kind that we have not so commonly met. I hope that we shall be able to deal with them effectively and then get back to our normal task of looking at value for money; we shall deal with the issues as they come.

It is most essential to maintain honesty in the spending of public money and to ensure that traditional public sector values are not neglected in the effort to maximise economy and efficiency, which we want to see working together. We shall pay particular attention in our future examination of accounts and the implementation of programmes to the successful combination of the proper conduct of public business and the energetic pursuit of value for money. Those must go together.

We think that to assist us in that task, it would be helpful if the National Audit Office were able to examine and inspect all non-departmental public bodies and other organisations that receive the greater part of their income from central Government funds and to report the results to us.

Following on from that, I had a meeting last week with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, together with the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission—the right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern)—and the Comptroller and Auditor General. The meeting, which was of long standing, was intended to pursue the matter raised ever since the National Audit Act 1983—the right to pursue public money wherever it goes. At this stage, of course, we do not expect as much as that, although it may remain a long-term end. After all, that power exists in the United States.

What we want is to pursue the issue of a contractor in a competitive bid. If there are no competitive bids—for example, for building a submarine or a tank—because there is only one supplier, the National Audit Office has the power to investigate the costs when the contract has been completed, to assure itself that the costings have been properly worked out. In competitive bidding, the NAO does not have that right. The view is held that if there is competition, there is no need for such an investigation.

In practice, there are problems of collusion between a limited number of competing bidders and that matter concerns us. As I mentioned, greater powers exist in the United States. The European Court of Auditors has the power to come into a company at which we cannot look and it can insist on finding out where the money has been spent. The Audit Commission can follow that public money. The same powers exist in the United States, but we do not have those powers ourselves. We are not asking to see all the books; it would clearly be wrong for us to investigate all the accounts. We want the power to pursue the areas, which could be very limited, in which public money has been involved. We say that, in such matters, we should be on a par with the European Court of Auditors, the Audit Commission and the United States authorities.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer looked at the matter sympathetically and I am pleased that we had a response from him. He intends to consider the matter and we hope to get some movement here. At present, when there is a competitive tender for a road, for example, we have no means of knowing whether there has been collusion. That is a power which I think that we ought to have.

A more immediate matter, because we have dealt with it frequently in the House, has been the way in which Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. and Swan Hunter competed for the contract to supply landing platforms for helicopters. The Committee dealt with that in its 30th report and it concluded that the best bid was accepted. That was probably true, but the difficulty was that we were never able to prove it conclusively and there was great bitterness about that. We did not have the same access as the European Court of Auditors would have gained if it had been a European sum of money. We did not want to see the whole profitability of everything that those companies did, but we wanted to ensure that the bidding had been fair and that loss-leaders were not involved.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, as I said, understood those arguments and the Committee hopes to hear something from him shortly. He will be consulting his colleagues to see how far he can go in that matter. Of course, we see a considerable response from the Treasury and elsewhere in the individual reports, and that may continue in other directions.

The Committee drew attention to certain matters relating to the Welsh Development Agency. One important abuse—there were a number of them—triggered the need to produce the eighth report on the proper conduct of public business in 1993-94.

Although some aspects of the matter were dealt with in our debate last year, I shall outline again some of the abuses. For example, paragraph (ix) shows how that public sector body decided on redundancy payments and then justified the payment of those redundancy schemes by considering schemes to which it did not belong. It justified the payments by saying that in one scheme people were allowed some benefit and in another people were allowed something else. It picked and chose the standards to apply. Of course, if one picks and chooses the standards to apply, one may end up with any solution that one wants. We strongly disapproved of that.

Paragraph (xv) shows that the WDA provided cars without drawing any distinction between cars used for official duties and cars used for private motoring, so the private motoring of senior employees was paid for by the taxpayer. Paragraph (xix) outlined the case of a Mr. Price, who had served only nine weeks as the international director before the Welsh Development Agency sent him home on eight weeks' gardening leave, as it called it. Tension arose between the chairman and that international director which ended up with a retirement package of £228,000, all because of a disagreement. That is not what the public sector should be about. The WDA went further and produced a legal agreement stating that the international director would lose money if he discussed that agreement.

One of the related matters that the Committee is bringing before the House is the secrecy element. We have seen a secrecy element in so many such cases, where money has been given by the chairman on the basis that if anything were subsequently disclosed, there would be a loss of money to the person receiving that payment. We have found out subsequently that 48 members of staff at the Welsh Development Agency received severance packages and had been required to give no disclosure of agreements. It is clearly wrong. This is taxpayers' money. We are here to protect the taxpayers' money and we find that such agreements would have been concealed from us if we had not had the advantage of the National Audit Office and the investigation before the Public Accounts Committee.

We then found that a Mr. Carignan, director of inward investments in North America, removed furniture amounting to more than £53,000, and the Welsh Development Agency received $15,000. The Committee's report states:

"We do not consider that agreement . . . represents good value for money".

I want now to refer to Mr. Smith, who was the director of marketing. He had a criminal conviction in the United States and there was laxity in checking his references. With regard to the appointment, I said at question 19 in the examination of witnesses in the 47th report:

"This points to very great laxity on very important matters. We are dealing with . . . considerable sums of public money."

In reference to the commissioning by Mr. Smith of Shapes Model Agency, I said:

"This is an astonishing tale is it not? It refers to payments made to the Shapes Model Agency who had at one time had a licence under the Employment Agency Act but this had lapsed so they did not any longer have it. It seems there was a failure to find out about the status of the Model Agency. Mr. Smith, on a Sunday, had 11 girls from the Model Agency up to his hotel to interview them to see whether they would be suitable for an advertising promotion that he had in mind. What happens in private industry does not concern us, but public money can never be used in this kind of way. Did you know anything about this beforehand?"

The reply was:

"No, I did not."

That is a scandalous state of affairs. The sums of money are not the issue. What is crucially important is the way in which public money is treated. We felt very bad about what had happened.

The WDA also examined possible privatisation of aspects of its own work. As a Committee, it was not for us to comment on that. If that was Government policy, that would be something we would take for granted. However, we found that the WDA had decided on that course of action itself. Under Operation WIZARD, £308,000 was spent examining the possible privatisation of WDA work. Nothing was formally minuted by the board and the existence of the operation was not publicly revealed, even after it was decided to shelve that programme. As the programme was spread over several headings, it was very difficult to discover what had happened.

We state in paragraph 41 of the 47th report:

"We note that neither approval nor progress of Operation WIZARD was formally minuted by the Agency's Board and that its existence was not publicly revealed, even after it was shelved . . . We are concerned that not only was Parliament denied information, but that this Committee would have remained unaware of the project's existence had it not been for unofficial revelations from within the Agency."

That is very important. By all means, let the Government decide to privatise what they wish. That is their prerogative. However, it is not the prerogative of people to spend public money outside the control of Government and then try to conceal it.

In this catalogue of errors and wrongdoings by the WDA, we referred to an incident in September 1987 involving Dr. Gwyn Jones. He was not chairman at that time, but he received a grant for the conversion of premises to eight craft workshops. A grant of £16,895 was paid after he became chairman of the WDA. A monitoring visit by the agency showed that there had been a change in use and the premises had been adapted for residential use. However, two years were to elapse before there was a clawback of £3,379.

We state in paragraph 35:

"It is clearly important that persons in high public office should ensure that circumstances do not arise which can give cause to any allegations of abuse of position. We consider therefore that Dr. Jones should have notified both of the proposed changes in use at the earliest possible opportunity."

I shall deal with matters relating to the West Midlands regional health authority as they are dealt with in the report. They are serious matters which require urgent consideration by everybody concerned.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): For the benefit of those who are following the debate both inside and outside the House, may I ask how often the right hon. Gentleman's worthy deliberations actually lead to prosecutions which might stand as a warning to people who are cooking the books or otherwise misusing public money? It would be a comfort to the public to know that

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

at least some of their money is being regained from some of the bungling that the right hon. Gentleman so vividly describes.

Mr. Sheldon: There have been prosecutions. The hon. Lady is quite right. Most prosecutions take a long time. Several have not yet been finalised. One or two have been finalised, and I shall mention them. The papers are always given to the police in due course and matters are followed up wherever necessary.

I shall refer to the West Midlands regional health authority and our 57th report of 1992-93, and the shortcomings that we saw. I begin with paragraph 32. A consultancy service was arranged to advise the supplies branch of the West Midlands regional health authority. The authority had a supplies branch and it wanted a consultancy—there is nothing wrong in that. Many organisations have sections in which there is insufficient expertise and they therefore employ outside consultants. There has been a large increase in the use of consultants. The Comptroller and Auditor General is considering as a general issue how such appointments should be made; that is a sensible way to proceed.

There was no tender for the consultancy that was obtained. The Government have been strongly of the view that there should be competitive tendering wherever possible—a matter on which we fully agree. We said:

> "First, it is unsatisfactory that there was no tender for this consultancy, which cost £2.5 million, and that the selection and appointment of the consultants was done outside the procedures laid down by the Regional Health Authority."

We went on:

> "Second, it is unacceptable that the Director of Regionally Managed Services, Mr. Watney, was able to avoid submitting the agreement to the Regional Health Authority for approval."

It was not submitted for approval. We said:

> "The omission was contrary to the Regional Health Authority's standing orders and is evidence of grave weaknesses in management and accountability.
>
> Third, it is unacceptable that there was no formal contract for the consultancy service since this left it in the hands of the consultants to decide what they would provide. Again, this omission was outside the Authority's standing orders."

Mr. Watney put great effort into preparing the supplies branch for privatisation. We said:

> "Fifth, we are astonished that the Director of Regionally Managed Services, Mr. Watney, was left to pursue his objective of privatising the Supplies Branch without the knowledge of the Regional Health Authority, which had no policy for such a privatisation, and without the knowledge of the Management Executive."

That is a terrible thing to do—somebody going off on his own in such a matter. It is for the Government to make such decisions; it is not for somebody who incurs the expenditure of public money to undertake those examinations. We said that it was

> "unsatisfactory that Mr. Davies, Director of Finance of the Regional Health Authority should have been able to make a loan of £300,000 to a company in financial difficulties without reference to the Regional Health Authority for approval and in the face of advice from legal staff."

That is a very serious matter. Later in the report, we note that the

> "Director of Regionally Managed Services, Mr. Watney, was allowed to leave on redundancy terms after five years service with the Authority, with an immediate pension of £6,462 a year and lump sums totalling £81,387. We consider these terms quite unjustifiable."

The Carver review, which examined these matters, was set up to inquire into serious allegations of mismanagement. We said:

> "We note that the Regional Health Authority and the Management Executive agree that Mr. Watney should have been dismissed not made redundant. We think it unsatisfactory that consideration was not given to dismissal at the proper time, and regard the Regional Health Authority's explanation that they did not have the full facts until later as further evidence of their failure to know about and control what their senior staff were doing in their name".

That is a terrible indictment.

Finally, we say—and this is repeated in a number of our reports:

> "It is unacceptable and disturbing that the Regional Health Authority agreed to a silence clause in connection with Mr. Davies' departure."

Silence clauses are not for the public service to decide; they are for the House to decide. The Committee does not deny that a silence clause is justified in certain instances, but it is a feature of many of the things that are wrong. The silence of people is demanded in return for a sum of money; if people break the silence vow, some of the money is lost to them.

We said:

> "We note the Regional Health Authority's view that this was not an issue that they had wished to air in public".

I am not surprised by that.

> "However we consider that such protection is unjustified for individuals in responsible public positions in relation to questions as to whether they have neglected those responsibilities."

All that is deeply disturbing. I wish that we did not have this sort of thing. It diminishes the standing of the public service generally and the way in which we carry out our responsibilities. We want to return to the standards that we always expected, and I hope that that will come in due course.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the real tragedies of the West Midlands story is not only that some officers have had silence clauses and others have simply been overpaid, when perhaps they should have been dismissed, but that there are real human casualties in this whole affair?

In particular, one of the areas investigated by the Committee was the case of Qa Business Services, which went bust after 18 months. The Committee's deliberations show that that probably should have been foreseen. As a result of the company's going bust, a number of employees who were not responsible for that ended up losing not only their jobs but up to two thirds of their pension entitlement. They are still suffering today, and will do so into their old age.

In addressing these issues, it is important that we remember those human casualties, because, so far, no one—neither a Minister nor anyone else—has done anything for the pensioners of Qa Business Services and employees in other cases. They still stand to lose, and will lose in the future.

Mr. Sheldon: Unquestionably, there are repercussions in all these matters. When a health authority misuses its money, we must also think of those people covered by the arrangements of the hospital authority, and the way in which services have diminished as a result of money being wasted elsewhere.

I now turn to a deep unhappiness in this catalogue of cases, the Wessex case. I shall deal with only some of the criticisms made by the Public Accounts Committee; unfortunately, they are numerous. I quote paragraph 1 of the 63rd report of the current Session:

> "In May 1984 the Wessex Regional Health Authority launched their regional information systems plan. This was intended to provide computer systems which would optimise the use of information to improve clinical and other health services. In April 1990, when the plan was abandoned, at least £43 million had been spent by the Regional Health Authority. District Health Authorities will also have spent money on the scheme, but it is not possible to identify how much."

When we examined this case, one of the problems that we faced was that we were unable to find out the total expenditure involved; but, obviously, we knew that it was greater than the sums that were in front of us and which are mentioned in the report.

I shall deal with only the conclusions, because it would take too long to go through all the matters. We said:

> "We consider it a matter of grave concern that, by the Management Executive's own admission, at least £20 million was wasted between the start of the regional information systems plan in 1984 and its abandonment in 1990."

We continued:

> "The evidence presented to us depicted Mr. Hoare"—

the former regional general manager—

> "as a man with a strong vision, and such a determination not to be deflected off course, that he presided over a series of actions incompatible with the proper handling of public money and without regard to clear evidence that the project was going badly wrong . . .
>
> We note with dismay that not only did the Regional Health Authority's management strenuously contest the auditors' criticisms, they were also able to conceal vital information from the Members of the Authority and from the Management Executive."

The regional health authority involved Andersen Consulting—this is another issue—in appraising available computer software to run on the preferred bidder's systems. It had a preferred bidder, but it involved Andersen Consulting in appraising it. The report says:

> "We note that subsequently, following a retendering exercise, the contract to supply core computer systems and software was awarded to Andersen Consulting at an inquorate meeting of the Authority."

It overturned the previous decision, gave the contract to Andersen Consulting, which had been brought in to appraise the software, and did so at an inquorate meeting of the authority. The contract contained no quality conditions and no maximum price. We point out that

> "it is clearly wrong for somebody who is tendering for National Health Service business also to be advising the National Health Service as their consultant."

On another issue, the report says:

> "We are concerned that the Regional Health Authority allowed Mr. Tuffill, while on secondment from IBM, at the request of the Chairman of the Regional Health Authority to advise them on the purchase of an IBM computer for £3.3 million, at which time it could have been purchased for £0.5 million to £1 million less than the price paid. . . . We are also disturbed that the contract for the computer was signed by Mr. L. Wright, then Regional Treasurer, on the instructions of Mr. J. Hoare, then Regional General Manager, without reference to the Chairman or to the Authority and without competitive tendering, contrary to the Authority's standing orders."

We feel that that is most serious.

Lastly, we say:

> "It is also important in our view to ensure that all health service staff respect the fundamental principles of public business in this country, and are judged . . . by the standards of honesty, openness and fair dealing that are expected in public life. Concern for these standards should play a large part in the selection, training and assessment of staff at all levels."

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): In the case of Wessex, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a matter for great concern that, in addition to the information that has been revealed, the auditors sent a series of reports to the Secretary of State? The earliest was sent in February 1987. Successive Secretaries of State and the NHS management executive failed to act properly on those reports.

Is it not a matter of great concern not only that things went wrong in Wessex but that, despite the efforts of the audit service to bring those matters to the attention of Ministers and the NHS management executive, no effective action was taken until £20 million or more had been wasted?

Mr. Sheldon: I have expressed myself, and the Committee has expressed itself, as very worried about the relationship between the NHS management executive and the various health authorities. We come across that time and again. Only a few years ago, as a result of our complaint about a certain matter, the NHS management executive sent a circular to all 192 health authorities asking them how they behaved in a certain situation. The management executive received replies from only two thirds of the health authorities. One third did not even bother to answer. That was clearly very wrong. Things have improved a little since then, but not sufficiently. We have never been in a position to say that the NHS management executive had control over, or even knew, what was happening, as it ought to have done.

Our 16th report, on the British Council account 1992-93, deals with a serious matter that we have not come across before. It highlights not necessarily fraud but something wrong in the way in which matters were handled. As the report says:

> "In December 1992 the British Council's banking section, having received seven fraudulent payment vouchers, paid a total of £520,072 into the overseas bank accounts of bogus suppliers. Other irregularities, including a fraud and an alleged fraud involving travel and subsistence claims, were also identified during the year, bringing total irregularities identified in 1992-93 to over £589,000."

Such fraudulent payments are a serious matter. We found out that in June 1988 the British Council introduced an electronic transfer system within its banking section. It was used to pay invoices to overseas suppliers in foreign currencies and, in some cases, to pay United Kingdom suppliers in sterling.

In December 1992, the banking section received seven fraudulent payment vouchers and paid a total of £520,000 in foreign currency by electronic transfer into the overseas bank accounts of bogus suppliers. The supporting documents were fraudulent. They had been photocopied and in several cases the vouchers bore signatures that were not on the approved lists.

When the council came before us, it acknowledged that the fraud could have been assisted by a member of staff who was part of the conspiracy. It could also have been assisted by a temporary employee or possibly a contractor employed overnight. It told us that police inquiries were continuing, but had not established any connection whatever with a member of the council's staff—present or past, full time or part time. That is the answer to the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). I understand

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from the Treasury minute that some arrests have been made and I hope that others might be made as the investigation proceeds.

The report says:

> "We are concerned that the Council failed to provide for an adequate separation of duties and so allowed a member of staff to defraud them of nearly £52,000."

That is another issue entirely. The council did not have a proper separation of duties. It relied too much on one individual. Everyone in private business or public service knows that one can never do that. There must be proper control systems. We said:

> "It is a serious matter that the perpetrator was allowed to check his own work as well as having the responsibility for controlling payments and accounting for them. We find it disturbing that an alleged fraud by another member of staff was discovered only after a change of staff and not through the operation of the Council's control arrangements . . . We note that the Council have taken disciplinary action against a number of their employees relating to the frauds which have taken place; and we note, in particular, that they have taken action against two members of their board of management. We regard such action as essential".

The responsibility of those concerned for the areas of business in which the irregularities took place must be made clear.

I now come to the report on the Pergau hydro-electric project. It was a new type of report for us. We had never made such a report before. We saw in operation the safeguard of the accounting officer's right to appear before the Public Accounts Committee. Accounting officers always have the right to claim that they received a direction; that is a safeguard for them. Clearly, the Minister is in charge and can insist on a payment being made. Accounting officers know full well that they can come before the Public Accounts Committee and say that they did not agree with that expenditure but that it was imposed on them.

In my experience as a Minister and elsewhere, I have known of at least two other cases in which such a letter was sent to the relevant Minister. I suspect that there are many other occasions on which a permanent secretary decides that he must get a direction, but then realises that it will make his relationship with the Secretary of State or the Minister concerned very difficult, so such a disclaimer letter is never sent. There have been one or two cases, but never one at that level or one that came before the Public Accounts Committee in such a way.

We found out that in July 1991 the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs overruled the advice of the accounting officer of the Overseas Development Administration and instructed him to incur expenditure of up to £234 million from the aid programme on the Pergau hydro-electric project in Malaysia.

Our report continues:

> "In view of the prospective size of the Pergau project,"—

a very large sum of money was involved—

> "we consider that it is essential that it should have been subject to a full economic appraisal. Although a number of desk studies had been previously undertaken, the appraisal visit lasted for only two days and an interim report on the project was made after only one day."

Clearly, such an examination is not serious. One does not decide to spent £234 million during a two-day visit to Malaysia. Obviously, reaching the site would take much of the time.

We later found out the reasons. We said that

> "we share the Administration's astonishment that the contract price should have been increased from £316 million to £397 million, ie by over 25 per cent only two weeks after the agreement between the two Prime Ministers had been reached."

It appears that the ODA was not fully informed, but it should have been and it should have discovered how the valuation and the cost was moving along. We added:

> "It is also unacceptable that this information was not available before the Government entered into what they regarded as a politically binding agreement."

That is the important issue which should concern any accounting officer who appears before the PAC. We went on:

> "In cases where Ministers over-rule officials on matters involving propriety and regularity, the papers are automatically sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General and such over-ruling would then be disclosed to this Committee."—

that is right—

> "Where such over-ruling concerns prudent and economical administration, efficiency and effectiveness, the Accounting Officer is not obliged to send the papers to the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the National Audit Office is made aware of the Ministerial direction only if it is conducting a relevant inquiry."

We continued:

> "We were concerned that the Committee of Public Accounts should always be in a position to know when, and in what terms, Ministers overruled their Accounting Officers on matters of prudent and economical administration."

There may be very good political reasons, but we should know, so that we are able to distinguish between political reasons that do not involve us, and on which we should not comment, and other considerations on which we might want to comment.

The Committee concluded:

> "We think it was right and in accordance with his responsibilities that the Accounting Officer advised Ministers that he would require a direction before spending money on this project. We accept that Ministers were given clear advice from their officials in February 1991 about the economics of the Pergau project; and were told that to support it would not be an effective use of the aid budget . . . We note that Ministers decided to provide aid because they did not wish to renege on an earlier commitment given by the Government at the highest level".

We noted that the matter went from the Minister for Overseas Development to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and then to the Prime Minister. Our inquiries came to an end because political considerations that did not concern us were involved. The matter was then dealt with by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. We had carried out our task. Once an issue becomes a matter of policy, we leave it to others to involve themselves, if they so wish.

The 23rd report, "Development Board for Rural Wales: allocation and sale of housing and car leasing scheme", concerns the sort of subject that everyone can understand because many people have experience of it. The report states that, under the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976, the board has

> "a stock of 1,000 houses . . . The provision, letting and sale of houses in their . . . area . . . is currently a major function of the Board, yielding an annual income of around £2 million."

The board is required to publish a summary of its rules for determining priority between applicants in the allocation of housing accommodation—like local authorities.

The report continues that the housing Acts

> "also require the Board to maintain a set of detailed rules which they have laid down to govern the procedures to be followed in allocating their houses. The Board must make these rules available for inspection by the public at their principal office".

That is a normal and standard safeguard. We added:

> "The Board published their rules for allocating houses in 1981 in response to the requirements of the Housing Act 1980."

The board also had a secret list, however. One of the public rules was that people allocated houses had employment in or close to the town concerned. In a sample, the National Audit Office found that 22 per cent. of the people who were allocated houses did not meet the criteria in the published rules. They obtained their houses from the secret list. The National Audit Office estimates that 238 of the board's tenancies were allocated under the unpublished rules.

Time and again, things seem to have gone wrong. Once matters are in the open, people will do things right and that is very important. Once they are in the open, no one can defend the unjustifiable. Only when they are kept secret can things go wrong on such a scale. There is no excuse.

In the 13 years that the secret list existed, not one member of the board's staff raised its failure to comply with the housing Acts. It was clearly wrong to have a secret list for such a long period.

Paragraph 12 of the report states:

> "Following his enquiries into a complaint by a member of the public into housing allocations made by the Board, the Ombudsman concluded that there had been gross maladministration by the Board in the allocation of housing. He also reported that the Board's Housing Officer had allocated a house to himself when he was not eligible for housing under the published rules"—

he did so under the secret rules—

> "and had allocated his ex-wife a house to which she was not entitled according to those rules."

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I endorse the right hon. Gentleman's assertions throughout his speech that matters should be put out in the open. One thing concerns me about the report, however. The right hon. Gentleman said that the housing officer allocated a house to his wife. He will see from the report that it was noted that "no reference required" was marked on the wife's file. The right hon. Gentleman's Committee asked for further and better particulars. There is a note to that effect at the back of the report. Why did it not elicit the information that the wife was a prominent county councillor and the Liberal Democrat constituency secretary for the area?

Mr. Sheldon: Party political matters are not for the Public Accounts Committee. We are interested in the presence of a secret list and the fact that 22 per cent. of house allocations did not meet the published rules. We found not only that the housing officer had been allocated a house and subsequently had been allowed to transfer to a different property without submitting an application form under the board's rules, but that allocated tenants could insist on purchasing houses at a large discount. That is fairly normal, but 55 tenants who obtained houses under the secret list were given the advantage of being able to buy houses at large discounts—some of those involved were not even tenants at the time—amounting in total to £718,000. The Committee thought that that was clearly wrong.

We dealt with the question of essential cars. In view of the question from the hon. Member for Billericay, I shall say something about the discipline that was involved. The Welsh Office decided that the discipline of the staff of the board was a matter for the board itself, but the Committee expressed its surprise that, given the nature and the scale of the maladministration, neither review of the matter concluded that disciplinary action was warranted.

On the question of leasing, the arrangement was that essential users of cars contributed two sevenths of the cost of running of that car—a fairly standard practice—for private motoring. We noted that

> "without the approval of the Welsh Office the Board amended the scheme to reduce to one-seventh the contribution from their staff and to allow free motoring for three Directors."

The civil service rules, which are set down for every Government Department, should have been followed, and we pointed out the weakness in financial control.

More recently, we had a report on the Welsh Office generally and we found out that only £180 million out of £480 million of road expenditure had a clear audit certificate—a terribly low proportion.

I now come to the situation at Huddersfield university, which I mention only to show how the Committee acted fairly quickly. We had one meeting and decided that an attempt to pay the vice-chancellor of Huddersfield university about £500,000 in a severance package went outside the standards that were set out. We said that the package appeared to be excessive and we agreed that the university may have exceeded its powers.

We took particular exception to a request by the university that the information on the matter should not be published "unless absolutely necessary." The Committee believes that it is absolutely necessary to disclose the matter. I was pleased that the university council reconsidered the matter; that shows that things can be put right if people know what is happening. The Universities Funding Council knew what was happening, as a result of the work of the National Audit Office, and took action to see that it was put right.

That is the message from our reports. Nobody in the House wants to see any sign of fraud or corruption, which diminishes all of us and diminishes us as a country. We want to see that matters are put right and to make sure that they do not happen again.

I now come to a rather happier situation, because I shall talk about what the Government have done. The initial reaction from the Treasury was not promising, but the Departments have been very good and have responded through the Treasury minute. However, we all know that the Treasury minute is not quite the same as a report being addressed to the Treasury itself.

We have seen that some major changes have taken place. First, the Treasury wrote to all Departments—the Committee was pleased that action was taken—drawing attention to the proper conduct of public business. It stressed that Departments should ensure that appropriate steps were taken to avoid similar problems arising in the future, and it used a checklist provided in the report by the Public Accounts Committee as the basis for writing to all Departments.

Guidance has been given on non-departmental public bodies, and the Treasury issued a new memorandum for accounting officers in March this year—soon after the Committee reported—which was designed to clarify the

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specific responsibilities of the accounting officers of those bodies, and their relationships with the sponsored Departments. We received a copy of the memorandum from the Treasury.

In addition, the Treasury issued to principal finance officers detailed guidance on a code of best practice for members of non-departmental public bodies, and the Committee had no disagreement on that. That advice included guidance on the responsibilities of board members, the accountability of public funds and the declaration of financial interests by board members. The Treasury intends that the document be used as a model which public bodies should implement, with any modifications which may be necessary.

In response to the original Committee report on the Development Board for Rural Wales, the Welsh Office commissioned a full compliance review of all non-departmental public bodies, and there were a few that we were very unhappy about. The review evaluated the extent to which bodies were to comply with their financial memoranda and other regulations issued by the Treasury and the Welsh Office, and the Welsh Office is considering further notes of guidance.

The Department of Health produced new guidance on corporate governance in the national health service, which includes a code of conduct and a code of accountability. The Secretary of State for Health acknowledged in a letter to me on 11 April this year that those codes go some way towards addressing the concerns raised in recent reports on the West Midlands and Wessex health authorities.

There have been some substantial changes. The Civil Service College has introduced a course for newly appointed chief executives of agencies and board members of non-departmental bodies on the subject of public accountability, and that is very important. The college's programme includes the handling of public money, all aspects of public business, and so on. I welcome that and if our report did nothing else but promote such consultation on matters, I would be pleased.

We heard the Prime Minister yesterday going further and introducing a standing committee on those matters and others in an area much wider than that which the Public Accounts Committee was able to deal with. We must hope that the standing committee proceeds effectively; if the members of the Public Accounts Committee are asked to give evidence, we will do so.

I hope that we now may be able to put behind us some of the things that have gone wrong and I hope that we have learnt lessons from them. If we do that, the Committee can deal with the standard fare with which we are rightly used to dealing.

We must always take account of the fact that the proper conduct of public business comes first, but we must always insist that that proper conduct is there. I hope that matters such as I have mentioned do not come before us again.

5.7 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): This annual debate represents the mechanism whereby the Public Accounts Committee draws to the attention of the House matters that it considers to be of special importance and whereby, as a result of the Treasury giving consideration to our recommendations, changes are made of the kind to which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) has just referred. Such changes can lead to our avoiding the mistakes of the past and to improving the economy and efficiency of the public service in future.

In answer to an intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne made the point that it is the custom of the Public Accounts Committee to be non-political. I think that that is one of our strengths. The Committee comprises 15 hon. Members, including the Financial Secretary, who comes to the Committee once only, at the beginning of his term of office. The other 14 members work as a team in examining the evidence that is placed before us by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office. We deal with facts, not with opinions. We investigate those facts and try to unravel where things have gone wrong. Then we report to the House. Today, about 50 reports are before the House, and I doubt whether any hon. Member, except perhaps members of the Committee, has read all 50. It would certainly be a monumental task.

In this debate I want to concentrate on only one or two reports, and especially on the one to which our Chairman referred—that concerning the proper conduct of public business. The report was published on 17 January and attracted considerable attention in the media. It has also aroused a good deal of interest in the civil service.

The report is about a number of failures by officials in the public service and in non-departmental public bodies—in other words, by the civil servants whose job is to operate administrative and financial systems in Departments and other public bodies. Their failures have led to money being wasted or being otherwise improperly spent.

I believe, however, that the report must be seen in the perspective of total public expenditure of about £270 billion. In the vast majority of cases, the administrative and financial systems that are in place have assured proper control over the spending of public funds. That should always be remembered when we talk about failures.

In the past, as the report states, the Committee has dealt with a number of serious failures in the administrative and financial control systems in Departments and other bodies—failures that have led to a waste of taxpayers' money. This report was of special significance because it drew attention to the fact that there have recently been fundamental changes in the way in which Government Departments and public bodies such as the national health service carry out their work.

The Committee has pointed out that the growth in the number of non-departmental public bodies is intended to improve the provision of public services, by greater delegation of responsibility, by streamlining and by a more entrepreneurial approach to the work. Still, at a time of change like this, the PAC took the view that it is important to ensure that proper standards are maintained in the conduct of public business.

Mr. Sheerman: Were not the remarks by the Chairman of the PAC directed to the fact that many of the people on these bodies seem to be spending taxpayers' money as though it were their own? If that represents the entrepreneurial culture to which the hon. Gentleman refers, is it not another step down the slippery slope that leads to lower standards and a lack of accountability?

Mr. Shersby: If most Departments and non-departmental public bodies were doing that, the hon. Gentleman would certainly be right. My point was that the failures reported by the PAC must be seen against the whole background of public administration in this country.

We have drawn attention to the view expressed by some people that the drive for efficiency and economy must be held back to some extent because of the need to take care with public money. Others have argued that if economy and efficiency are to be pursued vigorously, traditional standards must be relaxed. But the PAC has firmly rejected both claims—that will be of interest to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). The Committee takes the view that the first approach is often urged by those who do not want to accept the challenge of securing beneficial change; and the second is advanced by those who do not want to be bothered to observe the right standards of public stewardship. I hope that the hon. Member for Huddersfield feels reassured by that.

The Committee has stated unequivocally that any failure to respect or care for public money would be a most important cause of decline in the efficiency of public business. The Committee goes on to inform the House that, in future, it will pay particular attention to the examination of accounts and the implementation of programmes, and to a successful combination of the proper conduct of public business with the energetic pursuit of value for money. The hon. Member for Huddersfield will agree that those objectives are exactly right.

So why, from time to time, are there worrying failures, resulting from inadequate financial controls, by officials in the public service? The PAC has identified a number of key issues that provide some good answers to that question. First, inadequate internal accounting systems and controls lead to waste and a risk of fraud and theft. That is exemplified in the case of the British Council, which the Chairman described. Government Departments and public bodies must ensure from the outset that proper financial systems are in place and are properly applied.

The failure to ensure that financial procedures and controls are adapted in line with major changes in the organisation of business is the second key element. There can be no doubt that procedures need revising from time to time to ensure their continuing relevance and reliability, especially at times of major change.

Another extremely important point identified by the Committee is the fact that the use of inexperienced staff who lack financial training and expertise can result in a failure to secure adequate controls, particularly at a time of change. The Committee believes it vital that care be taken to provide staff with the requisite financial skills, to ensure that those responsible for securing big changes in accounting systems are suitably experienced.

A regular complaint of the PAC has been that poor monitoring of expenditure on capital projects leads to overspend and waste. Any hon. Member who has served on the Committee knows that to be a continuing worry. Again and again over the years the Committee has drawn attention in our annual debates to the need for attention to be paid to major capital projects, and to the need for those concerned with them to have specific financial and project management skills and experience. It is simply not possible for officials to deal with huge projects involving large sums of money unless they have both the skills and the training necessary to use them. We have emphasised that projects should not be embarked on unless such skills are available and used.

The report draws attention, too, to some fairly elementary requirements, including the need to check bills before they are paid. That sounds pretty basic, but it is necessary to check whether goods and services have been provided before bills are paid. In some public departments, that has not always happened, and the problem has gone on for a long time.

A failure to pursue money that is owed is another worrying feature that shows up in the public service. The House will agree that there must be adequate arrangements to ensure that moneys owed are properly monitored and pursued.

The payment of grants on the basis of insufficient evidence of entitlement has also concerned the PAC in the past year. We think that that is a worrying trend, and that proper procedures must be put in place and applied so that entitlement to grant aid is clearly established and documented before any payment is made.

As the Chairman said in his wide-ranging speech, in the past few years the Committee has become increasingly concerned about incidents involving the provision of redundancy benefits. In several cases, the delegated powers given to public bodies have been exceeded. The hon. Member for Huddersfield was temporarily out of the Chamber when the Chairman referred to the very disturbing case of Huddersfield university. There, I think, is a good example, in which the legal powers that that university has may have been exceeded. We stress in our report that such powers should not be exceeded in making provision for redundancy and other benefits.

Mr. Sheerman: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks and apologise to the House for the fact that I had to slip out of the Chamber for a few moments and miss the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), particularly on Huddersfield university. Is not the real problem exemplified by the crisis in my constituency that it was not a case of fraud and theft—and no one is alleging that it was—but a case of people using public money as though it were their own and of a public institution severing contracts using a secrecy clause, about which I agree with my right hon. Friend, to make people clam up and limit their ability to speak openly and say that there is a problem?

As a former member of the Committee, I hope that it will tackle the problem of so many public institutions with public money. Some of those institutions ensure the secrecy of the people who leave by an extra payment. That is at the heart of the problem at Huddersfield and also of many of the problems to which the Chairman drew our attention.

Mr. Shersby: The hon. Gentleman will, of course, know the details of what happened in Huddersfield—as, indeed, do I. I agree that the so-called "secrecy clause" is not a feature of public life that we should support. But there are many universities around the country in which the governing bodies have acted with the utmost propriety and probity, and I do not think that one should conclude

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from the Huddersfield case that such things are going on all around the country because obviously they are not. As the hon. Gentleman will readily agree, the whole question of ex gratia payments is difficult. It calls for the judgment of those concerned to be absolutely right. But it also means that they must act within the legal powers delegated to them, which are clear and which, I believe, are observed in the vast majority of cases.

So often in our debates we spend a great deal of our time re-telling the detail of the individual cases that have caused us concern. The Chairman dealt with a number of those very effectively. Despite those particular cases, I believe that there can be no doubt whatever that the British civil service is still the envy of the world and that the high standards set by dedicated accounting officers deserve the thanks and congratulations of the House and of all the members of the PAC.

As a Member of that Committee I have the greatest possible admiration for the work of people such as, for example—I stress "for example"—Sir Michael Partridge, the permanent under-secretary at the Department of Social Security, who is dealing with highly complex matters. He and his colleagues have demonstrated to the Committee how well they are doing their job. We have been also been impressed by Mrs. Valerie Strachan, who now heads Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. I think that she is the first woman ever to have headed that department, and she does so with considerable distinction.

Then there is the infinite courtesy and expertise deployed by Sir Anthony Battishill, chairman of the board of the Inland Revenue, in answering our questions and making it clear to the PAC that the Inland Revenue is moving with the times in the quality of service that it hopes to provide to individual taxpayers. I am sure that I speak on behalf of every hon. Member when I say that we hope that that quality service becomes a fact very quickly indeed. There are many other distinguished public officials to whom we have every reason to be grateful for the work that they do but who are too numerous to mention by name in the debate.

I am told that the report on the proper conduct of public business has had a great impact on the civil service. I am glad to know that, because the Committee has been obliged to refer to some of the failures—all of them serious—in that and in other reports. I believe that it is for the permanent under-secretaries, who are the accounting officers of the great Departments of State, to ensure that the lessons are learnt from the mistakes and failures referred to in the report, and that arrangements for all levels of delegated authority are tightened up and a higher standard secured.

Ministers must be informed at the earliest possible time when it is discovered that things are going wrong so that corrective action can be taken in good time. I believe that that is very important and that that message should go out to those who, quite rightly and properly, are concerned with ensuring that high standards are retained in the public service.

I refer now to the 58th report of the Public Accounts Committee, dealing with the Department of Social Security and the Benefits Agency, entitled "Combating Organised Fraud". The report describes attempts by groups of criminals to defraud the benefits system. That is a serious problem and is estimated to cost at least £1 billion. The value of payments under investigation in September 1992 was £61.4 million. That fraud was both individual and organised. Methods used by criminals engaged in organised fraud included making multiple claims for benefit; using false or stolen identity documents; stealing order books, payable orders and girocheques; counterfeiting and altering such payable instruments; and buying order books from legitimate beneficiaries, subsequently encashing the orders as they fall due for payment.

What a litany of criminal activity that is. Criminal elements are being attracted to the huge sums of money that are paid out as a result of the very generous social security system that this country has, whatever individual views we might hold about the merits of one benefit or another. Amounts recovered have increased from £100 million five years ago to a current total of £500 million. That is encouraging. It is very good indeed and the Department deserves to be complimented for the action that it has taken.

I do believe, however, that the time may now have come to consider the possibility of introducing an identity card bearing a photograph to enable the Department to fight that large-scale criminal activity. If benefits were paid only where the beneficiary's fingerprint matched that held on the national social security computer, it is possible that fraudulent claims could be virtually eliminated. Although many people who are interested in civil liberties—many hon. Members may have reservations about the introduction of such a system, which are quite understandable—we must look at the waste and the criminal activity that results in the fraudulent loss of £1 billion. I believe that the technology is available. If it were to be used, the social security budget would be much better able to meet the claims of the people who desperately need help. That is, after all, one of our principal concerns as Members of the House.

The report on the proper conduct of public business has in some ways been the flagship of the Committee's deliberations this year. Looking at the matter in perspective, one must recognise that, although there have been some serious failures, we still have a very fine public service. We have very fine accounting officers, people who are totally dedicated to their job. I saw that yesterday when, with the Chairman and two other members of Committee, I visited the Northern Ireland Audit Office and spoke with the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff. We were all deeply impressed with the high standards that are operating in Northern Ireland, and I take this opportunity to record that and say how much we appreciate what it is doing to ensure high standards in the conduct of public business in the Province.

5.29 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). I rather appreciated the innovation of his commending certain accounting officers who impressed the Committee; although the levels that those officers have reached have been publicly recognised in the honours system and their degree and rank is the same, we—as members of the Committee—know very well that some are more equal than others. That has been especially true in the period that we are discussing.

I think it fair to say that no period during the 14 years for which I have been a member of the PAC has been more disturbing than the one that we are considering. I think that my fellow members share my feeling, and that, in large part, that feeling moved us to issue the unprecedented eighth report. Like both the Committee's Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), and the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), I want to focus principally on that report. Because of the welcome comprehensiveness of the Chairman's speech, in which he described a number of the relevant reports in detail, I shall not need to speak at length.

I read the comments of Simon Jenkins in *The Times* today with a mixture of amusement and dismay. He suggested that the House of Commons was to be largely ignored in our constitutional processes, describing it as an "appendix" of the system which grumbled occasionally, and he argued that the House of Lords had more clout. He may have been seeking more to amuse than to analyse, but the Committee does not simply amuse itself in considering issues and responding to them; nor are our findings generally ignored.

I believe that the response of the public sector is also evident—that efforts are made to tighten up procedures, that our exhortations do not fall on deaf ears and that practices are modified and adapted according to our recommendations. I commend our Committee's work to Simon Jenkins, and submit that, in some modest measure, his comments undermine the institution of the House of Commons, which—for all its shortcomings, to which I am never slow to draw attention—is the basis of our democracy.

As I have said, the period that we are discussing is a disturbing one, and I find the Government's reply to the eighth report particularly disquieting. The Chairman expressed a belief that the Government might take more action than is suggested by their Treasury minute in response to our findings; but the Government's reply itself suggests a degree of complacency—indeed, almost a rejection of the report's findings—that I do not consider worthy of the Treasury.

I do not imagine that the incumbent Minister had anything to do with the wording of that response, and I hope that—notwithstanding the inevitability of Ministers' defending the language of government collectively—he will not feel it necessary to embrace its wording too closely. In the atmosphere of this of all weeks, it would not be suitable for the findings of a serious and unprecedented report to be disregarded so cavalierly.

I acknowledge the truth of what Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have said this week—that Britain's ethics in public life are the envy of the world. President Mitterrand of France and President Berlusconi of Italy would doubtless marvel at the tumultuous reaction of our press and other media to the issues of "cash for questions" and corrupt quangocrats that have been displayed this week: we can almost hear them saying, "How we wish that our problems were of the same order of magnitude." The Government, however, cannot offer that as an excuse for the seriousness—in both cash terms and moral terms—of the intromissions of behaviour uncovered in the Committee's reports. Standards are indeed slipping, and I am afraid that they are slipping because the Government have not been sufficiently strong in defending them. That is why it is important for the Minister to disavow the Treasury minute.

Most startling of all, in my view, was paragraph 90 of the Government's response to the eighth report. It states:

> "The Government rejects the inference which has been drawn from the report that the failings identified are in some way the result of the changes in the way in which departments and public bodies carry out their work."

The Committee did not draw such an inference; it was not an inference at all, but was stated as a finding. Let me quote a number of sentences in different paragraphs of the report, which make it quite clear what we were doing.

We stated that the failings to which we referred, and to which the report bore eloquent testimony,

> "represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years."

In the next paragraph, we said:

> "There have recently been fundamental changes in the way in which government departments and public bodies such as those in the NHS carry out their work."

We went on to say:

> "But at a time of change it is important to ensure that proper standards are maintained in the conduct of public business."

In paragraph 6, we stated:

> "At such a time it is even more essential to maintain honesty in the spending of public money and to ensure that traditional public sector values are not neglected in the effort to maximise economy and efficiency."

I do not think that any member of the Committee was in any doubt about what had been happening: we were dealing with a new situation, the very novelty of which made it imperative for us to collate the findings of a number of reports and to present general conclusions and recommendations, going to the length of drawing up particular advices. I am pleased to learn that they have been circulated to all Departments.

Let it not rest as a canard on the record that the Committee merely "drew an inference"; that conclusion was the core of our recommendation. I think it quite likely that we shall see similar cases in the future, but I hope that our report will lessen their number and seriousness.

Let me remind the Minister briefly of another report that has not been specified in the debate or the motion, although it is covered by the group that we are considering. The sale of the Scottish Bus Group was influenced by the fact that confused lines of accountability and responsibility existed between the group and the Scottish Office. The Government acknowledge that fact in their reply to the 21st report.

Wessex regional health authority wasted tens of thousands of pounds on a computer system that did not work because the systems for checking expenditure between the authority, the national health service executive and the Department of Health were inadequate. The Government appear to accept that finding in their reply to the 63rd report.

The Development Board for Rural Wales, a quango working under the Welsh Office, was able to amend the details of its car leasing scheme without the knowledge or approval of the Welsh Office and in a manner which violated the agreement between them. Under the amended scheme, cars were leased as perks rather than as necessities. In their reply to the 23rd report, the Government accept that that represented a failure of accountability and management.

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

In effect, the Government's response is a denial that the failings that Committee Members have identified in the reports represent a trend of declining standards. That response is astonishing. These are not isolated incidents. Time and again, we have discovered serious failings in management and accounting procedures which appear to flow directly from changes in organisation brought about by Government policy. They cannot be excused as the effects of change, because change is constant; nor are they merely teething problems because few were accidental, occurred in a short period or were isolated in time.

The problems are not acute, but chronic. If we are to avoid institutionalised corruption, the Government must accept a new public ethic and that ethic must reflect standards which many hon. Members have taken for granted as being characteristic of British administration. An Opposition Member intervened earlier to express the view—and I agree with it—that the atmosphere in some non-departmental public bodies suggests that a new "get what you can, do what you want" culture exists. Perhaps it is too strong, although I think not, to describe it as the venality of Departments, which are fearful of challenging the new agencies or, at least, insensitive to the problem lest they might appear disloyal to the programme of reform.

No progress will be made until the Government at least recognise that there is something wrong and that these are more than just a few little local difficulties. Paragraph 90 of the response to the eighth report contains even more nonsense. It states:

"the cases which have been identified have to be looked at against a background of progressive improvement in the efficiency with which public services are being delivered."

Are the Government saying that it is acceptable to sacrifice the highest ethical standards in the interests of efficiency? I think not, but viewed by itself paragraph 90 could be seen as a nod and a wink to the people in the quangos. It could be said that the Government are whispering, "It's all right, boys—do what you want, so long as you get results." That sort of logic produced Watergate in the United States of America, allows the French system of administration to crumble and undermines democracy in Italy. We are nowhere near those positions and I began my speech by making that clear, but insensitivity, reflected in that sort of logic, could lead us in that direction. That is why we take this issue so seriously.

The eighth report states clearly that

"there is no reason why a proper concern for the sensible conduct of public business and care for the honest handling of public money should not be combined with effective programmes for promoting economy and efficiency."

That issue crosses party lines and can be generally accepted as the basis of public life.

Public services are run with public money in the public interest. Public interest demands both efficiency in the delivery of the service and the proper use of the money which funds those services, but one cannot have efficiency of service if directors use the money for their own benefit, as occurred in the case of the Welsh Development Agency, or, unchecked by the Government, as hobby horses for their grandiose plans, as was the case with the Wessex health authority.

The Public Accounts Committee is one of the oldest—indeed, I believe that it is the oldest—and most senior Committees of the House. Since its foundation by Gladstone, it has enjoyed a uniquely privileged position in the mechanisms of oversight. Committee members have been able to draw on the National Audit Office's considerable resources and our abilities have been greatly strengthened by the National Audit Act 1983, for which the Government can take some credit. It enables us to consider issues in detail and with an authority with which few other Committees are able to compete.

Committee Members take their role seriously and we expect the Government to consider our reports with equal seriousness. I fear that it is possible that the Minister may attack my speech later, but he should at least be able to say that the Government take the PAC report seriously, that our recommendations have elicited action and that serious failings are being dealt with according to our prescription.

I acknowledge all of that, but in the eighth report we also requested that the Comptroller and Auditor General be given the power to investigate all non-departmental bodies and other organisations which derive the greater part of their income from central Government funds. If the Minister does not accept that recommendation or confirm that it is being given serious consideration, any statement that he may make about the attention that the Government pay to the Committee's recommendations will be seriously diminished.

The recommendation is a necessary extension of the remit of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The trend established by the Government is firmly in the direction of enlarging the number and authority of non-departmental public bodies. If the Government refuse to give the Comptroller and Auditor General the authority freely to investigate activities that were previously carried out by Departments under their scrutiny, they will seriously limit the effectiveness of the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. Permission will have to be sought on a case-by-case basis from the Department concerned, and such a process limits the effectiveness of the inquiry.

In many cases, it cannot be known in advance where it would be appropriate to look for information. The ability of the National Audit Office to decide for itself has turned up some of the more striking cases of maladministration that we have had to consider. The Minister should allude to that issue, which is one of the most important in our reports. In the world in which we live and in the week in which Lord Nolan, a Law Lord, has been appointed to consider standards of public conduct, it is not appropriate that Ministers should be in a position to say which matters should be open to scrutiny and which should not. The whole point of the National Audit Office's independent oversight is to enable it to go where it wants, to go where the Administration would prefer it not to go, and to examine what the Administration might prefer to remain hidden. The Prime Minister said in the House only yesterday that if any Minister has been guilty of wrong doing—

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I have served on the Public Accounts Committee for a few years. The hon. Gentleman says that certain matters cannot be investigated by the Public Accounts Committee because they are not within its remit. Has he any evidence for that allegation, or is he just trailing a kite?

Mr. Maclennan: I am referring to the recommendation of the eighth report. Paragraph 7 on page vi states:

> "We shall . . . be paying particular attention in our future examination of accounts and the implementation of programmes to the successful combination of the proper conduct of public business with the energetic pursuit of value for money."

The following sentence contains the most important point. It states:

> "To assist us in this task, it would be helpful if the National Audit Office were enabled to examine and inspect all non-departmental public bodies and other organisations which receive the greater part of their income from central government funds, and to report the results to us."

Mr. Stern: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: Before I give way again, perhaps it would be sensible to refer directly to the Government's reply to that point. They state:

> "The Government has considered the Committee's view that it would be helpful if the Comptroller and Auditor General . . . was able to examine and inspect all non-departmental public bodies . . . and other organisations which receive the greater part of their income from central Government funds. The National Audit Act 1983 already provides the C&AG with the access to bodies whose members are appointed by or on behalf of the Crown and which receive more than half their income in any year from public funds. The C&AG also has access to a wide range of public bodies by agreement of the sponsor department. The Government will consider on a case by case basis the need for the C&AG to examine any other body. The C&AG, as departments' auditor, is of course able to examine the way in which departments exercise their control over all NDPBs."

Because of the apparent doubt about what I have been saying, I felt it necessary to spell out those points in some detail. However, the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), who is also a member of the PAC and, if I may use the Chairman's word, an assiduous one, will know that many non-departmental public bodies do not fall into the category that I have described.

Mr. Stern: I do not wish to quarrel with the hon. Gentleman but I remind him of an earlier remark which, I hope, on reflection he will accept was somewhat misleading. He said that certain bodies were not open to scrutiny. The purpose of the recommendation in the eighth report is that such bodies should be open to scrutiny by the National Audit Office. I entirely agree with that. However, he left the House with the impression that those bodies not subject to scrutiny by the National Audit Office were not subject to any scrutiny. That is untrue. Those not subject to scrutiny by the National Audit Office frequently come under the purview of the Audit Commission or private auditors. It is wholly incorrect to suggest that they are secretive bodies that the Government are trying to hide.

Mr. Maclennan: I should regret it if any words of mine unravelled what was a unanimous report and recommendation. We have made a powerful argument; it is one which the Government accepted and one to which I, at least, adhere. The House and our constitution proceed with incremental changes, and I can understand that we might have to fight for the right to follow public money wherever it goes. The Chairman raised that point in his important speech. I agree with him about the objective and the means. We may have to be satisfied with less than full-hearted acceptance of the American principle, but that the principle is one that we should embrace I have no doubt. It falls to the Government, not to the Committee or to the House, to defend the exclusion of the National Audit Office.

Mr. Sheldon: I think that I can clarify the matter. During the very useful visit to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we pointed out that it was attempted in the National Audit Act 1983 but that 11 years had passed since then. Perhaps some of the anxieties that might have been present then had been put to rest by the way in which the National Audit Office has developed, and the Public Accounts Committee has gone along with it. He accepted that the changes had gone smoothly and expressed some sympathy with our aspirations. It was too early for him to reach a conclusion in time for today's debate, but we hope some progress will be made.

Mr. Maclennan: They are very encouraging words from the Chairman and we look forward to glimmers of hope from the Minister, reflecting the views of the Treasury. I have detained the House long enough on this point but it is important. I hope that the Government will show their attachment to the principle that we have outlined.

5.55 pm

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): For many years we have recognised the fact that at the heart of Parliament's concerns is the control of Government spending. That was never more so than now when, for 1994-95, the Government are spending about £291 billion, which is rather more than 43 per cent. of the country's gross domestic product.

Equally, the role of the Public Accounts Committee, the National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General is central to Parliament's historic concern. I like the phrase that the NAO used in its annual report. It said:

> "The NAO's goal is helping the nation spend wisely".

That was rather felicitously put. In fact, the NAO can boast a remarkable record over the past two or three years. It claims in its annual report to have saved no less than £266 million of public money in the past year, which adds up to more than £700 million-worth of savings over the past three years.

As has already been pointed out, three or four successive Conservative Governments have made major improvements in the way in which public spending is controlled and managed. I am thinking of market testing, competitive tendering, the next steps agencies and the successive changes in the way in which the Government have examined the public expenditure round. The latest development is the introduction this year of accrual accounting, which will mean a big change in the way in which the Government examine their internal accounts. In addition, there have been changes in the way that the Treasury conducts its internal audits. I understand that the Department of Health has undertaken a similar examination of how effective and efficient its own procedures are.

Indeed, the next steps agencies, or non-departmental public bodies—whatever jargon one wishes to use—have been a remarkable success story. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will be aware of a recent independent

[Mr. John Horam]

report by Price Waterhouse which examined how effective the agencies had been, most recently in 1994. It concluded:

> "Their drive to achieve better public services has been genuinely successful."

It pointed out that agencies are good value for money for the taxpayer in that they have reduced costs and improved management but that they have also led to improvements for the consumer and ordinary citizen in the form of better public service. They have undoubtedly led to improvements in staff morale by giving civil servants and others working in the agencies more control over their own environments, and the ability to run the show as they prefer. In all those respects the agencies have an excellent track record, which is proved by the independent analysis that I mentioned. The Government can say that, in their management of public spending, there is a genuine success story to relate.

Of course, that does not attract the same kind of publicity as other policies of the past 15 years, such as privatisation and the reform of the trade unions. None the less, it is on a par with those, at the centre of the way in which a Government should effectively conduct their affairs. The Government can take legitimate pride in what has been done.

However, I am sorry to say that although the Government's record in controlling public spending has been good, as I have outlined, Parliament's record in scrutinising Government has not been so good. The major change, which has already been mentioned, was brought about by the National Audit Act 1983, which altered the basis for the activities of the National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General and, significantly, led to the new "value for money" exercises.

The Act led to a major improvement in the role and workings of the Public Accounts Committee. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), its Chairman, can take considerable credit for his assiduous approach, which has meant a better attendance record, and more reports scrutinised each year. All that has genuinely led to a greater interest in such matters, and to much greater activity by the Committee, partly as a result of the right hon. Gentleman's efforts but also, as he would agree, because of the 1983 reforms.

However, other parts of Parliament's scrutiny of public spending have not worked out so well. For example, over the past 15 years the departmental Select Committees have been created, and part of their remit is to examine expenditure within their Departments and the way in which the business of their Departments is conducted. With few exceptions—the Defence Select Committee has examined such matters carefully from time to time—they have failed to do that. They continually scrutinise aspects of policy, but expenditure does not seem to come within their remit—possibly because they feel that that is the responsibility of the PAC alone. However, that has never been so. The Committees have always been able to examine expenditure, just as the PAC has.

Parliament itself has not improved its methods of examining public expenditure. Before the unified Budget, as hon. Members will recall, we used to have separate debates on public expenditure at this time of year, in October or November, followed by the Budget debates in March or April. Now that has all been rolled into one, and we do not have the single-minded analysis of public expenditure that we had in the past. The Budget debate is almost the only time during the parliamentary year when Parliament addresses itself to the central issues of how the Government are spending money—this year's figure is no less than £291 billion—and how they are raising the taxes to pay for it. To use jargon that may be more familiar in Europe, there is a "democratic deficit" in the way in which Parliament scrutinises the business of Government expenditure.

The Public Accounts Committee itself can sometimes be rather counter-productive in that respect. As we know, it homes in on errors and irregularities—and rightly so. It does so in a way that is often highly exposed. The television cameras are brought in and the matter becomes news. Other hon. Members and journalists comment on it, sometimes distorting the information or getting it completely wrong. The most famous example was when ITN's "News at 10" implied that the Queen had somehow pocketed some of the money from the sale of tickets to look round Buckingham palace, because the broadcasters had mixed up revenue and profit, in a rather elementary way. The impression created was wholly out of kilter with what we had said in the report.

I imagine that a permanent secretary or chief executive appearing in front of the Committee must find it all rather daunting. If he is a cautious man, as many civil servants are, he will ask himself, "Why should I take risks with this dreadful Committee, and all that may flow from that? Isn't it better to play safe, and not change anything?" That could make the civil service, which is already rather risk-averse, even more so.

Danger arises if we do not balance our criticisms—I am sure that they are wholly justified, and I have never known a member of the Committee hold back on a criticism—with praise where praise is due. We must recognise that civil servants are trying to push through a wider view of controlling expenditure, and that that will sometimes lead to mistakes. If one does not make mistakes, one will never make anything, and sometimes risks are necessary and justified when trying to control the leviathan of public expenditure. We should bear that in mind as we read reports.

Another worrying element in the way in which the Public Accounts Committee conducts its affairs is the fact that sometimes its reports become unduly politicised. Clearly, all of us in the Chamber are politicians, and we must accept that occasionally such things happen, but sometimes they go too far.

For example, I was disappointed that when we produced the famous eighth report—which has been discussed at such length—on "The Proper Conduct of Public Business", at the next Prime Minister's Question Time the then Leader of the Opposition brought it out in that heavily adversarial point-scoring atmosphere as an example of what was going wrong with the Government. He gave the impression that there had been a dramatic decline in standards, all because of the new methods that the Government were introducing. He implied, in particular, that the non-departmental public bodies were somehow the cause of that decline in public standards.

Yet that was not what the Committee said; it said nothing of the kind. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said earlier, the Committee was just as critical of errors and irregularities in traditional civil service Departments as in the non-departmental public bodies. In the evidence on which the report was based there were as many criticisms of traditional Departments as of the new bodies. There was no evidence that the new bodies were any worse than traditional Departments.

We did not make comparisons with the past. We did not say that things were worse than they were five or 10 years ago. There was no evidence whatever that the number of irregularities, or examples of overspending or misspending, that we found had escalated during the period under consideration. We simply said that clearly there had been some errors, difficulties and problems in both types of body—in fact, in all types of Government activity. We did not say that things were worse than they had been; we made the point almost as a warning that in the drive towards efficiency and greater economy in public spending, we should not allow our standards to drop. It was a shot across the bows, meaning, "Don't throw out the baby with the bath water. Keep standards as high as we recognise that they have been."

I am glad that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) recognised that fact, although in other respects he implied the reverse. He seemed to be doing what the former Leader of the Opposition did, and dramatising the idea that Committee had said that there had been a fall in standards. The Committee did not say that; it issued a warning that, as the drive for economy and efficiency, rightly, went ahead, there should not be a fall in standards. That would be the consensus among members of the Committee.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the report refers to a decline in standards over the past 140 years? That was in the opening paragraph.

Mr. Horam: With respect, the report does not say that there has been a decline in standards over the past 140 years.

Mr. Hall: That is what is in the report.

Mr. Horam: No, the report clearly says that some of the incidents that have taken place represent a decline, but equally that similar incidents took place over the previous four or five years, before the report was produced. Those examples are evidence that standards are not being maintained in those instances. The report does not say, as the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) will see if he reads it carefully, that there has been an overall decline. We have no evidence about the number of such incidents. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman in that respect. The report simply says that certain things have happened wrongly in particular Departments and that they represent the sort of things that should not happen again. We are in some danger, especially in the present atmosphere, of acting in a way that is genuinely counter-productive in terms of trying to get economy, efficiency and greater control of public expenditure—aims that the Government are trying to achieve through the measures that I have outlined.

There are two or three points of our procedures at which the Committee and the National Audit Office might look to see whether we can improve them. For example, it could consider whether to interpret its remit rather more widely. Many audit companies in the private sector, such as Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte and Arthur Andersen, have looked as management consultants at strategic issues of financial control because they have seen from their audit work the problems that may arise in a private sector organisation and they have seen ways in which matters could be improved. Obviously, value-for-money exercises are an example of that to some extent because the idea of one may be thrown up by an audit on a Department. I should like to take that further and to see whether such organisations could suggest ways, based on their audit experience and findings, in which Departments could improve their methods to achieve greater efficiency.

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, for example, recently went over the Department of Health, as hon. Members may have seen in the press, and came to the conclusion that no less than one fifth of the £282 million a year that the Department spent on pay and salaries was wasted money, and that there was a waste of public money in terms of duplication, unnecessary checking and committees meeting without any real purpose. That is the sort of exercise that the NAO could suggest to Departments. The NAO would not necessarily carry out the exercise itself; the work could be done by a private audit company. Substantial sums of public money are simply disappearing through waste and the NAO should be encouraged to go into those matters more fundamentally. That would be a valuable thing to do.

The Committee Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, will be aware of my next point from his long experience of such matters. He will have looked at what happens in Public Accounts Committees in other countries. In New Zealand and Australia, for example, they have tended to break away from our rather formulaic approach of having in front of us the permanent secretary and chief accounting officer, whom we then cross-examine on the basis of an NAO report. Often, for example, the New Zealand and Australian Committees have had a second or third bite at the cherry. They have called in another officer, who may be relevant to the particular inquiry, and have investigated him as well. They have often taken a month or more over one report. It is worth investigating whether we should do that.

Similarly, the New Zealand and Australian Committees have sometimes spent a lot less time on other reports. They have sometimes, for example, decided to eschew investigating witnesses. They have simply had discussions among the members of the Committee on three or four reports that they deem to be less important or controversial than others. They have looked at them quietly, decided what they want to say about them and then issued their response. Is there a case for varying our procedures in view of what happens in other countries? We might then be able to concentrate more on what matters rather than adopting the rather straightforward approach of simply having a report and then an examination of witnesses, who are only the permanent secretary or the chief accounting officer.

The relationship between the Public Accounts Committee and the departmental Select Committees is also worthy of further thought. As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under Lyne will be aware, the Select Committee on Procedure considered that point in the 1989-90 Session and pointed out that there was an overlap which the House could consider. It may be sensible for some of the Select Committees to take greater account of public expenditure questions in their deliberations.

[Mr. Horam]

As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne pointed out, we have produced no fewer than 49 reports, which we are considering in this debate. That is a huge number—the average Select Committee produces three or four reports a year. There is a huge discrepancy in the number of reports from the various Committees. I am sure that some of the departmental Select Committees, such as the Select Committee on Defence, could take on board some of the points at which we have looked and could examine, for example, the permanent secretary, rather than us having to do all that work. That would enable us to concentrate on especially important issues, particularly if we have to do more work on non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Maclennan: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that, on the whole, the existing arrangements work rather well. I draw his attention to the example of the work done by the PAC some years ago on the Stingray defence procurement issue. The PAC looked closely at the matter and expressed great scepticism about the expenditure incurred. We criticised the delays, but we recognised that we could not analyse the strategic arguments for purchasing Stingray. We felt that we had to pass that task to the defence experts—our colleagues on the Select Committee on Defence. That division of labour works pretty well.

Mr. Horam: The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is suggesting working together. He has an advantage over me because I was not in the House when that report was considered. We considered specific expenditure aspects and left it to the Defence Select Committee to look at the strategic aspects. Something similar happened with the Pergau dam issue. Both the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and the PAC had a bite at the cherry. I am arguing that perhaps we should do that more often and that we should not fiercely grasp all expenditure issues to our own bosom. We should let other Committees look at expenditure issues from time to time, which might lead to more fruitful consequences. Those are merely suggestions to carry the work of the Committee forward.

In my experience, the past 10 years or so in the history of the PAC have been valuable. The Committee has revived. Previously, it was hard to get a quorum and the Committee's work was not as well regarded as it is today. Our work, especially as a major Committee in the House, will be even more important in the future for the reasons that hon. Members of all parties have addressed in this debate. Therefore, I wish more power to the PAC.

6.17 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I very much enjoyed the speech by the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) and I thought that his constructive observations were typical of the attitude that prevails within the Public Accounts Committee, where there is a general wish to see the Committee working as effectively as it can. However, I am sure he appreciates that his good idea about more in-depth analysis and about calling further witnesses runs contrary to the problem that we are rather inundated with reports. I enjoyed what he said and the Committee may well want to look at his ideas—I am sure that the Chairman, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) will—and to consider some of the points at our meetings.

It is important that we keep reiterating what the Committee's role is. There has recently been an unfortunate misunderstanding. It is felt that in some way the Committee is a general parliamentary troubleshooter, so if anything crops up, people ask whether they can refer it to the PAC or ask why it has not been looked at by the PAC. One example is the Al Yamamah deal. We have all been inundated with telephone calls about that. My right hon. Friend the Chairman will, I suspect, confirm that among the £20 billion involved in the contract, a minimal amount was within our remit. As he and Sir Michael Shaw pointed out, the Committee considered the public money. Other expenditure is not within our remit; we do not have that power. It is just as well for everyone to understand that. We do not have the power to look into private money. It may save us all some time answering our telephones if we can get that message across. Indeed, that message may also be passed on by the Treasury Minister to one or two of his colleagues who made comments about a rather wider interpretation of the report produced by the Chairman and Sir Michael Shaw in the context of Al Yamamah.

It is typical of the problems of the House of Commons that here we are with one day's debate on 49 reports, many of which, as I am sure all of us would agree, deserve considerable attention in their own right. It is impossible to do full justice to so many reports in such a debate. The report on the conduct of public business—I do not intend to dwell on it—has been a catalyst for the way in which Government and people outside Parliament have looked at the role of accountability. It is the first time that the Committee moved from specific into general analysis, drawing on its wider experience. I congratulate the Chairman on initiating that move and I congratulate all members of the Committee, especially—this is not meant to be patronising—those Conservative members of the Committee because, after 14 or 15 or years in Government, inevitably, everything we look at involves their Administration. Therefore, one recognises that for them it is a more sensitive issue than it is for us. However, the easy unanimity with which we endorsed that report was encouraging.

I was delighted at the positive action taken by the Government. The Chairman mentioned the check list and I think that that check list is good. Indeed, yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister was helpful because the quangos and the civil service are to be within the remit of the standing body to be created. I am sure that our report will be part of the essential background reading for the members of that body when it starts its studies. I welcome the creation of that body and its forthcoming report. It is important that, every now and then, we stop, and that observations and assessments of how effective we are and how well we are or are not doing our jobs are made by people who are perhaps at arm's length from Parliament.

I do not want to talk about the issues surrounding the Pergau dam because they have been trampled over substantially and in so far as they needed mentioning, the Chairman dealt effectively with some of the key points. However, what came as a surprise to me—it may not have surprised my colleagues—having been in the House a little while, was that I did not realise the limitations in the effectiveness of an accounting officer's letter. I had presumed, like various Opposition and Conservative Members who have been in government in different offices, that the accounting officer's letter was automatically looked at and referred to by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Many of us and certainly many people outside the House were surprised to find that, in fact, it is only in the context of fraud and impropriety that there is any automatic reference to the CAG.

I am sure that we all welcome the Government's positive response to our feeling that the letter should be an early warning which is drawn as rapidly as possible to the attention of the CAG so that the Public Accounts Committee can consider issues of wastefulness and uneconomic use of resources when an accounting officer's letter has been considered relevant. Indeed, it is conceivable that had the new system, which I hope will apply, operated at the time of the Pergau decision-making, the existence of the accounting officer's letter may have brought matters to the attention of the House and focused the attention of Ministers earlier on the confusion that arose and that was revealed in the Foreign Affairs Select Committee about the relationship between arms and aid in the deal.

I observed last year—hon. Members have at various times made the point—that the job and role of Parliament has been altered by the structural changes that have taken place in the machinery of Government. It is not our job as Committee members to discuss whether the policy was right or wrong. All that we can consider is whether it has made our job easier or more difficult and whether it has made the role of the National Audit Office more or less effective. There is little doubt that the proliferation of accounting units, even right down now to hospital trusts, has made it more burdensome for the National Audit Office at step one to carry out its job. At one time, there was a single department in which a relatively simple audit could take place. Now, to follow through the implications of certain decisions, one may have to go to a dozen agencies or health authorities.

There is little doubt that the structural changes have created some difficulties. The hon. Member for Orpington said that he felt that the agencies were a good influence. I am sure that there are good and bad points to them. I have one of the biggest agencies in the city which I have the honour to represent—the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. The information and technology division of the DVOIT has just been hived off. I am afraid that my experience has been somewhat different from the hon. Gentleman's because I have witnessed a fall in morale there. That is due to uncertainty, because, all too often, such hiving off is seen as the first step towards complete privatisation. In fact, that has already happened to DVOIT. I hope that now its future has been settled, morale will improve.

The other factor that has made a difference was also dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. Contracting out and privatisation mean that public money, which a year before could have been followed right through by the National Audit Office, can no longer be followed, although it is still being spent in the same amounts, possibly by the same people and, possibly, for the same purposes. We have lost our right as Parliament to monitor the way in which that money is used. It must be recognised that we have fewer rights even than the Audit Commission, which monitors activities in relation to local authority spending.

I intend to be brief in dealing with my other points, but before hon. Members become optimistic, I would add that that is a statement in relativity. As a Celt, my brevity may be different from the wishful brevity of some of my colleagues. My right hon. Friend referred to some of the problems that we encountered. We discovered a Welsh WIZARD in the Welsh Development Agency, and we had problems in the west midlands, where management were manoeuvring circumstances for privatisations. We have to bear in mind the fact that, if we are going down the privatisation route, desirable as in many cases management buy-outs may be, they also present dangers and temptations. Therefore, they must be monitored closely to ensure that there is no conflict of interest or that no circumstances arise in which the price is unduly favourable to those wishing to buy.

The Scottish Bus Group, about which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) will be more aware than I because of his Scottish links, was sold for £90 million. However, just a couple of years before privatisation, the group had a profit of £9 million. By the time of privatisation, its profit was £500,000. There may be very good reasons for that, but it is disturbing that the Scottish local authority bus services operating alongside the group experienced exactly the opposite: the local authority bus services were becoming increasingly viable in what seemed to be the same market context.

Although I cannot speak for everyone, many of us were concerned about the group's privatisation and particularly about Citylink. Two years before privatisation, Citylink made a profit of £900,000. By the time of privatisation in 1990, that profit had turned into an £800,000 loss. On privatisation, there was in effect a £1.5 million cash injection in that the Government wrote off that much debt. The company was sold for £265,000 and three years later it was sold for £5.1 million.

We must ask whether it is just conceivable that the Government were had in respect of that operation. I suppose the Government would console themselves with the thought that while they made only £90 million when they sold the group, in respect of a company which was sold for 1p, that 1p proved to be one of their best pieces of expenditure because, in finally releasing all the companies within the group into the private sector, the Government opened access to the surpluses in the pension fund. The Government may feel that what they lost on the privatisation swings, they gained on the pension roundabout, because although they made only £90 million selling the whole group, they had the £150 million from the pension fund which was in surplus.

Committee members will remember that we had to work to obtain that figure. We were told in the report that the pension fund was £75 million. However, when one of my colleagues asked whether that figure had been revised, he was told that it was something above £100 million. When I asked precisely how far it was above £100 million, we discovered that the £75 million had become £150 million. From the Government's point of view, that was 1p well spent.

I am referring to some of the minor reports which are important to the people involved. With regard to the sale of the trust ports, I am sorry that the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) is not present because he

[Mr. Alan Williams]

raised questions on behalf of his constituents during the hearing. There was also a management buy-out in respect of the trust ports. Once again, there was a strange situation.

Medway was privatised for £13.2 million. That was the yield to the Government. However, within a short while, the managing director had made £12 million selling his shares to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, which, incidentally, is partly owned by the Government. The Government bought back some of the shares they had sold at a knock-down price.

Charterhouse Development made three times as much as the Government by selling its shares for more than £35 million. Something was drastically wrong somewhere in the way in which the company was evaluated. Although I am not sure where matters stand in terms of the legal representations being made by the work force, we can observe what happened. A short time after the company was privatised, half the work force no longer worked for Medway. Under the deal they were required to sell back their shares at an enforced price. They had to sell their shares back for £2.40 only to see them sell a short time later for £37. One can understand that there is bitterness among those ex-employees. Perhaps we can understand why they sought legal retribution.

When we asked how the share price could rise from £2.40 to £37 if the Government had got the privatisation right, the permanent secretary told us that that reflected the increased profitability. I examined the increased profitability. Profitability had risen 50 per cent., but a 50 per cent. increase in profitability does not explain a 15-fold increase in the market value of the shares.

I want briefly to refer to two important points relating to law and order and to reports which not receive much consideration. The first refers to the Insolvency Service executive agency. Hon. Members, in particular the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), whose background in accounting has been a great asset to the Committee, will appreciate the significance of the role of the agency and the Insolvency Service in identifying people who should be dismissed as directors and barred from being directors.

When we examined the service, we discovered that at a time when insolvencies had trebled, the number of staff had increased by only 25 per cent. As a result, there was a backlog. It was impossible for the disqualification unit to handle the sheer volume of work it faced. That was reflected in cases in respect of which receivers had identified unfit conduct. Over a period of six years, we found that while the receivers had referred to the disqualification unit in 1987 one in three of the cases in respect of which there was unfit conduct, in 1988 that became one in five; in 1989 it became one in seven; in 1990 it became one in nine; in 1991 it became one in 10 and in 1992 it became one in 22. As I said at the time, Britain had become seven times safer for the corrupt director.

However, the problem is more important than that. The hon. Member for Gillingham raised the very important point that there is no method of ensuring, even when directors are disqualified, that they relinquish their other directorships. In addition to finding that corrupt directors have a much greater chance of getting away with it, it is clear that even if they do not get away with it, no one has been following up to ensure that they get rid of the directorships that they are supposed to get rid of.

Committee members and I put it to the chief executive that if unfit directors continue to operate, they are a danger to other businesses, suppliers and customers, and that that is an undue risk for the public. The chief executive recognised that point. However, despite that clear collapse of the agency's ability to monitor those unfit to be directors, the department was being denied the extra manpower it needed in the context, to make a minor political point, of a Government who continue to talk about law and order.

Mr. Stern: I am listening with great interest, and I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. My recollection of our discussion of that point in Committee is that the Committee could not conclude whether the obvious failing was the fault of inadequate staffing or of inadequate legislation in the first place.

Mr. Williams: Inadequate legislation might have been an element, but, as it emerged in questioning, the problem was a lack of resources. The hon. Gentleman might recall exchanges in which, in essence, officials were challenged with, "Are you asking the Department for the extra manpower that you need? How much extra manpower do you need?" They admitted that they had not made even as assessment. They made the point that if extra manpower is needed, that is a job for Ministers, not them.

The next matter is literally a one-point dip into the report on organised Department of Social Security fraud. We are not talking about the person who fiddles the odd voucher. We are talking about crooks, big money, counterfeiting, and the theft of mailbags—that is, big organised crime. There is an organised fraud branch. In discussions, it emerged that three quarters of such fraud takes place in London and that, for every member of the fraud branch in London, there was a saving of £350,000 which would otherwise have been defrauded. When asked how much it cost to employ someone to save that £350,000, we were told, on average, £20,000. Many of us might naively think that there is an obvious logical next step from that.

I shall read a couple of the permanent secretary's answers. I said:

> "That means in London . . . he is saving £1/3 million, £350,000."

The permanent secretary said, "That is right." He was then asked about taking on extra manpower, and he said:

> "However there is a limit to which you can put more and more staff into that and you cannot just do it just on cost effectiveness criteria otherwise the size of the Civil Service would be twice what it is now."

I must admit that if it is cost-effective, it does not cause me great worry. I went on to ask:

> "As long as it was cost effective that would not matter, would it?"

The permanent secretary said, "Yes, it would." I said:

> "Why? Why would it? As long as it was giving the taxpayer back more than it was costing, why would it matter?"

His answer was:

> "no Government has ever proceeded on the basis that you simply staff the Civil Service on the grounds of how much money you can recover."

It was one of the saddest interviews we had.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to raise an urgent issue which relates to courtesy to hon. Members and which might impinge upon hon. Members' rights. Several hon. Members and noble members of the other place were assembled in the Parliament street building at a meeting which I called to hear the European representative of the Kurdistan workers party.

On his way to that meeting, between Westminster station and Parliament street, the speaker was arrested by about a dozen police officers. He is currently at Charing Cross police station. My noble Friends Baroness Gould and Lord Avebury are currently at Charing Cross police station to ascertain on what grounds he was arrested.

Could you use your offices, Madam Deputy Speaker, to ensure that no action is taken to deport that gentleman until we have an opportunity of questioning responsible Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office? Will you urgently investigate the matter?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): If the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) is alleging, as I rather think that he is, a breach of privilege, his course of action is clear: he must write to Madam Speaker privately without delay and inquire whether investigations can be made. Apart from that, I am unable to act.

6.44 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): They say that it is a sign of either old age or enjoyment if time flies by rather quickly. It seems only a few months since our previous annual Public Accounts Committee debate. It therefore comes as a shock and surprise to find that it is exactly a year and a day since we considered the excitements of the previous year.

Once more, several excitements are worthy of note, comment and, indeed, censure. At this time of feeding frenzy, which seems to have gripped Westminster for the past week or so, it is important to keep a balance and a perspective. Although a book of horrors has been opened by the National Audit Office during the year, I put it to the House and to the country that a veritable library has been assembled during the year through the good practices and good offices of the civil service. That service has been satisfactorily delivered and standards have been achieved that are envied throughout the civilised world.

I pay tribute to the National Audit Office not only for its work in supporting members of the Committee but for its day courses for members of the Committee, which allow them to find out how a report is worked through the system and how it carries out its investigations. That understanding helps us when we have to examine an accounting officer.

I express my appreciation of the delicate way in which the Chairman of the Committee guided us through the year and helped us to produce unanimous reports. He ensured that we did not stray into commenting on policy, with all the chaos and confusion that would have followed. He kept us focused on examination of the effectiveness of policy implementation and value for money.

Much of the debate has focused on the past year. The recently created executive agencies are becoming more of a regular feature of our debates. As reforms advance, the boundary between public and private "becomes open country", to quote the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the European policy forum in July, enabling the Government to investigate how to obtain the best deal for the taxpayer's money. A responsibility goes with that freedom, and that responsibility has been accepted by the House.

We examined the impact of executive agency status on the Vehicle Inspectorate. We produced a progress report, and undoubtedly a substantial stride forward has been taken—an initial endorsement of the Government's moves to that form of decentralisation—but one swallow does not make a summer, and other matters must be examined.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, to which the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) referred, is a case in point. Its change in attitude can be seen in the conclusion to our 34th report, which states that

> "although the Agency had not been wholly ignorant of customers' needs previously, the survey carried out for the Agency in 1992 was the first systematic attempt to consult the motoring public directly."

Of course, the report, like most of our reports, makes criticisms, but it acknowledges the agency's new willingness to give better service to the public.

In respect of telephone inquiries, we commented:

> "We note that the Agency acknowledge their discontent with the present system".

Indeed, organisational changes already made in the agency enabled it to deal with some 1.2 million calls from members of the public between April and July this year—20 per cent. more than in the previous year.

An examination of the accuracy of the agency's records reveals that quality is already improving with the increased use of computerised packages. The Department of Transport acknowledges that it does not have a sophisticated system for targets in place, but it is working on improving the process and taking account of customers' views on service quality. All that moves us forward. I should like to believe that we shall see a continual improvement in the service and value for money that the agency process can achieve.

The introduction of competition and choice into public services brings with it the requirement of accountability. It is timely and helpful that the Committee has produced its eighth report on the proper conduct of public business—a matter that the Chairman of the Committee went into at great length, as did the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

It would be presumptuous to say that the report is the definitive work—that the advice is set in tablets of stone—but it is a good working document for those who move executive agencies into the sometimes murky water of the commercial world. Indeed, the Treasury has reacted to our report by producing a code of best practice for board members, which is helpful support in charting the way forward for those who serve on such bodies.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland said about accountability. He talked about slipping standards, a Watergate environment, chronic conditions and a general and increasing malaise. His analysis was not only gloomy but faulty.

I take a slightly brighter view of the future. I believe that the creation of agency status will provide something that we have not had for some time. Anyone who runs a business, or anyone who knows about operating in the real world, will know that if one can ring-fence an activity

[Mr. Richard Page]

and then examine closely what is going on inside that ring-fenced activity, one can achieve a higher standard of quality, better value for money and better accountability.

It is easier to track and report on an agency's activity than on one that is submerged in a vast Department. How often do members of the Public Accounts Committee feel that we get to the bottom of a Ministry of Defence report on what has happened and where the money has gone? Of course, standards must be maintained, and I shall be the first to insist on that. Our eighth report is a valuable guide and a valuable step towards achieving that goal.

It is perhaps appropriate to move on to one or two of the excitements that have enlivened our year. The first was the 17th report on the Pergau hydro-electric scheme, which produced much media comment—and much of it inaccurate. I will not go through the whole unhappy saga word for word, except to show how one initial small mistake can start a chain of events. Just as a dislodged pebble will start an avalanche, the initial misinterpretation by the Overseas Development Administration and the consortium of United Kingdom companies involved in the project of a firm contract proposal with indicative costs started the chain of events.

The position of the construction company is that

"an application for ATP was submitted by"—

the consortium—

"in November 1988, giving indicative costs. This was not a 'firm contract proposal' and it was only on 31 March 1989 that the consortium was in a position to provide an estimate based on detailed specification, design and costing work."

However, the National Audit Office report says that it was a firm contract proposal.

It is still not fully clear how that has emerged, but, obviously, the two ODA officials who spent all of two days examining the firm contract proposal of only £316 million set the pebble in motion because they gave the project the green light, despite the consortium's submission of the real firm proposal of £397 million some two weeks later. That was after the meeting between the Prime Minister of Malaysia and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, which was too late; the rest, as they say, is history. One redeeming feature, from which I take comfort, is that exports to Malaysia were some £226 million in 1986, but £635 million in 1992. That is a small consolation for some of the difficulties that were caused.

Last year, I trailed the saga of the Wessex regional health authority, which had not completed all its stages. That task is now complete. The report has the dubious honour of being the highest pile of paper on my desk for any project. I gained comfort from the fact that the Government abolished regional health authorities two weeks before the report was published.

I was most disturbed by the discovery of the confidential auditor's report alongside the public one. I must thank a certain trade periodical for finding out about the confidential report. When we asked for it, we found that there was nothing confidential in it; all it did was shade and hide the blushes of some of the people involved. It was unfair that section 30 of the Local Government Act 1992 was used in such a way, and I am grateful that the Committee was able to remove the fig leaf behind which people were trying to hide.

The Chairman of the Committee touched on the report, which makes sorry reading. Despite two previous warnings from the auditors in 1987 and 1989, the regional health authority ploughed on. The executive members of the board failed in their duty. We rightly criticised the regional health authority and the management executive for allowing the board members to be kept at arm's length for more than three and a half years over the mismanagement of the project.

There was a fundamental conflict between the regional health authority and Integrated Systems Ltd. when the health authority appointed a director of that company to act as the regional information systems manager. That is one way of getting to the heart of it. The Public Accounts Committee regarded it as a matter of grave concern that at least £20 million was wasted between the start of the regional information systems plan in 1984 and its abandonment in 1990.

The Public Accounts Committee carries out a valuable task. It complements the National Audit Office, and the work that it produces is of a very high standard. I should like to think that the Committee acts on information fearlessly and freely without party bias. I shall take into account what the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said about the difficulties that obviously arise when party politics start to rear their head. I pay tribute to the Chairman of the Committee. I appreciate that he ensures that the Committee investigates only the effectiveness of the implementation of policy and value for money.

I shall conclude, as I did last year, by offering another little trailer. This year, I shall trail the story of a development corporation's brainchild. It was only a small stone turned up by the Public Accounts Committee, but again a stone seems to have started an avalanche. I refer to Merseyside development corporation's Grand Regatta Columbus and Fanfare for a New World concert. The corporation's chairman had the bright idea of laying on an opera extravaganza in a yet-to-be-opened Merseyside dock to help to promote the area. The event was described in press releases as

"probably the greatest line-up of singers ever seen in the UK".

Whether the unique culture of Liverpool was ready for it appears not to have been considered. Evaluation of the financial viability of the event took just five weeks. It was supposed to break even. From that initial mistaken calculation, the burden fell on the taxpayer.

It is symptomatic of the way in which events were driven by Merseyside development corporation that the deal, under which the taxpayer picked up the £400,000 debt, was signed after midnight on the day of the concert. Undoubtedly, more details will emerge next year. I shall be fascinated to receive the response to the report and to debate it next year.

Tonight's speeches have pointed to some errors, which we must keep in perspective. Much good work is done within our civil service, but I am sure that there will be enough to occupy us again next year and another catalogue of excitement.

7.1 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) said that the Public

Accounts Committee had had an exciting year. As one excited member of the PAC, perhaps I can give a few impressions.

It is difficult to go through 49 reports, even briefly. I hope that I will not distort the facts: impressions are impressions.

My first impression is that a substantial amount of public money seems to be spent on computers and computer systems by Government Departments, quangos, next steps agencies, health authorities, non-departmental public bodies and the like. I gained the impression from our work that there was little concern for value for money when Departments or quangos embarked on the installation of a computer system. I suppose that everyone has to have a computer these days. There was little analysis as far as I could see.

The problem is that the people who take the decisions are people of my generation who know nothing about computers and therefore have to bring in computer consultants or salesmen. The computer salesman is like a double glazing salesman. He obviously knows everything about the product and his client knows nothing. Newer, better and more powerful systems are added on and the cost escalates. Once the system has been installed, no one seems to ask whether it is cheaper, more efficient or more user-friendly. Many computer systems are inflexible, as we have seen with the Child Support Agency and other agencies. No one asks whether the body has obtained value for money. The whole business just goes on and on.

When the Chief Secretary takes his knife to public expenditure, as all Chief Secretaries must, he should have a look at the vast sums of money channelled into computing systems and into the firms that instal them.

My second impression is that a substantial amount of public money has been paid to senior managers and administrators in what are called termination payments. This matter has been referred to already in the debate and it is perhaps more serious than the computing problems. It does not seem to matter whether the individual involved has done his job badly or should have been discharged or disciplined or whether there has been a breach of contract. Once it has been determined by other senior managers that one or more senior manager or administrator is to leave, an army of accountants, auditors and pension consultants descend and work out vast figures to pay to the unfortunate person who has to leave.

The payments are described variously as compensation payments, ex gratia payments, termination payments, redundancy packages, accelerated pension payments or enhanced pension payments. I never know quite where the money comes from, but it comes from all directions. Some of it certainly comes from the pensions industry.

On top of those payments, people are offered the opportunity to purchase at a low price the accoutrements of power such as the motor car, the visual display unit, the computer or whatever else they used in their office. In many cases, the lucky people leaving with enhanced payments are then offered a consultancy. So they do exactly the same work for the organisation that in effect dismissed them and paid them a lot of money. That is the impression that I received from listening to many of the exchanges in the Committee.

Leaving aside the cost of making payments to members of the public salariat, it is my impression that the law of contract has been turned on its head. I spent some time years ago learning the basic principles of the law of contract, which are fairly simple. If one party to a contract breaks that contract and the other party suffers damage, the party who breaks the contract has to pay damages to the party who suffers from the breach of contract. It is a simple elementary proposition. However, the law of contract in many of the cases to which I listened was different. The person who broke the contract received money from the person who was damaged as a result of the breach of contract.

I do not know where the law of contract has gone wrong in employment within the public salariat and, indeed, private industry. I shall give a few examples to highlight the point. First, as we have been told, the regional general manager of Wessex regional health authority, sadly, was responsible in the main for losing at least £20 million of public money. In consequence of that, it seems, he received £111,000 in his pocket. On top of that, he had to pay only £750 for a desk and a pedestal, two bookshelves, a VDU table, a fax machine, an answering machine, a word processor which was apparently obsolete, a pocket organiser and a lamp. He received all that for £750 on top of the £111,000 even though he was responsible for losing £20 million of taxpayers' money.

The second instance from Wessex regional health authority was the case of Ms Storrs. She was a good employee; we made no criticism of her. She did her work well—so well that there was no work left for her to do under her contract. Her contract could be terminated by either side with three months' notice. Her work came to an end. She could have been given three months' notice, but Wessex health authority paid her £78,000. It was described as an ex gratia payment. It is nice to be paid that amount of money. The health authority was probably a good employer, but I find it extraordinary that a public body dealing with health, facing all the pressures on public expenditure and the need to channel as much money as possible to the care of patients, should pay such a sum when the person had been paid fully under her contract of employment.

Mr. Stern: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that perhaps one of the most sinister aspects—I use that word advisedly—of the overpayment, as it turned out to be, to Ms Storrs was that it seemed to be intended to buy her non-participation in any future activity of the health service, when she was dismissed for having done her job so well that she had worked herself out of a job?

Mr. Davies: That seems to have been the case. If it had been the intention to debar her from competing with the health service, perhaps that should have been written into her contract. Such business arrangements can be made. The £78,000 was described as that very strange animal, the ex gratia payment.

The director of finance of South Birmingham health authority, who probably should have been sacked, was paid £27,000 before he left and the chief executive—who, according to the report, clearly should have been dismissed—received £33,000. Those are relatively small sums. There is no legal basis for making such payments, yet an authority is writing the cheques and using public money in that way with no legal authority.

[Mr. Davies]

I shall leave aside the Welsh Development Agency, as enough has been said about Celtic institutions. I merely point out that such problems occur in other parts of the country as well.

The director of regional management services at the West Midlands regional health authority should also have been dismissed, and could have been for what he did. He was given an immediate accelerated pension of £6,462 a year and a lump sum of £81,387. That was quite unnecessary. It was a cavalier and irresponsible way of dealing with public money.

Finally, the deputy regional managing director of West Midlands regional health authority received £42,000 for resigning, which takes me back to the basic principles of contract law. I do not see how one can be paid if one walks off the job. If a builder contracts to do a job and wilfully walks off the building site, thereby breaking the contract, I would not expect the employer—as described in the contract—to pay the builder for breaking the contract. Yet, that gentleman was ostentatiously described in a press release as having resigned. Because he resigned and broke his contract, he received £42,000.

Years ago, a private steel firm moved from the west midlands to my constituency. It closed down in the early 1980s and 1,500 steelworkers lost their jobs. They never got anything like those sums in redundancy and they did nothing wrong. The most that any of them received was £3,000 for 25 to 30 years' service. They produced wealth rather than merely distributing other people's, but they received very little, yet the Public Accounts Committee finds that vast sums of money are paid to people who do not produce wealth, although they do important jobs, and who have, sadly, done something wrong.

I am sure that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury reads our reports assiduously. He sits there looking very interested in our debate. If the Chief Secretary were to take up that knife, perhaps he should start with the higher echelons of the public salariat and leave the poor, the disabled and the unemployed for the time being.

7.13 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), not least because he referred to some circumstances that we considered in the Public Accounts Committee in the past year—cases of people leaving their employment with substantial payments. I want to refer to such circumstances more obliquely, but, before doing so, I must return us to the main theme of the debate—our eighth report, on the proper conduct of public business.

Some hon. Members, especially those on the Opposition Benches, sought to draw from that report inferences of a decline in the work and standards of the public service, caused by applying the standards that apply in private enterprise. I draw the opposite conclusion. I spent most of my life advising businesses before I came to the House and I conclude from so many of the examples listed tonight that no private business could measure down to the standards that we have seen apply in the public service. In so many of the examples, it was not a case of the public sector declining to the level of the private sector, but of the public sector failing to reach standards that would be regarded as automatic in the private sector.

If some of the examples of gross mismanagement and sheer carelessness with other people's money that can be quoted from our reports had been applied in the private sector, the organisations would swiftly have gone bankrupt. It is more likely, however, that they would never have had sums of money of such a size to play with in the first place.

One of the more horrifying reports that we produced in the past year, which has not been mentioned to any great extent in the debate, was that on the Department of Employment Field system. It was an example of a computer system being installed—the right hon. Member for Llanelli mentioned that subject.

We concluded in our report that

"although the Department spent £48 million on the Field System, most TECs"

for which it was intended, were using it only in part or not at all. It was developed in some ivory tower somewhere, and bore no relation to what the potential users wanted. We formed the conclusion, and were right to do so, that the system could not be regarded as any sort of success, even a partial one.

We were given evidence that if the training and enterprise councils had been fully in existence at the time that the Department decided to press ahead with the system, after much consideration, the TECs would never have asked for it and, given its subsequent lack of success, we cannot really blame them, can we?

The full horrors of the Field system and its total failure were not merely the decision to go ahead with a system that no one wanted, but concerned the management of the project. Even if it was a wrong 'un' and no one wanted it, the system did not need to cost £48 million of taxpayers' money that would otherwise have been spent on training people to gain employment opportunities.

We concluded that a significant part of the expenditure was totally wasted. It was not even remotely referrable to the project under consideration. In addition, the haphazard way in which the Department engaged consultants to set up the system left us questioning whether the £11 million out of £48 million spent on employment consultants to develop the system was largely a complete waste of money. I have no doubt that the money was of great benefit to the consultancies, but certainly not to the public weal.

That is an example of management within the Department that could be said to have broken every rule that a junior Master of Business Administration student would have imbibed before being released into the business world.

I question whether, when we compare private and public sector standards in the management of public money, we should not start from the premise that we have seen examples in which the public sector has totally failed to measure up to standards that would be set automatically in the private sector. That has occurred not just in one Department or in the management of specific sums of money in a brand-new project. Reference has been made to the South Birmingham health authority. In our conclusions, the Committee stated its concern at the

> "Regional Chairman's finding that there had been obfuscation on the part of the South Birmingham Health Authority in the manner in which they had supplied information to the Region about their increasing deficit."

"Obfuscation" is a long word which most people would prefer to shorten to "lying". Deliberately wrong information was passed by the management of the South Birmingham health authority to the regional authority. The regional authority's management of South Birmingham was sufficiently distant that it did not notice, and the members of staff concerned were allowed to get away with it. That is not a decline in public sector standards to those of the private sector; that is the application of standards which would be applied only—if at all—in the course of a systematic fraud, whether in public or private sector management. Frankly, those standards must be wholly deplored and the Committee was rightly charged with rooting them out.

The problems of South Birmingham were not just those of appalling management, because there is another lesson which we can learn from South Birmingham and which is too infrequently applied in the public sector. Where there is inadequate accounting or communication between one department and another in a substantial private company, it is recognised that it is the job of one section of the company not to try to do down another section of the company. If one section has gained money at the expense of another, it is the job of the management to point out and rectify that inadequate distribution of resources within the company.

That is apparently not the case in the public sector as applied in South Birmingham, because its accounting system was so inadequate that it was failing to bill other sectors, health authorities and trusts for money that was legitimately due to South Birmingham. Not surprisingly, the authority was running into a huge deficit and, in the end, a number of people lost their jobs. We rightly criticised South Birmingham for that failure in accounting, but should not we look also at the other health authorities and trusts that were getting services from South Birmingham, were not getting a bill for those services and were keeping quiet about it?

Should we not expect standards within the health service management which would be applied in any substantial company? After all, the health service is the biggest business in Europe in terms of the resources that it uses and the number of people whom it employs. A similar point also came up when we were looking at the Property Services Agency.

Should it not be axiomatic that the job of the public service is not to try to do down other parts of the public service, but to achieve value for money? Value for money seems to have been furthest from the minds of the public sector management involved in the two examples to which I have referred.

Value for money is not just a matter of seeing how little can be spent to achieve a certain effect. It is also a matter of measuring the effect that is achieved by a certain level of expenditure. That point was brought home to us when we were looking at—among other things—the construction of the helicopter landing platform. I agree with the Committee's conclusion that, in terms of public expenditure, the award of the contract through competition was done to achieve the contract at the minimum level of public expenditure appropriate to the circumstances. But we indicated in our report that we would wish to return to the matter.

The Committee also found it necessary to question whether, as a result of that competitive process, the public ended up getting value for money. It was noticeable that the definition of what the public were buying with that money was changing continually as the price went down. It was originally intended that we have a single ship which was designed to achieve a certain purpose. But, by the time the cost had been pared and, as the accounting officer concerned said, the "gold-plated taps" had been eliminated from the costing, we ended up with—I shall not hesitate to quote what I said in Committee—

> "a ship which cannot defend itself, which relies on other warships for protection, which has to waddle along in pursuit of those escorts at two thirds of their speed, which has a radar signature which was originally considered dangerous."

If it is the job of the Public Accounts Committee to consider value for money, I question whether we sometimes have sufficient resources on our own and without reference to other Committees to arrive at such a conclusion. In a case such as the helicopter landing platform, I would have hoped to have a reassurance at the end of our inquiry that the ship that we were buying with public money was still capable of fulfilling its original purpose. I did not get that reassurance, and nor did the Committee. That is why we indicated that we would wish to return to the subject.

As the work of the Committee develops—as it has developed over the years—we may well need to look more at what the Government are trying to buy with the money they spend, as well as whether they are spending that money most efficiently.

The final report to which I wish to refer is one that the Chairman referred to and which, in a way, typifies the worst examples of public management. I refer to the report into the British Council. We found in a very small organisation—particularly compared with some of the organisations that the Committee looked at—a series of management mistakes involving basic accounting techniques. I speak as an accountant. Accountancy is not everybody's cup of tea and what to me is basic would not be regarded as such by other people.

The inability of the British Council to distinguish between what was a payment and what was a grant was so basic to the mismanagement of that body as to leave the Committee calling into question whether the organisation is capable of managing public money from within the resources that the public granted it to manage that money.

In other words, should we look at organisations such as the British Council and say to them that they are not capable of reaching the standards that we expect for the management of public money? They have proved that they are not capable of reaching those standards. Therefore, should the Committee recommend to the Government that they take the responsibility for the management of public money away from the accounting officers of such bodies and give it to someone more capable of exercising that responsibility? The question asked in the eighth report was whether we, as a Public Accounts Committee, could contribute to reversing the decline in the public sector which we were noting in far too many cases. We produced our report as guidance for the head of the civil service, not just on how to avoid the

[Mr. Michael Stern]

list of mistakes that we had catalogued but to tell him that we, as a Committee of Parliament, expected better of his work than we had so far seen.

I should like to add a personal note that derives from my experience outside the House. The right hon. Member for Llanelli referred to the circumstances in which a number of senior public servants had left their posts and asked whether the Committee, or the head of the civil service, as the man ultimately responsible, could do anything to stem the tide of payments to people for so-called inadequate services. I believe that there is something we can do, but it will not happen until the House and the PAC have been shown more than one example of an accounting officer, confronted by the sort of mismanagement that has been described today, being required to clear his or her desk and walk. That may already have happened; we may investigate such a case next year. But until it is seen to happen and until we are prepared to apply to public servants the sanctions that are applied routinely in the private sector, we shall not attain the standards of the management of public money that Parliament is entitled to demand.

7.31 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): The debate takes place against a backdrop of growing public concern about the conduct of public life, from which we may conclude that there must be concern about how individuals in public life conduct themselves.

"The proper conduct of public business", the important report published by the PAC on 27 January, reported to Parliament a series of failures in administrative and financial systems and controls in Government and public bodies. This is where I take issue with the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), in whose speech I intervened, in an attempt to draw his attention to paragraph 1 of the report. I do not apologise for quoting it again:

> "In recent years we have seen and reported on a number of serious failures in administrative and financial systems and controls within departments and other public bodies, which has led to money being wasted or otherwise improperly spent. These failings represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years."

It is important that the Government respond positively to the criticisms in the report and that they reassure Parliament that they take it seriously and deal with its criticisms constructively.

Clearly, the report deals with incompetence, with fraud and with corruption in a series of Ministries, Government agencies and quangos. It is a catastrophic catalogue of public money being wasted or improperly spent. It demonstrates the Government's failure to ensure sound financial management and probity in a large number of cases.

I firmly believe that the Government are ultimately responsible for Departments, Government agencies, next steps agencies and non-departmental public bodies: the buck stops with the Government, so if these criticisms are valid, they must take responsibility and act on them.

The bottom line is the straightforward fact that the British taxpayer has paid dear for the failings outlined in the eighth report of the PAC. There are startling examples of failings—failures of financial control, failures in the stewardship of public money, and failures, when public assets have been sold, to get value for money. It is indeed a staggering catalogue of mistakes and failures, affecting the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department of Employment, the Ministry of Defence, the Welsh Office, the Property Services Agency, the Insolvency Service, the National Rivers Authority, Wessex regional health authority, the West Midlands regional health authority, the national health service management executive and the new town development corporations—to name but a few.

I wish to discuss two other reports by the PAC, the ninth report, published on 19 January and entitled "Grant Maintained Schools: Financial Control", and the 23rd report, published on 21 April and concerning the sale of the Scottish Bus Group. I should also like to refer to the minutes of evidence taken on the Merseyside development corporation's Grand Regatta Columbus and Fanfare for a New World concert. This matter has already been mentioned by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page), and I should like later to allude to some of his remarks.

On 14 August 1992, the Fanfare for a New World concert took place in Liverpool, in conjunction with the grand regatta. Those two events cost the public and private purse £1.1 million and were, from start to finish, a financial fiasco. When we took evidence on the episode, we were told that it was the brainchild of the chairman of the Merseyside development corporation, Sir Desmond Pitcher. It turned out to be a rather expensive brainchild for the taxpayer.

On 3 March 1992, the Merseyside task force gave contingent approval for the Merseyside development corporation to spend up to £400,000—£250,000 to be spent on the regatta and up to £150,000 on the concert. The letter of approval from the Merseyside task force included the following sentence:

> "My colleagues have been reassured by your estimate that the maximum possible contribution in the worst case scenario would be a £400,000 cost to the public purse."

However, as the PAC report states, before this approval was sought and given, the Merseyside development corporation had already started to spend money on the project, to the tune of £15,000. That was the start of the slippery slope which eventually led to the loss of £1.1 million.

Perhaps the event that concerns me most was the one that took place on 12 July 1992, when the draft budget was produced for the concert, showing that it would lose £187,840. The letter of approval signed on 3 March 1992 said:

> "I shall be grateful if you will ensure that we are informed if it seems likely that additional funds will be required for these projects".

So we might have expected the Merseyside development corporation to tell the Department of the Environment on 12 July 1992 that the project was going to lose money, and that it would cut its losses by cancelling the concert. The corporation did neither; it went ahead. Some time in July 1992, it actually signed a binding legal agreement to pay the cost of television coverage of the concert, amounting to £50,000 out of the estimated total cost of £150,000.

When the PAC sought evidence as to why the project, with such huge losses becoming apparent, was not cancelled, the explanation given to the Committee was that, because the Department of the Environment had sanctioned expenditure of £150,000, losses would amount not to £187,000 but to £37,000—a more manageable sum. The corporation omitted to mention the expenditure of an additional £50,000 from outside the budget estimate.

To make matters worse, on 7 August 1992, a week before the concert was due to take place, the Merseyside development corporation—I would be astonished if, by that time, with the information at its disposal, it had not realised that money was going to be lost—signed over the liability of the concert to a shelf company with a share value of £2 and no assets.

When the concert took place on 14 August—and lost money—the losses were transferred to the private company and away from the Merseyside development corporation. If that move was not bad enough, on the eve of the concert, the Merseyside development corporation was faced with the fact that if it did not put more money into the concert it would be cancelled. So it put in £90,000 of public money to sponsor the event and bought £60,000-worth of tickets to ensure that people would be there when it took place. That was additional expenditure.

It was said clearly in the letter of 3 March that if there was any additional expenditure, the Department of the Environment should be informed. The Merseyside development corporation did not do that. The concert went ahead and made a loss of £223,000 to the company, Carroll Promotion Ltd. The concert made a loss of some £419,000. The Grand Regatta Columbus lost £426,000. When all that is added up, the loss comes to £1.1 million of public and private money, because of one event. That is a complete waste of taxpayers' money.

Just to make matters worse, £90,000 was spent on hospitality for the regatta. That is an abuse of public expenditure and cannot be condoned in any way. The PAC has not yet reported on that matter, so I will not draw any conclusions, but the minutes of evidence are on the record for people to see, and they beg serious questions about public accountability, public service, incompetence and waste.

It is surprising to note that the chairman of the Merseyside development corporation is still in post. I find that absolutely astonishing when the Government's response to the PAC's eighth report says:

> "The fundamental purpose of the Government's programme of reform is to strengthen the management of the public sector so that waste is reduced and those who manage public services are more accountable for their actions. The Government fully agrees with the Committee's view that effective programmes for economy and efficiency must be combined with a proper concern for the sensible conduct of public business and care for the honest handling of public money."

I should like to see how the Government will fit that response to the way in which the Merseyside development corporation conducted its affairs over the Fanfare for a New World.

The sale of Scottish Bus was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). It is another example of the PAC being concerned to get value for money. We are not concerned with the politics of the matter or the decisions taken by the Government to sell Scottish Bus; they are irrelevant in this case. The most important thing for the PAC is to gain value for money.

The decision to sell Scottish Bus was taken in 1988. Then, its value was £118.1 million. It was making, as we have heard, a profit of £9 million a year. Immediately prior to the sale, those profits had gone down to £0.5 million, whereas, as my right hon. Friend said, the profits of the local authority passenger transport companies had gone up from £1 million to £4 million. The only change in circumstances was that the Government had decided to sell Scottish Bus. More importantly, they had decided that a management buy-out would be preferred.

One could be forgiven for saying that there would be a conflict of interest in that activity. The more profitable an organisation is, the more the individuals in charge of that organisation would have to pay for it. One would assume that if the profitability of Scottish Bus went down, the sale price would also come down. It may well have been in the interest of the management of Scottish Bus to ensure that it traded to a level where they could purchase it at a more favourable rate.

The Scottish Office says that it does not see a conflict in the decision to sell Scottish Bus with a preference towards a management buy-out. If Government assets are sold anywhere else, they must put into the enterprise management who are independent of their decision to sell via a management buy-out. There should be senior managers who are independent and are not interested in the outcome of the sale, to ensure that the public get good value for money.

The acid test for that has already been referred to—the sale of Citylink. It was making a profit of more than £900,000 at the time of the decision to sell, and went into the red by £800,000. It was given an injection of cash of £1.5 million immediately prior to its sale and generated income to the Government of £265,000. It was sold three years later for £5.1 million. That was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West. But what my right hon. Friend did not say is that if the Government had included a clawback clause in the sale of Citylink, they would have benefited from the profitability of an onward sale. That omission has cost the taxpayer a great deal of money.

Eventually, the project was valued at £118.1 million. By the time the PAC report was published in April, the Treasury had received only £79.4 million of the proceeds of the sale and was expected to receive another £8.7 million, which brings the benefit to the Treasury to £88.1 million—a massive reduction from the £118 million that was foreseen in 1988. The taxpayer has not had value for money.

One of the important aspects of the sale is that, out of the £88 million that the Treasury expects to receive, £56.4 million will be from a pre-sale dividend, which will not be available unless the company is to be sold. It has generated a sales income to the Treasury of £31.7 million. I feel that the Government should consider that more closely.

My hon. Friends mentioned the fact that the sale will enable the Government to get £150 million into the Treasury from the surplus pension fund. I suspect that that was the main motivating factor behind the sale. I am very critical of the way in which that pension fund is treated. The sale of Scottish Bus emphasises once again that the Government are prepared to sell public assets at knockdown prices, which cost the taxpayer and the Revenue money. That seems to characterise a whole range of privatisation issues and has been repeated in that sale.

[Mr. Mike Hall]

My final point relates to grant-maintained schools' financial control, which is dealt with in the ninth report of the Public Accounts Committee 1993-94, published on 19 January. Two aspects of the report cause me concern. The evidence received by the PAC shows quite clearly that schools that initially opted out to become grant maintained—the first tranche only—have received preferential treatment in the way in which they received their maintenance grant. The PAC clearly established, from evidence given by the permanent secretary at the Department for Education, that there was a concept called "double funding".

Paragraph 22 says that the Department for Education

> "have not calculated the central services element of annual maintenance grant so as to reflect accurately local education authorities' delegation of central services to schools. Consequently, some double funding has occurred."

The PAC found that the existing arrangements showed that the local authorities involved in those schools had lost out to the tune of £13.6 million. There was a central funding element. Approximately 16 per cent. of the budget was paid to the grant-maintained schools. The school budgets were greatly devolved from the centre, from county hall, and increased to something like 93 per cent. of the overall budget. The existing traditional or historic funding of 16 per cent. remained. That concept was confirmed to the Committee by the then permanent secretary at the Department for Education, Sir Geoffrey Holland. He did not disagree with our findings that double funding had taken place.

The PAC, knowing full well that an immediate removal of that double funding would put schools at a disadvantage, called for it to be removed over two years. I am disappointed at the response from the Treasury minute, which says that it disputes the PAC's view and claims that the central services charges were calculated properly and that there was no double funding. I should like a commitment from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that the Government are prepared to look again at that aspect of the PAC report on grant-maintained schools.

The second aspect of the report about grant-maintained schools that concerns me relates to the activities of the Grant Maintained School Centre Ltd. That organisation, which is funded by central Government, is there to provide schools that have already achieved grant-maintained status with information, advice and services. In 1992-93, it received £577,000 in public money.

The centre shares its headquarters in 36 Great Smith street with Choice in Education, which runs the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation. The two organisations are actively involved in the promotion of the concept of grant-maintained schools in advising schools that are considering their approach to the balloting of parents on whether grant-maintained status is right for those schools. They are, therefore, part of a quasi-political organisation that is involved in promoting a particular view.

The PAC was informed in evidence that, in February 1993, the Department for Education undertook an internal evaluation of the centre's activities. That evaluation pointed to a risk that grant money might have financed non-eligible functions. In other words, an internal report clearly indicated that money voted by Parliament was being spent for a purpose not intended in the Vote. The problem was that a single accounting system was being applied to three organisations, from which staff, office and rent costs would have to be found. It was impossible to disaggregate the three budgets.

I accept that officials from the Department for Education have visited the Grant Maintained School Centre Ltd. and sorted out the problem; I also accept that, at the time, it was not possible to say that money voted by Parliament had been used for such purposes. However, this is an example of cross-subsidy, in which Government money was used for quasi-political activities. It is important for non-departmental public bodies to have clear guidelines, so that such instances cannot be repeated.

The PAC has pointed out that the Property Services Agency charged itself £65.6 million because it was unable to recover the money from its customers—whom I suspect to have been Government organisations and agencies. It has also found that the Department of Employment made doubtful and incorrect payments to training providers, including training and enterprise councils, amounting to £79.5 million.

Wessex regional health authority, we learn, wasted £20 million on an information system that was eventually abandoned. West Midlands regional health authority wasted £10 million of public money; and, as the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) pointed out, the Department of Employment invested £48 million in a redundant Field system.

I suspect that the reason behind that was that the Government had decided that training should be taken away from the regional employment departments and given to agencies and training and enterprise councils. Bureaucrats in the regional offices probably decided that they wanted some control over what was going on in the TECs, and tried to set up a computer system that would involve them in the accounting methods used by TECs; the TECs, however, saw through it and did not use the system. As a result, £48 million was wasted—as was the £11 million spent on consultancy fees, which was strongly criticised.

We are seeing a serious breakdown in financial control at the heart of Government, in Government agencies and in quangos. I hope that the responses from spokesmen on both sides of the House will lead us to a point at which we are able to ensure that the Government take responsibility for what goes on in their Departments, agencies and quangos, and that the conduct of public business is carried out properly, ethically and with the probity that we would all consider right and proper.

Perhaps we could start by saying that members of quangos should be accountable in some way and that when they are found to have wasted public money they should be subject to surcharges similar to those levied on members of local authorities when they lose public money in a similar way. We should also introduce some openness in the way in which members of quangos are appointed.

I was very disappointed by the references made to my late right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East, John Smith, who raised the eighth PAC report on the Floor of the House. He asked the Prime Minister for a positive response. I do not think that he tried to make the report into something that it was not. The most disappointing event of that day was the Prime Minister's comment that there had been no breakdown in the way in which public business had been conducted, contrary to the findings of the Committee. He said that the report was merely a useful checklist, which actually justified the Government's approach to the way in which they were running their business.

I do not think that that response was helpful, in the context of trying to improve the public's perception of the way in which those in public life conduct business on their behalf. I hope that today's debate will lead to a massive improvement in the way in which public money is spent.

7.55 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): I feel a bit like an intruder: I think that I am the only non-member of the PAC who has spoken so far. That is unfortunate, because the Committee's work is supremely valuable to the House of Commons, and every hon. Member should take an interest in its proceedings.

I pay tribute to the Committee for all its work on behalf of the rest of us. It does an outstanding job; it has done a particularly outstanding job in the past year or so, and will be seen to have contributed greatly to the development and improvement of British public administration. Well done, and thank you; I hope that Committee members will not mind if, for a few minutes, I join what seems to be a private conversation.

As other hon. Members have said, the eighth report is clearly the one that history will remember, although all the reports are memorable. I am sorry to quote a sentence that has already been quoted, but history will of course remember that the Committee stated:

> "These failings represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years."

When the history of the period is written, that sentence will provide at least a footnote—possibly more. It will be seen to encapsulate the history of what was happening to the organisation of public services during a particularly important time.

I have been reading some of the memoranda that Sir Charles Trevelyan was bunging off to Gladstone 140 years ago, on the theme that we must clean up British public services and the civil service and eradicate patronage. The PAC's language is not quite in the same vein—how could it be?—but there is nevertheless a parallel between what was said then and what the PAC has felt obliged to say in the 1990s. It is saying, as Sir Charles Trevelyan said to William Gladstone all those years ago, that a problem exists that must be addressed in the interests of the integrity of British public service.

I note that in recent days the Government have been saying—because of the difficulties that they have run into—that they have, after all, been excessively zealous in monitoring the whole area. As has already been pointed out, however, the story is not quite like that. When the report appeared, the immediate official response was "What problem? There is no problem; do not make a fuss." Now we are told by the Chairman of the Committee—and I take some reassurance from this—that all kinds of things have been happening within Government.

In a sense, that makes matters both better and worse. It improves matters in that the Government have clearly been activated by the findings and verdict of the PAC; the bad aspect is that the Government should want publicly to maintain the pretence that there is no problem. There clearly is a problem, as evidenced by the Government's own behaviour. It has been a little misleading of the Government in recent days to claim credit for having introduced the National Audit Act 1983, the foundation of the modern audit system. It was not like that at all. When the Public Accounts Committee produced a special report saying, basically, that wherever public money goes, public audit should go too, the Government did not like it. The previous Chairman of the PAC described the Government's reaction as "almost wholly negative."

Vast numbers of hon. Members got very cross during a debate at the time. Almost 300 of them signed an early-day motion and eventually, through the medium of a private Member's Bill and under the auspices of the person who now sails under the illustrious name of Lord St. John of Fawsley, the 1983 Act was passed. For the Government to claim that it was their Act and that they wanted this zealous audit of public bodies is not true. Perhaps obfuscation is the word that we could use to describe the way in which the Government have talked about the matter.

The Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the Public Accounts Committee's sister Committee, published a major report analogous to the PAC's 1981 report. It said that the ombudsman should be able to go wherever public administration goes, that the framework in which the ombudsman operates should be changed and that there should be at least an annual debate on the work of the parliamentary officer.

Again, the Government's response has been wholly negative. They say that those changes do not need to be introduced and that there should not be a debate. This, however, is a House of Commons matter and a parliamentary matter. It should go beyond the normal exchanges between the parties. Parliament is asserting itself against the Executive. That is what the issues are, and should be all about.

It is impossible to understand that historic sentence from the eighth report without recognising the sort of changes in public services that have produced that verdict. Again, the Government cannot have it both ways. They tell us that they have engineered "a revolution" in public services. They claim that they have transformed the nature of public services. They say how right they are and make claims about increased efficiency and performance. They say that they have brought a particular model to the operation of public services. The Government wanted a revolution in the way in which the state and state services are run. They have been pursuing that policy, but they must accept that it has led to the most acute problems in relation to accountability.

If one fragments public services and disaggregates the state, if one devolves responsibility right down the line, if one sets up a contract culture and magical flexibility on, for instance, pay and patient arrangements, one will see, if one is not careful, the more unpleasant consequences of that flexibility. There will be a lack of control and a lack of accountability. When they make their claims about the revolution in public services, the Government must be serious about the implications for accountability of their actions. In every revolution, whether we like it or not, there are casualties and in a sense we have been hearing about those casualties this afternoon and reading about them in the PAC's reports.

[Dr. Tony Wright]

My principle is a simple one. In any organisation or reorganisation of public services, accountability must follow. The more one fragments and disaggregates services, the more pressing becomes the problem of accountability. One cannot do it in the old way. One must find new techniques of accountability to match new techniques of organisation. That is the essential principle that the PAC is trying to underline.

Mr. Page: I do not know what experience the hon. Gentleman has of business, but I promise him that a smaller activity that is ring-fenced is much easier to audit and investigate for misdemeanours than a large conglomerate, where things can so easily get lost. That has been shown time and time again in the PAC reports. For years, the Committee has heard those various criticisms. I suggest that, of course, there are dangers, but there are also benefits and those dangers can be quantified and monitored. The chances of getting caught by going through the agency and abusing the agency system are so much greater that that would be a tremendous deterrent.

Dr. Wright: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making that point. I am not sure that he quite understood the point that I was making, which seemed to contain an elementary truth. Hon. Members are required not to pronounce on our liking or disliking for what is being done but to recognise that the more one shifts power around the system—the thrust of what the Government are doing in relation to public service—the more one must ensure that accountability follows. That unifying principle should keep us all on the same side.

Mr. Shersby: There is accountability and there must continue to be accountability, but that will happen only if officials and people monitoring the work of disaggregated bodies do their stuff. They have the skills and ability to monitor what is going on and to watch what is going on. Systems are in place to achieve that but the skills are required.

Dr. Wright: I am grateful to the hon Gentleman for that intervention. If one considers the work on the accountability of these bodies, a rather different picture begins to emerge. I and other people conducted a study recently into the matter. It tried to assemble and to apply an index of accountability in relation to extra-governmental organisations, as we call them. We found that there are 5,000 of these bodies compared with 1,300 executive quangos. We can argue about the figures but it is important to consider how accountable those bodies are because their accountability will be a factor in some of the problems that they will experience.

I shall not give all the results of the study, but let me list some of the accountability criteria involved. Were the members liable to surcharge, as members of local authorities are—an important discipline? Were they subject to an ombudsman's investigation and scrutiny? Was there effective external public audit? Did they have, again like local authorities, monitoring officers to keep an eye on what was going on? Do the public have a right to inspect a register of member's interests? Did the public have the right to attend board or committee meetings, to inspect the minutes of meetings and to see policy papers or documents from meetings? Were bodies required to produce annual reports, to publish annual reports and annual accounts and to meet the public?

I wish there were time to go through the list of extra-governmental organisations in the study and to show how deficient they are in those respects. We heard earlier about the urban development corporation. Under almost all the headings, the answer was no. That is not sensible. It is not democratic. There is a lack of the mechanisms that are liable to produce an avoidance of the sort of problems that we have heard about this afternoon.

Mr. John Plummer, funded by the Joseph Rowntree trust, published a survey on quangos and accountability a matter of days ago. His verdict was as follows:

> "In terms of accountability, the quangos are operating with ill-defined, contradictory and opaque principles. Procedures vary widely without obvious reason."

He examined in detail training and enterprise councils, housing associations and national health service trusts and found a complete mess with regard to accountability.

We should remember the Charles Trevelyan warnings about the dangers of patronage when considering the appointment process. It is an elementary truth that if one sets up an appointive state, which is essentially what has happened—for good reasons for bad—one needs appointees, and good ones, to run the various bodies. The fact is that many have not been very good, perhaps because good ones were in short supply. Unless we tackle the nature of the appointments system, we shall have to face the consequences of patronage that were discussed 150 years ago.

Let me cite the example from the west midlands with which I am fairly familiar. A major reason why the west midlands story continued so long and generated so much scandal was that the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority was the friend of a Minister. He had been appointed as a ministerial placeman and it became impossible to remove him. Indeed, the more he was attacked, the more he was protected. The same is true of Ministers—they cannot be got rid of when they get too awful because it is too embarrassing to get rid of them. That was precisely what happened in the west midlands. Someone whose maladministration was at the root of so many problems could not be removed because he was a ministerial friend, the president of the university Conservative association and various other things. Patronage is bad in democratic terms but also in terms of efficiency. When the scandal was compounded by a pay-off of £10,000 for having brought the whole region to the point of catastrophe, people rightly ask what on earth is going on.

In response to a point made a few moments ago, I believe that there is a sense in which at bottom much will always depend on the sheer good sense, honesty and probity of the people involved. Here, too, there is a difficulty. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the culture within public services has changed considerably as a consequence of the public service revolution brought about by the Government. The strongest defence against corruption of all kinds is honest people with a sense of professional pride and service. If we undermine and corrode that defence we shall be led into the problems of which we have had an inkling today. The Government's actions have caused precisely that erosion. They have destabilised the traditional and professional culture within public services, which was the best guarantee of honest dealings and probity and all that we consider so important.

I add one more element to the picture. Another characteristic of the bodies that we are debating is the lack of external accountability, or certainly the lack of external democratic and local accountability. There has, rightly, been an obsession with upward financial accountability, accountability from the centre. We are now told that the Government are strengthening accountability even more because of the PAC report. However, some of the best discipline arises when people are publicly and democratically accountable to users and electors. In so far as the Government have removed those dimensions of accountability from the services, they have made it all too easy to forget responsibility.

I conclude with an article that I stumbled on the other day. It was written in 1938 by Sir Ivor Jennings, a leading authority in the early part of the century and the leading expert on public administration. Interestingly enough, the article was entitled "Corruption and Public Services". He noted the way in which increasingly, even then, public administration was moving from the old uniform structures to the new structures of boards. He wanted to sound a warning and that warning must be compounded now. He said:

> "If it is desired to set up commissions for public services or committees for public control of private enterprise, it is essential that they should be co-ordinated with the general system of administration so as to share in the tradition of the civil service and the democratic control that maintains it."

They were wise words 50 or more years ago and they are echoed by those of the PAC report. The tragedy is that in the intervening period, and especially in the past decade and a half, we have not put in place the structures of accountability to match the changes in public administration. We are now paying the price.

8.16 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I shall not detain the House for long. I have followed the Wessex regional health service story almost since I was elected in 1992 when the first and rather bowdlerised version of a district auditor's report on Wessex was published. I have a few final observations to make because this is perhaps the last debate to refer to the sorry Wessex saga and what it can teach us about standards of conduct in public life and the responsibility of Government and Ministers towards public bodies such as health authorities when things start to go wrong.

I shall not repeat the information about the Wessex saga which is already in the public domain, but it is worth noting that, if it had not been for the determination of the Public Accounts Committee, much of that information about Wessex would still be confidential. A major report in two sections by the district auditor would have remained confidential, had it not been obtained in part by journals such as *Computer Weekly* and *The Independent* and thus been drawn to the attention of the PAC which, having seen it, insisted on publishing it. The information in the report should have been made public from the outset and the Ministers who had seen it should have moved heaven and earth to make it public. I thank the PAC for doing so.

I now develop a theme which was touched on in the PAC report on Wessex but not dealt with in great detail. That is the failure of successive Secretaries of State and the national health service management executive to respond to early warnings about what was happening in Wessex. The PAC concluded:

> "It is unacceptable . . . that, although a series of auditors' reports were presented to the Management Executive and the Secretary of State between February 1987 and August 1989 detailing what had gone wrong in the implementation of the project, it was not abandoned by the Regional Health Authority until 1990".

As far as I know, the PAC did not consider the auditors' reports in detail. What was in them and how reasonable was the failure of successive Secretaries of State to act?

The tender for the RISP contract—the regional information systems plan—in Wessex was awarded in August or September 1986. The first audit report was sent to the Secretary of State as early as February 1987. In essence, that report revealed the major issues that were to be at the centre of the Public Accounts Committee investigation when it took place in 1993. The report described for the Secretary of State the role of Arthur Andersen, which was involved both in evaluating the contract and in tendering for the contract—a practice highlighted as wrong in procedure and in practice. That report, dated February 1987, also showed that the contract had been let at an inquorate meeting of the authority.

Having had that information, did the Secretary of State respond to the auditors? The auditors had said that it should be considered whether there was sufficient justification for not accepting a different contract that had been recommended by consultants, and also that the propriety of affording one competitor access to the evaluation data should be examined. The Secretary of State had been asked to consider whether a retendering exercise should be undertaken, and even whether authorisation existed for the letting of the contract. Yet despite those matters having been drawn to the attention of the relevant Minister in 1987, nothing effective happened.

In August 1987 the health service auditor found it necessary to issue a second interim report before the closing of accounts for the year 1986-87. That report, which also went to the Secretary of State, had no fewer than four different sections highlighting concerns about financial management in Wessex.

The first, headed "Financial Control over Regional Information Systems Plan", revealed that the health authority was short of about £8.3 million to carry out the project. The auditor expressed his concern at the "escalating costs" of the project. The arrangements for financial control were examined, and the auditor wrote to the Secretary of State:

> "I conclude that I am unable to establish the costs of the RISP development up to April 1986".

The second paper in the same report criticised the recruitment of staff and the use of contract staff in connection with the development of the project. The third report to be sent to the Secretary of State criticised the engagement and control of management consultants. The fourth criticised in some detail the purchase of computers.

If the first interim report was not sufficient to set alarm bells ringing in the Secretary of State's office, surely the second report should have done so. Yet it appears that no effective action was taken. Why not? For all the wrong reasons. For the Government and for IBM, the major

[Mr. John Denham]

computer company, RISP was a flagship project, and it was more important to keep that flagship sailing than to examine the criticisms being received from the auditors. The whole undertaking was driven by an assumption that the project must succeed, no matter what the cost to the public.

It was also unfortunate for Wessex and for the Government that Sir Leonard Peach was head of the national health service management executive at that time. He was a secondee to that post from IBM—but IBM was the major contractor in the Wessex RISP project. I referred to Sir Leonard in an Adjournment debate on the subject and he wrote to me, quite reasonably, saying that as head of the management executive he was required to take no part in any decision-making relating to IBM contracts and had at all times signed the appropriate disclaimers. That should be placed on the record, although there is no independent record of it because when the NHS management executive moved to Leeds all the papers were thrown away; I have been told in writing that there is no record of any disclaimers having been signed and we shall take that at what is said.

Given the failure of the NHS management executive to respond to the audit reports that it was receiving, it was surely unfortunate for the Government that that body must have been disabled by the fact that its chief executive could play no part in examining what had been happening in the major IBM contract in Wessex. He could have nothing to do with it. The person at the top of the organisation, who should have been driving through Wessex's books in 1987 and 1988 to try to stop the waste of money, could play no part in any such attempt. We must recognise that that was a direct consequence of the Government's decision to bring people from the major contracting firms as secondees into that part of the control structure of the national health service.

The accounts were duly qualified again in 1987. The next phase was in 1988, when a further audit report was sent to the Secretary of State. We have to conclude that by that time the auditor had given up sending copies of the reports to the health authority, because it clearly did not intend to do anything about them. The next report was sent to the Secretary of State alone, in November 1988.

That report foreshadowed the major issues involved in the second aspect of the RISP disaster—the privatisation of the in-house computer operation in Wessex to a company called CFM. In 1988 the Secretary of State was told that the procedure adopted by Wessex had serious shortcomings. That must have been so, to justify a one-off confidential report to the Secretary of State. There was no proper work specification and no demonstration that value for money was being obtained; the parameters of the work were vague and non-specific; arrangements regarding the provision of capital funding had not been determined. I could go on to detail a further four or five aspects of what was wrong with the arrangements.

Is there any evidence that the Secretary of State responded to the report? I am afraid not—or at least, the Secretary of State did not respond effectively. Yet it was the privatisation of the in-house computer operation that created the situation in which a private company was in effect writing its own bills to the health authority for work that it was determining itself. That formed the major second plank of the criticism by the PAC.

Even in August 1990, two years later, we find that when the contract came to be renegotiated with the privatised computer operation, Wessex failed to negotiate a satisfactory new contract, despite all the apparent attention by the management executive.

There is an interesting sidelight on those events. By August 1990—indeed, by the time of the first report in 1988—Sir Robin Buchanan, who is now chair of the NHS supplies authority, was chair of the Wessex regional health authority. I find it significant that the Secretary of State received a report criticising Sir Robin's renegotiation of the second contract before he was appointed as chair of the NHS supplies authority. The PAC took no view on whether Sir Robin was an appropriate person to be the chair of that authority. None the less, it criticised him quite sharply for his failure to get a grip on the RISP project at an early stage. I wonder whether, had the audit reports been made public at that time, Sir Robin would have been appointed to the supplies authority.

It may simply be an unfortunate coincidence that Sir Robin is a prominent member of the Conservative party. Perhaps it is only people of a malicious turn of mind who believe that his political links protected him from proper scrutiny. However, if the Government are criticised in that manner, it is they who have invited such criticism.

Finally, the response of the Treasury to the Wessex report, together with other Government statements, encourage us to believe that throughout the history of the RISP saga the NHS management executive and successive Secretaries of State struggled manfully for control over the errant health authority, but, despite having done their best, regrettably failed. However, the record does not sustain that view: it clearly suggests that Ministers were more than prepared to shelter behind the words of the health authority in concealing the disaster taking place in Wessex.

I shall cite two examples from the parliamentary record. On 15 May 1987 the Minister then responsible, now the Lord President of the Council, answered a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) about the tendering procedure. He said:

> "I understand from the regional health authority that the tendering companies were selected under the EC-GATT arrangements."

By 15 May 1987, the Secretary of State had received an audit report which, in my view, made it crystal clear that EC-GATT arrangements had not been followed. How was it, then, that the Minister told the House that they had been followed? To quote those magic words,

> "I understand from the regional health authority".—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1987; Vol. 116, c. *431*.]

In other words, to give a frankly misleading impression to the House the Minister chose to use assurances of which I am told that there are no written records, but only verbal assurances, to contradict the audit report that he had received.

In January 1988, my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) asked the Secretary of State:

> "if he will indicate the extent and the reasons for the overspend by the Wessex regional health authority on its computer system".

The Minister replied:

> "I have been assured by officers of Wessex regional health authority"—

those wonderful words again—

> "that their computer programme is not overspent".—[*Official Report*, 6 January 1988; Vol. 124, c. 199.]

Again, that may not have been factually untrue. However, the Secretary of State had received the report of November 1988 telling him that the programme was in great financial difficulties and that a further £8.8 million, which had not yet been identified, would be required to carry out the programme. Ministers have been all too willing to shelter behind the words of the health authority to prevent Parliament or anyone else wishing to ask questions from knowing what was going on.

It is a sorry story. Many of the issues to which hon. Members have referred today have occurred in quangos and in other bodies at arm's length from Government and the audit service has picked up what has gone wrong. Wessex provides a well-documented case in which successive Ministers were regularly informed about what was going on, but failed to act. To my mind, that makes that situation worse than any of the others to which hon. Members have referred today.

That failure has led to a great and unnecessary delay in acting to improve the procedures in the health service. The Public Accounts Committee noted with reference to events that took place in 1986:

> "We are concerned that . . . the Regional Health Authority . . . involved Andersen Consulting in appraising available computer software to run on the preferred bidder's systems. We note that subsequently . . . the contract . . . was awarded to Andersen Consulting at an inquorate meeting of the Authority".

We commented that the management executive accepted the Committee's concerns. The Treasury response stated that a new model of public procurement procedures was available for general use in early 1994. It took the Public Accounts Committee to publish the audit report in 1993 to get the NHS management executive to produce new guidelines for 1994. Ministers knew what had gone wrong in Wessex since February 1987. The fact is that no action was taken for six years to tighten up the procurement of computers until the PAC published its report. That is utterly unacceptable.

The lesson from Wessex is that nothing changes unless the spotlight of publicity is shone on one of the problems. If the spotlight of publicity is not on it, or if misleading answers can be given to perfectly proper questions, nothing will happen. That is the real lesson of Wessex and I have yet to be convinced that that lesson has been learnt.

8.33 pm

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for his full explanation at the beginning of the debate and I pay tribute to his work and to the work of the members of the Public Accounts Committee. I welcome the Financial Secretary to the debate. I understand that this is his first debate on the PAC reports, as it is mine. He has had three months to consider the reports; I have had but three hours. However, I feel that in sitting through this interesting and educational debate, I have learnt a great deal already about the pathways of public money and about the odd cul-de-sac into which it finds its way.

This afternoon, we heard explanations of what went on in the Welsh Development Agency. We have heard about its rather interesting and obscure redundancy payment schemes, its car leasing schemes and its eight-month gardening leave schemes, which seemed immensely attractive at about 6.30 pm. We heard about the difficulty in getting information from various bodies, about the scandalous state of affairs with the emergence of the Welsh WIZARD and about the disappearance of £800,000 in privatisation discussions.

We heard again about the West Midlands regional health authority and about Wessex regional health authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) has done a great deal to bring into the spotlight for consideration the concerns about public money and where it is going. Millions of pounds of patient care money was frittered away in ways that have been wholly condemned by hon. Members of all parties.

The problem speaks volumes about the changes in the national health service, with the development of the new accounting units and the difficulty of keeping track of all those units. The *British Medical Journal* of 22 January this year drew two conclusions from the Committee's findings. The first was:

> "the NHS should review its reliance on outside consultants, the most obvious beneficiaries of the changes"—

in other words, the most obvious people to have gained from the public purse. The second conclusion was:

> "management buy outs clearly carry the danger that those participating will give priority to their own interests over those of the NHS. The two points are linked and lead to a more general conclusion. To the extent that the NHS hives off activities by contracting out managerial functions, there is a risk that it may undermine its own esprit de corps."

The public sector ethos is an elusive ethos, which can too easily be damaged and destroyed in the changing system.

We heard about the fraudulent payments in the British Council, about the Pergau dam proposal and spending, about the role of the accounting officers and about the lack of flagging up of the accounting officer's letters to warn that there were problems beyond fraud. I welcome the Government's proposal to change the way in which those letters are interpreted.

We heard about the Development Board for Rural Wales, with the interesting allocation of tenancy rights, the secret hiving off of money and the maladministration. As the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) pointed out, the Committee has produced 49 reports, a huge amount of work, detailing time and again the problems being experienced with the accountability of public money.

The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) made some interesting and important points about the present and future roles of the PAC in scrutinising the spending of public money. I hope that his points and all the other contributions will be taken up. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) pointed out the structural problems that now exist in pursuing public money into the places that it funds.

There were the problems of the Scottish Buses experience and the trust ports. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) was right to be fascinated by computers and the apparent obsession with them in all those contracts. I was interested in his interpretation of contract law and to hear that it would appear in many cases that those who broke the contracts were those who received the compensation. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) again returned to the question of public accountability and

[Ms Dawn Primarolo]

how we ensure that that money is accountable, a point that was echoed powerfully by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright).

The reports culminate in the excellent proposals in the report "The Proper Conduct of Public Business". Let us not be misled. The report tells us in the first paragraph:

> "In recent years we have seen and reported on a number of serious failures in administrative and financial systems and controls within departments and other public bodies, which have led to money being wasted or otherwise improperly spent. These failings represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years."

The late leader of the Labour party raised those points in the House of Commons and they have been misrepresented in some respects in this debate. The report said:

> "These failings represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years."

That departure has occurred because of the structural changes. It seems that the pursuing and understanding of those changes centre around the expansion of quangos, the next steps agencies and privatisation and contractorisation. I am not going to enter into a debate this evening about whether it is right or wrong that those organisations exist. We have made clear the view of the Labour party. Today's debate is about how the fragmentation of so much of the structure of Government has led to a lack of accountability and how we can continue to ensure that public money is accountable.

With the proliferation of accounting units, it is now very difficult for the Public Accounts Committee, for the National Audit Office and for the Comptroller and Auditor General to ensure that that money is always accountable. Parliament needs to address itself to the questions raised in the reports about how we now ensure not only that the Government take note of the proposals but that public money can always be seen and how it is spent can always be known.

The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) made some interesting observations about the standards of public accountability and the ability of the public sector to run institutions, and compared public—unfavourably—with private. I was interested in how he could manage that because there are no direct comparisons between the rigorousness of assessments of public and private institutions, considering how private institutions run themselves. Indeed, the PAC does not have the right to follow the spending of public money through the contracting process into private companies. In the spirit of the debate this evening, we need to look again at those proposals and the remit of the Committee.

If public money is to be accountable, the organisations which have that public money need to be accountable and need to be called to account by the House. The Public Accounts Committee reports, 49 of them, demonstrate clearly that that is not the case. The eighth report, "The Proper Conduct of Public Business", shows how we can begin that process. It catalogues inadequate financial controls, failure to comply with rules, inadequate stewardship of public money and assets and failure to provide value for money. That is a catalogue of shame and disaster. I hope that the Government will take on board the recommendations and ensure the proper conduct of public business and the proper accountability of public money.

8.45 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Sir George Young): I begin by welcoming the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) to her new position and by commending the speed with which she mastered her brief. I must say, however, that the last two or three minutes of her speech did not carry me and, I suspect, my colleagues wholly with her.

It has been a good debate, broadly free from partisan remarks. It shows that the House can meet on common ground and debate how it can best protect taxpayers' money and promote the highest standards in public service.

Let me begin by adding my thanks to those of others for the dedicated efforts of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and his colleagues on the Public Accounts Committee during the past year. This month marks the 30th anniversary of three members of the Committee as Members of Parliament—an observation which says much about the personal expertise of the Committee. The right hon. Gentleman has been closely associated with the Committee for much of that period and in his 11th year as Chairman, he has brought great wisdom and experience—not least as a Treasury Minister—to its work.

It is greatly to the credit of the right hon. Gentleman and his Committee that the PAC probably enjoys greater respect, not only in Parliament, but in the country as a whole, than it has ever done in its long and distinguished history. That that respect is shared by the Government is demonstrated by the fact that, according to the latest National Audit Office annual report, the Government accepted 95 per cent. of the Committee's recommendations last year. In addition to thanking the Committee Members, perhaps I could also thank the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), who stepped down earlier in the year after eight years of conspicuous—sometimes very conspicuous—service.

The achievements of the Committee are, of course, founded on the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff at the NAO. The Government wholly support the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Strong, independent auditors, serving a strong and independent Public Accounts Committee are essential to the maintenance of proper standards of public administration in this country. The Government recognise the key role played by the PAC in setting those standards and in seeing that they are adhered to. The Government pledge themselves to playing their full part in maintaining the integrity of standards in public service.

The NAO reports that the Government pay most attention to the critical reports. But I shall mention in passing today's report, which compliments the Treasury on its effectiveness in the recent sale of BT shares.

I have not served on the PAC before, nor, I confess, have I taken part in its debates. However, as a former spending Minister, I am familiar with its work. I used to have responsibility for the Property Services Agency—*[Interruption.]*—one of the regular suspects rounded up by the PAC and asked to account for itself. Now, as a

Treasury Minister, I am grateful for the savings of £229 million made last year as a result of the NAO's value-for-money reports.

No one should believe that the issues that we have debated today are new. I asked for details of the PAC's past work and I found, in 1889, that the Committee was complaining about the absence of competitive tendering for the celebration of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign! My predecessor made an excuse, which I fear may have irritated the Committee, that,

"as a rule, these things have to be done in a very great hurry".

As a Jubilee celebration is, by definition, a predictable event, it seemed a rather weak reply. I hope to do better as I respond to today's debate.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne mentioned silence clauses, and the point was picked up by other hon. Members. Like them, I deprecate the kind of silence clause that we have heard about today. In the case of the Welsh Development Agency, such undertakings are no longer required when a member of staff leaves. In addition, the national health service executive has agreed with the conclusion that such clauses are unjustified and the NHS is now issuing guidance.

The point raised by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne about secrecy leads to a more general point about openness. That ties in with comments made by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright). Openness is a key weapon on the part of the Public Accounts Committee and the Government in deterring, preventing and detecting abuse. Secrecy must play no part in the role of non-departmental public bodies.

The code of best practice for board members states that public bodies and their boards must at all times comply with all reasonable requests for information from Parliament, from users of services and from individual citizens. Each year, the annual report should provide a full description of the board's activities and state the extent to which key strategic objectives and financial and other performance targets have been met. It should list the names of the current members of the board and some senior staff and provide details of their remuneration. I agree with much that was said about openness.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said that the losses that are incurred are not impersonal losses with no losers. We heard about people who may have lost their pensions and there was inevitably a knock-on effect for those affected in the NHS. We have not been talking about victimless incidents.

Another general theme mentioned by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne which was referred to by other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), related to access. As the House is probably aware, the Comptroller and Auditor General is the statutory auditor of all Government Departments, executive agencies and trading funds. He is also the auditor of half the executive NDPBs and he has inspection rights in respect of all those where he is not the auditor.

The CAG is the auditor of almost all advisory NDPBs and of the summarised accounts of the entire NHS. The National Audit Office can carry out value-for-money studies at all Departments, all executive agencies, all trading funds and all NDPBs, throughout the NHS, the universities and grant-maintained schools. The NAO has inspection rights in universities and grant-maintained schools.

In addition, the National Audit Act 1983 provides the CAG with a statutory right of access to any other public body whose members are appointed by, or on behalf of, the Crown and which receives more than half its income in any year from public funds.

Access to a wide range of other bodies, including many in the private sector, has been arranged by agreement with the sponsor Department. As the Government have emphasised, the need for the CAG to have access to any other body will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

As was mentioned in the debate, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) have recently discussed with the Chancellor of the Exchequer the question of NAO access in contracting-out cases. The guidance issued by the Treasury and the Cabinet Office states unequivocally that satisfactory arrangements for NAO access must be made when services are contracted out. However, of course, the Government will give the most careful consideration to any specific recommendations that the Committee might make on the subject of NAO access.

Mr. Maclennan: Would not it be more appropriate for the assumption to be that the NAO has a right to intervene and to oversee the spending by NDPBs unless, perhaps, that particular NDPB seeks exemption from, as a result of a ministerial intervention, giving grounds in the public interest?

Sir George Young: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Government's view is that at the moment there is no need to extend the statutory right of access and I have been through the position as we see it. However, we recognise that that is a subject on which there are strong feelings on both sides of the House. As I have just said, we will give careful consideration to any specific recommendations from the Committee relating to NAO access. I cannot say more than that at this stage.

Mr. Sheldon: I am not sure what that means. Does it mean that the NAO will not have access until the PAC considers the matter? Obviously the first step in an investigation is taken by the NAO itself. Until it has information, it cannot say what is missing or what is not missing. If there is a competitive situation in which collusion is suspected, we are talking about a very important safeguard for the NAO. I do not believe that the private sector needs to be worried about these matters. After all, such practice is common in the defence industries, which are only too happy to tender for business knowing full well the consequences. A similar acceptance would arise in a wider area.

Sir George Young: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman and I have seen the record of the meeting that he had with my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor where those points were rehearsed. We would like to reflect on the points made at that meeting and see how best we can respond. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will understand that there is not much more than I can say at this stage.

I refer now to the detailed points raised by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and others. Clearly, the situation in the West Midlands regional health

[Sir George Young]

authority described in the PAC report was wholly unacceptable. The Department of Health accepted that all areas of the NHS should be publicly accountable and subject to review of their performance. All those in the NHS concerned with the expenditure of public money should be aware of their responsibilities and the need for strict propriety.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has published codes of conduct and accountability which set out a framework against which the conduct of public business in the NHS can and will be judged. Those codes of conduct have been adopted by all NHS boards in England.

The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) raised several detailed issues about Wessex regional health authority. If I may, I would like to reply to him in writing. However, the very thorough investigation by the PAC followed that of the district auditor which was undertaken at the request of Wessex regional health authority. The PAC report welcomed the action taken by the NHS executive and the RHA. That action will ensure that the lessons have been learnt across the NHS and that the events which the PAC rightly criticised do not recur.

As I have just said, codes of conduct and a code of accountability have been implemented. Among other things, that requires a clearer definition of the functions of chairmen and non-executive board members of health authorities and NHS trusts. National health service boards are required to establish audit and remuneration and terms of service committees. Board directors are required to declare any private interests that are material or relevant to NHS business.

With regard to the British Council, there was a different incident as "a criminal gang", to use the PAC phrase, was involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) asked what happened. In that case, as I believe the Committee will know, eight people have been charged and a trial has been set for January 1995.

New enhanced control mechanisms are now in place in the British Council, new financially qualified and experienced staff have been recruited, and a new audit committee has been established. The delayed programmes were in sectors that were funded by the council's own revenue-earning activities. It is a little harsh to move to the judgment which was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern)—the ultimate sanction of having the system removed—but I notice that that is an ultimate deterrent to be used only when everything else has failed.

A judicial review of the legality of expenditure on the Pergau dam is set for 9 and 10 November. The important point that arose is that of ministerial directions to officials. The Government have accepted the Committee's recommendation in its report on Pergau that in future, where such a direction is issued to overrule official advice on matters of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, the accounting officer will pass the relevant papers to the Comptroller and Auditor General without undue delay. The Treasury memorandum on the responsibilities of an accounting officer is being amended to reflect that.

On rural Wales, I was grateful for the kind words following the issue by the Treasury of guidance to all Departments covering expenditure on staff benefits in NDPBs and the need for arrangements to ensure that NDPBs do not act beyond their delegated authority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) put the debate in context by reminding us that most of the money that is spent is spent legitimately and properly and that one should not get the matter out of perspective. He also drew attention to the eighth report, to which I shall return. It made sense for the PAC to stand back and see whether it could identify some of the common themes that had emerged from its reports and use its influence to identify those themes, promote them and publish them to make sure that we learnt lessons from its experience. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words about people at the senior levels of Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue.

I listened with respect to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, as I always do, but he overstated his case. I listened to the quotations from the eighth report and I have read it again. I could not find the causality between reforms and failure which he asserted. Other members of the Committee were also unable to trace that causality. I defend with vigour my new Department, which said that it rejected the inference which has been drawn from the report, because I do not think that the report directly comes to that conclusion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) stressed the benefits of the programme for next steps agencies in terms of improved efficiency and job satisfaction. He made several helpful suggestions about how the House of Commons itself might more closely monitor the Executive—suggestions on which it would be imprudent for me to comment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) again stressed that, by comparison with other countries, our standards are of the highest. He also commented on the improvements in performance in some next steps agencies.

I share the views of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) about computers. There can be no excuse for treating investment in computers any differently from any other capital expenditure. There must be value for money and so on. On termination settlements, on which the right hon. Gentleman commented, detailed guidance has now been issued to health authorities and to NHS trusts on the principles and procedures to apply when considering severance payments to senior managers. That underlines the importance of having due regard to probity and value for money. Trusts have also been asked as an interim measure to provide a quarterly return to the NHS executive setting out the termination payments that they have made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West again made the point that some private sector institutions could not have survived the scale of loss that parts of the public sector have survived, because they would have gone out of business. He also made the valid point that one should not assume always that the public sector has higher standards than the private sector. What he said on that subject was particularly relevant.

On the Field system, we accept that mistakes were made in the management of the project. The Department has learnt the lessons. The Government's view was there was no practical alternative but to proceed with the project, because without it the training and enterprise councils' ability to manage public money would have been jeopardised.

On Scottish Buses, which was raised by the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), the Department was satisfied that the price received for the Scottish Bus Group companies accurately reflected their market value at the time of sale. The reduction in SBG profits during the pre-sale period was the result of declining economic activity and extreme vulnerability to competition in a deregulated market.

On grant-maintained schools, the Treasury minute, I hope, responded positively to the PAC's recommendations. The National Audit Office's report recognised that the Department for Education and individual schools had approached the change in status and the new financial regime with a large measure of success.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, who apologised for intervening as an outsider, made a thoughtful speech with which I profoundly disagreed. It is easier to monitor public expenditure in a disaggregated system than in an aggregated system. If individual outputs are specified, put out to competitive tendering and retendered every three years, it is easier to keep track of what is going on than if it is within one simple aggregated system. I ask the hon. Gentleman to consider the next steps agencies. They set out and publish specific targets for their performance. They report on their performance. There are annual reports, and accounts are presented to Parliament. The accounts are audited by the NAO. The chief executives are accounting officers who are summoned to give evidence before the PAC. That is greater accountability than when it was all lost within one Department. The present system can lead to greater openness, greater transparency and greater value for money.

Finally, I turn to what was the most interesting report, the eighth report on the proper conduct of public business—a highly topical subject. Only seven paragraphs long, the report provides the right focus for the debate about the Government's public sector reforms.

The case is sometimes made by our critics that we cannot maintain the ethos and integrity which are traditionally associated with the public service if we somehow contaminate that culture with that of the private sector. It is sometimes argued that the entrepreneurial flair of the competition-driven private sector can have no place in the public sector. I wholly refute that. What we want, and what we can achieve, is the best of both cultures, and I believe that the Public Accounts Committee endorses that approach.

Paragraph 5 of the report, which was much quoted, says that

> "there is no reason why a proper concern for the sensible conduct of public business and care for the honest handling of public money should not be combined with effective programmes for promoting economy and efficiency."

Indeed, the Committee goes on to say in the next paragraph:

> "We believe it is important that the drive to provide improved services at reduced cost should be sustained and that this drive should not be stifled by unnecessary bureaucracy."

That is what the Government have been doing. Improved value for money is at the heart of our programme of reform to strengthen public management. It has involved the next steps executive agencies, the White Paper "Competing for Quality", the citizens charter and the civil service White Paper. The programme is not confined to central Government. In local government, compulsory competitive tendering is providing a powerful stimulus to improve services.

A range of private sector disciplines is being successfully transplanted into the public sector, giving it fresh vigour and testing and improving performance by using competition, franchising and better management information systems.

However—and this is my last word—being more entrepreneurial does not mean, and must not mean, abandoning proper standards of conduct. The Government will not tolerate "wide-boy" practices in public sector bodies, and there is no room for complacency. It is for those reasons that I welcome the reports listed in the motion. Through them, the Committee has reassured hon. Members of the need and justification for the better management of public services, to which the Government are committed. I commend the motion to the House.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 55th to 63rd Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1992-93, of the 1st to 39th and 41st Reports of Session 1993-94, and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda on these Reports (Cm 2419, Cm 2446, Cm 2492, Cm 2493, Cm 2555, Cm 2577, Cm 2602, Cm 2618 and Cm 2677) with particular reference to the following Reports:

Session 1992-93

Fifty-seventh, West Midlands Regional Health Authority: Regionally Managed Services Organisation;

Sixty-third, Wessex Regional Health Authority: Regional Information Systems Plan;

Session 1993-94

Eighth, The Proper Conduct of Public Business;

Sixteenth, The British Council Account, 1992-93;

Seventeenth, Pergau Hydro-Electric Project;

Twenty-third, Development Board for Rural Wales: Allocation and Sale of Housing and Car Leasing Schemes

Legal Aid and Advice

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the draft Legal Aid (Scope) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.—[*Mr. Sackville.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to discuss the draft Parental Orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) Regulations 1994 and the draft Parental Orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) (Scotland) Regulations 1994.

9.7 pm

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): First, I congratulate the Minister; it is his birthday today, which probably explains the speed with which he moved the motion.

We are happy to confirm our support for the parental orders regulations. Basically, they provide a fast track for the adoption of children where surrogacy, which is not legally enforceable at present, has been part of the arrangements. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 clearly states that a woman who gives birth is the mother and, while I find this term difficult, the "commissioning couple"—that is, the natural mother and father; the parents who have donated the egg and the sperm—must adopt the child. The Act does not provide for that. The parental orders will speed up the adoption process.

The system of a guardian ad litem being appointed by the court is aimed at ensuring that the Adoption Act 1976 does not cause any difficulties or problems. The legal aid provisions—the only legal aid extension that the Government have provided recently—will assist in that process where there is a challenge.

We welcome the regulations. The issue was debated at length when the Bill was originally before Parliament. I understand that it is a complex issue which has now been settled. I hope that the House will have no hesitation in giving its full support to the regulations so that we can regularise a situation that has been unacceptable for many.

9.9 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I am glad to welcome the remarks that the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) has made from the Opposition Front Bench. I am also glad to add my good wishes to the Government and to thank them for bringing the matter on.

I think that I ought to say that those of us who have pressed for the matter to be dealt with for a long time have been extraordinarily patient. After all, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 was put on the statute book four years ago. As the Minister knows, I have pressed both him and his predecessor for a long time for the regulations to be produced. I hope that the Minister will say something about why it has taken this unconscionable length of time to bring the regulations before the House. It is not good government practice. The Government ought to be ashamed of themselves for the amount of time that it has taken. I hope that it will not happen again.

I remind the House of the reasons why the regulations are before us. It stems from an amendment that I suggested to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, as I recall, on Second Reading and to which I spoke both at that stage and on Report. The House might be interested to be reminded of the circumstances that caused me to become interested in the matter.

One of my constituents and her husband told me their story, which was an extremely sad one. The lady had been born without a uterus, but she ovulated in the normal way. Therefore, taking advantage of modern science, they had some ova taken from her and fertilised with the husband's sperm. The resultant embryo was implanted in a surrogate mother who had agreed to bear the child. No payment was made.

Ultimately, after the normal period—not the period that it seems to take the Government to move from an Act to regulations—the surrogate mother produced two bonny twins, whom I have met. Everyone was delighted. It was a joyous moment. My constituents were presented with the twins by the lady who had borne them. She said, "Look after them well. I have looked after them well for nine months. Take them away with my love and best wishes." That is what they did.

The couple returned to Cumbria and attempted to register the children as their own. The registrar said, "I am afraid that will not do. You will have to adopt them." They replied—I shall not repeat the words that I imagine they used—"Don't be so stupid. These are our children genetically. What are you talking about? There is no question of adopting them." Apparently the law said that in those circumstances the children had to be adopted to be taken into the care of their genetic parents. It was at that stage that I came to understand the case and moved changes in the law which ended up as section 30 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. May I pay tribute to the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was extremely helpful and understanding at that time?

Provided the House agrees to the regulations, as I passionately hope that it will, that couple, who are no longer my constituents, will be able to use the arrangements under those regulations. I hope that the Minister will confirm that one has to apply for a parental order, so that one can be deemed the proper parents of children in such a case. As I understand it, the regulations state that that must be done within six months; in the case of children born before the regulations came into play, the parents will also have six months to apply. That will mean that my constituents, whose twins were born five or six years ago now, will be able to apply and to be deemed the parents by the court under a parental order—similar to an adoption order, but crucially different—and that genetic parents will not have to apply to adopt their own children. That seems to be a sensible way out.

With the passing of the regulations, there will be much joy among parents who have the control and care of their genetic children although the mother may not have borne them. If it is passed, it will bring much happiness to a significant number of families.

9.17 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): From conversations with the Minister and fairly lengthy ministerial correspondence, especially on the submissions of Sir

Malcolm MacNaughton, professor of paediatrics at the university of Glasgow, I think that the hon. Gentleman can anticipate my concerns.

My locus in this matter is that I am one of the lay members of the biological sciences advisory committee at the university of Edinburgh, which is distinguished in the medical field not least in reproductive biology, as the Under-Secretary of State at the Scottish Office knows.

One does not criticise the Clerks of the House or its authorities so, in one sentence, I cannot comprehend how the amendment, which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) moved late at night, got into the Criminal Justice Bill. Some hon. Members who were in Committee dealing with totally different matters were taken completely by surprise. In the circumstances, we did not wish to divide the House because we thought that, in the atmosphere that pervaded it at the time, it would simply result in a humiliating vote, which would injure the cause.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) and I interrupted the debate. I asked the hon. Member for Edgbaston a straight question as to whether her proposals would in any way affect research. When we talk about research, we are not talking about things which people do for fun. As the Minister knows, the research is into the very essence of Down's syndrome and other extremely crippling diseases.

What are the reflections and the position of the Department on the issue? How was it that decisions were made before the report of the Human Fertilisation and Embryo Authority? At the very least, one would have thought that the Secretary of State would wait until such time as the very expert organisation which she herself set up and in which there has been general trust had reported and until one had heard what it had to say.

My question tonight, which I think is relevant to these orders, is: what is the latest thinking of the Department on this very delicate and sensitive matter? What can be done to safeguard research into crippling diseases involving foetal tissue which, as I say, is very important and could stop a great deal of human and family misery?

9.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): First, may I thank the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) for her good wishes and for the skilful way in which she did my job and described what the Government are proposing tonight?

I must say to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that, while the subject that he raises is somewhat outside the scope of the regulations, I am familiar with the point that he is making. The amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) was not intended to ban research, and she has made that clear. The fact that it was passed is a matter for the will of the House on a free vote.

Mr. Dalyell *rose—*

Mr. Sackville: I am sorry, but I would like to get on.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sackville: No, I would like to proceed on the subject of the orders.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who described his interest in commissioning couples and how he became interested in that subject. It was due to my right hon. Friend's impetus that the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 was amended so that the interests of couples who had commissioned a surrogate birth were taken into account, and the mechanism has been proposed under the regulations for them to achieve parental rights with a much simpler system than a full adoption.

My right hon. Friend pointed out the time that has elapsed. It is regrettable, and it is the product of matters being considerably more complex than they first appeared. They have involved not only consultation between Departments on very delicate points of law, but consultation with outside bodies. A mixture of those procedural matters and some complicated policy decisions over matters to do with the guardian and curator ad litem have meant that it has taken longer than we would wish to bring the orders forward.

I say to those couples who been waiting for these regulations that I am aware of the anguish that they must have suffered during this time of anticipation and expectation. I hope that we see shall the regulations go through the House. They are also, I understand, to be discussed in another place tonight, and I very much hope that they will soon become law so that we shall have a system by which those couples can achieve the parental rights that they have so long sought.

Mr. Dalyell *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Has the Minister given way?

Mr. Sackville *indicated dissent.*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Legal Aid (Scope) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Parental Orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.—[*Mr. Bates.*]

Resolved,

That the draft Parental Orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) (Scotland) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 11th July, be approved.—[*Mr. Bates.*]

BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That Sir Anthony Grant be discharged from the Select Committee on Broadcasting and Mr. David Amess be added to the Committee.—[*Mr. Bates, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*]

LIAISON

Ordered,

That Mr. John Watts be discharged from the Liaison Committee and Sir Thomas Arnold be added to the Committee.—[*Mr. Bates, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*]

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should just like to register the fact that I think it unfortunate that a Minister would not answer a question politely put to him at 9.25 pm, when we were not exactly short of time. I can well understand it when Ministers are winding up and have a great deal to say in a short time;

[Mr. Dalyell]

they may not wish to give way in those circumstances. But what happened this evening was, I repeat, somewhat unfortunate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for many years, so he knows that the Minister is responsible for his own speech. I was very tolerant with the hon. Gentleman while he was speaking, even though he strayed rather far outside the narrow motion under discussion.

Kevin Williams

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

9.25 pm

Sir Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): The House will be familiar with the tragic events at Hillsborough on 15 April 1989, when 95 people died, a couple of them my constituents. The House will also be familiar with the fact that the events leading up to the disaster have been well rehearsed and were reported on by Lord Justice Taylor. It is not the purpose of this debate to go over that ground again or to rehash the arguments that were dealt with in some detail by the Taylor report.

Tonight's debate is narrowly and tightly drawn. It relates only to the death of one of my constituents, Kevin Williams. It is not my purpose to talk about events before 3.15 pm, the cut-off point that the coroner decided should be set at the inquest. His suggestion was that all who died that day were brain dead by that time. Therefore the evidence from that day was dealt with only up to that point.

I should like to put firmly on the record the events relating to Kevin Williams which occurred after 3.15 pm and which, because of the coroner's decision, were not deemed admissible as evidence. The chronology of what happened to Kevin that day is broadly speaking as follows. At 3.28 pm Kevin was lifted out of enclosure 3 and helped on to the pitch by PC Michael Craighill. There is visual evidence of that fact from BBC tapes. At 3.32 pm Kevin was rushed across the pitch on an advertising hoarding—there is a timed photograph of that taking place. Also at 3.32 pm, an off-duty Merseyside policeman, a Mr. Bruder, who was in the north stand spotted Kevin lying on the ground and left his seat to go to attend to him. There is also visual evidence of that incident, as a set of photographs is available from *The Times*.

At 3.35 pm, there is visual evidence of a second ambulance entering the ground. There is a timed photograph of that incident. It appears also on video. At 3.37 pm, Mr. Bruder says, an ambulance passed while he was attending to Kevin and he asked the St. John's ambulance man present to stop it and to put Kevin in it. The ambulance would not stop. Mr. Bruder said that it looked as though it had orders not to.

Since then, Mr. Tony Edwards of the ambulance service has confirmed that he was the assistant to the driver in the ambulance and that he would have passed Mr. Bruder at 3.37 pm that day. Mr. Edwards also says that he had orders to go straight to the Leppings lane end of the ground, as there were fatalities.

At 3.45 pm, special WPC Debra Martin came across Kevin lying on the ground in the recovery position. She says that she saw life in his face and found pulses in his neck. Miss Martin and the police constable who was with her ran with Kevin to the gym. Miss Martin was told by her superiors to stay with Kevin and to carry out resuscitation and heart massage. After resuscitation, Kevin started to breathe again, his ribs were moving. Miss Martin picked Kevin up in her arms. It was then that Kevin opened his eyes, murmured, "Mom", then closed his eyes and died. Miss Martin said that Kevin turned grey and then went quickly blue. The time would have been about 3.55 pm.

At 4.6 pm, Dr. Curpen certified life extinct.

Those are the bare facts of the chronology of the death of Kevin Williams.

I turn now to the medical evidence. At the inquest, Dr. Slater, giving evidence of his findings concerning Kevin, said:

> "My examination of Kevin showed that the main finding was that of asphyxia . . . This had also resulted in four fractures to the small bones in the actual voice box . . . the compression of the neck or chest has occurred here and unconsciousness occurs very rapidly, certainly within a few seconds . . . Following unconsciousness then there is no discomfort and no pain. Death then occurs after approximately three to five minutes."

Further evidence came before the judicial review, which has since taken place, from the specialists who were asked to provide their opinions. In his evidence, Dr. Iain West, from the department of forensic medicine at Guy's hospital, clearly said:

> "I do not believe it is possible to say how long consciousness would have been retained, but he certainly would not have become unconscious between 3 and 5 seconds of being crushed. Again I would not agree with Dr. Slater in estimating how long the deceased would have survived . . . he could well have survived for a considerable period, well beyond 3.15 pm.
>
> He suffered convulsions as the result of anoxic brain damage. Whether Mr. Bruder saw convulsions or twitching is irrelevant. A dead body neither convulses or twitches."

He goes on further to say that that apparent twitching is seen

> "in individuals who are maintained on a respirator but whose heart is still functioning . . . This phenomenon only occurs for a very short period after death unless muscles are electrically stimulated. Twitching movements, however, suggest that one is much more likely to be dealing with a live body than a dead one."

Dr. James Burns, a forensic scientist from Liverpool university, commented as follows on Dr. Slater's evidence:

> "Dr. Slater suggests that Kevin lost consciousness very quickly and I see no reason to disagree with this. However, Dr. Slater then goes on to generalise and state that death occurs after approximately three or five minutes in these cases of traumatic asphyxia. While this may be so, in the vast majority of instances, it is by no means certain that even in a severe case of traumatic asphyxia, death necessarily ensues three or four minutes after the compression begins. The all important factor, in my opinion, is whether the severe compression is sustained. If the pressure is intermittent, then death may not ensue for a considerable length of time."

My concerns arise from a detailed examination of the evidence that was presented to the inquest. The off-duty policeman from Merseyside, Mr. Bruder—who was present as a Liverpool fan—clearly stated in his original evidence that he had seen and taken a pulse in Kevin, and that Kevin was convulsing. That was the opinion of an experienced police officer who had had some first-aid training. Subsequently, Mr. Bruder changed his mind, and suspected that they had not in fact been convulsions.

I have to say that that change of mind came after Mr. Bruder had been interviewed by West Yorkshire police and had been asked to reflect on his evidence. He has since spoken to Kevin's mother, Anne Williams, and has confirmed that his original evidence was the evidence to which he would adhere.

I want to make particular mention of Debra Martin, the special WPC who was on duty. She was a trained dental nurse and, in her own words, had probably had more experience of dealing with first aid than most of her colleagues who were there that day. She is convinced in her own mind about what had happened; yet the way in which her evidence was treated at the inquest is little short of scandalous. It provoked the specialist pathologist whom I have already mentioned to say, in a letter to Mrs. Williams:

> "It strikes me that WPC Martin has been the victim of unjustifiable adverse criticism amounting almost to ridicule. I am amazed that the evidence of Miss Martin, a Dental Nurse, by training, and a Special Woman Police Constable of five years' standing, is treated with such incredulity, amounting almost to hostility. From what I have learned from the post-mortem examination of Dr. Slater, and from the evidence given by Dr. Slater at the inquest, I see no reason to doubt the evidence of Miss Martin when she states that she picked Kevin up in her arms, that Kevin opened his eyes, moved his mouth and said 'Mom', flicked his eyelashes, closed his eyes and died."

The questions that I should wish to stress and that are the central issue of the debate are these. Why has it proved necessary for the evidence to be presented to a judicial review, where it was given only scant attention? Why has it proved necessary for the evidence to be the subject of a television programme? That served only to extend further the agonies of Anne Williams and her family. Was it an attempt to try to lay blame for something that occurred a long time ago?

I suggest that little in the way of preparation or training could have helped once the disaster at Hillsborough had occurred. Almost inevitably, people were bound to make some mistakes. It was inevitable that judgments would be made on the spot which perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight and of considering the matter after some years had passed, should not and certainly would not have been made. But what is there to hide? I cannot understand why the evidence of Mr. Bruder and WPC Martin should be called into question.

If Kevin were dead by 3.15 pm or if he were brain dead and died very soon thereafter, the events that took place between 3.26 pm and 3.55 pm are irrelevant. As Dr Iain West said, however, dead bodies do not twitch. In this case, prima facie evidence shows that Kevin Williams was still very much alive at that time.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Will the hon. Gentleman object if I speak for a couple of minutes at the conclusion of his speech, and before the Minister replies?

Sir Malcolm Thornton: Of course not.

The matters that I described are the cause of my concern. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has been courteous in the extreme in dealing with this case. He has considered it very fairly. I have corresponded with him. He has spent probably more time on the Kevin Williams case than on any aspect of the cases of the other victims who died at Hillsborough on that day. I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that and I know that Kevin's mother, Mrs. Anne Williams, thanks him for it, too.

In our most recent exchange of correspondence, my right hon. and learned Friend said that he had considered the matter in the light of the judicial review and that he felt that, although he has powers under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988, he could not find sufficient new evidence that would warrant his intervention on this occasion. However, he left the door open for full and further consideration of any new evidence.

I have read the transcript of the judicial review. Scant attention was given to the reports of the pathologists Iain West and James Burns. Scant attention was given to

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anything that did not appear at the original inquest. An examination of all the documentation that is available and that I shall make available to the Attorney-General tomorrow will show clearly that there is a need, in the Kevin Williams case, to consider the circumstances again.

What can possibly be changed by re-examining this tragic case? It will not bring back Kevin or change what occurred. I have already referred to the Taylor report and the hope that lessons will have been learnt from that day to ensure that such tragedies can never occur again, so why reopen the case?

Since that day, I have spoken to Anne Williams many times. I and other colleagues who have had to meet their constituents—the families of those who lost their lives that day—have all been made aware of the grief that they still feel to this day and the uncertainties that they still face, but it is not the object of this exercise to talk about other cases.

The one thing that impressed me about Anne Williams was her desire to know the truth. Somewhere in Sheffield there is a death certificate that relates to Kevin; it does not relate to the circumstances of which Anne Williams is now aware. In other words, the cut-off point of 3.15 pm does not relate to Kevin, and I believe that the evidence shows that clearly. She has told me more than once that, until the truth is known, neither she nor Kevin will know peace. I believe her. It is not my purpose, or hers, to expose errors that may have been made that day because of human frailty. That exercise has already been undertaken. I have already said that I find it difficult to understand why evidence that was freely given was somehow altered afterwards. The purpose is not to point the finger; the purpose is to find out the truth.

I can best finish by quoting Anne Williams. She said:

> "He was just a little boy that went to watch a football match and never came home. There is nothing that I can be told now that will make the agony any worse. I just want to know the truth."

For those reasons, together with the evidence that I shall certainly give to my right hon. and learned Friend—it will be with his office tomorrow—I urge him to re-examine the case, to exercise the powers available to him under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 and to hold a full inquiry. The House can then show mercy to a family who have suffered for far too long.

9.47 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I wish to express my gratitude to the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) for allowing me to speak for a few minutes and for the assiduous way in which he has pursued this case for a number of years on behalf of his constituents.

In raising this matter, the hon. Gentleman has also raised many concerns common to the families of those who died at Hillsborough—people from Merseyside and beyond. On one occasion, he and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) and I met to discuss the problems arising from Hillsborough.

My concern is simple. There have been times since the disaster when I felt that it might have been right to draw a line under the incident. There are times when I have felt that it might not be in the best interests of the bereaved families to reopen the process and go through all the traumas again. But what impresses itself on me is the fact that those families do not feel that all that needs to be said has been said. I could quote particular constituents, but I shall not.

The difficulty is caused by the fact that there was a cut-off point of 3.15 pm for the events considered by the inquest. Things that happened after that time were not taken fully into account. Consequently people feel, probably rightly, that despite everything that has been said and all the conclusions that may have been drawn, exactly what happened in those individual cases has not been properly covered.

I do not want to go into the technical detail, as the hon. Member for Crosby has done so exhaustively and with such great skill. But until people feel fully satisfied that every stone that can be turned has been turned to find out exactly what happened in every case, even beyond the cut-off point of 3.15 pm, they will not feel satisfied that everything that can be done has been done.

In congratulating the hon. Gentleman on bringing the matter to the attention of the Attorney-General and of the House, it is important to say that we have not yet gone all the way with the process. That is not because of what I may think, or what the Attorney-General or the hon. Member for Crosby may feel, but because the families feel that even if justice has been done, it has not been seen to have been done. Until they feel that justice has been done, we cannot let the matter rest.

9.51 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) for the careful and comprehensive way in which he has brought before the House the very real and understandable concerns of his constituents. Nobody can fail to understand or to sympathise with the deep and continuing anguish of Mrs. Williams and the other families, both from the Liverpool area and from anywhere else in the country, who were affected by the disaster, and with their wish to have as much information as possible about the circumstances in which their loved ones—and Kevin in particular—so tragically died.

I am grateful, too, to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) for his brief contribution to the debate. Rightly, he drew attention to the fact that he and his hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) came to see me to discuss the matter. I have discussed it with other hon. Members, too, and I recognise that it is a matter of the greatest concern to the families.

I hasten to make it clear that from my point of view—indeed, from anyone's point of view—there is nothing to hide here. That said, I know that my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Knowsley, North recognise that my role in the matter has to be that of Attorney-General, and has therefore focused primarily on the consideration that I gave in 1992 to an application by relatives of six of the victims of the Hillsborough disaster, including Mrs. Williams, for my consent under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 to the making of an application to the High Court for an order quashing the inquisition and directing a fresh inquest. When I have to use legal phrases I do not intend them to be as dry as dust; I simply mention them to put them into context.

After careful consideration I felt it right to decline to authorise such an application, because I had concluded that there would be no reasonable prospect of establishing before the High Court that it was

"necessary or desirable in the interests of justice"

for a fresh inquest to be held. That is the statutory test. Subsequent litigation has tended to confirm that assessment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby and a number of hon. Members have brought to my attention the broadcast on ITV of "The Cook Report". I have seen that broadcast and I have studied it. I have thought about what I am saying in the context of this debate and in the context of that programme. It relates to the Hillsborough disaster, with particular reference to the case of Kevin Williams.

No further formal application has yet been made to me under section 13 of the Coroners Act and if I am formally to consider the matter, such an application would need to be made. In saying that, I can reassure my hon. Friend and other hon. Members that I shall look carefully at the evidence and information that my hon. Friend has said he will put before me tomorrow—and I welcome that.

I have made it clear to those who have written to me—many have—that I remain willing, as is my duty, objectively to consider any further application under section 13. A proper application, of course, has to be supported by evidence in proper and admissible form. That is not a legal technicality. Obviously, if I considered an application appropriate, I should sooner or later have to put it before the court.

I make no criticism of "The Cook Report". It was an absorbing, fascinating programme on a tragic subject, but it is not evidence in itself. I have more to say about some of the topics with which it dealt. It will be well understood by the House that a media report cannot be the basis for a legal decision in itself. A proper view must be based on an analysis of the underlying evidence and it is in that spirit that I approach the matter tonight.

Before I deal with the matter in detail, I must issue a slight caution. The matter has been looked at enormously carefully; we shall look at it again. I do not want to give false hopes. I do not have a closed mind; I have an open mind.

The scale of the Hillsborough tragedy was enormous. The then Home Secretary responded by establishing a public inquiry chaired by Lord Justice Taylor, now the Lord Chief Justice. It was a painstaking and thorough inquiry which examined not only the events which led to the 95 deaths, not to mention the many serious injuries, but wider issues including safety at football grounds and the need for changes in public order law. The Taylor report placed the blame for the tragedy fairly and squarely on police handling of crowd control at the event. The police have admitted fault and paid compensation.

The Government have responded positively to the report. By August 1994, the vast majority of the 46 clubs in the premier league and first division had all-seater grounds or had closed their last remaining standing accommodation and were working on its conversion to seating. The Government have also set up the Football Licensing Authority which is responsible for keeping under review the way in which local authorities discharge their functions under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975.

The thoroughness of that wider inquiry did not, however, dispense with the legal requirement that an inquest be held in respect of each person who died. That inquest was conducted by Her Majesty's coroner for South Yorkshire in difficult circumstances because of the complications that flowed from the sheer number of deaths; the fact that the Taylor inquiry was proceeding; and the fact that its interim report caused the Director of Public Prosecutions to request a criminal investigation into the police handling of the events.

Two points need to be emphasised in relation to inquests generally. First, inquests are not intended to be wide-ranging public inquiries, but serve a specific statutory purpose. The position was carefully explained by the Master of the Rolls in his judgment in the Court of Appeal earlier this year in Regina *v* The Coroner for North Humberside and Scunthorpe ex parte Jamieson. The Master of the Rolls said:

"An inquest is a fact-finding inquiry conducted by a coroner, with or without a jury, to establish reliable answers to four important but limited factual questions. The first of these relates to the identity of the deceased, the second to the place of his death, the third to the time of death. In most cases these questions are not hard to answer but in a minority of cases the answer may be problematical. The fourth question, and that to which evidence and inquiry are most often and most closely directed, relates to how the deceased came by his death. Rule 36 requires that the proceedings and evidence shall be directed solely to ascertaining these matters and forbids any expression of opinion on any other matter."

The Master of the Rolls went on to add:

"It is noteworthy that the task is not to ascertain how the deceased died, which might raise general and far-reaching issues, but 'how . . . the deceased came by his death', a more limited question directed to the means by which the deceased came by his death."

Secondly, coroners are independent judicial officers. Although the Home Secretary has responsibility for the substance of the law relating to coroners—

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Bates.*]

The Attorney-General: Although the Home Secretary has responsibility for the substance of the law relating to coroners, neither he nor any Minister has power to interfere in their decisions. It is for the High Court and the other appellate courts to determine issues relating to proceedings before coroners courts.

One route of access to the High Court is by way of application under section 13 of the 1988 Act and the legislation provides that my authority is required for such application. The existence of that filter reflects the statutory requirement that, in order to justify directing a fresh inquest, there should not only be made out one of the specific grounds mentioned in the statute, such as fresh evidence or irregularity, but circumstances such that the interests of justice require a fresh inquest. The quashing of an inquest verdict and the directing of a fresh inquest is a serious step which may have implications for many persons and organisations whose competing interests therefore have to be considered and balanced. It is not every irregularity or piece of fresh evidence which will justify an application to the High Court.

In recent years—I now come to the question of judicial review—the High Court has developed the doctrine of judicial review so that the vast majority of issues arising from the conduct of inquests may also be considered by

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the High Court, in the exercise of its supervisory jurisdiction, without resort to the procedure under section 13 of the 1988 Act. There is a substantial overlap between the two procedures and that is very sensible.

As I indicated earlier, Mrs. Williams was one of those who, in 1992, made an application under section 13 of the 1988 Act. All the points raised on her behalf were carefully considered. The application on her behalf was thoroughly prepared by a barrister, by counsel. There were three general and procedural matters relied upon. First, it was relied on that the coroner wrongly failed to direct the jury as to the verdicts of lack of care or accidental death due to or "aggravated by" lack of care relating to the negligence of the police which caused the tragedy.

Secondly, it was relied on that the coroner wrongly excluded evidence of lack of care in the emergency services—that is close to what my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby was saying—and the police's reaction to the deceased's initial injuries, wrongly insisted on a cut-off point of 3.15 pm for the evidence heard at the main inquest, and wrongly failed to direct the jury on the availability of a verdict of accidental death by lack of care or lack of care based on the failure of the various responsible agencies to provide the deceased with adequate medical attention after they had sustained their original injuries.

It was also asserted in relation to Kevin Williams that there was evidence to justify the coroner in concluding that he was alive beyond the 3.15 pm cut-off time adopted by the coroner. I pause to emphasise that because anyone who has seen "The Cook Report" knows how important the cut-off time was. I emphasise that that matter was very much before the High Court when it considered the judicial review. Moreover, evidence had emerged subsequent to the inquest to suggest that considerable pressure had been put on two witnesses to retract or qualify their evidence about the signs of life that they described in Kevin Williams after 3.15 pm.

The conclusion that I reached was that none of the matters raised afforded a realistic likelihood of successful application to the High Court. In the event, the applicants proceeded by way of application for judicial review which I have described. It is clear from the judgment of the divisional court that all these points which would have been relied upon in an application under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 were canvassed in those proceedings.

In giving the judgment of the divisional court, Lord Justice McCowan ruled that none of the procedural or technical points raised justified the intervention of the divisional court and then he went on—and I hope that this will be of some comfort—to deal in the following manner with the evidence relating to the death of Kevin Williams:

> "We were told that some while after, Mrs. Williams, the deceased's mother, made contact with PC Bruder and WPC Martin and they alleged that they had been pressurised into changing their stories and that they now stuck by their original versions. Where does the truth lie? I see no fault in the coroner in this matter. He made full inquiry. He was not asked by the applicant's representative to do more. There was overwhelming medical evidence that the deceased was in fact dead by 3.15 pm. In my judgment it would not be right to quash the verdicts and order a new inquest on the strength of these allegations made against the investigating police officers."

Those allegations are of course the same ones which were subsequently repeated in the ITV programme to which my honourable Friend has referred. The divisional court, however, went further and examined a letter written by the pathologist, Dr. Ian West, who also provided an interview for the ITV programme.

The divisional court did question its own authority to look at fresh evidence of that nature on an application for judicial review, but, having done so, it commented that it found the evidence to be of far too tenuous a nature to justify ordering a new inquest.

At the conclusion of his judgment, Lord Justice McCowan concluded that the inquest was correctly completed and the coroner's directions to the jury as to the manner in which they should approach the case were impeccable. He added some comments which the House may wish also to consider:

> "If I had found such reason and had to exercise my discretion the following matters would have weighed with me. What would be the purpose of fresh inquests? To get a verdict criticising the police? Such criticism has already been firmly levelled by the Taylor Report. The police have admitted fault and paid compensation. To get a verdict criticising the emergency services? I see no evidence to justify such criticism, and in any event it would be irrelevant if all six were brain dead by 3.15 pm. To obtain further examination of the last minutes of their lives? I doubt that anything more would be learned, but the process would be a very harrowing one involving large numbers of witnesses and lasting if not for 96 days, for not far short. Moreover, irrespective of whose fault, if anyone's, it is, the fact is that four and a half years have already passed since the tragedy occurred. As to the alternative suggestion of a mere quashing of the existing verdicts leaving nothing in their place, I would regard that as absolutely valueless.
>
> Mr. Jones says that the families are pursuing this matter because they have a deep instinct to know the circumstances in which their relatives died. I am perfectly prepared to accept that that is their motive and I respect it, but I hope they, for their part, can understand that I have to take an objective view and I have to consider the interests of all concerned including those of all the witnesses who would have to come along five years later and try to cast their minds back to events that they must have been trying to forget. Taking that objective view, and considering the interests of all concerned, I would in my discretion conclude that this was not a case in which it will be right to order fresh inquests."

All that adds up to the fact that it will require really cogent and persuasive fresh arguments if they are now to result in an order by the High Court that there should be a fresh inquest. So far as I have been able to ascertain before today, the evidence referred to in "The Cook Report" did not bring matters forward beyond where they stood at the time of the application for judicial review. Moreover, the court would not have regard, as I have indicated, to "The Cook Report" itself, but it will need to see the evidence in proper form. However, I have made that point.

Sir Malcolm Thornton: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that at the judicial review—I am referring to paragraph D, page 29 of the judgment—the court was restricted in the main to consideration of evidence available at the time of the inquest and that that meant, for example, that scant regard was paid to the evidence of Dr. West? At paragraph D, page 29, the court simply agreed to look de bene esse at Dr. West's report. The court also admitted the restrictive nature of judicial review proceedings. It conceded, as the Attorney-General has already mentioned, that it had grave doubts as to whether it had power to look at fresh evidence which had emerged since the date of the inquests. That is paragraph D, page 30 of the judgment.

I have tried—I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will accept this—to show that the limitations of the judicial review prohibited proper examination of that further evidence and that, under his powers under section 13, there is an opportunity for my right hon. and learned Friend to have a further look at it; it is that which is the basis of my submission and of the evidence which I shall give him tomorrow.

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall say what I was about to say to my hon. Friend, which is that I will indeed look very carefully at the evidence that he gives me tomorrow, and I will look at it in the context of all the matters that I have dealt with. As my hon. Friend mentioned, although I have a copy of the judgment in front of me, I cannot pick up all the words that he said, but I am quite sure that the court did not give scant regard to anything. I am sure that the court looked very carefully.

The House will have recognised from what I have said that, although the court was worried as to whether it had power to look at certain evidence, in fact it did, in that curious Latin phrase, de bene esse. It went on to look at that evidence. It did not brush it aside; it looked at it. My hon. Friend and Opposition Members are concerned that I should look carefully once again at what my hon. Friend can put before me, and I assure the House that I will. I caution that it requires very cogent evidence before the matter can be reopened, but I fully understand the concerns of the families and I express my deepest sympathy for them. I shall look carefully at the matter that my hon. Friend can bring forward.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 27 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Madam Speaker *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Private Bills *[Lords]* (Suspension)

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Message [25th October] as relates to the London Local Authorities (No 2) Bill *[Lords]* and the Bodmin Moor Commons Bill *[Lords]* be now considered.

Ordered,

That this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

British Waterways Bill *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed) and shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means, who shall make such Amendments thereto as have been made by the Committee in the present Session, and shall report the Bill as amended to the House forthwith, and the Bill, so amended, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Humber Bridge Bill *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Humber Bridge Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no petitioners shall be heard before the committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph (b) of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered a Second time on Tuesday 1 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

TREASURY

Manufacturing Output

1. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conclusions he draws from the trend in manufacturing output.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Manufacturing output continues to grow strongly, which shows the strong competitive position that has been achieved by British industry.

Mr. Spring: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, with the most welcome rising trend in manufacturing output and the further rise in third quarter gross national product, Britain remains on course for a sustainable economic recovery? Does he agree that that is due to the sensible policies that have been pursued by a Conservative Government and, in view of those economic successes, will he assure the House that he will continue to stick to his guns?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. We are poised for strong recovery that can be sustained and combined with low inflation, and I am particularly glad that British manufacturing is playing such a key part in that. I further agree that this situation would not have occurred had the Government not been prepared to take difficult decisions to get the public finances healthy again, to follow monetary policies designed to maintain low inflation and to put in place the stable framework of which British manufacturing industry is now obviously beginning to take advantage.

Mr. Gordon Brown: What effect will the interest rate rise and the seven further tax rises that the Chancellor is planning have on output and on the growth of the economy? Does the Chancellor recall the promise that the Prime Minister made when he fought the last election that there would be no extension of VAT in particular? Will he use this opportunity to rule out any extension of VAT to food, to children's clothes, to books or newspapers or to train fares as a result of any Budget that he might introduce?

Mr. Clarke: I thought that new Labour was in favour of the interest rate rise that I announced and that the new, responsible Labour party followed my lead in saying that we take no risks with inflation. The hon. Gentleman has advised me to reduce interest rates on each and every occasion for the past 18 months. If his former advice had been followed, it would have caused high inflation and brought this recovery to an end. Until the hon. Gentleman states what spending he would cut, as opposed to raise, he cannot really address Conservative Members on inflation. As for budgets, he must wait for the Budget and he knows perfectly well that there are only a few weeks to go.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a floating exchange rate must also be said to have played some part in the present happy state of affairs?

Mr. Clarke: The exchange rate has been extremely stable over the past 18 months—as long as I have been in this post—as a result of the extremely responsible policies that we have pursued in getting on top of our fiscal deficit and showing that we are prepared to follow responsible monetary policies. If my hon. Friend is trying to lead me back to his theory that the present recovery is a sole result of certain changes in the exchange rate that occurred about 18 months ago, he knows that I regard that as nonsense. In fact, the current policies of the Government have very much more to do with the strong manufacturing recovery in Britain.

Mr. Sheldon: If the manufacturing recovery is to be strongly based, will it not be necessary to do something about investment allowances and the absurd notion that 25 per cent. is the maximum that the Chancellor can afford to give for manufacturing investment? If we are to achieve the capacity increase that we require, he must do something about that.

Mr. Clarke: Investment, I am glad to say, is strengthening considerably at the moment, including manufacturing investment. The present recovery looks set to be a healthy recovery, led by exports, with investment strengthening rapidly and consumer growth continuing in a sustainable way. I do not accept that indiscriminate investment allowances automatically produce the kind of investment that boosts growth. It is the quality of investment that matters. The old eastern European countries, the Soviet bloc, used to produce marvellous figures for investment, but the quality of the investment was so bad that they were among the worst performing economies in the world.

Mr. Jenkin: May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and the Government on the stable framework to which he alluded, which brought about this upturn in manufacturing output? Does he agree that it is now time to make it clear that we will not flirt with the idea of a single currency in Europe? Will he endorse the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in November 1990 that the single currency in Europe is about the politics in Europe and federalism by the back door?

Mr. Clarke: In my experience, flirtation requires more than one person. The single currency is not being actively pursued anywhere within the European Union. If the question of economic and monetary union arises in future, I look forward to debating it with my hon. Friend. However, the judgment that we should both seek to make about it is whether it is in British interests at the time to participate. That is the position that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reserved for this country when he negotiated the Maastricht treaty.

Tax Collection

2. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount the Inland Revenue failed to collect in taxes for the last year for which figures were available; and what proportion this represents of the amount raised in 1994 from VAT on fuel bills.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Sir George Young): Value added tax on fuel bills, excluding compensation payments, is expected to raise

£1,120 million in 1994-95, which represents 75 per cent. of the £1,580 million written off by the Inland Revenue for 1992-93.

Dr. Godman: Could not the money raised by imposing VAT on domestic fuel have been collected by ending the tax relief on executive share options and by closing, once and for all, the tax loopholes that make the United Kingdom such a wonderful tax haven for many rich and greedy people?

Sir George Young: No, there is no way in which the measures outlined by the hon. Gentleman would meet the shortfall that he has identified. If the Labour party is seriously suggesting that the second stage should be revoked, it owes it to the House to say what other taxes Labour would increase or what public expenditure it would cut.

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since privatisation in 1986, domestic gas prices have fallen in real terms, taking account of the extension of VAT, by 16.5 per cent.? Will he contrast that with the position in the late 1970s under the Labour Government, when the prices of all utilities rose tremendously under very high inflation and interest rates?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There has been not only the favourable movement in fuel prices, to which he rightly drew attention, but a generous compensation package, costing £2.5 billion over three years, to help those on low incomes pay VAT on fuel.

Ms Armstrong: Will the Minister now take the opportunity to honour the Government's election pledge to rule out any further extension of VAT to items such as children's clothing or food? Will he please answer the question?

Sir George Young: I welcome the hon. Lady to her new position in the Treasury—*[Interruption.]* I meant the shadow Treasury team. I have nothing to add to the answer that has already been given.

Economic Strategy

3. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Government's long-term economic strategy and the level of unemployment.

13. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Government's long-term economic strategy and the level of unemployment.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): The Government's economic strategy is to achieve sustained non-inflationary growth and higher living standards. There is a direct relationship between the success of this strategy and a steady fall in unemployment.

Mr. Clapham: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply, but when one compares it to reality, it does not stack up. Are not the Minister and the Government using the large pool of unemployment as the only weapon to tackle inflation? If the Government are really confident about sustained economic growth, why did they increase interest rates?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman asks a question about unemployment in somewhat churlish terms. He does not seem to have noticed that unemployment has fallen in the past 20 months by 406,000, and that it came down by 28,000 in September or nearly 1,000 a day. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency, there has been a 7.3 per cent. fall in unemployment since last year.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made a small rise in interest rates, for very good reasons of prudence, to ensure that inflationary pressures do not arise in future. There is no evidence that that has had an adverse impact on the continuing fall in unemployment.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a significant feature of the recent large reduction in unemployment, apart from the fact that it is in direct contradiction with the forecast that was made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), is that it has been accompanied by a significant increase in investment and exports? To maintain that increased investment in the long term, will my right hon. Friend consider capital gains tax reforms, which would more adequately reflect the value of long-term investment?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend mentions the brilliant forecasting skills of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who predicted some 20 months ago that "unemployment will rise" month after month. Since that great prediction, unemployment has fallen month after month. The hon. Gentleman deserves a good kick up his endogenous zone for that wrong prediction.

On my hon. Friend's second point, he is quite right to say that the growth in exports is most encouraging; it is rising at 10 per cent. a year, which is a remarkable figure. On his points about capital gains tax, I am sure that he will understand that I cannot anticipate my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given the importance of his responsibilities for economic strategy, will the Chief Secretary now take the opportunity to tell us that at no time was any part of his bill last year in the Ritz hotel in Paris paid for by a Mr. Ayas? Will he answer the question? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot allow that line of questioning on a question to which it does not relate. The hon. Gentleman may wish to pursue the matter through me to the Privileges Committee. Alternatively, of course, he has the opportunity to— *[Interruption.]* Please hear me out. The hon. Gentleman has the opportunity to table a substantive motion if he wishes to make a criticism and to seek a statement or a debate through the Leader of the House at business questions.

Mr. Aitken: With great respect to you, Madam Speaker, I would very much welcome a chance to answer that question, not least because it is my first chance to clear myself of the scurrilous accusations that have been made. With your indulgence, I simply say to the hon. Gentleman that, first, I completely deny the allegation that he has made. Secondly, I think that he should be aware that the Cabinet Secretary has today sent a letter to the editor of *The Guardian*, Mr. Peter Preston, repudiating and denying the scurrilous allegation that Mr. Preston made this morning, to the effect that I had lied to the Cabinet Secretary. The relevant sentence from Sir Robin Butler's letter reads:

> "For the record, I confirm that I do not regard Jonathan Aitken as having lied to me or misled me."

I hope that the House, which is a very fair-minded place, will accept both my assurance and the Cabinet Secretary's assurance and put an end to the hysterical atmosphere of sleaze journalism by *The Guardian*.

Interest Rates

4. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect interest rate reductions since October 1990 have had on the economy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Low interest rates have contributed to the broad-based recovery that we are now experiencing. Monetary policy will continue to be aimed at low inflation to ensure that growth can be sustained over the years ahead.

Mr. Booth: As long-term investment, stability and the low interest rates to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred are vital ingredients in the success of our economy—success that is evident in my constituency of Finchley at successful firms such as Pentland, Witherspoon's and Gerson—will he assure us that he will continue to reinvigorate and reinforce those successful policies?

Mr. Clarke: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. He will know that interest rates, although raised to 5¾ per cent. from their previous level, are still at their lowest level since 1972. I believe that we will be able to keep interest rates down and consistent with our monetary policy if we act in good time, if our fiscal policy is sound and if we keep on the course that we have set. I agree with my hon. Friend that companies such as those that he named are now well placed to take advantage of that, and I am glad to say that they are beginning to deliver the prosperity and jobs that the country needs.

Mr. John Evans: The Chancellor of the Exchequer constantly boasts about the successful economy and falling unemployment. Is he aware that no one with any intelligence takes any notice of the Government's unemployment statistics? Will the Chancellor confirm that more than 1 million people are unemployed and are economically active but do not appear in any unemployment statistics? Will he confirm that the latest scam, the job seeker's allowance, will save the Treasury millions of pounds and take another 90,000 out of the unemployment statistics?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman questioned me in the past when I was an Employment Minister. He knows that I have never taken too seriously the figures for benefit recipients as a measure of unemployment in this country; they are used as the basis of fairly lightweight political exchanges inside the House and outside. I take seriously the labour force survey, which I always used to protest was a much better measure of unemployment. I am glad to say that that is currently showing real falls in unemployment in line with the headline count and an increase in employment of about 750,000 new jobs. The hon. Gentleman cannot deny that the present real recovery in manufacturing and the British economy is generating new jobs—it is the only way that we can generate new jobs—and that we are on course in the medium term to get unemployment down to an acceptable level.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we are living in a deflationary world and that there is still plenty of spare capacity in the British economy?

Mr. Clarke: I am interested to hear that. I gaze at surveys and all sorts of data, and I have many conversations with people in British business to judge whether capacity constraints are likely to affect our performance. No one can measure it; it is a matter of judgment. So far, we are all satisfied that there is spare capacity in the economy; it has been rising above the trend for some time. I shall make judgments as I go along on the best evidence that I have to keep the recovery as strong as possible and consistent with our monetary targets and the maintenance of low inflation.

VAT (Fuel)

5. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what income has accrued from value added tax on domestic fuel bills from April to October 1994.

The Paymaster General (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): The Central Statistical Office's estimates of consumer expenditure show that the projected total of VAT accruing on domestic fuel bills in the six months to 1 October 1994 will be £410 million, and for the year to 31 March 1995 the projected total accruing will be £1,120 million.

Mr. O'Brien: Does the Minister agree that 10 million pensioners and 6.5 million people, including unemployed people, have contributed substantially to those figures? Only fools would accept that the 50p allowance introduced by the Department of Social Security to help to pay bills meets the cost. As pensioners, unemployed people and those on income support face difficult winters and difficulty in meeting their energy bills, will the Minister prevail on his colleague, the Chancellor, to withdraw the next issue of the implementation of 17.5 per cent. VAT on fuel bills?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The House decided to implement VAT on fuel bills in two stages. It did so in the knowledge that a generous compensation package gives extra help to all pensioners and widows, disabled people and those on income-related benefits, adding up to some £2.5 billion over three years. The background is that fuel prices generally are falling. Indeed, even allowing for the introduction of VAT earlier this year, electricity prices have remained stable over the past two years and gas prices are now lower by 2.5 per cent. in real terms than two years ago.

Mr. Biffen: Will my hon. Friend use this occasion to assert the sovereign role of this House in determining fiscal matters and, in that context, acknowledge that there is an economic and social argument for keeping our rates of value added tax below those of our European Union partners, even though that may have consequences for direct taxation?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I can confirm that the decision on fuel taxation was taken by the House and was not forced on us by the European Community. Our existing zero ratings are protected fully by EC legislation, and we have an effective veto on any changes that are against the wishes of this House.

Mr. MacShane: The Minister will be aware of today's important article in *The Times* pointing out that personnel directors have awarded themselves wage increases significantly above those given to their employees. He will also be aware that suppliers are now increasing prices across industry because of the recovery, that large wage claims are in the pipeline and that the latest Union bank of Switzerland prediction on inflation in the United Kingdom next year is 5 per cent. Will the Minister make a bet with me on what the inflation rate will be in 12 months' time? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is on the wrong question: we are talking about VAT on domestic fuel bills. I will allow the Minister to answer, however; I am sure that he can.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I can answer in relation to privatised industries in the fuel and power sector. I can confirm that privatisation has led to lower prices. That has been good for customers, as well as for all who work for the industries concerned. There has been an unalloyed benefit from the privatisation programme introduced by the Government in the teeth of opposition from hon. Members on the Opposition Benches.

Economic Growth

6. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the growth of the economy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Figures released last week show that GDP grew by more than 3.5 per cent. in the year to the third quarter of 1994. Let me add that the country's economic prospects are so good that my Treasury team is prepared to answer supplementary questions on any aspect of the economy, in response to any question.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that rising output, low inflation and falling unemployment make our economy the envy of our competitors? Is it not time that the Opposition realised that the one thing that would stop our economy would be the adoption of their policies, with minimum wages, social charters and, inevitably, rising taxes?

Mr. Clarke: I quite agree. I believe that my hon. Friend has drawn his conclusions in part from the forecast of the International Monetary Fund, which expects ours to be the fastest growing economy in Europe, both this year and next. As my hon. Friend implied, last year we had to make some difficult fiscal decisions, and the Opposition voted against all the public spending savings measures that we had to take through the House. Their approach to the economy would pull down our growth rate and prospects and damage what we are currently poised to achieve.

Mr. Shore: In the interests of continuing the growth of the economy, and taking account of the enormous help that the Chancellor gave us through the 17 per cent. devaluation that took place when we left the exchange rate mechanism, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now assure us that, in the latest movement of interest rates and in any future movement, he is not simply trying to shadow the deutschmark as his last predecessor but one did so disastrously two or three years ago?

Mr. Clarke: I am tempted to take issue with the right hon. Gentleman's premise. The recovery had started before we left the ERM; interest rates started to fall before we left the ERM; and inflation started to come down before we left the ERM. The fact that good Government policies since we left the ERM have allowed us to retain the competitive advantage of that devaluation without subsequent inflation is to the Government's credit.

I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that I am not shadowing the deutschmark. I accept that exchange rates either float or are fixed; we are currently floating, and we are maintaining stability through the responsibility of our policies.

Income Tax

7. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the basic rate of income tax would have to rise to fund a £35 billion increase in public spending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: To raise £35 billion from income tax, the basic rate would almost have to double.

Mr. Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me about the importance of continuing to control public expenditure? Does he agree that, by contrast, the Labour party continues to want to spend more and more, which must mean more taxation and—without a shadow of a doubt—taxing not just the mythical undeserving rich but, by implication, all middle-income earners?

Mr. Aitken: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend's first point—that tight control of public expenditure is vital to a healthy economy. The Labour party's policies are still in a somewhat amorphous and unveiled state, but it is clear from its conference pledges alone on such matters as the minimum wage that it has still not shed, or come anywhere near shedding, its well-deserved reputation as the high-spend, high-tax party.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: On the subject of tax increases, will the Minister confirm to the House that the tax increases which will come into effect this month, coupled with those which will come into effect between now and April, add up to the equivalent of just under 3p in the pound? Are not the Government presiding over tax increases while talking about tax cuts?

Mr. Aitken: Income tax rates have not gone up by 3p in the pound, and we have reduced income tax rates time and again. We inherited an income tax rate as high as 83 per cent. at the top rate, which we brought down to 40 per cent. We also inherited from the Labour party a standard rate of some 30 per cent., which we brought down to 25 per cent., and we now have a standard band of 20p which 5 million people enjoy. We are a low-tax, tax-cutting Government, and we will get back to our core belief of cutting taxes as soon as it is prudent to do so.

Mr. John Townend: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the recent announcement that the Treasury will be setting an example in reducing the Government's overheads. Does he appreciate that there is enormous support on the Conservative Benches and in the party for his efforts to cut the public expenditure total this year, so that we can change from being a tax-increasing Government and resume our natural position as the party of low taxes?

Mr. Aitken: I regard praise from my hon. Friend, who is something of a Robespierre of public spending, as praise indeed. Painful decisions have been made about the Treasury and the fundamental expenditure review, but it is worth reminding the House that the administration costs of Government and the running costs of Whitehall are approximately £15 billion per year, which is £13 of taxation for every household. It is entirely right that the Government should look hard—as they have in the past and are now doing again—at reducing that burden of public expenditure where it is prudent to do so.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister admit that the £35 billion referred to in the question is almost equivalent to the amount of money that could be saved if we managed to get those 4 million people who do not have jobs into work? There is another way, of course. That is to increase taxes on those who have received £50 billion in tax cuts in the last 15 Tory years, which would mean taxing people like Al Fayed and all his friends.

Mr. Aitken: I shall resist the temptation to say anything about the gentleman mentioned in the hon. Gentleman's question.

The £35 billion figure is in fact the amount by which the Labour party would have increased public expenditure if it had been elected. Those were the pledges that it made. This Government have been doing their best to reduce the burden of public expenditure. We are now doing so, and we hope to bring it down to a satisfactory amount between now and the next election.

Mr. Brazier: As a fellow Kentish Member, will my right hon. Friend join me in agreeing that local spending as well as central spending must be controlled in the interests of taxpayers? Does he agree that it is quite wrong that the county that we share, which is controlled by a Lib-Lab coalition, should spend £750,000 this year on entertaining and conferences?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is quite right. The spending of Kent as a local authority under Lib-Lab control is giving great cause for concern. It seems to be a case of canapés for the boys, and that should be restrained as much as possible.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

8. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on Government proposals for compensation for the victims of BCCI.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): While we sympathise with the plight of BCCI depositors, responsibility for their losses rests with those who committed the frauds, not with the Government. Parliament established the statutory deposit protection scheme to protect those with small deposits and to date more than 17,800 payments have been made to BCCI depositors, totalling more than £76 million.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister join me in welcoming the new settlement agreement which has been reached between the creditors committee and the sheikh of Abu Dhabi? What necessary steps will the Government take to ensure that those payments are made immediately, bearing in mind the fact that the Government have done absolutely nothing to support the depositors and creditors of BCCI during the past two and a half years?

Mr. Nelson: While I vehemently reject the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I should like to pay a more generous tribute to the hon. Gentleman, who has shown much interest and concern for depositors who have lost out through the collapse of BCCI.

The factual position is that the $1.8 billion package for the creditors has been the result of negotiations between the liquidators and the majority shareholders, and should enable depositors to win back something like 30 to 40 per cent. of their funds. It will be necessary for the creditors committees in the UK, the Cayman Islands and Luxembourg to agree on that. I believe that that has now been agreed, and the only remaining hurdle is for the courts in those three jurisdictions to agree to it. I very much hope that when that is done, the way will be cleared with expedition to pay some recompense to those who have lost out.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity, notwithstanding the claims of some of the BCCI depositors for possible compensation, to reassure the House and the country that investors who take unnecessary risks with their money should not expect to be compensated by those who are prudent in their investments?

Mr. Nelson: I strongly believe that my hon. Friend makes a pertinent point, both with regard to depositor protection and with regard to investor protection. Not just as a result of directives from the European Union on both issues, but as a result of legislation introduced by this Government on both issues, we have substantial protection schemes to protect depositors and investors. At the end of the day, however, there must be a responsibility—a caveat emptor—on those who place their funds to take some responsibility for the husbandry of their financial affairs.

Mr. Darling: Do the Government accept that the bank claims and the pension transfer claims arise from the same problem, which is that the regulatory regime in this country does not work? In the light of that, why did the Minister claim earlier this week that the financial services regulatory system was working well? Is he surprised that no one has any confidence in the Government's ability to make the regulatory regime work?

Mr. Nelson: I do not for a moment accept the hon. Gentleman's premise. The fact is that with regard to opt-outs and transfers of personal pensions, it is as a result of the investigations and inquiries, and the process of redress that has been put into place, that people who have been disadvantaged will have it made good. That is the result of an incisive, deliberate and determined approach of supervision and regulation which is proving its worth. It is serving the interests both of investors and of depositors. This week's announcement by the Securities and Investments Board is a good example of that.

Corporation Tax

9. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what comparison he has made between the corporation tax in Britain and that of major competitors; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Levels of corporate taxes in the United Kingdom's major competitor countries are monitored continually. The United Kingdom continues to have the lowest main rate of any of the major industrial countries.

Mr. Evans: In confirming that the United Kingdom has the lowest rate of corporation tax in the European Community, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is due to the fact that we have given great encouragement to our medium-sized and especially our smaller companies? We have allowed them to keep more of their own money, thereby allowing them to reinvest it in the companies. That has allowed them to increase their productivity, especially in manufacturing, and has led to record exports being achieved.

Sir George Young: I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the small and medium-sized enterprises to which he has referred, which have done so well in the past few years and have created many new jobs. On the substance of his question, I recognise that this country operates in a competitive world market. We need to attract inward investment from some of the multinational companies to create secure jobs in growth industries. The fact that we have one of the lowest rates of corporation tax is a clear signal that we welcome such investment.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I congratulate the Financial Secretary on his appointment. Will he confirm that the Government have decided not to publish the report on the review of dividend taxation and related matters which was initiated by the former Financial Secretary? Given that the Government's record on investment is so poor, should not the public, industry and especially this House have the opportunity to examine the evidence for themselves on the basis of a full and comprehensive report?

Sir George Young: There never was a report in the terms that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned; nor was there ever any intention to publish such a document. There will be ample opportunities in the Finance Bill and on other occasions to debate the important issues that he has raised.

Mr. French: In comparing the tax regimes in Britain with those of other European countries, will my right hon. Friend confirm that he is now fully satisfied that a business that wishes to operate a pan-European mutual fund, including the provision of FCPs, or fonds communs de placement, will not find fiscal reasons for locating in Dublin or Luxembourg as opposed to London?

Sir George Young: I very much hope that that is the case. There are many letters on my hon. Friend's question and I should like to write and confirm what he has just said. Over the past year or so, a third of inward investment into the European Community came to the UK. That confirms his point: that this is an attractive location from which to base enterprise.

Manufacturing Investment

10. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure he has for the level of manufacturing investment in this country; and what this figure was in 1979.

Mr. Aitken: Total business investment is up by more than 30 per cent. since 1979, totalling about £60 billion in the past year, of which investment in manufacturing is currently running at £11 billion a year compared to £13.6 billion in 1979.

Mr. Byers: Will the Chief Secretary assure us that next time he visits the Ritz in Paris he will consider why manufacturing jobs in this country have been lost at twice the rate of those in France? Will he confirm that, in real terms, manufacturing investment in the United Kingdom has declined by 13 per cent. since 1979? Does he agree that those figures clearly show the Government's failure to assist the manufacturing sector?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman is being very selective in the investment figures that he quotes. Britain is doing well in terms of investment, particularly inward investment from other countries. We are attracting the lion's share of foreign investment into the European Union—far more than France and Germany combined. If the French could see how well we are doing in that way, they would be grateful to have our good record.

Mr. Forman: In considering manufacturing investment, will my right hon. Friend always give due weight to the argument that it is much better that those decisions be taken by management and firms themselves, than distorted by tax relief, such as the 100 per cent. first year allowances, which would be a bad idea?

Mr. Aitken: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the Government's real priority in trying to attract investment is not to produce all sorts of Government-created advantages but to create a framework like the one that we have now, of low inflation, a flexible labour force, low costs, and a stable and prosperous economic environment in which growth is occurring. Those conditions encourage manufacturers both here and abroad to invest in Britain.

Tax Rises

11. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Government's imposition of new tax rises and the standard of living in the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: Our policies of sound finance will produce sustained recovery, more jobs and further increases in living standards.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Is not the reality that, as a result of the Chancellor's Budget last year, the poor have been hit hard and those on middle incomes have been hit even harder? Is the Minister aware that, as a result of last year's Budget, a family on average earnings with two children is already £330 a year worse off and faces a further £85 loss in income as a result of inbuilt tax increases? When the Government promise year-on-year tax cuts and increases in standards of living, why do average families have to dip their hands further and further into their pockets to bail the Government out as a result of their economic failures?

Sir George Young: The actual figure for next year is not the one that the hon. Gentleman gave. The average impact of next year's increases across all households is £3 a week. A large number of households will pay less, and the figure for pensioners is 90p a week. The hon. Gentleman must put those figures in perspective. Since 1979, average families have had an increase of some £80 in real take-home pay.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is it not a fact that living standards in my constituency and throughout the country have risen under this Conservative Government, and is it not correct to say that the average family receives £80 more per week than it did in 1979? That is a tribute to the Government.

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Real take-home pay has increased for all earning deciles since 1979.

VAT (Books and Newspapers)

12. **Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning the extension of VAT to books and newspapers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer receives a wide range of representations in the run-up to the Budget.

Ms Primarolo: Is it not the case that, although the Government talk about reducing taxes, they have actually increased them, the scope of VAT having been increased 14 times since the 1979 general election? Will the Minister give an assurance today that the Prime Minister's promise at the last election not to increase the scope of tax will be honoured by the Government?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I take it that the question is about VAT on books, magazines and newspapers, and I can confirm that our zero rating is proof against challenge from the European Commission. Although all other member states except for Ireland levy VAT on books, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said that he has no plans for extending VAT in that way in the near future.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister (John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Cunningham: Can the Prime Minister end speculation in today's London *Evening Standard* naming an individual as the person who either tipped the Prime Minister off or acted as the intermediary in allegations against Ministers?

The Prime Minister: As I have said on a previous occasion, the person concerned came to see me privately and in good faith. I have no intention of offering a name. The note of my meeting with my informant has been passed, as I told the House the other day, to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the name is known to her. It is for her to decide how to proceed, and I understand that she has now passed the papers to the Metropolitan police.

Mr. David Howell: Does my right hon. Friend accept that his decision to set up an independent and powerful committee to inquire into the conduct of public life is warmly welcomed? Does he also accept that certain areas of conduct should be reserved to the House to look after? Will he therefore continue to resist most strongly the immature and inexperienced proposal of the Leader of the Opposition that the Select Committee on Privileges should meet in public, which would create a lynch trial kangaroo court atmosphere that every democrat should abhor?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend speaks with great knowledge of these matters, and I share the opinion that he has expressed.

As for the committee that I have established, I have made it clear to the House that I am not prepared to see confidence in elected or unelected public servants undermined by the public parading of unsubstantiated slurs and innuendo. It is precisely for that reason that I have set up the committee on the conduct of public life. I look to Opposition Members, who, I understand, support the initiative, to join me in ensuring that the committee is able to work successfully. I also look to them to ensure the ending of the continual peddling of gossip and rumour.

Mr. Blair: Now that today we have another report by the Cabinet Secretary exonerating another Minister, can we make ourselves clear about the basis on which the Prime Minister is running the Government? A week ago, he said that there were unsubstantiated allegations against his Trade Minister and insisted that he stayed. A few days later, there were allegations that were supposed to be unfounded, as he called them, and he insisted that the Minister concerned went. Now there are new unsubstantiated allegations against the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and he stays. What is the basis on which the

Prime Minister decides to retain or dismiss his Ministers—the truth of the allegations or merely the number of them?

The Prime Minister: I had understood that when the right hon. Gentleman became leader of the Labour party we were going to see a new style in politics. I had not expected to see the right hon. Gentleman step down into the gutters of public life quite so soon. Let me make it clear to the House and to the right hon. Gentleman—I set out my position concerning my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) in my statement to the House the other day and I have nothing further to say. As for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, the examination shows that there is nothing for them to answer to, and the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) should be ashamed of using the privilege of the House to raise those matters in this way.

Mr. Blair: As the Prime Minister knows perfectly well, I have not said that I agree with the allegations against anyone. The idea that, after the resignation of two Ministers in a week, the Opposition should not be entitled to ask questions, is absurd. Cannot the Prime Minister see that the problem will not be resolved unless he understands that the Butler reports are plainly inadequate as, on his own admission, Sir Robin Butler is not able to see the person making the complaints, Mr. Al Fayed, he has forbidden the Nolan committee to look at the allegations, the Privileges Committee is deadlocked because Conservative Members want it to sit in private—*[Interruption.]* I repeat, because Conservative Members want to sit in private. The Prime Minister will take a grip on the problem only when he understands that there has to be a proper method of investigating Mr. Al Fayed's allegations that has the public's confidence, which means an open, full investigation in public view.

The Prime Minister: Now there is no doubt. We now know where we are with the right hon. Gentleman and we know precisely what way he plans to play his politics. The right hon. Gentleman says to the House that he does not believe that the allegations are substantiated, yet he is still prepared to peddle them in here. The whole House will have noticed that he is prepared to peddle them. There is only one thing stopping the Privileges Committee from proceeding: the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends will not attend that Committee, which is wholly against all precedent in the House. The right hon. Gentleman is a lawyer; he knows that investigations take place in private and when those matters are over, debate takes place in public. He would change that for his own party advantage. If the right hon. Gentleman had listened, he would have heard that the documents relating to Mr. Al Fayed's allegations were passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions and have now been passed by her, after examination, to the Metropolitan police for examination. Surely, the right hon. Gentleman cannot imagine that I shall add to that.

Mr. Blair: With all due respect, the Prime Minister is not being asked to add to it. It is not me; it is—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I must have some order in the House.

Mr. Blair: It was not I, but the Prime Minister who dismissed two Ministers. Furthermore, the normal procedure in courts of law is that hearings are held in public. No Opposition Members are saying whether the allegations are true or false—merely that they should be investigated. Why will the Prime Minister not allow the investigations to be held in public?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman says that the matters may not be true and may be unsubstantiated gossip; yet he wants them peddled in public so that people's reputations—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall have order from both sides of the House.

The Prime Minister: Despite the fact that the right hon. Gentleman does not believe the allegations and does not believe that there is anything substantial in them, he still wants to see them examined in public. People will ask for what party political reason he wants to see them established in public. If that is to be the new, clean politics, let us have the old, dirty politics from Labour that we have been used to.

Mr. Sumberg: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to read the report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution from traffic? Does it not dictate an urgent review of the roads programme, and in particular the abandonment of the disastrous M62 relief road which has caused so much damage in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend, with the ingenuity that we have come to expect of him, has continued his campaign of concern about the M62. I think that the report by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution is a useful one, and we shall be studying it closely. It contains many very helpful things—although there are some parts of it which are uncosted and which would be better for having been costed.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Prime Minister confirm that the two Ministers who have been forced to resign from the Government in the past week will receive £3,500 each in redundancy payments for their pains?

The Prime Minister: As I understand it, the right hon. Gentleman voted for the legislation which requires that.

Mr. Walker: Does my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Back Benchers are as entitled as Front Benchers to a little quiet in this House.

Mr. Walker: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that many of us believe that there is a deliberate campaign, based on unfounded allegations, to discredit this Government and him? Is he aware that one of the advantages of Select Committees sitting in private, when required, is that their discussions cannot be debated on the Floor of the House before the reports have been fully submitted and details of all the evidence made available?

The Prime Minister: It has been well understood for many years in this House that Select Committees, when carrying out investigations, sit under the cloak of parliamentary privilege. That is one reason why they have decided for many years to investigate matters in private. Of course, when the investigations are completed, it is right that the report should be published—and it will be. It is also right that the report should be debated—and it will be. All our predecessors in this House have always agreed, in the interests of natural justice, that those Committees should meet and examine matters in private.

Q2. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Raynsford: As the Prime Minister confirmed on Tuesday, and again just a few moments ago, that a note of the approaches made to his office by agents of Mr. Al Fayed had been passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and now to the Metropolitan police, does he feel that it would be proper for the Conservative party to repay the £250,000 that it has received from Mr. Al Fayed?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman has lived up to his reputation.

Q3. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Spring: Is my right hon. Friend aware of just how welcome the new strategy to combat drugs is to thousands of concerned parents throughout the country? Does he agree that the way to tackle this issue most effectively is in local communities, to destroy the cancer of drug abuse which has tragically blighted the lives of so many young people across the industrialised world?

The Prime Minister: I know how strongly my hon. Friend feels about the appalling damage that is done to young people by drugs, and I know how much he has done in his constituency to tackle the problem. Including the costs of police and education time, we spend in total about £500 million a year on tackling drug abuse. I entirely agree that we need to ensure that those resources, and indeed all efforts, are deployed as effectively as possible. We believe that that will best be done by implementing the proposals in the report by my right hon. Friend the Lord President and by making sure that action is taken in schools and by the drug action teams.

Mr. Salmond: The Prime Minister has achieved a welcome success from his policy in Northern Ireland, which has hinged on the principle of consent—the right of people in the north of Ireland to determine their own future. For the avoidance of any doubt, will he confirm that he also believes in the right of self-determination for the Scottish nation?

The Prime Minister: Every nation has always had that right. The hon. Gentleman is clearly talking about a tax-raising devolved Parliament in Scotland, and he well knows my view about that. I am sure that he would benefit from reading the speeches that I made during the 1992 election campaign; if he had done so, he would not have needed to ask his question.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam Speaker. The business for next week will be as follows:

Monday 31 October—Opposition Day (20th allotted day). Until about 7 o'clock, there will be a debate on an Opposition motion, for which the subject will be announced. That will be followed by a debate on transport and the environment, on an Opposition motion.

Remaining stages of the Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*.

Proceedings on the Drug Trafficking Bill *[Lords]*, which is a consolidation measure.

Tuesday 1 November—Opposition Day (12th allotted day—second part). Until 7 o'clock, there will be a debate on conservation of energy on a motion in the name of the Liberal Democrats.

Consideration of Lords amendments which may be received to the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Consideration of Lords amendments which may be received to the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

Wednesday 2 November—The House may be asked to consider any Lords messages which may be received.

Motion on the Local Government Act 1988 (Competition) (Defined Activities) Order.

Motion on the Local Government Act 1988 (Competition) (Defined Activities) (Construction and Property Services) Order.

Thursday 3 November—Subject to the progress of business, the House is expected to be prorogued.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet on Tuesday 1 November at 10.30 am to consider European Union documents Nos. 8441/93 and 8128/94 relating to protection of animals during transport.

[Wednesday 2 November:

European Standing Committee A will meet at 10.30 am to consider unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 19 April relating to adjustments to fisheries arrangements for Spain and Portugal, two unnumbered explanatory memoranda submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 14 September relating to fisheries; common fisheries control system and fisheries access to areas and resources, and EC Document No. 7541/94 relating to fisheries multi-annual guidance programme 1993.]

Mrs. Taylor: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement. As it seems that it will not be possible next week to discuss further and act on the recommendations of the Jopling report, will he ensure that it is debated and acted upon early in the new Session?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that any debates next week will inevitably be overshadowed by allegations and counter-allegations about the conduct of Ministers, and that that will continue unless the air can be cleared? That requires the Priveleges Committee to meet in public wherever possible. Will the right hon. Gentleman do everything in his power to make sure that that Committee can meet as soon as possible, to the satisfaction of all hon. Members and to restore the confidence of the general public in that Committee?

Mr. Newton: I welcomed the hon. Lady in a way on Monday, but perhaps I could take this opportunity to welcome her to this first exchange on the business question and congratulate her on her appointment. The hon. Lady asked about the Jopling report. I was glad to have an early opportunity to speak to her on the matter.

I am grateful to the hon. Lady, as she seems to be continuing the constructive approach of her acting predecessor, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), and I shall seek to respond as positively as possible to her remarks this afternoon.

On the hon. Lady's latter remarks, our business will be "overshadowed" by allegations, as she put it, only to the extent that the Opposition continue to wish and engineer that all other proceedings should be overshadowed by such allegations. As for the Privileges Committee, she will know that it would not normally be open to me to discuss the proceedings of that Committee across the Floor of the House and outside the Committee, because of long-standing conventions. She also knows that the Committee has taken an entirely proper decision in accordance with precedent and after a long and full discussion; I can do no more than report that to the House.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent early debate on the actions of Kent education authority which is seeking to impose a primary school on four villages in my constituency, against the opposition of the two existing schools, the two parish councils, all the district councillors and myself, along with the vast majority of people living in those villages? Is it not a matter of the Conservatives backing the people and the Lib-Lab pact at county hall backing the bureaucrats?

Mr. Newton: Many people beyond the House will have heard with concern my hon. Friend's description of the problems in his area. While I cannot promise a debate, I hope that he may be able to raise the point with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education, who is here to answer questions on Tuesday.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will the Leader of the House explain why no provision has been made for a debate on the reform of the procedures of the House? I understood that there was an expectation that there would be progress through the usual channels, so that matters would be put in hand for a trial period, at least, for the next Session. If there is no provision for a debate next week, does that mean that that will now not happen?

Mr. Newton: I do not think it does, because the early part of the new Session will be taken up with the debate on the Queen's Speech and, fairly shortly thereafter, the Budget debate, so there would be an opportunity to pursue the matters that interest the hon. Gentleman in a way which, effectively, would give the House the advantages of it at the point at which it would start to count—when that period is over.

[Mr. Newton]

As to the implicit thrust of the first part of the hon. Member's question, I have already said that discussions are continuing through the usual channels. Obviously, I am anxious that we should proceed in the usual way, which is with full agreement.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The Prime Minister has frequently emphasised the importance of manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom economy. In approximately a month's time, the House will be facing a Budget. Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House find time at a early date for a debate on manufacturing in the United Kingdom economy, so that the House can advise the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the measures we believe are needed to ensure that manufacturing continues to play a vital role in our economy?

Mr. Newton: I anticipate that there would be quite a lengthy debate as usual among the debates on the Queen's Speech when we return for the new Session, and I should have thought that it would be likely to provide my hon. Friend with an extensive opportunity to make the point that he wishes to raise.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Does the Leader of the House regret the grossly intemperate response given to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) in the House on Tuesday? Will he confirm, either this afternoon or in a statement early next week, that it is not for any Minister to instruct the Privileges Committee, but for the Privileges Committee itself to decide whether it meets in secrecy or in public? Will he also confirm that that was the legal advice given by the Attorney-General?

Mr. Newton: I am becoming extremely concerned at the extent to which an experienced Member of the House is breaking every possible convention concerning the proceedings of the Privileges Committee.

Mr. Morris: The right hon. Member himself made a public statement.

Mr. Newton: I cleave to what I said. I do not wish to say anything intemperate, but I will respond to the first half of the right hon. Gentleman's question. Of course it is not for Ministers to interfere with the activities of the Privileges Committee or those of any other Select Committee. They did not interfere. The Committee made its own decision and it is that decision which the right hon. Gentleman is refusing to accept, to the point of declining to co-operate as a member of the Committee.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Will the Leader of the House consider having a debate on the remit of the Nolan committee? For instance, if a Member of Parliament receives substantial financial backing and then the son of that backer receives privileged access to a job, thanks to the patronage of that Member's wife, would that come under the remit of the Nolan committee or the Privileges Committee? If my right hon. Friend is not sure, would he kindly consult the leader of the Labour party about his conduct in that respect?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it very clear that the remit of the Nolan committee is to look at issues, as I would put it, in general rather than at specific allegations against particular people. If specific allegations are made against particular people, they can be looked at, or least considered for examination, in a range of ways, either by the committee to which my hon. Friend has referred or by the Select Committee on Members' Interests, or perhaps in some other way of which I cannot immediately think. That would be the proper way in which to consider such allegations; they would not be issues for the Nolan committee.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On Tuesday's business, does the Leader of the House have any flicker of embarrassment at the way in which English local authorities—Somerset, Oxfordshire and Shropshire, for example—have gone along and, understandably, said, "Look, we don't like the consultation," and have got their way to some kind of acceptable local government reform whereas in Scotland we have had put upon us an inane, expensive, ill-thought-out, unwanted and vindictive scheme of local government reform, with the break-up of Strathclyde and Lothian? A similar reform in England would have been judged quite unacceptable and would have been rejected. Does the right hon. Gentleman remember the poll tax, because the local government reform is another example of us being the guinea pigs?

Mr. Newton: We are frequently told that, in education and a range of other matters in Scotland, there are different traditions, and that it is appropriate to have different arrangements. I see no reason to suppose that that is not appropriate for local government. Certainly it is the case that different ways forward were chosen on local government in Scotland, in England and in Wales to suit what were thought to be the interests and needs of those nations. So I have no flicker of embarrassment at the fact that flexibility has been shown in approaching different problems in different places.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me remind the House that business questions is not when we debate issues, but when hon. Members put brisk questions to the Leader of the House. I also remind the House that there is an extremely important Adjournment debate on Northern Ireland to follow, which is over-subscribed. A number of hon. Members will not be called in the debate because there is such a great deal of interest in it—and I intend to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches. Therefore I shall not allow business questions to last much longer, but I plead for brisk questions and answers so that I can call as many hon. Members as possible.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): May I endorse the call of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) for an urgent debate on manufacturing, because something quite extraordinary is happening in the country at the present time? Not only do we have a high rate of economic growth at 3 per cent., but—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have just said that issues must not be debated, and I am not going to allow them to be debated. If the hon. Gentleman is asking for a debate on manufacturing industry, he should say so, get it off his chest and let us hear the answer.

Mr. Davies: I was trying to present some argument to persuade my right hon. Friend—

Madam Speaker: Order. That is my point: arguments do not have to be presented. The hon. Gentleman has already asked for a debate on the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Davies: The fact, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Speaker: I am not Deputy Speaker, so the hon. Gentleman had better be very careful—

Mr. Davies *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Sit down a minute. I am a very fair Speaker, so let us have the question again, straight to the point, with no discussion of issues. Come along.

Mr. Davies: Would it not be a very good idea, Madam Speaker, to have a debate on manufacturing, at a time when manufacturing output is increasing much faster than the rest of the economy and at a time when exports are expanding faster than imports—

Madam Speaker: Order. Now the hon. Gentleman is abusing my good will. Let us have an answer from the Leader of the House.

Mr. Newton: I hope that I can restore your good will, Madam Speaker, also be helpful to my hon. Friend and be even more helpful than I was before to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). It has occurred to me that, by some magic foresight, I have already arranged a debate tomorrow on inward investment. It would appear to me that everything that has been said would be relevant tomorrow.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to two related early-day motions, 1670 and 1635? The first states:

[*That this House deplores the arrest outside Parliament on Wednesday 26th October of the European representative of the Kurdistan Workers Party on his way to address a meeting of members of both Houses; demands his release; and further demands that the Home Secretary withdraws the deportation order to enable the meeting to take place.*]

Will he provide an opportunity next week for the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary to come to the House so that the Home Secretary may justify his actions in taking out a deportation order against Mr. Kani Yilmaz and say why Mr. Yilmaz constitutes any more a threat to the national security of this country than the Liberal Democrat peer, the noble Lord Avebury, constitutes a threat to the national security of Turkey?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to engage in a discussion of the particular case. I cannot immediately make an arrangement for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to be here, but, again as it happens, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be here next Wednesday if the hon. Gentleman wishes to try to put that question to him.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a longer debate on transport? Much of the debate which has so far taken place has not referred to rural areas. Many of the suggestions which have been put forward would be very damaging indeed to rural areas, where people rely on the use of the motor car.

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend has said, there is a debate next week in which he could raise that matter, and I hope that he may be fortunate enough to catch your eye, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When can we have a debate on the very disappointing report on personal pensions, which does not help almost 4 million people who may well be financially impoverished by taking out personal pensions? Will the Government now, just once, confess their own involvement in the matter, including the personal involvement of the Leader of the House as a former Minister, in the advertisements that they put out, which were wickedly deceptive? What will happen to those who are orphaned, whose firms have gone out of business and who have no redress from anyone?

Mr. Newton: As is perhaps evidenced by the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, at my side, we have just had Treasury questions. Indeed, I understand that this matter, which was the subject of an extensive statement by my hon. Friend yesterday, was raised during questions. Certainly I cannot promise to provide a further immediate opportunity.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): In framing a brief question, may I declare an interest as one of the Members of the House who is a lawyer, and married to a lawyer? Would the Leader of the House find time for a debate on training and education in the legal profession? Could it be so framed as to allow debate on entry to the legal profession and whether entry should be on the basis of fairness or merit, or on the basis of any sort of favours through an old boy network or even through a new boy network?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I should declare an interest myself, in that one of my daughters is a lawyer as well. It occurs to me that my hon. Friend may wish to raise his question with the Secretary of State for Education who, as I said earlier, is here on Tuesday.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that, when the House is prorogued next Thursday, there will have been no opportunity this year for a debate on the Metropolitan police in London? It has been traditional that the Home Secretary has come to the House to debate that subject so that hon. Members who represent London constituencies have the opportunity to ask him about his policy of financing the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly look at that point in view of the way in which the hon. Lady raises it. That will have to be without commitment, and certainly without a commitment to arrange a debate before Prorogation.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether Monday's debate on the Drug Trafficking Bill *[Lords]* will give the House an opportunity to debate the policy of legalising cannabis? I

[Mr. David Wilshire]

am sure that some of us at least are anxious to hear more details of the Liberals' half-baked proposals to do just that.

Mr. Newton: That debate, of course, is a consolidation measure, so it may not offer quite the opportunity that my hon. Friend wishes. Nevertheless, he raises an important point, and I shall bear it in mind whether there may be any such opportunity at some later stage.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House confirm that he has got rid of the debate on the Jopling report on Wednesday? With a spare day before Prorogation, would it not be a wonderful idea for the Government, who are in such low esteem, to pick up the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), give it time, get through its remaining stages, and allow those 5 million disabled people to realise that at long last they are being listened to?

Mr. Newton: In response to the hon. Gentleman's question, the right way forward is for the Government to do what they are doing, which is to look very carefully at the results of the large widespread consultation they have undertaken on these matters and then come to the House with their conclusions.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to see early-day motion 1583 which calls for the scrapping of Trident and which is signed by no fewer than 60 Labour Members?

[*That this House believes that United Kingdom defence spending should be reduced to the average level of other West European countries, allied to constructive plans for defence diversification, arms conversion and the transfer of the savings made to social priorities by investment in job creation and economic development, and the restructure of the United Kingdom's infrastructure; recognises the importance of making retraining of the defence sector workforce a priority; supports the call for the scrapping of the Trident submarine and weapons programme as an essential step towards eliminating nuclear weapons world-wide; notes with dismay the Government's decision to ringfence nuclear weapons in its front line first defence costs study; believes that in rejecting Trident the United Kingdom would demonstrate concrete support for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation treaty prior to the review and extension conference for the treaty next April; recognises the importance of a successful outcome to the negotiations for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty for the NPT; further believes that the lifetime costs of Trident deployment will be at least £33 billion when re-fit, replacement and decommissioning are included; that it is the hidden extra costs of continuing the United Kingdom nuclear weapons programme, in health, environment as well as financial terms that has drastically damaged the peace dividend; and therefore calls on the Government to support the cancellation of Trident and to plan the investment of resources saved into job creation and industrial innovation in the British civil economy.*]

Can we have a debate on that early-day motion at an early opportunity, so that we can discuss the implications for the city of Plymouth, where 4,000 jobs would be lost and our dockyard closed?

Mr. Newton: I will certainly look to see whether there could be such an opportunity. What we may need is a debate on the growing evidence of the unreconstructed Labour party seeking to regain the ground.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May we have a debate next week on the live transportation of animals? How would the Leader of the House like to be kept in a confined space for ages, crapped all over and, at the end of it, have his throat cut? I know that that sounds rather like a Cabinet meeting, but that is how animals are transported around Europe. There is a lot of debate about that outside the House, so can we please have a debate inside the House?

Mr. Newton: Joking apart, I have much sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's concern. I cannot arrange a debate on the Floor of the House next week, but as I announced, there is a debate on European Community documents relating to the protection of animals during transport in European Standing Committee A on Tuesday. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that that reflects strong and persistent pressure by the United Kingdom Government to advance the cause of animal welfare in Europe.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): In connection with the brief debate scheduled for next Monday on transport and the environment, is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us would associate ourselves with the point of view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin)—that we need more time to discuss those very important issues which have been highlighted in the recent report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution? Will he find Government time for such a debate soon after the House returns after Prorogation?

Mr. Newton: Again, given that what happens when the House returns after Prorogation is several days' debate on the Loyal Address, which can range very widely and normally covers all policy, there may well be an opportunity for my hon. Friend then. However, it also occurs to me that remarks of that kind could easily be in order in the Liberal Democrat debate on the conservation of energy next Tuesday.

Ms Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): Will the Leader of the House give us an idea when time will be allocated for us to debate the survey of potential demand for child care facilities in the Palace of Westminster, which was published by the House of Commons Commission just before the summer recess?

Mr. Newton: I believe that the hon. Lady is aware of the position following the publication of the report. I clearly cannot promise a debate before Prorogation, but it is obviously something that I shall have it in mind to consider when we return.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate on training before the House prorogues so that we may examine the Government's excellent record in that regard, and do something about the new Labour council in Ealing, one of whose first actions was to close the training and development centre for Ealing, which will be so damaging for my young constituents, and constituents of all ages and both sexes?

Mr. Newton: Such is the assiduous pursuit by my hon. Friend of his duties that I sometimes feel that I am almost a member of Ealing council because I know so much about its activities. However, I am sure that my hon. Friend's constituents will have noted his very proper expression of concern about what is happening there.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Will the Leader of the House allow time next week for a statement by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), a sponsor and erstwhile enthusiastic supporter of the Energy Conservation Bill who, as the Minister now responsible for energy conservation, is reneging on his support for that Bill, to explain his position which is now becoming untenable, and which really should lead to his resignation?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to accept any such suggestion as the use of the word "reneging" implies. I am sure that my hon. Friend will make his position clear in any appropriate way, as indeed he already has.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): In light of our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's speech on 24 October and his proposals about a European army, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House find time to debate that matter? I gather that there is deep disquiet in the Ministry of Defence about such proposals, and such a debate would at least give us an opportunity to demonstrate what Government policy is with regard to the matter.

Mr. Newton: Once again, I have to refer to the debate on the Address when we come back for the new Session. Indeed, it occurs to me that it gives me a good defence against almost any request today, because every matter will be in order in it. I am therefore providing wide-ranging opportunities for such matters as my hon. Friend raises.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Leader of the House say within the next few days when we will see the implementation of the changes to the Standing Orders which govern Scottish business? Many hon. Members are anxious to have an early sitting of the Scottish Grand Committee, which would enable us to question Scottish Office Ministers about the scandalous financial circumstances of the failed private hospital in Clydebank, Health Care International. It is an important matter and it is worthy of an early sitting, during which we could cross-examine the appropriate Ministers.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Standing Order changes were debated and accepted by the House earlier in the year. I will bring his request for a particular use of those Standing Orders to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Given that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made it plain to the House last Thursday that the Italians should be made to pay for their milk fraud in full, yet, the very next day, the Chancellor of the Exchequer changed that policy by rolling over in front of pressure from the Commission in order to pave the way for the increased money for the European Community, should we not debate changes of Government policy that are made in our name in Brussels, without proper debate and accountability to the House?

Mr. Newton: I am tempted to thank my constituency neighbour, the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), for his helpful question, but I find it difficult to do so. I note the point he makes, and I respond by saying that I do not believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer can in any sense be said to have rolled over. Indeed, I can think of few of my colleagues who are less likely to be rolled over by anybody. My right hon. and learned Friend made substantial progress in the direction that my hon. Friend urges.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Could time be found on the spare day next week to debate the inadequacy of the Government's representation of the Scottish people by having a Minister in the other place representing the Government on social policy, particularly in respect of Scottish children legislation, which has been the subject of several meetings with the Minister and the all-party group on children?

Could we have a statement by the Secretary of State? In the papers which were leaked inadvertently by one of his civil servants, he has said that he does not have Cabinet approval for a Children Act for Scotland, and that he wishes the responsible Minister not to mention it in any press releases. On the one hand, those meetings tell us that we will have a Children Act, but, on the other hand, the Secretary of State denies it.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot speculate, certainly at present, about what he is in effect speculating about—the contents of the Queen's Speech. As for the rest of his remarks, I had some slight difficulty in being clear about what he was driving at. It seems to me to be a compliment to Scottish representation in Parliament that my noble Friend, who was formerly a Scottish Member of Parliament, is now a Minister in the Department of Social Security, but in the other place.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will my right hon. Friend consider a debate on solvent abuse? That topic was only touched upon in the Green Paper entitled "Tackling Drugs Together", but it is very important, bearing in mind the fact that three quarters of the nation's children sniff solvents, and that each week two die from it.

Mr. Newton: Although my hon. Friend is right to say that the document that was published in my name and others' last week—"Tackling Drugs Together"—was specifically focused on drugs, there is no doubt that the mechanisms and the approaches it suggests are highly relevant also to tackling solvent abuse, and I believe that they will significantly contribute in that direction as well.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The House has only recently returned from a 13-week recess, and now we are to have another fortnight away. It is bad enough having part-time Members of Parliament, but it is a disgrace to have part-time Parliaments—and the two might be related.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman—I make no criticism of him for this—persistently raises these points.

[Mr. Newton]

Many hon. Members value the opportunity to be in their constituencies to look after the other half of their business, as it were, and I am certainly not prepared to stand here and apologise for the fact that they will be able to do so to a degree during the next fortnight.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Despite the right hon. Gentleman's earlier reply, the position of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), the new Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, with regard to the Energy Conservation Bill is not at all clear. Therefore, can we have a statement from the new Under-Secretary next week explaining why he is allowing some Tory Members to use blocking tactics to prevent further progress on the Bill when it had the support of almost 400 hon. Members, including him in his pre-ministerial days?

Mr. Newton: As I have already said, I am sure that my hon. Friend will always make his position clear. As to the suggestion that he is somehow organising in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests, the fact is that it is up to individual hon. Members to decide what they will do with regard to a Bill.

Northern Ireland

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Madam Speaker: I have had to impose a 10-minute limit between 7 pm and 9 pm.

4 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I warmly welcome the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) to her important and demanding responsibilities. She brings with her valuable previous experience of the Province. I must also say that, although I often disagreed with him—sometimes fiercely—I have always respected the dedication of her predecessor, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), over many years.

This debate comes at a very opportune time. I am glad that it has been arranged because it is high time that the House had the opportunity to review the developments that have followed one upon the other during the recess and more recently, and to discuss the way forward for Northern Ireland.

Yesterday, I was in Magherafelt in the constituency of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). He was present as a member of the council, and I was present at the council. There, the chairman of the district council, Mr. Bertie Montgomerie, welcomed the events of the past two months and described them as amazing. I find that that impression is widely held.

In common with every other council in the Province—I was with Strabane councillors on Tuesday—Magherafelt councillors are making common cause to build on the present peace. They are building on the bright prospects for jobs and for stability that can open up because of it.

Throughout the Province, there is also an altogether new sense of hope—hope in place never of despair, but of a grim and dogged acceptance that violence would go on being inflicted for the foreseeable future.

What is the character of that hope? It is that this time, in defiance of all too many precedents, violence will prove to have been set aside for good; that the overlay of history will no longer dominate the political scene; and that the conflict between national identities and loyalties will at last be managed peacefully and fairly.

At first, it was a tentative, even timid hope. However, as the weeks have gone by, it is increasingly being seen as realistic, although in many minds it is a long way from being an expectation. The agony has gone on for so long that it has been hard for people to hoist in that the guns are, indeed, silent.

As the weeks have passed since 31 August—eight now—people have become less disoriented and a lot less suspicious as well. However, on all sides, suspicion and fear remain dangerous, powerful forces in Northern Ireland, and we must show that we understand that. The fears may be allayed, but they are all too easily revived. Unionists fear above all that an end to the Union will somehow be imposed on the people of Northern Ireland against their wishes, or somehow—by a kind of ratchet process—made inevitable. It will not happen; it cannot happen. But the fear is there.

Equally, nationalists fear a secret plot to reimpose an unreformed Stormont, with one side of the community permanently dominant and the other permanently subordinate. It will not happen; it cannot happen; no one even argues that it should happen. But the fear is there.

It is worth examining whether these immensely welcome developments really should have amazed us, or whether we should properly see them as simply the outcome of consistent policies followed over a long time. I am sure that the latter is the case. Let us take the Provisional IRA's ceasefire statement. Was it truly surprising, save perhaps that it did not come earlier?

Looking across the Chamber, I can see several right hon. and hon. Gentlemen who were not surprised by that statement. Once the world came to realise that the Irish and British Governments took a common position in the Downing street declaration, surely it was hopeless for anyone to go on using violence to advance his political purpose. The reason is that the Governments declared then that it was democracy that would shape the future for Northern Ireland, and that violence never worked. They declared that, whereas anyone with a democratic mandate could join in the debate and try to shape the future, no one could do so who still seemed willing to fortify his negotiating position with a bomb.

For someone to continue violence for political purposes in those circumstances is to admit to all the world that he knows that he cannot succeed democratically, yet he is not prepared to put up with the position. That is not very attractive; in fact, it looks very bad indeed. So that person has to stop the violence—and that is what the declaration did. Let me add that it simply would not have come about without the vision and courage of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister; and I similarly salute Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It is certainly important for us to mark the fact that terrorism did not triumph over the democratic process, and that at no stage did the British people or the British Parliament abdicate from the fight against it. But if it is important that the two Governments reached an agreement over a period—which includes the joint declaration—is not it equally important that London and Dublin continue that degree of working together? Should not that be the cornerstone of our policy? Should not we also recognise that it is not the Republic's wish in any way to take over Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority, and never has been? Is not it also important that we decide, with Dublin, the nature of the cross-border executive bodies that will give the minority community in Northern Ireland the feeling of security that it clearly requires?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman has covered a large sector of the rest of my speech. It is, of course, important for the two Governments to go on working together. They worked together very beneficially to bring about the joint declaration; there was a constructive and useful meeting at Chequers on Monday, and I am certain that that pattern not only should but will continue.

I was saying how much the declaration owed to the two Prime Ministers. Those who were present last weekend in Dungannon, Newry or Lisburn, will have seen the crowds greet the Prime Minister in the streets and shopping centres—right across the spectrum; we should reflect on the character of those towns. It will be apparent to those who saw those huge crowds that they knew perfectly well how important the contributions of the Prime Ministers had been.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I was in Newry at the time. As the Secretary of State said, we were pleased to be visited by the Prime Minister: he was given a warm and widespread welcome.

May I make two further points, lest they go by default? The real peace people in Northern Ireland are the ordinary men and women sitting in their houses whose names we do not know and who stood up against the bully-boys for 25 years and said that they would not succeed.

May I also recognise the contribution of the leader of my party, my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), who took enormous risks inside and outside the House to play his part on behalf of our party to bring us towards a peaceful resolution?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman is rightly generous in his tributes to all those whom he mentioned in that intervention, and I gladly associate myself with him.

So deep is the suspicion that I mentioned that I need to repeat once more the words used by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a little time ago when speaking about the ceasefire declaration of 31 August. He said that no price had been paid, that there had been no secret deals, no secret assurances, no nods, no winks and no tricks with mirrors and that we had not lowered our guard. It is necessary to go on saying that and, of course, it is equally true of the ceasefire announced on 13 October—no less welcome—by the combined loyalist military command. The Prime Minister's promise that the outcome of a resumed talks process would be put to the people of Northern Ireland in a referendum was undoubtedly highly reassuring, and may well have been decisive; I do not know.

So the developments of the past two months have rightly heartened countless people. They have come from policies which we have long pursued and which have always had very great support.

Through all of these traumatic years, our resolve has remained constant. It has been to protect the people, to uphold the rule of law, never to give in to terrorism and, therefore, to give our full support to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and to the Army which acts only in its support. Mine is now the responsibility for that.

Since long before I became Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I have supported the constitutional doctrine that chief officers of police are independent in operational matters. Their duty is owed to the law and to the Crown, not to Ministers. I believe that to be of great importance, especially now when crucial decisions are being taken, which must be taken on the basis of professional advice from that quarter.

Like all my predecessors, I have to see to it that the people in Northern Ireland get the best protection against terrorist crime—and it is crime—that can practicably be provided. Therefore, the response of the security forces to the terrorist threat has always had to be proportionate to that threat and in whatever strength it may necessitate.

That is why, in January 1992, the Army battalions additional to the Royal Irish Regiment were increased in Northern Ireland from 10 to 12 in number. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State and I are grateful to my right

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hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence for his agreement that they will stay there for as long as they continue to be needed.

Methods of deployment, too, have always been dictated by the character of the threat, and that continues to be the case in today's changing circumstances.

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): May I take the Secretary of State back a moment? At an enormously important moment in history such as this when we can make real progress, it is important for everyone to be honest and humble. In his earlier remarks, the right hon. and learned Gentleman talked as if what Britain had done in Northern Ireland had always been fine and good. Does he accept that Britain's failure to secure justice in Northern Ireland during the period of Stormont is a part of the problem and that we must all do better in future?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: If the hon. Lady, who is a close student of these matters, cares to remind herself of a speech that I made in Coleraine in December 1992, she may find that something of that character was addressed.

In some areas, it has been possible to reduce quite markedly the numbers of soldiers accompanying police patrols. It has been possible to make changes in the weapons carried by police officers on patrol in some areas. Flak jackets have in some areas been removed, and berets worn in place of helmets. Camouflage cream is generally no longer used on the streets, and so on.

Wherever practicable, there has been a general lightening in the forward deployment of the military in particular. The General Officer Commanding, Sir Roger Wheeler, has been able to make other changes in his discretion. It is, for example, very exceptional for helicopters to fly below 500 ft. As long ago as December 1992, I made the speech to which I have already referred the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short). In that speech, I anticipated that with an ending of violence, it would become possible for the Army to revert in normal times to normal garrison duties in Northern Ireland. There are garrison towns and stations throughout the United Kingdom, so that would be [illegible] return to normality. In Northern Ireland and in Great Britain, garrison towns have always been established.

It is not possible as yet, or anything like it, for the RUC to police the Province without the assistance of the Army, but steps in that direction are beginning to be taken and it is important that they should be. The Army does not want to be a policeman any longer than it has to and the RUC, although deeply grateful to the Army, would much prefer to be able to do the job on its own. People can see for themselves that that is now happening.

In that context, I want to make one thing absolutely clear to the House. In no circumstances will risks be taken by reducing security measures to a level below what is professionally seen to be necessitated by the perceived threat of terrorist crime. Nothing has been reduced or discontinued that cannot very quickly be put back should the situation be seen to require it once again. That goes in particular for my rescinding on Friday some 80 closure orders on the remaining closed border-crossing points. Again, I acted on the advice of the Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Annesley. If the situation necessitates it, the border-crossing points can be quickly closed again. Meanwhile, the protection of those near the border in whose interests the closures were initially made remains a prime responsibility of the RUC. The Chief Constable and the GOC are paying close attention to it.

On the RUC, I shall give one illustration of the benefits that the process that I have described is bringing in terms of enabling it to get on with the ordinary duties of policing. On Friday, I was in a police station where a police inspector said to me how much more effectively the RUC was now able to deal with ordinary policing, such as dealing with non-terrorist crime. He gave as an example an incident in which the police had recently been able to reach a house where a burglary had been reported almost before the householder had put down the telephone. The diminution in the threat accounted for their ability to do that. Accordingly, they were able to arrest the burglar. The householder said:

> "if this is peace, I am for it".

What is not recorded is what the burglar said. There is, of course, very much more to it than that. Racketeering, for example, will now get even more attention from the RUC, which it will continue to need.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The Secretary of State will recall that I have questioned him previously about the incidence of protection rackets and racketeering generally in Northern Ireland. He will be familiar with the work of Families Against Intimidation and Terror in Northern Ireland and he will know that despite the ceasefire, welcome though it is, the IRA has continued to try to be the de facto civil authority in parts of Northern Ireland and has viciously attacked young men. A 16-year-old Catholic in west Belfast had his leg badly broken. The hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) has raised the matter with the Department. Can the Secretary of State confirm that the Government will continue to take every possible action to deal with those who carry out protection threats and racketeering, using political ideologies and terrorist organisations? Will he confirm that they will not be allowed to operate like a Mafia?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am glad that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) raised that point. He is right to refer to the so-called "punishment beatings"—the presumption that those people are entitled to punish anybody, and to deal with anyone without charge, trial or appeal. So much for their view of human rights. I am glad that the RUC has been insistent that such activities should stop. It has been reported to me that, in recent weeks, their incidence has declined. There is no justification for such activities.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Although what my right hon. and learned Friend has just said about the RUC and its new duties means that Northern Ireland will be the Province with the most perfect motorists for at least the next six or nine months as a result of the RUC's vigilance, does he agree that what is now unfolding is what the Prime Minister referred to in his speeches during his recent visit—the very exciting economic prospects that are beginning to open up? Although it is very early days, does my right hon. and learned Friend see signs of economic optimism returning already?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Yes, I do. My hon. Friend is right to point to that matter, to which I shall come in a few moments, depending on how often I give way to interruptions.

Before I move on from the security aspects of the scene, I pay tribute to the gallant police officers who have served or now serve in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. They have held the line for 25 years. I believe, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sitting beside me agrees, that without their efforts, supported prodigiously by the Army, the Province would not be at peace today. They have never weakened in their duty to the law and to the people of Northern Ireland as a whole, nor have they ever flinched in the face of the gravest danger. Theirs has been the continuing courage of cold blood, and it has been shared by their families. Their casualties have been high—296 have been killed and nearly 7,300 injured over the past 25 years. But without their service, those of the civilian population would have been far, far higher. They deserve, and I know that they get, our deep admiration and thanks.

With the peace, which we all hope will stick, the police officers of the RUC face new challenges but also new anxieties, especially about their jobs. Those anxieties deserve our understanding and sympathy and a decent and worthy response from us. And they will get them. We shall not turn our backs on the people who have seen us through.

I should like to say something now about the Army, and the Royal Marines who have served in company with it. I do not forget the contributions of the Royal Air Force, the rest of the Royal Navy and the other services. During all this time, the Army has shared the burden of policing the Province under the rule of law. Even now, members of the armed forces must outnumber the police by a proportion of about 3:2. No fewer than 648 members of the armed forces have been killed; and 5,762 have been injured, nearly all of them in each category in the Army. Like the police, they have no privileges or immunities; they have only duties, which are often very dangerous. Generally very young men and women, they have habitually worked 16 or even more hours a day in exhausting conditions. They have fulfilled that role with great discipline and courage and they are a source of great pride to our country.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): First, may I formally thank the Prime Minister for putting Northern Ireland at the top of his agenda? I was present when he made his speech in Belfast last week, and the points that he made were extremely well taken.

On the point raised by the Secretary of State, I totally accept the great sacrifices made by the police and the British Army in Northern Ireland. However, is not it insensitive to bring the Parachute Regiment into the streets of west Belfast? I am not noted for making things difficult for the security forces.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I do not agree with that point, which is unusual in the case of the hon. Gentleman, who lives a courageous life in west Belfast. There is no regiment in the British Army that cannot be trusted to serve with the discipline, care and courage needed in Northern Ireland. May I point out to the hon. Gentleman, in case he has forgotten, that the second battalion of the Parachute Regiment has been serving in Holywood, east of Belfast, for the past two years with great distinction, engaging in a considerable amount of community work as well as its ordinary duties? It has always had one company detached up at Woodbourne, which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is not too far away from his constituency. Therefore, I do not accept his argument that the Parachute Regiment should not serve, and nor should any of us.

On the political response to the ceasefire, it has been necessary to assess the true intention of PIRA-Sinn Fein, as it is necessary also to assess the true intention of the anti-nationalist paramilitaries. The fundamental point is that we must not enter into substantive negotiations with people who may still intend to bring a gun or bomb to the table with them. Only they can know their true intentions. The rest of us must rely on their words and actions, or rather on what they do not do. Conduct speaks louder than words.

I make no bones about the fact that, although Sinn Fein and the IRA have sought to convey the impression that the ceasefire is permanent, they have not yet stated that unambiguously. It is fair to say that they have not, which is why we have been very cautious. It is now recognised that we have been wise to be very cautious. However, as the Prime Minister said last week in Belfast, we have been reviewing their actions, which have been more compelling than their words. My right hon. Friend announced then that we are prepared to make a working assumption, in those circumstances, that their ceasefire is intended to be permanent. That means that we can move carefully towards the beginning of exploratory dialogue between Sinn Fein and the Government, which, for so long, we have publicly stated to be the next stage in the process.

If we can continue reasonably to assume that Sinn Fein is establishing a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and if the IRA goes on showing that it has indeed ended its terrorism, we shall be ready, as the Prime Minister has said, to convene those exploratory talks before the year is out. They will, of course, need to embrace the republicans' proposals for depositing and decommissioning their armaments, and that also goes for the anti-nationalists. Continued retention can have no justification whatever, for republicans and loyalists alike. If, on the other hand, the evidence starts to point away from a continuing commitment to exclusively democratic methods, our working assumption will cease. It is up to them.

Just as that has been our political response to the republican ceasefire, it has been no less necessary to recognise the ceasefire announced by the others. We have needed in their case, too, to show an understanding of their desire that their political concerns should be taken into consideration, and not excluded. They, and those close to them, have genuine anxieties, not least on social matters. Those worries need to be heeded, as is the case with anxieties emanating from the other end of the paramilitary spectrum. We shall need, therefore, to consult on that, and consider it further.

I shall now mention the interests of the victims—the people who have borne the brunt. Although all the recent events have brought hope, we must surely not forget the victims and their families, who have suffered so much in the past 25 years. The staff who work in the health and

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personal social services in Northern Ireland have responded to those people's needs as caring and dedicated professionals, and I pay tribute to their work, which has been excellent. However, often victims and their families will have long-term physical and psychological scars and disabilities, which need continuing care, compassion and support.

The Government want to do more to help staff in that most important work. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State responsible for health and social services, the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss), will therefore set up a special fund to provide additional help for people disabled by violence in Northern Ireland, and £1 million will be made available. I envisage that fund being used to help people with physical disabilities in the regional disablement centre, Musgrave Park hospital. It will also help people with psychiatric problems, and those needing bereavement counselling and support.

I recognise that some people still argue, in the case of Sinn Fein, for example, that, by reason of its affiliation and association with terrorists, its members should never be allowed to sit down at the conference table with Governments and parties that have always followed constitutional paths.

I well recognise the bitter feelings of many people whose husbands, wives and relatives have been the victims of terrorist violence. I have seen more than enough to be able to sympathise with them. So great is the grief, pain and anger that has been caused, that it is readily understandable for such people to take that position—but I do not find that it is typical.

To my great admiration, many people who have suffered grievously nevertheless recognise that stability will come to Northern Ireland only if all viewpoints are represented in discussion. They stipulate only that we speak to people who now reliably commit themselves exclusively to democratic purposes and means. I am sure that they are right. That is why the Government have established the stages by which Sinn Fein could, as far as we are concerned, be admitted to a resumed process of political talks. I shall now discuss that process.

The House has always warmly supported that process, so patiently introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), and announced by him in March 1991. The objective of the process has been to achieve a widely acceptable and durable political accommodation for Northern Ireland as a whole. The House is familiar with its three-stranded process. I believe that the House has always endorsed the judgment that only by means of political talks of that composite character can there be a realistic prospect of a more stable, less antagonistic, more tranquil and more prosperous way of life in Northern Ireland.

As for the first strand, for our part we want, for example, more responsibility to be restored to locally accountable representatives in Northern Ireland, in relationships that are fair, and that reflect the principle that the principal traditions in the community should be held in parity of esteem. The British Government are responsible for Northern Ireland, as has always been recognised since the inception of the process. As for the second strand of relationships, we also think that it must make sense to make common cause with the Republic in areas where there is common interest between north and south. The means by which that can be achieved without impinging in any way upon sovereignty in relationships across the border, is a matter for careful judgment. We want to see whether a new formulation of the relationship between the Republic and ourselves can be arrived at, commanding broader consent than at present.

All those matters were, to varying degrees, discussed during the talks process in 1992. It is our earnest hope that that process will be resumed, again with all the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland participating, and, if the proper conditions are fulfilled, with Sinn Fein as well.

The two Governments want to help the parties to get back round the table. We have resolved to try to develop a shared understanding of the sort of overall accommodation that might have the best chance of winning the wide acceptance across the community that it will need if it is to stick. We continue to work at that. It has come to be called the joint framework document. We have not yet reached agreement, therefore no document yet exists. I greatly hope that we can reach agreement, but it is not certain. We have made some good progress.

We want to achieve agreement and to do so quickly. We want to do so not in order to present the result as some sort of blueprint with which the political parties in Northern Ireland must conform—far from it. We want to do so as a means of helping them realise that it would be worth their while sitting down around the table again because there would be a prospect of carrying the process through to success. It would be a suggestion—an offering—but because some fears have begun to centre on the framework document, we have undertaken jointly that it will be published when it is handed over to the parties. It is for exactly the same reason—because the British Government are responsible for the internal arrangements of Northern Ireland—that we shall publish our suggestions on the first strand of relationships. With the maximum degree of openness thus established, confidence on all sides should grow, which is what we hope and intend.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: If the hon. Gentleman will excuse me, I should very much like to finish my speech as I am taking too long.

Meanwhile, underpinning everything is the unshakeable guarantee that the constitutional future of Northern Ireland will be determined by the consent of its people and that the outcome of the talks process will be submitted to the judgment of the people of Northern Ireland themselves.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: No, if the hon. Gentleman will excuse me. I must finish my speech.

This is a time to build. The Northern Ireland Economic Council said on Monday:

> "The combination of Northern Ireland going into a seemingly sustained period of economic recovery, together with the benefits that would arise with an end to all violence and the creation of political stability, provides an economic scenario in Northern Ireland that has never been better in the past 25 years".

I very much welcome the generous support that the international community is showing for the peace process. Both the European Union and the Government of New Zealand are increasing their contributions to the International Fund for Ireland, and the Australian Government have announced their intention to contribute to it. The Government of the United States and the European Union are also putting forward packages of economic assistance to Northern Ireland to help embed the peace and promote community reconciliation through economic regeneration. We, as the Government responsible for them, shall be seeking the views of the people of Northern Ireland, across the spectrum, on the projects that we and the European Union should back financially.

We shall convene an international investment conference in Belfast before Christmas. In settling future public spending levels in the Province, we shall continue to take full account of Northern Ireland's social needs. We shall concentrate, above all, on jobs.

The potential and prospects for Northern Ireland are extraordinarily good. It will be the desire and the will of the entire House that, this time, they shall not be blighted.

4.33 pm

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I welcome the timing of the debate. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), the Leader of the Opposition, who sits beside me, said at the party conference this year, we need a new politics of courage, honesty and trust. That means being open. If the Government get things right, we shall give them credit; when they do not, we shall say so. I intend to do just that on the subject of Northern Ireland. In that vein I thank the Secretary of State for his open, honest and complimentary remarks about me at the beginning of his speech.

I also welcome the opportunity to do this job at such an important time in the search for a permanent peace within these islands. There is now the best opportunity for many years to enable normal life to return to so many people in the north of Ireland.

First, however, I extend my thanks to my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), for his tireless work in the interests of both communities over the past seven years. As many of my colleagues will know, his interest in Northern Ireland began long before that. He was a leading figure in a group of Labour Members in the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster in the 1960s. He was tenacious in raising questions in the House about discrimination against the minority community, and active in breaking the Speaker's convention that restricted discussion of Northern Ireland issues in this House.

As I am sure the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) will remember, my hon. Friend was also active in 1969, when he marched with him in the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. My hon. Friend has been a committed campaigner for civil liberties, and he divided this House after internment was introduced in 1971. He has been held in especially high regard for the role that he played in the House during the passage of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989, when he worked assiduously to rectify the inadequacies of the 1976 Act.

My hon. Friend has played an historically significant role in raising issues such as the administration of justice in Northern Ireland—the UDR Four, for instance—and in his astute and effective use of parliamentary questions. He has avidly campaigned for civil rights, justice and fair employment. I am honoured to have the chance to continue his work, and I know that he will be working in the days and years ahead on the same areas. I look forward to his support.

I should also like to record my party's thanks to my hon. Friends the Members for Wigan (Mr. Stott) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). Their hard work in Northern Ireland is readily acknowledged, not least in the letters that I have received in the past few days from various organisations testifying to their assiduous efforts.

Following the changes to Labour's Front-Bench team that have just occurred, it might be helpful if I took this opportunity to reaffirm to the House Labour's full support for the Downing street declaration, and to acknowledge its crucial importance in changing the context in which the peace process in Northern Ireland can be advanced. The Opposition endorse the aim of the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, outlined in the declaration, to foster agreement and reconciliation leading to a new political framework, founded on consent and encompassing arrangements within Northern Ireland, for the whole island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain.

I should like also to reaffirm Labour's historic commitment to the unification of Ireland by consent—always the crucial word. I reaffirm our support for the principles contained in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which states that there can be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of its people. Labour also welcomes the Government's recognition in the Downing Street declaration that it is right for the people of Ireland alone to exercise their right of self-determination; and the Irish Government's recognition that this right must be exercised with, and subject to, the agreement and consent of a majority of people in Northern Ireland.

We welcome the cessation of violence by all the paramilitary organisations, and acknowledge that the next couple of months are crucial to moving the peace process forward—although everyone in the House knows that there are many thorny questions to be dealt with. It is essential, however, that the peace process keep moving forward. We have to keep on trucking, and unless we do, it will be counter-productive for everyone involved.

No one will have anything to gain from prevarication or procrastination in the hope of a change of Government. Labour, in opposition and in government, will seek to facilitate and encourage a balanced constitutional settlement leading to an agreement that will have the support of both traditions.

We believe that such a settlement requires five features. First, there will have to be provisions that ensure that constitutional legislation in both Ireland and Britain is mutually consistent, and consistent with the principle of majority consent.

Secondly, there must be provision to establish strong devolved government in Northern Ireland—a devolved assembly which will need to be based entirely upon proportional representation to ensure that each party is fairly represented. That principle is now broadly accepted in Northern Ireland.

Thirdly, there must be provision to ensure that each community receives parity of esteem and equity of treatment. Those principles will have to be reflected in a

[Ms Marjorie Mowlam]

fair employment policy, policing and the administration of justice. They will require imagination and willingness to break the shackles of our past.

Fourthly, as the Downing street declaration envisaged, deepening cross-border co-operation in Ireland and the encouragement of institutions which reflect that, are simply common sense, irrespective of where one stands on the national question. Those arrangements need infringe no one's sovereign statehood.

Fifthly and finally, any constitutional arrangements that are established must be securely and appropriately guaranteed and protected by both Governments. In that respect, we welcome the recent statement by the Irish Foreign Minister, Dick Spring, in his address to the United Nations on 28 September. He argued that an agreement was needed in which

> "the exercise of sovereignty, by whichever government, will at all times, now and in the future, be qualified by scrupulously equal treatment of the two northern communities and their rights, identities and allegiances."

We agree that a balanced constitutional settlement must achieve that objective. That process was assisted by the Government's announcement on Friday, which we supported, and especially by the package of security and investment measures which are crucial to the process of moving towards a stable peace.

If that future is to be one of peace and prosperity, both Governments must take the necessary steps to encourage both the restructuring and the regeneration of the Northern Ireland economy. The Opposition welcome the statement earlier this week in the annual report of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, which said that public spending should be maintained at current levels if the peace process is to be moved forward.

We all want to see a permanent cessation of violence, and we must recognise that, as a result, over time that will bring structural changes in public expenditure. There will be a need for the reallocation of public spending not only to tackle the structural weaknesses in the Northern Ireland economy but to respond to changes in the public sector and to the need to stimulate greater private sector investment.

There is no doubt in my mind that Government subventions are a significant determinant of demand in the Northern Ireland economy. We should like assurances from the Government that, in the wake of the ceasefire, the Treasury will not, as it has done elsewhere on public expenditure, be keen to see immediate cuts. We should like a clear statement from the Minister that the Treasury will keep its hands off current public expenditure in Northern Ireland.

Peace as well as conflict present difficult economic adjustments. It is essential for the Government to consider now the implications of economic policies and priorities for an increase in employment opportunities and standards of living for everyone in Northern Ireland. We acknowledge the conference that the Secretary of State is organising in December, but we are interested in the steps beyond that that the Government plan to take.

It is crucial to address the problems of long-term unemployment. It is appalling for anyone without a job, from whichever side of the divide, to contemplate continuing in the long-term unemployment that exists in both communities but especially in the nationalist community. The fears of people in the police and security forces about future employment are apparent from talking to them, and, as everybody knows, people's fears and insecurities about future employment are powerful and potentially destructive feelings at the best of times. But when going through a process of political change, those insecurities are considerably magnified.

The Government must not fail to address the problems of unemployment, the consequent social deprivation and the structural change in the employment market in Northern Ireland. To fail to do so would be potentially harmful to the peace process.

There has been much recent talk about a peace dividend, but the Opposition recognise that failure to address issues of investment and structural unemployment could lead to an economic peace deficit. Consequently, we welcome the setting up by the European Union of the task force to help regenerate the Northern Ireland economy, and we also welcome the endorsement by the Council of Europe, the Commission and the Parliament of the Downing street declaration and the peace process.

We look forward to the peace summit in December in Essen, where measures to regenerate the Northern Ireland economy will be considered. Northern Ireland has great assets in its young talent and its natural environment, and they must be developed in the interests of stable peace and lasting prosperity. Tourism is a classic example, because in Northern Ireland it generates £120 million of GNP and employs about 10,000 people. There is no doubt that the onset of peace can enable the full potential of Northern Ireland's natural inbuilt heritage to be realised in the medium to long term, and that has potential employment opportunities for another 8,000 to 10,000 people.

As the peace process accelerates, it is vital for all parties to look to the future and to consider everyone else's fears and anxieties, and not simply to reiterate past positions and stay in their trenches.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, so I ask for succinct speeches.

4.46 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): I am flattered to be called so early in the debate. In deference to other hon. Members who wish to speak, I shall restrict myself to specific topics. As I am the first Back Bencher to be called in the debate, I shall make some well-deserved nice remarks about the Government and thank the Opposition parties for their support in the process, which so far is going so very well.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was in his place a moment ago, and is well aware of my support. I was one of the first to write to him about his Guildhall speech. He has occasionally been criticised for going too slowly, and perhaps at times I have been a little impatient, as have other hon. Members. However, so far so very good. Our congratulations on the success so far by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State are the best judgment that we can offer. I wish them well as we now enter possibly more difficult successive stages in this historic operation.

I said that I would mention specific topics, and I should like to speak about the nature of the cessations of violence with, of course, particular reference to Sinn Fein/IRA, and to address the immediate problem of weapons and explosives. Last but not least, I shall speak about pace and progress in the immediate future. I shall not even begin to take up all the parameters of this vast subject, but shall concentrate on those specifics.

The nature of the cessations of violence is extremely relevant to what follows, and especially to the attitudes that we adopt to judge such key issues as the surrender of weapons and explosives. On the basic situation—I am mainly addressing the IRA—we need to be realistic, and should perhaps remind ourselves what has been achieved. I dare say that it is more profound than usual, but basically it is an IRA ceasefire in the terms that have been expressed.

I shall remind the House of those terms by using direct quotations. At the outset it was stated that there was

> "a complete cessation of military operations . . . it is unconditional and open ended."

When he addressed the remarks by the Irish Taoiseach, Mr. Adams said:

> "The assumption of permanence is correct."

Last but not least, the statement by Mr. Adams and my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) outside Government buildings in Dublin perhaps took it even further, saying:

> "We are all totally and absolutely committed to democratic and peaceful methods of resolving our political problems".

In the light of that, let me, as a Conservative Back Bencher, make a few comments about what appears to be the IRA/Sinn Fein position. I am not being semantic, but, as far as I understand it—I do not have as exact an understanding of IRA constitutional rules as some others do—the IRA cannot actually use the word "permanent" because it has had no Army Council meeting. IRA spokesmen are obliged to do that if they are to use the word "permanent", as that would mean the end of what they would term "the struggle". There is nothing they will do, or be prepared to do, that could be said to amount to a surrender.

Therefore, without the word "permanent", and with no council meeting or surrender, we begin to understand the terminology that I have outlined to the House. IRA leaders have, however, declared an intention to make it permanent, and deserve an acknowledgement of their considerable contribution to the position. They appear—it has to be put to the test—ready and willing to negotiate and build a permanent peace.

I welcome the other cessation and ceasefire—that of the loyalist paramilitaries—and I particularly welcome its terms. Hon. Members will agree that the terms were generous, to say the least, and that the only condition, which relates to a resumption of violence on the other side, is completely understandable. On the paramilitary side, everyone is ready to talk.

My second point concerns an immediate problem that applies to both sides: the surrender or decommissioning of weapons and explosives. That has to be a matter for our preliminary talks with Sinn Fein. Unless we get over that problem, we shall not get very far with anything at all. It is of paramount importance to getting Sinn Fein into substantive talks at a later stage or whenever we can. We want those weapons handed in. At the end of the day, we must have them in, but Sinn Fein is unlikely to bring them in without some progress being made, either generally or in negotiation. Hon. Members will have heard that point being made by a Mr. McLoughlin on the "Today" programme on BBC Radio 4 this morning. He made the position very clear. It will not be easy, and will need some patience on both sides.

What can we do about it? Perhaps all we can do at the beginning is to stick rigidly to the logistics. At least we have to talk about it and to quantify the agreed and accepted amounts of arms and explosives. We can categorise—I welcome something that crept in with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Question Time last week—and differentiate between weapons that are undoubtedly offensive, such as Semtex explosives and detonators, and those which can be used for defensive purposes.

We have to consider the manner of handing over weapons and to whom they are handed over. There will be no Falkland Islands stockpiling of weapons and no surrender of weapons. Some people have the idea that it will amount to that, but it will not.

We have to try to establish a political sequence linked to progress, which can lead increasingly to the handover of weapons and the gradual involvement of Sinn Fein in the process. Obviously, the eventual aim is to get it involved in the substantive talks.

Finally, as far as the pace of progress is concerned, I must repeat that the caution of Her Majesty's Government has proved to be completely correct. The main players have to remain on board, and the pace cannot be too fast for those main players. I welcome the attitude throughout—I have done so publicly before, although it is not always recognised that I do this—of the Official Unionist party. It has behaved in a statesmanlike way, as have other Northern Ireland parties.

We need a steady momentum. There need be no rush, but everybody—including Sinn Fein—has to feel that, at whatever pace, we are getting somewhere. We have to remember that each side has to be kept on board. No great rush is necessary, provided we all have confidence that we are getting somewhere.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way at this crucial moment, but will he make it clear whether he envisages talks continuing, or at least starting, while not a single weapon has been handed in? If that is the case, could it not be interpreted that Sinn Fein would have the upper hand and could instigate a process of blackmail?

Mr. Temple-Morris: I was trying to make it fairly clear that I was talking about talks about talks. As for talks about weaponry, surrender, logistics and so on, I set out a whole sequence. Only when we have accomplished an agreed handing over, or at least an agreed sequence that everyone accepts and that will have involved a large-scale handing over, will talks be practicable, because the Official Unionist party and other parties in Northern Ireland have to be prepared to talk to Sinn Fein. I am not addressing the House in a cloud of imaginary optimism; we have to be practical.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Unless I misheard the hon. Gentleman, I

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

thought that he was trying to draw a distinction between defensive and offensive weapons. What does he mean by defensive weapons?

Mr. Temple-Morris: I was trying to make it clear that that distinction appears to be creeping into the frame. It is for those who take part in the negotiations to determine it. I would guess that, on the loyalist side, it would be extremely difficult for everybody to hand in firearms which they would class as defensive. In practical terms, to expect everyone in Sinn Fein-IRA to respond to an amnesty with every weapon might be a little optimistic.

I am making no distinctions in terms of the desire to get everything handed in, but we should remember in the back of our minds that the absolutely lethal offensive weaponry that would be used right at the front line should there be a resumption of violence and should we fail in all this, would be Semtex and detonators.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Would the hon. Gentleman regard the knee-capping of someone as an offensive or defensive act, and would he regard the weapon used as one that should be surrendered?

Mr. Temple-Morris: That is a smart point to make in a debating society, and I commend the hon. Gentleman on making it. We all deplore such acts, and as soon as he makes some slight acknowledgement of the desire of the vast majority of the House for peace and his considerable potential contribution to it, which would not include such comments, the quicker we will be able to make progress. It is not very clever to raise that which we all deplore.

Let us get on if we may, now that I have given way a number of times. I just want to make my final point about confidence-building measures which do not all involve formal talking. Obviously, we have to talk as soon as possible about talks—and formally—but on the way there, by way of building up confidence, a crucial contribution can be made by all concerned. My last answer went some way to pointing out the attitudes which could be involved.

Because we are just dealing with speeches and actions, not agreements, things are a bit easier at this stage. In that context, I welcome the measures that have already been taken to lift the broadcasting ban and the exclusion orders, as well as the decision to open the cross-border roads. I also welcome the reduced level of police and military activity, with which my right hon. and learned Friend dealt today.

I do not want to discuss policing in detail now, but it is part of the confidence-building process, and decisions on it have practical implications.There is nothing more prominent, more in the front line or more pertinent now and in the future than the policing of Northern Ireland.

In my humble view, we will not establish a permanent peace without some changes in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. That must be accepted. Despite that, we must still end up with an effective police force for Northern Ireland. In that respect, both communities and both sides will need to give. More signs of a willingness to do so by either side would be welcome, and would be the best signal we could have to suggest that we might be on our way.

Parity of esteem is a key part of policing and is important in general. A diminution of majorityism and a feeling that both communities belong to the whole are vital ingredients. In terms of building confidence at this stage, it is also important that, last but not least, the framework document is published. I desperately hope that we will reach agreement on that.

I understand why my right hon. and learned Friend said that that agreement had not been reached and was by no means automatic, but it is vital to confidence-building and in general. It is most vital in terms of the constitution and the sort of assembly and Executive that will be proposed for Northern Ireland. Developments on that are pivotal to progress.

Although it is right to pause to offer congratulations to everyone on where we are now, we are but at the beginning. I wish the Government, which has the support of the Opposition—one is very grateful for that support when one merits it—all good fortune and good luck in an historic task.

5.1 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I am delighted to be called in the debate and I shall keep my remarks as brief as possible.

I am sure that my feelings about the progress achieved in Northern Ireland are shared by all those who have been involved in its affairs for many years.

My involvement started with my election to the House in 1979. Throughout those years, many people told those of us who took an interest in Northern Ireland that, at the end of the day, the republicans would say this or the Unionists would say that. Everyone said that there would be no end to that day, that it would go on for ever and that we should not make any assumptions about the violence coming to an end. What so many of us had hoped for and dreamed about has come true in the past few months and weeks. In all honesty and fairness, I must say that the Government and the Prime Minister—I am not one of the right hon. Gentleman's greatest fans—deserve our unstinting congratulations.

I first became hopeful in 1985, with the British-Irish agreement, and those hopes shot through the roof with the Downing street declaration. They were visionary steps forward and I compliment the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and others involved on their achievement. I should love to list some of the other people who were involved, not least the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and his party and the Unionist population, who recently have changed their position quite significantly. Time does not permit that, but I should just like to say that our hopes are invested in the Northern Ireland people, who have borne the brunt of the violence. Their future, however, is partly entrusted to us, which is why we must deliver on the important Downing street declaration.

I have always argued that I am not a historian and that I do not understand, nor seek to know in great detail, the history of Ireland. That statement sometimes surprises people, but I have always believed that our duty as politicians is to solve political problems. To do so, we might need some understanding of history, but if we tried to understand the entire history of Ireland we would spend the rest of our lives studying it. We would never solve the problem.

The essential problem was that a significant minority of the state of Northern Ireland did not accept the government of that area. One of the most important developments on the Unionist side, to which I wish to pay tribute, has been the way in which the Unionist population and, I think, now, their political leaders, seem to accept not only that they cannot return to life prior to 1969, but that they do not want to. It is important to recognise the significance of that sentiment.

Although it was always easy to condemn the violence in Northern Ireland, because it was obviously wrong, we would make a serious mistake if we assumed that it had no cause. The Unionist domination of Northern Ireland up to 1969 meant that it was a one-party state. However, I believe that that one-party state did not even serve the Unionist population very well. It broke down in 1969, but it has taken us a long time to address the deep feelings, bitterness and distrust that followed as the two communities struggled to gain domination.

In many respects, the problem with the Unionists is that they feared what would be done to them if they were subsumed into a united Ireland, in much the same way as the minority community in Northern Ireland continued to remember what was done to it when it was subsumed within the majority in Northern Ireland. Because of that struggle for power and that fear of reprisal, we must build confidence in both communities.

In the 1980s, I pointed out to the leaders of Sinn Fein that the violence that they were pursuing was not only wrong in principle but counter-productive, given what it set out to achieve. I also knew, however, that the violence was due in large part to what had happened in the past. Too often we in Britain forgot that many nationalists, republicans and Catholics suffered at the hands of Unionist violence, which we did not always condemn equally. It is always important to do so, because violence from either side is totally unacceptable, and always has been. I am pleased to repeat that assertion.

I also have some pleasure in saying that the Labour party's policy has been proved right. It is one of those rare examples of a political party having a policy that has stood up to the test of time rather well. I had a hand in devising our 1981 policy document on Northern Ireland, which made it clear that there could be a united Ireland only with the consent of the majority of the people. It said that there could be no veto on political progress by any group. It also said that there needed to be greater cross-border co-operation and harmonisation between the two parts of Ireland. All those recommendations are in the Downing street declaration or in the British-Irish agreement, and I welcome them warmly.

It is clear to me that Sinn Fein is committed to peace—that is clear from its actions and, increasingly, from the words of its leaders. Its leadership and that of the Unionist paramilitaries recognise that they cannot possibly go back to life as it was. As Sinn Fein's leaders have said, they want to be involved in the democratic process. That is important. We should make it as easy as possible for the Unionist and republican paramilitaries to give up violence and become involved in the political process. For that reason, it is a little early to talk of the surrender of weapons by either side. I accept that that proviso is important, but if we allow talks to founder because of it, we will not gain the confidence that is necessary within Northern Ireland to enable the talks to make headway.

We must all remember that the followers of Sinn Fein and the Unionist paramilitaries do not necessarily share their leaders' commitment to the peace process. They are bound to have doubts and anxieties and no doubt some will consider that they have been betrayed by their leaders. If those leaders are to continue to lead effectively, and if we are to avoid a drift back into violence by either side, we must make it as easy as possible for those leaders to benefit from their involvement in the political process. It is clear to me, however, that the leaders of Sinn Fein consider a return to violence on their part as inconceivable.

We must seize this moment. The developments that the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister announced at the weekend were exceptionally important and exactly what was needed. I had been concerned that progress had not been sufficient, but the decision to open all the cross-border roads and the associated measures was exactly right and well timed.

The marvellous reception that the Prime Minister received in Newry and, indeed, that the Secretary State for Northern Ireland received in Strabane, where he was acknowledged by even Sinn Fein councillors, was no accident. Movement was recognised. It goes without saying that the Unionist population showed their support for what the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister have done.

The reassurance of Britain is important. That is why I was delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) made it clear that there are no hidden deals, that Labour Members agree with the Government on this matter and that there will be no transfer of sovereignty without consent. That is a common position between the parties and, funnily enough and despite popular reports to the contrary over the years, it always has been.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who has taken the lead for the Labour party very well, also made the all-important point very clear—again, it frequently was not acknowledged, but I heard him say it at a number of conferences and in a number of speeches—that if there were peace and agreement in Northern Ireland, to which both communities were committed and which they wanted, we would not let our party's policies stand in the way. That was always the line that we took and it was exactly the right line. It would make no sense at all for Britain to say that we were going to impose our views on the people of Northern Ireland once they had agreed a settlement. After all, we have all been working for a settlement over the years.

The role of the British is now crucial. I recently heard an economist at a conference say that a statue should be erected in Northern Ireland to the great unknown British taxpayer. There is a lot in that statement. The cost of running Northern Ireland is immense. One of my views over the years has been that if we could resolve the problems in Northern Ireland, the burden of carrying it would lessen and there would be marvellous opportunities for the people of the north. There is a peace dividend to be had, but it will not arrive quickly.

It is sometimes assumed that once people stop fighting and troops are withdrawn, a pocket of money will suddenly be available. It will not, but there is a process by which, initially, there may be more unemployment. For example, people working in security organisations may lose their jobs. We need to plan the use of the peace

[Mr. Clive Soley]

dividend to ensure that such people are retrained and kept in employment. Although I have never believed that the underlying levels of high unemployment in Northern Ireland have been the cause of the violence, they certainly have not helped. There have been quite good recruiting serjeant majors for paramilitary groups on the Unionist and republican sides.

I shall now do what I think is the duty of Opposition parties—make a few suggestions and perhaps press the Government to go a little further in certain areas, which I hope would help both Unionists and nationalists alike. We have to choose from different menus, as it were, to help both, but they are both important.

I want to start with an area that has always been profoundly important to me. I was slightly disappointed—this was about the only disappointment that I felt during the Secretary of State's speech—that we did not hear a statement about the future of emergency legislation in the United Kingdom as a whole. The Secretary of State will know that, for the first time since the second world war, Ireland has abolished the emergency legislation. One of the matters that involved me in the Northern Ireland debate was the way in which we were undermining our own democracy by the use of exceptional powers, such as the prevention of terrorism Act and the emergency powers legislation. I have made the point many times that the prevention of terrorism Act involves internal exile. A former Minister, Lord Coleraine, if I remember rightly, used that term after I had used it. It is the first time that we have had that power since the days of Henry VIII. It is an exceptional power and we need to clarify its future, even though we may not be able to get rid of all those Acts quickly. It would be welcome if the Government made a statement saying that if the peace process continues as it is at present, it would be our intention to get rid of the emergency legislation as early as possible.

A small example of that intention could relate to the Diplock courts in Northern Ireland. There has always been an argument for scheduling cases in—to describe a case as being of a terrorist type and putting it on the list for inclusion under that schedule—rather than, as at present, having to schedule them out. The argument for that change must now be overwhelming. It is very difficult to argue that we must go on assuming that all cases in the Diplock courts are of a terrorist type. Similarly, although I will not develop the point for reasons of time, the admissibility of evidence rules need to be brought into line with what we expect from a sophisticated democracy with a commitment to the rule of law.

It is important to continue the process of getting the troops off the streets, with one exception—those areas bordering the peace lines, where the communities say that they want the troops to remain. That is important for both Unionists and republicans in those areas, who feel very insecure at times. If they want them, the troops should stay on the streets of those areas.

We need to consider checkpoints, look-out posts and security bases and generally try to downgrade or mothball them. I recognise the difficulties of moving too fast, but people who live in Armagh especially, or somewhere like that, where the peace process has worked, may ask what they are seeing in return. If they are dominated by a large Army base, which even now is being redeveloped, rebuilt and enlarged because of mortar attacks on helicopters and so on, it is difficult to see the reason for continuing that process when we are trying to convince the population—not the leaders, but the population—that we are serious about responding to the current window of opportunity. It is a small point, but I remember all the fuss and hassle when the Gaelic Athletics Association pitch was half absorbed in, I think, Crossmaglen. Such changes, by which we can allow the population to use their leisure areas again, could help to reassure the population of those areas.

We need to look at increased resources, especially in housing and jobs in a number of areas. I accept fully the Fair Employment Act and everything that goes with it, but in a number of Unionist areas housing is quite often worse than in neighbouring Catholic areas because of the success of the Housing Executive. There are areas, even in west Belfast, where that is true, so we need to use what money we can—I urge the Government not to cut public expenditure in Northern Ireland—to prevent some parts of the Unionist community from feeling that the money goes to Catholics and not to Protestants. That is one of the arguments that the paramilitaries use when recruiting.

I urge that we use European and other money to develop one of the key prospects for the future in Northern Ireland—the Dublin-Belfast link. It is noticeable that, of the six largest United States personal computer producers, four are located in the south. The opportunities in the north for software development on a similar basis as that between London and Bristol or, indeed, between Edinburgh and Glasgow, which in many ways are similar cities to Belfast and Dublin, are such that they may enable us to create a necessary high-tech belt. I strongly suspect that the Europeans would be able to put money into that.

I thought that I heard mumbling from the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) about further links with Scotland. I am fully in favour of that. It is a great idea, but, as I said in the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs, just because there is a cultural, political and social link with an area, it does not mean that an economic future lies there. I may well have an affinity with Canadians, Australians or Americans, but that does not mean that I do not recognise the economic importance of Europe. In a sense, that is true for the people of Northern Ireland in relating to the people of southern Ireland to create an economy that works for all the people.

By all means change articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution in the framework document, and I suspect that there is the will to do so, but, in recognition of that, we have to deal with the remaining parts of the Government of Ireland Act 1920. I have said on many occasions that it is a little odd that Britain says in one of our Acts of Parliament that Northern Ireland will stay in the United Kingdom for as long as it likes, because, of course, it is really a statement of insecurity. It allows the United Kingdom to say, "You can stay if you like, but we would not put it into Acts of Parliament relating to England, Scotland or Wales because they do not feel insecure."

Mr. Trimble: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soley: I shall give way in a second.

There has to be new legislation and I hope that, in the process of making it, we can make it clear that we accept that the border cannot be changed without consent, but that we in Britain, as in the British-Irish agreement and the Downing street declaration, are prepared to look at change.

Mr. Trimble : I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman, but I found his comments rather confusing. He said that there had to be changes to the Government of Ireland Act *1920, but he then quoted the Northern Ireland* Constitution Act 1973. I agree with him that the 1973 Act does nothing to strengthen the Union, but does he agree that section 75 of the 1920 Act is of no importance whatsoever?

Mr. Soley: I am inclined to agree with that, although not everyone would. That is why I said that it needs to go. I do not believe that there is a difference. I was simply saying that some people perceive it to be stronger than I believe it is. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) was right to say that it is not that important. However, it is important to say that it can go. I hope that I have made myself clear.

I understand that cross-border institutions should not be given Irish executive power. However, it is critical that we ensure that they can work if, for whatever reason, they are not being made to work in Northern Ireland. In that sense, the British still need to recognise that we have a role as a direct-rule power. That is important.

I was going to intervene on the Secretary of State about my next point, but I will make it now. I understand that the strand 1 talks are extremely important. I can see that the framework document is even more important. I hope that I am making this point unnecessarily, but I hope that the Government are aware that those two things must work in tandem and that they must in no way be in conflict.

I have kept my comments as short as I can. For many years, I have spoken on a matter that has troubled me deeply, not just because of the violence, death and horror—which we saw primarily on the streets of Northern Ireland but also in southern Ireland and Britain—but because I have watched our great democracy eroding many of our greatest civil liberties and being found guilty before the European Court of Human Rights in respect of issues that often arose from Northern Ireland on more occasions than any other country in Europe and when we were the country that drafted that very code of human rights.

It is deeply sad that such a great democracy as ours should allow itself to slip back because of the crisis in Northern Ireland. We now have a chance to begin to undo that and I fully commend the Government for their achievements so far. I simply ask them to go that bit further and, above all, to begin to restore our democracy to what it used to be.

5.21 pm

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): I agree with the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) that a statue should be erected to the British taxpayer. The only trouble is that the IRA would vandalise it or, despite the peace process, blow it up. The IRA has nothing but contempt for the connection with Britain.

Tribute should be paid to the British people because, despite 25 years of terrorism which was also brought to this mainland, the British people have stood firm, shoulder to shoulder, with the decent people of Northern Ireland in the fight against terrorism. That point should be placed on the record.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) on her appointment as shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Her appointment is well deserved and she has my good wishes. I pay tribute also to the Prime Minister who, on taking office as Prime Minister, dedicated himself to ending terrorism in Northern Ireland. He deserves the plaudits of the people of this country for being a man of vision and honour. It is regrettable that the press devotes so much time to other matters and not to the serious matter of the peace process in Northern Ireland.

When the Prime Minister announced the Downing street declaration 10 months ago, some people did not believe that it would lead to peace. That declaration, agreed by both the British and Irish Governments, has established that the will of the majority in Northern Ireland will prevail and that if the people of Northern Ireland wish to remain within the United Kingdom, that wish will be respected by the people of this country and by the Government of the Irish Republic.

However, it is important to emphasise that the majority to which I have referred comprises both Catholics and Protestants. It is not simply a Protestant majority. That idea is sometimes put abroad mischievously. Roman Catholics as well as Protestants voted in the last referendum to maintain the British connection. That was the only way in which the number of votes could be accounted for.

That majority in Northern Ireland wishes Ulster to remain fully within the United Kingdom. It is equally important to stress that it is the wish of most Unionists to develop harmonious relations in our Province with all the people of Northern Ireland and their elected representatives, working together to improve the quality of life for all in the Province without regard to religion or politics.

About a year ago, I criticised the frequent use of the expression "two communities in Northern Ireland" because, in my opinion, there is only one community even though, over the past years, there has been an unhappy division, mainly as a result of the terrorists who wish always to divide the people and sometimes as a result of politicians who always believe that, by dividing the people, they can ensure their position in the political life of the country.

If peace prevails—and I pray that it does—I have a vision of an Ulster at peace with itself. That will take a long time, as some hon. Members have said, and I hope that people will not be disappointed at the slowness. However, we must build up confidence, not only within Northern Ireland, but between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

I believe that the people of Northern Ireland wish to have nothing but the very best relations with people in the Irish Republic. That is perhaps not always understood in Dublin, but I believe that it is absolutely true. Indeed, if someone were to give me a ticket for the Dublin train, despite the sleaze factor which is abroad at the moment, I would be happy to go to Dublin and see any Dublin

[Sir James Kilfedder]

Minister. That does not weaken my position as a Unionist because I believe that the way forward is for everyone to work together on an informal basis.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): In view of the hon. Gentleman's willingness to take the train to Dublin, will he accept the very generous invitation that he has already received to participate with the rest of us in arguing the debate on peace and reconciliation by attending the forum opening in Dublin tomorrow morning?

Sir James Kilfedder: I said that I would take a trip to Dublin and of course I would return again. However, I have no wish to attend the forum to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I am prepared to engage in any talks with constitutional politicians and anyone who repudiates violence. When those talks begin in Northern Ireland, I am prepared to participate in them. I will not join what is largely a republican organisation in Dublin, although I wish it well and I hope that it fully understands the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland. When the real talks begin—

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir James Kilfedder: No, I promised to take only 10 minutes. I doubt whether the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) is offering me anything other than an invitation to attend tomorrow's meeting.

The fight against terrorism over the past 25 years required great courage, restraint and dedication on the part of the Ulster people and on the part of the security forces. I join the tribute which was paid by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—I admired the way in which he paid it—to the security forces and the police in Northern Ireland. I echo his words when he said that he had admiration for their service and he thanked them for what they had done over the past 25 years.

That was a terrible battle against terrorism in respect of which most people in Northern Ireland were totally impotent. As civilians, they could do nothing but watch what happened as a result of terrorism on their television screens or, worse still, endure it if they were there when a bomb went off or a bullet killed an innocent person.

With peace, we must fight with the same determination for the peace to prevail. We need to nurture the peace process. I have doubts about it. Like the Prime Minister, I am wary and cautious about it, but I am not going to condemn it because of those reservations: I wish to nurture it and I believe that most people in Northern Ireland would wish to see the peace process go ahead and succeed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) said that Sinn Fein had definitely and permanently ended the violence. I was appalled to hear on BBC radio this morning a statement by the chairman of Sinn Fein to the effect that the present ceasefire is only temporary—I think that he used the word "pause"—and that there will not be permanent peace until the IRA-Sinn Fein have all their demands met. That is not the language of peace. That is not an indication of permanent peace. It is blackmail, telling the people of Northern Ireland, the House of Commons and the Government that they must submit to the demands of the IRA or they will return to the gun and the bomb.

Sadly, after 25 years, the IRA realised that it was getting nowhere with terrorism and that it was being defeated by the restraint, courage and determination of the Ulster and British people. The IRA has nothing but contempt for fundamental democratic rights. Having failed in its horrendous campaign of terrorism, it now hopes, in peace, to obtain what it failed to get with the gun. It is vital that the IRA hands over all its Semtex, detonators, arms and ammunition, which was largely provided by Colonel Gaddafi. While such weapons of destruction remain in the hands of the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries—I include them as well—there is little prospect of meaningful discussion and little prospect of permanent peace in Northern Ireland.

It would be possible to devote an entire speech at great length and involving many hours to the negative aspects of the present situation—that is, the threats, to which I have already referred, and the present recruitment of youngsters by the IRA. I do not understand why, if peace has come, it is still recruiting people. I refer also to the work of IRA punishment squads, shooting youngsters in the knees, and so on. We must adopt a positive approach. We must all do our best to nurture the peace process and build bridges.

The way forward is to have a devolved assembly at Stormont. It would provide an arena in which all political parties would be represented. They would be able not only to speak in the Chamber of the Stormont Parliament but to meet in the dining room, smoking room, bars, and so on and get to know each other. Half the trouble in Northern Ireland is that politicians do not meet frequently. A political arena would help to bring about the harmony that we so desperately need in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir James Kilfedder: No, I must finish.

An arena would certainly create the political stability that we need. Stability is certainly required in Northern Ireland, because we need more jobs and we need to deal with the unemployment problem. That is the way forward. I thank the Prime Minister for embarking on the peace process, and I wish him and the Government well.

5.32 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) is a distinguished former Speaker of the previous assembly in Northern Ireland. I share his hope that, once again, there will be decentralised devolved government in Northern Ireland, so that Northern Irish people together will be able to take decisions there which far too often we have dealt with in this place in a casual way, in one-and-a-half-hour debates and unamendable orders which have prevented the normal business of politics from taking place. By putting Northern Ireland business in such a straitjacket, we have impeded the process that we all want to encourage.

I join others who have expressed their unqualified admiration and support for the Prime Minister, the Taoiseach, the Tanaiste, the Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), for the way in which they have combined to try to bring about the peace process. I also welcome the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) to her Front-Bench position. I join those who have also paid tribute to her predecessor, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), for the distinguished role that he has always played in our Northern Ireland debates.

I particularly congratulate the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister on daring to think the unthinkable. For too many years we have been caught up in the idea that it is impossible to make progress. Coming from a city such as Liverpool—I have the honour to represent a constituency that was once, in part, in the south-west Lancashire division, which Mr. Gladstone once represented—I can be forgiven for recognising the problems of sectarianism in an especially acute way.

A century ago, Gladstone commented that the problem in Ireland was that, when one thought that one had an answer to a question, the Irish would change the question. The Secretary of State must feel sometimes that the goalposts have kept moving during his time in that position. If we could have our time again and could go back to the second Home Rule Bill which Mr. Gladstone piloted through the House but which was rejected in the other place, hon. Members might reflect that many of the tragedies and divisions in Northern Ireland since that time could have been avoided.

The future is what calls us today. On a personal note, with a mother from the west of Ireland who once taught the former Speaker of the Dail his Irish as a boy, and with children who, I am proud to say, have Irish citizenship—as I have—as well as British citizenship, I recognise the importance of my pride in my Irish origins as well as my pride in my British origins. Only when we recognise the enormous contribution and worth of both traditions—the hon. Member for North Down said that there is one community, but there are two traditions—will we see real progress.

I do not think that any united Ireland or United Kingdom solution exists. We must have shared goals, shared power and shared responsibilities. Throughout these islands there is a need for plural systems of democratic, effective and accountable government based on modern concepts of citizenship and the rule of law. That raises fundamental issues for us all. In Ireland, it raises fundamental questions about articles 2, 3 and 4 of the Irish constitution. Hon. Members will accept that, since the 1972 referendum, the previously privileged position of the Roman Catholic Church has been removed. Nevertheless, there are many issues which disturb people in the north about the way in which the Irish constitution still lays claim to the territory of Northern Ireland. Such matters will have to be addressed honestly in due course.

There are many shared ideals north and south of the border, particularly the strength of family life north and south of the border, authentic human values, and the sanctity of human life, which is held in such great regard both north and south of the border. As sectarianism becomes less important, there will be many shared goals, particularly as many committed people north and south of the border see the need to turn the tide of secularism which would otherwise engulf the people of the whole of the island of Ireland.

In Britain, we also need an understanding of the rights of the people of the north who are nationalists and who rejoice in their Irishness, every bit as much as of the rights of unionists who have pride in their Britishness. We must end the way in which we have treated Northern Ireland issues in this place and move as quickly as we can to a devolved and decentralised system of government.

There are also issues that must be addressed by the paramilitaries. Two weeks ago, when I was last in Northern Ireland, I visited the university of Ulster at Coleraine and spoke to young people from both traditions. They showed extraordinary enthusiasm and optimism about the future, but they were also hard-headed and realistic about the problems which must be overcome. After that, I met representatives of FAIT—Families Against Intimidation and Terror—in Belfast.

I intervened on the Secretary of State to point out the continuing problems of operations which are conducted without fear or favour against vulnerable people, some of whom have been driven out of Northern Ireland. We hear much about freedom of movement within the United Kingdom or in the United States of America, but let there be freedom of movement as well for families who have been exiled from Northern Ireland and required to live in the United Kingdom on pain of death if they should return to Northern Ireland.

I want to hear more from the leaders of Sinn Fein and the IRA about what has happened to those families. I want to hear more about such cases as the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) has recently raised. Despite the ceasefire, there have been continued assaults on people who might have committed minor offences in Northern Ireland, but the IRA has set itself up as a quasi-judicial authority. The *Belfast Telegraph* of 20 September states:

> "This youth had known for weeks that the IRA was pursuing him. Then one night last week, he was hiding in a friend's house in the Whiterock area, when six men raided the house and took him out.
>
> They laid him down on the ground and broke his wrists and fingers with a metal bar. They beat him about the legs with a hurley stick with a nail through it and punctured the flesh by his shin bone. He had a black eye."

Ms Short: Obviously, we are revolted by such events. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is a real challenge to us here? There are areas of Northern Ireland where the police's writ has not run and the IRA has taken on the policing role at the request of the community.

Mr. Mallon: Not in Crossmaglen.

Ms Short: I regret to say that it is true in Crossmaglen. Hon. Members will not allow the truth to be spoken in the House because they are so partial.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) is intervening on the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and should not respond to sedentary comments.

Ms Short: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but there was a lot of noise which was preventing me from making my point, and I was responding to that. Surely, the challenge to us—this is the point that I want to put to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)—is to improve the policing in Northern Ireland to win the trust of those communities. Of course, we must denounce

[Ms Short]

all these evil actions, but that is the real challenge to the United Kingdom Government, in co-operation with the Irish Government.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Lady makes a good point which I shall mention in a moment. I was about to say—

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: I shall give way in a moment. Articles which have appeared in the press, and the human rights updates regularly produced by FAIT, demonstrate that these cases of intimidation continue daily. Once again, I quote from the *Belfast Telegraph*:

> "Since the IRA ceasefire, Provo punishment squads have been beating their victims with iron bars, hammers and baseball bats instead of kneecapping them."

Recently, the hon. Member for Belfast, West raised the case of a 16-year-old who was viciously assaulted with a crowbar; I know that the hon. Gentleman has raised that issue with the RUC.

Such cases are not confined only to one side of the community. Clearly, many of the loyalist paramilitary organisations have become heavily involved in drugs, which is an increasing problem in many ordinary families in the north of Ireland. We also have such problems in our urban areas in Liverpool and drugs can be one of the most powerful pressures for crime. The racketeering, profiteering and Mafia-style activities which have been part and parcel of terrorism must not be regarded as a side issue; they must be central to the future that we are trying to create in Northern Ireland. Military violence may have ended, but violence per se has certainly not ended.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. As the Member of Parliament who represents the area of Crossmaglen, I wish to make it clear that the people of Crossmaglen have not asked the IRA or anyone else to police on their behalf. The people of Crossmaglen and south Armagh have no time whatever for the type of thuggery involved in the incident identified by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). My own research assistant was subjected to such a beating by thugs in the IRA. Everyone should understand that no one in south Armagh asked the IRA to do that. Did the IRA do it in the name of anyone in south Armagh?

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman has made a powerful and eloquent intervention. He makes the point effectively that no one wants to see a quasi-judicial organisation established with a de facto policing power under the aegis of the IRA. That is not the way forward.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) said—the House must recognise that this is a problem—that the nationalist community, the Catholic community, was alienated from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. For good reasons, many Catholics and nationalists have felt unable to join the RUC because of the consequences that would follow if they did.

That must change, and that will require us to reform both the policing and judicial arrangements in Northern Ireland. I hope that we shall not do that by a series of knee-jerk reactions or piecemeal reforms with emergency powers, prevention of terrorism orders, or whatever. I hope that these matters will be legitimate questions for the talks process, and that we shall examine all the questions together and try to provide an ordered way of moving forward. That is surely what the people of the north want. They want the same freedom of movement that we enjoy in the rest of the United Kingdom. People should not be forced to become exiles in their own land.

It would be a move of extraordinary importance if Gerry Adams were to say—never mind the persiflage of whether he speaks for the IRA and/or Sinn Fein—that he has no intention of resuming violence, whatever gains or defeats he has in the talks process. That would go a long way to reassuring the cynics and pessimists who wonder precisely where the future is leading. It is not good enough to come out with ambiguities and obfuscation about whether violence will be resumed, depending on what happens in the talks. That is holding a gun to people's heads and it will not do.

The Government have shown courage, vision and determination. They are entitled to the support of the whole House, and on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends I can say that they will continue to receive it.

5.44 pm

Mr. Nicholas Scott (Chelsea): First, I apologise to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for not being present for the whole of his speech. In the same breath, I congratulate the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) and welcome her to her responsibilities on the Opposition Front Bench. She takes on those responsibilities at a challenging and important time and I am sure that we all wish her well.

It was 13 years ago when I arrived in Belfast as a Minister. I arrived when the hunger strike was still in progress, a number of hunger strikers had died, the streets of Belfast were littered with debris, the Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary were under tremendous pressure and one almost despaired at the prospect of movement towards peace in Northern Ireland.

We seemed to be in a stand-off position, yet patient negotiation behind the scenes and understanding of the feelings on both sides managed to bring the hunger strike to an end. Patient, understanding work—much of it behind the scenes—led to the situation where we have a ceasefire in Northern Ireland. I have the highest hope that its permanence will soon be recognised.

Those of us who follow the cartoonist Matt in his light-hearted interpretations of current events will remember the cartoon of the two ladies waiting at a bus stop in Belfast with one expostulating to the other, "Typical. We wait 25 years for a ceasefire and now we get two coming along at the same time." We have two ceasefires and I hope that they will last.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his vision and courage to go down a route where there was no success guaranteed at the end. He would have been severely criticised by a variety of quarters if the whole thing had failed. However, the Prime Minister, in co-operation with the Taoiseach, the Tanaiste and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, has brought about a remarkable success. I know that hard-working people in the Northern Ireland Office and elsewhere have played their part, and they also deserve our gratitude. We can celebrate—hopefully, not prematurely—the progress that has been made so far. We all recognise that there will be pitfalls ahead, but I remain an optimist, not least because of some of my experiences when I was a Minister in Northern Ireland.

After all, it was the Prime Minister's predecessor who signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The workings of that agreement, which was not welcomed whole-heartedly in all quarters of the community in Northern Ireland, proved that it was possible for those holding ministerial offices in London and Dublin to work against a background of constructive understanding between the two Governments, to develop habits of mutual co-operation without the surrender of sovereignty on either part in the discussions that took place. As each Government began better to understand the position of the other, they made adjustments in their policies and approaches to the issues that confronted us in Northern Ireland.

There was no question of executive power being transferred or sovereignty eroded, but there was a steady development of mutual understanding, which has been immensely beneficial and which may well have laid the foundations for what has been achieved in the latest accord between London and Dublin. If there are new bodies to be formed under the terms of the latest arrangement, I think that they can learn a great deal from the work that followed the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

We stand on the threshold, as it were, of historic steps affecting the future of the island of Ireland. At such a time, we should look back and pay tribute to the security forces which have borne such an immense burden over the years of the emergency. I was privileged to be security Minister in Northern Ireland for a number of years, and I recognised the pressures that those forces were under: I was in no doubt that terrorist organisations, especially the Provisional IRA, set out to do their best to provoke the British Government and the security forces to react—to over-react, it could be said—to the terrorism with which they were being presented.

I recognise, of course, that over the past 25 years mistakes have been made in security policy, but I find it difficult to imagine another Government in a liberal democracy who would have reacted more calmly and steadfastly in the face of such provocation. As I said, undoubtedly mistakes were made, but overwhelmingly we preserved the values of a liberal democracy in the face of immense provocation from the terrorists.

Let us translate the statistics for those 25 years of violence in Northern Ireland into a Great Britain equivalent. That would mean our having incurred about 1 million casualties and nearly 100,000 deaths—figures that put into perspective what the people of Northern Ireland have suffered. To their immense credit, they have endured it; they deserve our understanding and our continued support as the peace process develops.

A number of problems must be confronted if that peace process is to continue. My hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) mentioned weapons: I think that they will pose a very difficult problem. If I were a member of either side of the Northern Ireland community, perhaps on the fringes of the paramilitary organisations, I should be very reluctant to hand over weapons that many people—perhaps doubting the good will of the other side—may regard as personal protection. I believe that the heavier weaponry, the Semtex and detonators, should be first on the agenda. I hope that an arrangement can be made with the paramilitary organisations to ensure that that happens.

There is another problem, in which I took particular interest when I was in the Northern Ireland Office: the prisoners—men and women, many of them young—who have been caught up in terrorist activities over the years, and are now serving very long sentences, life sentences in some cases. The life sentence review board could help us to resolve that problem. The board assesses when it would be possible to release those sentenced to life imprisonment in Northern Ireland.

I recall that one of the major factors in the decision was the risk that released prisoners would reoffend. Given recent events and the constructive atmosphere that seems to be developing in Northern Ireland, I hope that the Ministers will examine the workings of the board and consider how it might play a more proactive role in considering which prisoners could be released into the community. I am certain that, during my time in the Northern Ireland Office, the board's activities had a profound effect in the Northern Ireland communities: it was possible to release a number of people into the community, and I hope that we can build on that achievement now. I was particularly pleased to note that Mr. Gusty Spence—a loyalist former prisoner; I was able to use my influence to secure his release—had played an important part in bringing about the loyalist ceasefire.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Does my right hon. Friend understand that some Conservative Members see no distinction between someone blowing up a three-year-old in the name of a united Ireland, and someone blowing up a three-year-old just because he is plain evil? They would find it impossible to follow the route that my right hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Scott: My experience was that examining the background of offenders who had probably been sentenced by the courts in Northern Ireland, the possibility of their reoffending if they were released and the part that they could play in persuading others to turn away from the path of violence was a constructive contribution to the process of bringing about a change of mind and heart in the paramilitary organisations. Again, I mention Mr. Augustus Spence in particular.

Let me say a word about the economy. Over the past 25 years, we have spent a vast amount on security in Northern Ireland. I hope that, if peace endures, the extra resources spent in recent years will not suddenly be clawed back by the Treasury and denied to Northern Ireland Ministers; I believe that at least some of them should be deployed in trying to ensure that both Northern Ireland communities have job opportunities in the future. We have seen some remarkable economic successes in Northern Ireland, and the peace dividend—as it is sometimes called—should be reflected in more job opportunities throughout the Province.

Of course, we still face—in the words of the Tanaiste—a great conundrum in bringing about a final arrangement in Northern Ireland. The competing claims of nationalists and Unionists still strike many as incompatible; the Governments of both the Republic and the United Kingdom bear a heavy responsibility in taking the process forward. I hope that they will not be persuaded to rush fences—that they will be patient, take small steps in the right direction and not allow themselves to be panicked

[Mr. Scott]

into sudden action that may leave them face downwards in the mud. Patience, I believe, is the key to a final solution to the problems that we are trying to solve.

I believe that the nationalist community in the north of Ireland should take some satisfaction from the progress that has been made since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the recognition of the legitimacy of the nationalist aspiration. We in this country, however, must understand the depth of feeling in the Unionist community. John Hewitt—who could, I suppose, be called the poet of unionism—once said:

> "This is my country, nowhere else.
> I shall not be outcast on the world."

Those who seek a solution, within the island of Ireland, to the problems of Northern Ireland must bear in mind the depth of passion among Unionists about their identity. It is essential that whatever solution we find can accommodate both traditions; otherwise, we shall write ourselves a recipe for a return to violence and disaster.

The future of Northern Ireland should provide no role for facile slogans such as "No surrender" or, indeed, "Ourselves alone". We must find ways in which the two communities can work together and build confidence. That will not happen overnight; it will take years, if not decades. But we need to maintain the momentum, keep our nerve and keep our vision of peace. We owe it to the people of Northern Ireland, as well as to the people of Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

5.59 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) served as the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on Northern Ireland for several years, and while I must confess that as far as the Ulster Unionist party is concerned, we never really reached a shared understanding, we can say that the hon. Gentleman put his opinions with clarity and force.

One of the reasons for the hon. Gentleman's departure is the fact that the present leadership of the Labour party has decided to upgrade the Northern Ireland post to shadow Cabinet level, so we have a double reason for congratulating the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam). The hon. Lady is the first woman in that post, and she will no doubt make clear the Labour party's views on Northern Ireland as they develop in the coming years. We offer her our sincere congratulations.

We are also looking forward to the further clearing-up of the problems that some of us have in trying to define defensive weapons in the hands of terrorist assassins and fellow travellers. The hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) raised that matter, and some of us found a measure of difficulty with it.

I have had the same measure of difficulty since 31 August with the degree of euphoria that clouds the judgment of so many in Northern Ireland, and indeed further afield, in regard to the present ceasefire, cessation of violence or truce—whatever one cares to call it.

The Government have been refreshingly wise in the way in which they have dealt with the evolving situation in Northern Ireland. I can use that description, because this Administration have come to understand that they do not need any selfish, strategic or economic reasons to stay in Northern Ireland, because the people who live there have a vast array of good reasons to remain within the United Kingdom and not a single good reason to leave it. Thus, Ulster's constitutional position depends upon the will of its inhabitants, so it will stay within the United Kingdom.

However, I must say to the House—and particularly to the Government—that the unity of the kingdom is best secured when the central authority also has the wit to understand that it has a role to play beyond a benign neutrality while leaving others to defend the integrity of the Union and the realm. In the long run, of course, the people of Northern Ireland need to know that their constitutional position is secure. The Secretary of State's rejection of the comments made by Martin McGuinness at the weekend as arrant nonsense was both necessary and clear.

More needs to be done, for that exchange highlighted the need to convince people by taking action to restore local accountability. The Prime Minister's carefully constructed speech in Belfast last Friday deserves the most detailed analysis by all who are trying to move Northern Ireland towards real peace and stability, and that careful consideration will take into account all that he and his Government colleagues are saying and have said in the past few months.

The Prime Minister must not be under any illusions as to the complexity of the situation, and clearly he is not. Great dangers are still present as we proceed down the difficult road to stable institutions of government in the Province. In the light of that, he does well to exercise due caution and to say that the Government will judge the situation by the deeds of terrorist organisations, as much as by their words.

In his speech, the Prime Minister said that he now had sufficient evidence of the IRA's intentions for him to proceed on the "workable assumption"—as he called it—that violence by the IRA had come to an end. The noble Lady Baroness Denton of Wakefield, who speaks for the Government in another place, said last week that the time lapse before accepting that violence had ended was to

> "enable commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic methods to be demonstrated."—*[Official Report, House of Lords,* 17 October 1994; Vol. 558, c. 80.]

A young man who is in the process of having his bones smashed with an iron bar might not fully share the Government's opinion that the IRA has given up violence. It may well be that such unfortunates will be comforted by the fact that the IRA has construed the term "complete cessation of violence" in a very narrow sense. The IRA has always intended the term to mean only that it has stopped murdering people and exploding bombs. For all its other items of activity, it is simply business as usual—a slogan that we have become well used to in Northern Ireland during the past 25 years.

The IRA is therefore behaving in accordance with the strict letter of the words, and the spirit of good will and common decency that some wrongly detected in the ceasefire statement is simply non-existent. The fact that it has hitherto ensured its continuing dominance of the sections of the community of which it is an integral component—combined with its storage of weapons and explosives, fund raising and all the activities that are needed to sustain, direct and execute a terrorist campaign—is not evidence that it is really dismantling its murderous machine. Rather, it is simply being semi-mothballed for the moment. The rotation from the IRA's version of peace to a full-blown terrorist campaign would take a very short period, should it decide to change.

The present limited peace is self-evidently fragile, and the action taken by the Garda last Saturday is convincing evidence of the danger that still surrounds us. From what was said in regard to that episode, it would appear that dissident elements within the IRA were planning to take over the organisation and its weaponry. We must also assume that any such takeover would not have been bloodless and that there might have been deadly consequences for the leading peacemakers. The Garda's efforts to protect them are therefore welcome, and show the high quality of intelligence that is now available to that force. Had such information been available and similar action taken in the past, many who became the victims of murder and other crimes would be alive and well today.

The IRA has spent 25 years trying to overthrow the will of the people of Northern Ireland, and even it found eventually that violence would not shift them from their fixed desire to remain within the United Kingdom. It has made no secret of the reasons for its new behaviour—it is to get a united Ireland by other means. It has now spent some eight weeks trying to get its new policy off the ground.

The question now is whether the IRA will persist in the democratic debate and persuasion, or whether it will revert to type. I must say that many of us believe that the latter is the more likely course that it will follow in the coming days, weeks and months. It would be extremely foolish to diminish the capacity of the Army and the RUC, in case they are needed rapidly to restore the defences that have been swept away in recent days.

The opening of border roads and the removal of soldiers from the streets give welcome evidence of a slow return to normality, but so long as the possibility and the threat remain that violence will resume, the capacity to restore defences has to be kept intact. I hope that the soldiers will stay—if not on the streets—in barracks in Northern Ireland where they can be instantly available in large numbers.

One thing of which we can be sure: Irish republicans of whatever shade of green will always find some new product from their factory of grievances about which to complain. We had much experience of that 25 years ago. I hope that the House, and especially the Government, have learnt that no matter what concessions Irish nationalists—again of every shade of green—have been given down the years, they have been received with ill grace, and nothing has ever come back in return.

On the issue of law and order, on which we had hoped to find co-operation—and where every right-minded person would want co-operation—we find that the Social Democratic and Labour party has still not taken up a place on the Police Authority, even to the point where it recently expelled Councillor Rocks of Cookstown because, as a very brave citizen, he dared to play his part on that body.

It is clear to many people in Northern Ireland that that sad rejection of responsibility does the SDLP no good in the eyes of reasonable people, and drives many people in Ulster to ask how it can ever play a responsible part in the Province, a view that we share when it simply refuses to do what it can to make the police service acceptable to those whom it represents. We had some striking evidence of the need for a police service, even in the most republican areas of Northern Ireland, in the early exchanges on Opposition Benches today.

The SDLP should have the confidence to stand on its own feet and take the lead, and it should not be tagging along with those who want to dismantle the RUC and replace it with something else, which, in the end, would be acceptable to no one. Such a betrayal of that force would not be acceptable either to my party or to the House.

The Prime Minister's speech last week set out a most ambitious agenda, much of which can be put in train regardless of what the IRA does in the coming weeks and months. He set out a considerable programme on the economy, which we warmly support. Four members of the Ulster Unionist party, including myself, were in Washington in September. We found much talk in several quarters about how to help to provide American investment for jobs. It was suggested that there should be a meeting of business leaders to see what could be done.

It is notable and welcome that the Prime Minister went much further. He said that he wanted to draw together possible investment from the whole globe. We already have quite a lot of successful investment from many of the areas mentioned in his speeches. The Prime Minister will also know that the Ulster Unionist party estimates a loss of 25,000 to 30,000 jobs in security-related work in conditions of permanent peace. Such a drop in employment would be devastating to many places that currently supply the persons employed in that work. For that reason, my party has already called for resources to be deployed to ensure that unemployment levels equal to those in the worst black spots do not become the norm in many areas of Northern Ireland.

We especially welcome the Prime Minister's statement that European Community money will be in addition to the Government's expenditure plans over the next few years. In the past, such sums have always been subsumed in United Kingdom Government spending plans. I am glad that the Prime Minister, as First Lord of the Treasury, has persuaded that institution to be a little more like Scrooge at the end of "A Christmas Carol" rather than the individual whom we meet in its earliest passages.

The fact that the Prime Minister also intends to consult at council level to hear local opinion on what is needed to rejuvenate and regenerate those council areas is very welcome. For the first time, local voices will be heard where it really matters. We have every confidence that the varying needs of the different council areas will be made clear to the Government by the leaders and chief executives of each council.

The Prime Minister has made it evident that he intends to move ahead on a wide front to reinforce the demand for a peaceful Ulster and, as far as possible, to make it impossible for anyone to return to violence. He is well aware of the great responsibility that he carries as he works patiently to construct a system of governance in Northern Ireland that will command the respect of all well-intentioned people. We all know that universal acceptance is a bit like the holy grail—long sought, but never found. Frankly, it will never be found. Nevertheless, methods of administration and representation acceptable to the great preponderance of the population in that part of the country can be created. The acquiescence of more

[Mr. William Ross]

will be certain and only the tiny number who are totally blinded to reality by their detestation of all things pertaining to Britain will oppose those methods.

The Prime Minister is to be congratulated on his cautious advances so far. We wish him well in future and we hope that his efforts and those of many others involved will eventually be crowned with success.

6.12 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I join right hon. and hon. Members in welcoming the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) to the Opposition Front Bench. I assure her that my colleagues and I will be happy to meet her at any time to express our views not only on the general constitutional position, but on social and economic matters where there may be more of a meeting of minds.

In saying that, I also acknowledge the deep interest that the hon. Lady's predecessor, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), showed in his post. Undoubtedly, there has not been much common cause on constitutional matters between the hon. Gentleman and my colleagues and myself, but we recognise that he was sincere in his interest in Northern Ireland—indeed, so much so that, when I came to the House in the 1970s, he regularly expressed his views, different though they may have been from mine, although he did not have a Front-Bench post.

I welcome the opportunity that this debate provides. Like the Secretary of State, I believe that it is high time that we had a debate to consider many of the recent developments in the Province. I recognise that I may well be swimming against a popular tide in the House, although I share many of the hopes and desires expressed for Northern Ireland by other hon. Members. It will not be a surprise to the House to learn that I do not have the expectations that other hon. Members have expressed about the prospects for this process. I certainly have greater fears and concerns than those expressed by others.

I believe that the Provisional IRA has punctuated its activities with what appears to be more a comma than a full stop. However, over the past weeks, the weary and hard-pressed people of Northern Ireland have been enjoying a taste of life without the thud of the bomb and the crack of gunfire.

Much has been said about Northern Ireland and its prospects for peace. Newspaper editors, some politicians, some Churchmen and some people who should know better have been using expressions such as, "Peace is the most precious pearl. Nothing is more important than peace." I expect that many hon. Members share my belief that that statement is not valid. Although peace is undoubtedly a precious gem, to be sought after and cherished, there is a more precious gem than peace. That gem is, of course, freedom, and the protection of the rights and liberties of the people of Northern Ireland.

We would not want peace if it was a peace of slavery or a peace of surrender. Who better than this nation to say that, if peace had been the most precious gem, if peace had been the ultimate objective and if peace had been the most important factor, this nation would have stood aside to Hitler, it would have offered no resistance to Galtieri, and it would have bowed before Saddam Hussein. Indeed, it would have surrendered to the Provisional IRA several decades ago. Peace, therefore, is a priority, but it is not the main priority. The main priority must be the protection of the rights and liberties of the people of Northern Ireland.

When the Prime Minister came to Northern Ireland a few days ago—I welcome his regular visits—he said:

> "Seven weeks after the IRA ceasefire, seven days after the Loyalist paramilitaries' ceasefire, Northern Ireland is at peace."

Those words have been uttered many times before and since his visit, so I must address the question whether Northern Ireland is at peace. Many commentators who have used those terms have not entered certain caveats as carefully as the Prime Minister did in his speech.

For me, peace signifies more than the silencing of guns, more than the stilling of bombs, and more than the easing of the sorrows of war. Peace must be a permanent, enduring and lasting end to violence. It means stability in terms of our political structures. It means that the causes of the conflict have been addressed. What we have is not peace; it is at best a peace process. By definition, if a peace process is real, it may achieve peace at the end, but it is not peace at the beginning.

I shall now look at the prospects for the present process, based on the recognition that the cardinal principle to be observed is the protection of the rights and liberties of the people of Northern Ireland and the acknowledgement that it is yet to be determined whether this process can achieve peace.

As the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) said, we have two ceasefires. First, let us look at the stated reasons why those have been announced. On the part of the loyalist paramilitary organisations, the combined loyalist military command said that it called its ceasefire because "the Union is safe". The Provisional IRA said clearly, and has said since its statement, that its ceasefire has been called because it believes that the Union is to be dissolved. It hardly requires me to point out to the House that we therefore have ceasefires called by two of the paramilitary groups on a contradictory belief as to the outcome of the process.

Secondly, let us look at the nature of the ceasefires that have been announced. The loyalist paramilitary ceasefire is conditional and depends entirely on the Provisional IRA and republicans maintaining a ceasefire. The Provisional IRA ceasefire is clearly conditional on achieving its goals. So if the IRA does not have the concessions necessary to maintain its ceasefire, not only does its ceasefire end, but the loyalist ceasefire ends as well.

The Provisional IRA's announcement did not meet the criteria which the Prime Minister set out on a number of occasions for the basis on which he would engage the Provisional IRA in dialogue in exploratory talks. The Prime Minister had consistently declared that he needed to be satisfied that the ceasefire was permanent. I remind the House that, on 8 October 1993, the Prime Minister said:

> "No Government which I lead will negotiate with those who perpetrate or support the use of violence."

On 1 November 1993, in this House, he said that, if the implication of the remarks by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)

> "is that we should sit down and talk with Mr. Adams and the Provisional IRA, I can say only that that would turn my stomach and those of most hon. Members; we will not do it. If and when there is a total ending of violence, and if and when that ending of

violence is established for a significant time, we shall talk to all the constitutional parties that have people elected in their names. I will not talk to people who murder indiscriminately."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1993; Vol. 231, c. 35.]

In the Downing street declaration, the Prime Minister made clear the position of his Government and that of the Irish Republic. Section 10 says that the involvement of Sinn Fein and, indeed, any other paramilitary organisation, in the democratic process and the exploratory talks depended on a permanent end to the use of or support for paramilitary violence.

On 31 August this year, the Prime Minister said:

"We need to be sure the cessation of violence is not temporary."

And on 7 September, he said:

"I must be certain that this is not just a short-term ceasefire but a credible, long-term, permanent cessation of violence."

So I am looking for the Prime Minister's reasons for determining that the ceasefire is not temporary but long-term, lasting and permanent. When the Provisional IRA called it several months ago, the IRA official newspaper, *An Phoblach*, described it as a suspension of the armed struggle. The hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) said that the chairman of Sinn Fein used the same terms this morning on radio.

When speaking on the subject of the ceasefire, the well-known Sinn Fein spokesman, Mitchell McLoughlin, made it clear that, unless the British Government came up with the goods, the ceasefire was, to use his term, "doomed". It is also worth pointing out that he laid down a number of demands in that statement: that talks must begin with the Government and Sinn Fein—that condition is on its way to being met; that the electoral and democratic mandate of republicans must be recognised in every area—we saw that starting yesterday; that the broadcasting ban must be lifted—that has been met; that exclusion orders on Sinn Fein members must be lifted—that is already under way; and that the demilitarisation process must begin immediately—that is also under way. But his remarks clearly showed that, unless the Government made concessions, the ceasefire would not be permanent.

Speaking in Boston, the leader of Sinn Fein, Mr. Adams, said once more that, if the reasons for violence had not been addressed in two or three years' time, a new leadership would come along. Whatever one may think about the truth of that, it is clear that he does not think that this is a permanent cessation of violence.

Only last week, the former IRA leader and present Army Council member, Joe Cahill, told republicans in America that violence had not been renounced, and said that the position would be re-evaluated at Christmas. Depending on what concessions had been made by that date, he said that they would go on until Easter, at which time they would take a decision on whether to end their violence permanently.

All those remarks have been accompanied by a break-out at a prison, when the IRA attempted to shoot its way out. That hardly demonstrates a wish for a permanent ceasefire. Members of the IRA have consistently challenged the police and the Army on the streets of Northern Ireland, removing in the first instance cross-border blockages, and trying to pull down the security outside police stations. On the Falls road, Mr. Adams told his supporters that the conflict was not over, and that they would be called out on to the streets if the Government did not make the concessions that he required.

The punishment beatings continue. Exclusion orders on young Catholic men whom the IRA deems not suitable to remain in its areas are still in force. Mr. Adams and Mr. McGuinness have had their exclusion orders removed, but they still hold them on young Catholic men, who have been forced to leave Northern Ireland.

A report has appeared in a national newspaper that the Provisional IRA is keeping open its supply lines from America, and the flow of arms is continuing. Indeed, we had an unusual day when my colleague, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), who is currently in the United States, said that he had information that a containerload or so of arms had entered the island. The FBI managed to put out three statements in the same day, two of which confirmed my hon. Friend's statement.

All those factors do not point to a permanence in the IRA's ceasefire—quite the opposite. Yet in spite of them, the Prime Minister made the statement he did. He sometimes wonders why some of us are so cautious about assurances that he gives us. I believe that that is a further lesson to Unionists not to depend on assurances for their political salvation.

A year or more ago, we were assured that there would be no contact with the Provisional IRA. There was. The Government then explained that it was not really contact: it was simply a channel of communication—but, to the people of Northern Ireland, it was a promise broken, or, at best, a promise diluted. We were then assured that there would be no clarification of the Downing street declaration for the Provisional IRA. There was—21 pages of it. The Government explained that it was not clarification; it was a commentary—but, to the people of Northern Ireland, it was another promise broken, or, at best, diluted.

As I said, the Prime Minister promised us that there would be no move to bring Sinn Fein-IRA into exploratory talks until it had permanently ended its violence—but again, there was. The Government now explain to us that, although it is not permanent, they will make a working assumption that it is intended to be permanent. There is a double dilution for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker: another promise bites the dust.

I therefore advise people who are holding on to promises from the Government to look carefully at the bottle of promises they have, because they will see clearly on the label the words, "to be diluted".

Mr. Barnes: Would the hon. Gentleman prefer that there had been no ceasefires in the first place, so that the logical inconsistencies would not have continued?

Mr. Robinson: That must be one of the most absurd views for anyone to take. I think that the hon. Gentleman is being deliberately obtuse—at least, I hope that he is being deliberately obtuse, and that it is not part of his nature.

How on earth could anyone assume that I am worried that promises are being broken because I would prefer violence to occur? I would prefer that the promises were kept. That is the obvious conclusion for anyone to draw from my remarks.

[Mr. Robinson]

What is the next promise that may be broken? Is it the promise—

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is being quite fair to the Prime Minister. I am looking at the Prime Minister's statement, made on 16 September in Belfast. I think the hon. Gentleman stopped short of the part when the Prime Minister said:

> "We shall therefore go on scrutinising both words and actions until—as we hope—we can sensibly make the assumption that the IRA truly intend to end violence for good."

He had previously said:

> "We need to know from their words and their actions that this is a firm and unequivocal decision. They are nearly there. I hope they will have the courage to remove ambiguities and make the . . . statement."

I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is being fair. I think that the Prime Minister was recently expressing quite a well-established line of thought. We needed to be able to make a sensible assumption.

Mr. Robinson: I hope that I am not being unfair to the Prime Minister, but I would point out to the Secretary of State that the Prime Minister's undertaking was that he would not start the clock ticking until he was satisfied that the Provisional IRA ceasefire was permanent. The Secretary of State's words obviously showed that he is not convinced that the IRA ceasefire is permanent. Indeed, the opinion of the Prime Minister that events must be continuously monitored shows that the Prime Minister is not convinced that it is permanent. I did not set the criteria. I did not lay down the yardstick. The Prime Minister did. I am asking the Prime Minister merely that he should keep to his own guidelines.

If the Prime Minister continues to monitor events, I wonder whether he was monitoring BBC radio this morning. Did he hear the opinion of the chairman of Sinn Fein that the cessation of violence will not be permanent? Will the Prime Minister therefore say that, in view of his continuing monitoring of the situation, he will now change the opinion that he expressed when he was in Northern Ireland a few days ago?

The Prime Minister also gave a sign to the hon. Member for North Down last week, in answer to a question about the IRA's arms and explosives. I shall happily give way if someone wants to assure the House that I am drawing the wrong conclusion from this matter. The Prime Minister started to change the basis of his previous promise. His previous promise was that there would be no entry to the negotiating process for the Provisional IRA's representatives until all the guns, arms, ammunition and detonators had been handed over. However, in answer to the hon. Member for North Down, the Prime Minister last week said:

> "Armaments—especially Semtex and detonators, perhaps more than guns—are a crucial issue that will have to be dealt with as we advance the process"—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 140.]

Mr. Spring—who, until last week, had also been sure that guns had to be handed over before the IRA started the negotiating process—changed his opinion. He said:

> "It would be unrealistic to expect the arms to be handed over right now, but I would hope that can be done in due course.
>
> I don't see a completion of any negotiations taking place until arrangements are made for the handing over of arms by both sides."

It seems to have moved from the start of the process to some time during the process, and I note the views of the hon. Gentleman, where he seems to say that, if the guns were not handed over at the beginning, at least there should be some understanding of at what point they should be handed over.

How could anyone sit down in negotiations with the Provisional IRA or anyone else if they are still holding on to their guns? I believe that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) was right when he said that there should be no guns on the table, under the table or outside the door. That seems to make good common sense to me.

In case I was reading too much into the Prime Minister's remarks in his answer to the hon. Member for North Down, I note that the spokespersons—the spin doctors of the Northern Ireland Office—were at work at the weekend, and that they had been helping our newspapers to interpret those events. *The Mail on Sunday* says:

> "Both governments are trying to get the IRA to hand over most of the non-defence weapons"—

where did we hear that expression used today?—

> "such as explosives and mortar bombs".

The Observer said:

> "Handing in guns and explosives is not the British Government's priority".

There you are, now.

It went on to say:

> "No one will want to create artificial hurdles to stop the process".

A senior Northern Ireland Office source said:

> "It's not the guns. The detonators and the bombs do most of the killing."

I would question that, but that is the Northern Ireland Office senior spokesman's views on the matter. Therefore, there is some anxiety that yet a further promise may be watered down.

If the Government cannot be trusted to deliver on those promises, can they be trusted to deliver on the more important issue of the safety of the Union? The quickest glance at all those issues leads me to conclude that I should make a working assumption that the Union is not yet safe.

Mr. Winnick: I cannot understand the logic, for the life of me. If this country has fought terrorism for 25 years, and its international reputation has suffered—in some respects, wrongly, obviously, in our opinion—and if we have made it clear throughout those 25 years under successive Governments, Labour and Conservative, that we will not give in to terrorism, that we will not go against the majority wish in Northern Ireland, why on earth, under conditions of peace, would we abandon that pledge, which has been given by successive Governments and by all the political parties in the House of Commons? I do not understand the logic of what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Robinson: I shall attempt to help the hon. Gentleman.

I do not need to suggest any malevolent intent on the part of those people who are watering down those principles. All I need to show is that they are reducing the standards that they themselves set. The important thing—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry; let me answer the hon. Gentleman. The important thing is the enthusiasm.

Everyone can understand why people so long for peace, hope for peace, desire peace, that they are prepared to push any process forward.

But the criteria set down by the Government initially were set down in the cool light of day, when they recognised that certain standards had to be met along the route to any peace. The Government are reducing those standards as they go along. That may be due to their enthusiasm to achieve peace, but it is a high-risk strategy. If the people of Northern Ireland are made to believe that peace is on its way or that peace has already arrived, but that peace cannot be achieved, those people will be not only deflated, but without hope. I suspect that many hon. Members will know, without me having to say it, what can happen if people are let down in that way.

I want to make it clear that my colleagues and I will do nothing to present an obstacle to real, lasting peace in our Province. The people we represent have much to gain from unconditional and lasting peace, but, after the decades of vicious terror, nobody should be surprised that those who have endured that terror campaign should closely examine the bona fides of the terrorist organisations and the commitments they make.

I put it to the Prime Minister when I last met him—brief though that may have been—that the vital issue for the future of Northern Ireland, from the perspective of Unionists with fears and concerns, was that their rights must be protected through the principle of consent. The traditional guarantee, which has already been repeated in the House, which is enshrined in statute and which successive Prime Ministers have enunciated from the Dispatch Box, is that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom for as long as the people of Northern Ireland wish. But the weakness of that guarantee was brought home to me most acutely in 1985, when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was published.

When the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, it became evident to me that, whatever constitutional guarantees may have been on the statute book or enunciated by Prime Ministers and Secretaries of State, the agreement represented a significant change in the way that Northern Ireland was to be governed in future. That change went to the very core of Northern Ireland's constitutional position. Dublin was now inside the door, but the people of Northern Ireland had not been asked for their consent or been given the opportunity to give it.

I saw a weakness in the constitutional guarantee. It appeared that it was a guarantee only at the end, at the final act of severance—the legal handing over of Northern Ireland to the Irish Republic. It gave the people of Northern Ireland no power or control in any step leading up to that final act. The Downing street declaration also underlines the fact that the people of Northern Ireland do not have a right to give or withhold their consent. They were not asked to give their consent to that declaration and did not have an opportunity to give it.

It is clear that the traditional constitutional guarantee is a limited warranty. It does not apply to each and every step leading to a united Ireland, but only to the final step. There were even some people who looked at the joint declaration and thought that it enunciated and endorsed the principle of consent. They were soon blown out of the water by Albert Reynolds who, on 10 January in Dublin castle, made it clear to the Irish Association that it applied only to that one constitutional issue. He said:

> "It does not mean that all forms of political progress or other decisions by the two Governments are subject to a similar block."

We pressed the Prime Minister to give an undertaking that not only would any constitutional change affecting Northern Ireland be subject to the principle of consent, but any new means of governance for Northern Ireland, or any new institution or structure affecting Northern Ireland. I was heartened by the Prime Minister's statement in Northern Ireland on 16 September, when he said at a press conference at Stormont:

> "So for the avoidance of any doubt I want to make clear today that the Government will submit the final outcome of the three-stranded process of talks to the electorate of Northern Ireland for approval by referendum. That is to say, we shall consult the people of the Province on the full package of proposals as a whole. The details of such a referendum will rightly be for discussion with the parties. Let me say to all the people of Northern Ireland the referendum means that it will be your choice whether to accept the outcome."

However, the Prime Minister did not say what would happen were the outcome of the talks process to be a failure. He did not say whether he would then decide—either on his own or, worse, in league with Mr. Reynolds—that they should bring in their own proposals for change in Northern Ireland. He did not say whether those proposals would also be put to the people of Northern Ireland by way of referendum. The only true consent that is meaningful within the context of Northern Ireland is the explicit approval of the people of Northern Ireland—the population—at each stage of the evolution of any change.

But the Prime Minister implicitly suggested that the commitment did not or may not end with the outcome of the talks process. He said:

> "My commitment means that no one can go behind your backs—not today, not tomorrow, not at any time."

There is a suggestion that the commitment, while given specifically to apply in the one set of circumstances, might also apply in other circumstances. The Prime Minister should apply the principle of consent to all sets of circumstances and for all time. Once again, I today seek confirmation that that is the Government's position, and that the democratic principle of consent will apply to any future change in Northern Ireland.

The Government should clarify the extent to which they will abide by the principle of consent in Northern Ireland. They should formally submit that principle to the House. That would also give the Labour party the opportunity to commit itself to the principle of consent on the terms under which the people of Northern Ireland decide their future.

The principle of consent makes sound common sense. If one looks back into the recent history of Northern Ireland, one sees that, for about 50 years, there was a system of government that had the consent of the Unionist community in Northern Ireland, but not the consent of the nationalist population. It collapsed. Why? Because it did not have sufficient consent within the community. The Sunningdale agreement had the consent of the nationalist community, but not that of the Unionist population. It collapsed after five months. Why? Because it did not have sufficient consent.

[Mr. Robinson]

We must all learn the lesson that one cannot govern without consent. If the Government commit themselves fully to that principle, they will, apart from anything else, leave my colleagues and me free to concentrate on our next priority—urging the Government to try to overcome the obstacles to our participation in a new talks process. I hope that the Government will ensure that they create a talks process that will not be tied to a fixed or predetermined outcome, or to one that is so circumscribed by Albert Reynolds's principles that agreement cannot be achieved.

No sensible negotiator would allow his negotiating base to be either limited or extended by the terms of agreements reached by others. No one could expect us to allow ourselves to be constrained or steered by an agreement to which we were not a party and which we had not signed. The basis for talks must be on a level playing field.

I shall now make some observations on the state of the Union. Some say that the Union is safe. In November 1985, all Unionists believed that the Union was in peril. When I look at its present state, I must ask myself what has changed since 1985 to make the Union safe. Every change since 1985—whether the outflow of the work of the secretariat and the conference to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Downing Street declaration or other concessions that have been granted—shows that, if the Union was in danger in 1985, it is in greater danger today.

I believe that the Government's policy is based on a false premise—the idea that ultimately the people of Northern Ireland will go into a united Ireland. There is no sound reason for believing that. The whole strategy of this Government is based on the idea of a transitional process towards a united Ireland, however. They believe that some time, somewhere down the road, the people of Northern Ireland will not want to be part of the United Kingdom. This is why Northern Ireland is not governed in the same way as other parts of the United Kingdom are. It is why Northern Ireland is the detachable part of the United Kingdom.

It is quite false to believe that the people of Northern Ireland will ever want a united Ireland. An opinion poll carried out by the two Unionist parties some years ago showed that the overwhelming majority in Northern Ireland wanted to retain the link with Great Britain. Not a single supporter of the Democratic Unionist party or the Ulster Unionist party said that he or she wanted a united Ireland. Only six per cent. of those who support the Alliance party said that they wanted a united Ireland; and only 41 per cent.—fewer than half—of the supporters of the SDLP wanted a united Ireland! Not surprisingly, 91 per cent. of those who vote for Sinn Fein said that they wanted a united Ireland, but that 91 per cent. brought the total who wanted a united Ireland to only 17 per cent.

Just think of the constitutional manipulation, the political transformations and the programmes for further change that have been undertaken to placate this mini-minority of 17 per cent. I believe that the Prime Minister should build the Government's Northern Ireland policy around the inevitability of its remaining in the United Kingdom, instead of being dragged by Albert Reynolds into constructing a road that has only one destination, and for which only the timetable is in doubt.

The Prime Minister should move to ensure that Northern Ireland is more contained within the Union, instead of pushing it towards a united Ireland.

6.51 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I congratulate the Labour Front-Bench spokesman and wish her all the best. I have no doubt that she will talk to everyone and listen to everyone. There may even be a "Dear Marjorie" column somewhere along the line in the years ahead. I pay tribute also to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and his colleagues. I salute his remarkable contribution to events in Ireland over a long period. I offer that tribute with the greatest sincerity on behalf of those whom we represent in this House.

I came to this debate with an air of confidence and with a feeling that I would see for the first time in this Chamber some signs of hope in the air. It did not take long for that hope to be dispelled and for the sourness that we heard from both Unionist parties today to creep in again.

Spinoza said that peace is not an absence of war: it is an attitude of mind, a disposition towards benevolence, confidence and justice. After listening to the two Unionist speeches this evening, I wonder where that benevolence is going to be found, or where we shall find the generosity of spirit that will be needed to overcome the problems that we will face. How are we to remove the terrible aridity that has invaded those Unionists' political lives?

I should like to refer to an historic statement made by another Unionist in another forum. William Butler Yeats reminded the people of the Republic of Ireland,

> "We are not petty people".

Indeed; the Unionist people are not a petty people, and they would not want to be associated with the aridity, negativity and nihilism to which we have just listened. The Unionist people among whom I live have greeted the opportunity of peace with confidence, generosity and the sense of justice that I think will be required to solve this problem.

I do not intend to deal today with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). I shall deal with them in my own good time, and there will be plenty of opportunities. I would, however, like to make one point about what the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) said. I agree whole-heartedly with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who challenged him, saying that he had the distinct impression that the hon. Gentleman was almost sorry that peace had broken out—that he would have preferred continuing carnage in the north of Ireland and rubble on the streets of London in the wake of bombs and bullets.

There is something terrible about such a begrudging attitude of mind and a disposition that cannot follow the type of leadership offered so courageously by the Prime Minister, the Irish Prime Minister, the leader of my party, and above all by the ordinary men and women, Unionists and nationalists alike, in the north of Ireland. It is they who have stood up to the bullies and resisted the terrorists, telling them, "You are not going to do that to my children, my country or my community." That is what eventually wore down the conflict and created this wonderful thing called peace, which we must nurture and treasure. We must value it, and to hell with nihilism. Those who are alive today because of the peace will have absolutely no sympathy with the negativity that we have heard from various quarters.

I shall be brief because I know that many others want to speak and we have been detained for some time at the crossroads of aridity by the hon. Member for Belfast, East. I speak from the nationalist point of view. We nationalists want the creation of a united Ireland through peaceful and democratic means—I have never said otherwise. Now the Government and the Unionist parties face a new challenge: how, in the foreseeable future, to create a north of Ireland where nationalists and people who think like me can enjoy equality, self-esteem and dignity while the framework remains. I readily accept the principle of consent—that there can be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. My consent to that idea means that I intend to live in Northern Ireland until a majority of its people decide to change it; but I want to live there with dignity and equality, without my political aspirations or those of the people I represent being compromised by the type of sourness that we have heard today. Together with the Unionist people, we can, for the first time, start to create a settlement in a positive and generous way that will take us beyond the myriad problems that we face.

The coin of consent has two sides. Let us be clear: agreeing that the status of Northern Ireland cannot be changed without the consent of the majority of its people does not mean that I have to agree with the status of Northern Ireland. I have the right politically to disagree with its status while agreeing that it cannot be changed without a majority.

I have a question for some, but not all, the Unionist Members. If a change took place somewhere down the line and the majority of people in the north of Ireland decided that they wanted to change its status, to end the constitutional arrangement with Britain and be part of a 32-county Ireland or to have an independent Ulster, would Unionist Members go on record in *Hansard* and say that they would readily accept the wishes of the majority of people in the north of Ireland? I will give way to anyone who would like to confirm that on the record. That is the acid test of sincerity about adherence to the principle of consent.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I cannot understand why the hon. Gentleman has any difficulty about understanding the Unionist position on the right of consent. The Downing street declaration was not a document that we would have written, but we subscribed to it because it recognised the right of consent not just for today but for tomorrow and next year and for as long as we have any say in the matter.

Mr. Mallon: I am delighted that I gave way because, with his usual honesty and sincerity, the hon. Gentleman has stated what I believe to be the correct position of unionism, just as it is the correct position of nationalism. If we have done nothing else in the debate, at least we have put both positions on the record for posterity.

I spoke about equality and dignity. It is the job of the two Governments to ensure that what is created will give those to me and to the people I represent. It is an onerous task because when the two Governments issued the joint declaration on 15 December, they decided to remove the cause of the conflict, to overcome the legacy of history and to heal the divisions of that legacy. They made a commitment to go to the heart of and solve the underlying problems in Ireland. Let us remind ourselves of what was in the joint declaration. It was not confined to Northern Ireland. It states:

> "The role of the British Government will be to encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of such agreement over a period through a process of dialogue and co-operation based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland."

That is the role of the British Government while they remain in Ireland. By working together that aim can be translated into reality.

Does anybody imagine that, given the sorry history of the north of Ireland, there will not be problems? Does anyone imagine that those can be overcome quickly or that there will not be things said on radio in the mornings that will throw everybody into a tizzy?

A remarkable feature of the speeches so far has been the absolute obsession with Sinn Fein and what it and McGuinness—not the hon. Member behind me—and Mitchell McLoughlin say. That is what the debate has been about, but I should like to put it in terms of the other section of the nationalist community in the north of Ireland, the community which does not bomb anyone and which does not, has not and will not inflict terrorism on anyone. Its stand in the north of Ireland prevented the entire nationalist community from going over the brink after the hunger strike about which we have heard in the debate. How clearly we remember that period. Let us look at the needs of those people to see how we can give them equality and dignity and whether we will have the courage to be able to do that, because that is what the two Governments will have to do.

Will anything given to the nationalist community be by grace and favour of the Unionist parties? Will it have to have Jim's imprimatur in political terms? Will I have to meet an unwritten test of unionism before I can get dignity for the community in which I live? Will we need to have the agreement of all sections of unionism before making changes in some of the matters with which we shall have to deal?

Reference has been made to policing, but as soon as the term is used, hackles rise. I understand the reason for that because I know the emotional conflict in the Unionist community about policing. I remind the House that no section of the community owns the police; that the police are the servants of the entire community. Are we to approach changes in policing on the basis that they are needed for a new and changing situation, or will they be approached on the basis of what unionism will allow? Those are the questions that we and the two Governments must ask ourselves.

Will there be north-south bodies that will allow the expression of my aspirations? Will they have powers to enable them to be dynamic and capable of acting, of serving all the people and of being of mutual benefit, or will we have the sort of north-south bodies that unionism will allow? Does unionism have a veto on the decisions of sovereign Governments so that those Governments cannot make decisions about solving Ireland's problems?

That imprimatur of the Unionist parties is what we reach when we deal with questions of equality, parity of esteem and dignity. If the nationalist position is squeezed out as one squeezes toothpaste from a tube in terms of what unionism will or will not allow, we will not get to the root of the problem. I make that point forcefully

[Mr. Mallon]

because we are at a crossroads in deciding the philosophical basis from which we should start to address our political problems.

We can address those problems only on the basis of honesty. We can respond to the type of leadership that has not so far been given with generosity of spirit and confidence for the future, and with the courage that is required to take on the unknown, because that is what we face.

Mr. Maginnis: I should like to make two points in answer to the hon. Gentleman. First, as a Unionist I do not have a veto. I have a mandate given at the ballot box, and that mandate must be honoured by me and by others who represent the majority community. The only veto that I know of in Northern Ireland is the veto that is exercised by terrorists through the barrel of a rifle. The hon. Gentleman should be careful when speaking about the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I do not want the RUC to be my police force: I want it to be the community's police force, and that will happen only if people such as the hon. Gentleman do not kick them around like a political football. I shall try not to do that if he will do the same.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I have one minute left but if I had the time I would say thanks very much.

If the Unionist veto means the strong political influence of a coherent community of 900,000 people in the north of Ireland, I accept that: it would be futile not to do so. If it is something extra—if it is something that must be met on every decision that a sovereign British Government will take in relation to the solution of the problem—it is a contrived veto which will do nothing for unionism and which never has over the years. We should look where it has got us; it will bring us all into a position where we can solve nothing.

Generosity of spirit has been shown by the Prime Minister, the Taoiseach and others, including the people of the north of Ireland, Unionist and nationalist, with the courage that will be required and with the approach that will be needed to solve this awful, intractable problem—let us face it on that basis and none other.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I must remind the House that between now and 9 o'clock speeches are limited to 10 minutes.

7.10 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I am grateful to follow the triptych on the wall of Northern Ireland politics made by the excellent contributions of the hon. Members for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). I shall draw something from each of those speeches in the few remarks that I wish to make.

Everyone taking part in the debate recognises that there has been a very substantial change since we last met to discuss Northern Ireland affairs. Those of us who had some involvement in them way back are in many ways astounded that this debate is taking place and at its context.

Our first feelings are a combination of relief and gratitude—gratitude to those who, like my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, have taken immensely difficult decisions showing great initiative and courage to bring these matters to book.

In terms of the phases with which we have to deal with matters in Northern Ireland, relief and gratitude may well be fairly short-term. We have already seen some signs recently and in the speeches just made that there is a fairly short time limit allowed for both relief and gratitude.

After 25 years of total disruption of civil liberties, during which people experienced difficulties walking round the streets, faced road blocks and body searches, had their handbags emptied on to the pavement and were unable to go Christmas shopping—as was the case when I was a Minister—a remarkable change will have to take place before the various factors that have come into play can cohere to produce a more unified and stable society.

After relief and gratitude comes phase two—suspicion and anxiety, and I suspect that we have seen something of that already in the comments of the hon. Member for Belfast, East, the deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist party. Deep anxiety and suspicion have represented a common view. People want to know what has happened to create such an enormous shift so remarkably quickly after the intransigence, the bullets and the bombs have lasted for 25 years. It is a rational view to be deeply suspicious that some secret agenda has been worked upon. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it abundantly clear that that is not the case and has repeated that nothing was underhand and that there were no nods and no winks, but it will take a long time to remove entirely the suspicion that something has occurred. With suspicion comes anxiety about what happens next—the anxiety that, although a hideous nightmare is apparently over, suddenly things will change in a unknown manner and, possibly, in a unstructured way.

In that second phase of anxiety and suspicion, decisions on such issues as disarmament and the role of the Army and the police are absolutely crucial. There cannot be any meaningful exchange between Government and Sinn Fein or the IRA until the issue of disarmament has been addressed. There must be disarmament to a level which is at least understandable and recognisable so that anxiety is reduced.

Those of us who have been involved from time to time in, for example, Home Office activities, know that there are two attitudes to crime: there is crime itself and there is the fear of crime, and sometimes the fear of crime is a vastly more destabilising factor than the incidence of crime itself. The anxiety factor has to be addressed in the next phase into which the Government, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in particular, will be moving. The Army must not be removed, as the Sinn Feiners would wish, until the anxieties and the confidence of the population have been restored to a level at which that can be done most safely.

The third phase is the phase of caution and care. Caution, I am happy to say, is clear in some of the Prime Minister's recent speeches and comments. He is right to move slowly, to behave with great caution and to take note that he can move only in such a way that he carries the confidence of the people with him. I suspect that the vast majority of the citizens represented by Members of Parliament on both sides of the House are extremely anxious that there should be procedure with care—that it does not outrun the cautious view of many people in the Province that, with the termination of hostilities, there has to be a considerable period of time before people will regard the situation as something approaching normal.

We need a cautious period and a careful period, making sure that the question is not the timetable that the Taoiseach may wish to see. The rapidity with which he himself has moved is surprising—although of course at the last election the Sinn Fein commitment represented about 2 per cent. of the vote in the Republic and a much larger and more important proportion in the Province, so the anxieties that he may have in relation to the pace at which the movements are made are not as great as the anxieties of those who are responsible for the governance of Northern Ireland.

I am concerned that there should not be a timetable and that the only factor that should determine the pace is the real and genuine prospect of success—not an artificial timetable, but moving with caution and care to ensure success.

The final phase—and we do not know how long it will take—will, no doubt, be confidence and then commitment. It is clear from comments across the spectrum of the debate tonight that the confidence of the entire community of Northern Ireland has to be obtained. It may not exist currently in the nationalist community or in certain minds of the Democratic Unionist quarter of the population— a very significant proportion of votes. It may not exist among those who support the majority party—the Unionist party. There is certainly anxiety and suspicion, and it may take some time for confidence to be built up again.

In a sense, the Government have only to ensure that they move in a way that allows the confidence of the people to determine that point at which they can reach commitment. Obviously, within that phase comes the crucial nature of whatever structures are to be put into Northern Ireland to enable the population— the entire community—to be reflected properly in a democratic manner and to start reaching decisions for the governance of Northern Ireland at local or regional level. Those structures have to be built in a situation where they can create confidence so that those who are elected to those structures will represent a people who are prepared to reach commitment.

The consequence of the rather laborious and dangerous process of unknown timing will ultimately, I trust, be that the people of Northern Ireland, throughout the length and breadth of the Province, whatever their view, their religion or their political affiliation—and many will have none—will be the ultimate winners after 25 years of desperate trial and tribulation.

7.19 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As I said in an intervention, it is important to mark the fact that terrorism has not triumphed over the democratic process.

The course taken by the Provisional IRA from the late 1960s onwards, which was designed to force through the union of both parts of Ireland by terror and sustained violence, was always unlikely to succeed. The policy of successive Governments was quite clear—that the majority wish to remain part of the United Kingdom would be respected. Although it is true that the IRA could not be defeated—if that had been possible, it would have been achieved—nor was there any chance that it would succeed.

In the past 25 years, terrible crimes and atrocities have been committed, obviously mainly in Northern Ireland, but also on the mainland. In the west midlands, we recall the murder of 21 totally innocent people in Birmingham in November 1974. As we all know, they were killed by bombs in two public houses. It is right and proper that we should remember them, as we should remember the victims of all the atrocities of the past 25 years. We should also remember the victims of the loyalist murder gangs, including their last victim, who were put to death for no other reason than that they happened to be Catholics.

I am reasonably optimistic about the permanence of the IRA ceasefire. Just as the leaders of the IRA must have realised that they had not achieved their objectives in 25 years, they must also have realised that, even if they continued their terrorist campaign for another 25 years, there was no sign that they would succeed. They were right to appreciate that victory would not be possible. They, and the leaders of Sinn Fein, must also have recognised that, by continuing with the killings and rejecting the joint declaration of the British and Irish Governments of last December, they were seriously out of step with opinion in the Irish Republic and, I imagine, with that of most nationalists in the north.

Although I believe that the IRA ceasefire is likely to be permanent, I accept that another terrorist campaign could be launched in future years. No one can be certain about that. Other people may come to share the view held by the Provisional IRA in the late 1960s: that Britain can be forced out of Northern Ireland through terror and violence. Progress towards political reform is therefore necessary to guarantee that any such future campaign is unlikely to succeed in winning marked support among the minority community.

We must recognise, as I am sure that Ministers already do, that there are two distinct communities in Northern Ireland. It is no good obscuring that fact. I am not suggesting that everyone in the minority community is in favour of a united Ireland. It is important, however, to take note of the historical traditions of each community, which are as legitimate as one another. Improvements in the local economy and in the housing stock will also deter violence, because undoubtedly the economic conditions of Northern Ireland aided the forces of terrorism.

I understand that the concept of power sharing is no longer a controversial breaking point among Unionists, as it was 20 years ago. We remember what happened in 1974 shortly after the election of a Labour Government, when the Sunningdale agreement was destroyed on the ground in Northern Ireland. It is unthinkable that any political changes in Northern Ireland would not now be based on power sharing between the two communities. What was once so controversial and a matter of principle to the majority community 20 years ago is no longer so for the majority of Unionists. More is required, however, because a purely internal political settlement will not meet with the approval of the minority community, nor is it likely to meet with the approval of the Irish Republic. An Irish dimension is required. That is why cross-border organisations with some executive powers are as essential as power sharing in any political settlement.

[Mr. David Winnick]

Irresponsible elements within the Unionist community argue that the peace process is part and parcel of a plot to drive Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom. They claim that the Irish Republic and what some Unionists call the pan-nationalist front are plotting to bring about a united Ireland. That is absolute nonsense. Irish Governments of successive political parties have declared time and again that they respect the majority wish of the people of Northern Ireland. They recognise that there cannot be a united Ireland as such without the agreement of the majority community. That has been the Irish Government view for a long time, regardless of articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. The hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), who co-chairs the British-Irish parliamentary body, and I have met many Irish politicians of all parties and we know that they believe that consent is absolutely essential to achieve any united Ireland.

The basis of continued progress must undoubtedly be a working relationship between Dublin and London. The problems with Stormont would probably never have arisen if there had been such a proper working relationship between the two countries. How much better it would have been had that relationship existed prior to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is right and proper that two neighbouring countries should work closely together. It is perfectly understandable for the Irish Republic to have a legitimate interest in the north, as was recognised in the agreement.

Northern Ireland has been a feature of British politics for a very long time. Those of us who read our history know of the fierce debates that took place over home rule in 1886 and afterwards. We know about the even fiercer debates and bitter controversies of the years leading to the war in 1914. That was an unhappy time in Anglo-Irish relations and should not be repeated. It is rather remarkable that, given all the changes that have occurred in Europe since 1914, making it almost unrecognisable by comparison, here we are in 1994, six years from the next century, once again debating Northern Ireland.

I hope that, at long last, we are near to reaching a settlement which respects the wishes of the majority community. The Labour party has no plot. As my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), the Labour party spokesman on Northern Ireland, and her predecessor made clear, we are in favour of a united Ireland on one basis—that it has the support of the majority of the people. We recognise that without that consent the proposal simply would not work. It would not be possible to transfer a substantial minority of people within a united Ireland if that minority was unwilling to accept that. Such forced transfers do not work, as is clear from what has happened in the Indian sub-continent and in former Yugoslavia. What we say, we mean, because it makes political sense.

It is necessary for political reforms to take place along the lines that we in the Labour party have indicated. Certainly, there should be power sharing; certainly there should be an Irish dimension, and certainly there should be a continued working relationship between London and Dublin. If we can work on that basis, we shall perhaps at long last end the sickening violence which has disfigured Northern Ireland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time is up.

7.29 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): For the sake of brevity, I must be selective. The much welcomed peace process is now nearly eight weeks old. It is far too early to predict the outcome. It is too early to talk in terms of being optimistic or pessimistic. Those are vagaries. We must, however, ensure that our thinking is firmly rooted in realism and reality. There is a very long way to go. Some of the early signs are not very promising. There are many pitfalls to be avoided.

There is good news. The good news, of course, is that a genuine peace process has started. The bad news is that, despite many pleasing sound bites, there are strong reasons for being deeply suspicious about the policies, the motives and the objectives of the IRA. Due to all that, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have, in my judgment, been absolutely right. Their cautious, step-by-step approach has been fully justified. The peace process can maintain its momentum only if it retains the confidence of both sides of the deeply divided community in Northern Ireland. That is why the Prime Minister has been right to move slowly and cautiously, to warn against euphoria and over-hasty action—all of which could jeopardise the process.

The Government's policy has been right from the start. They were right in February last year to enter into the exchange of messages with the IRA after that message was received which began:

> "The conflict is over but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close . . . "

The Government were right to embark on the lengthy dialogue with Dublin which led to the Downing street declaration. The Government were right in that Downing street declaration to assert the concept of consent rather than coercion as the way forward and to underwrite Northern Ireland's constitutional guarantee. The Government have been right since the ceasefire to move the peace process forward, but to do so cautiously and slowly.

We must have no illusions about the IRA ceasefire. When Mr. Adams announced that ceasefire on 31 August, the Provisionals were neither war-weary nor militarily defeated. The IRA had not lost the "arms struggle", nor had it lost its appetite for it. If the IRA so wished, it could tomorrow inflict death and destruction in virtually any part of the United Kingdom, just as loyalist terrorists could do so in Northern Ireland if they so chose. The IRA has not permanently renounced violence. There has been much reference already in the debate to the disagreeable interview with Mr. McLoughlin on this morning's "Today" programme, which illustrates the point.

The cessation of military operations is a long, long way from the renunciation—permanently—of violence. I fear that some Irish republicans can and probably will resume violence if the IRA's present option does not deliver the goods that they seek. The ceasefire statement signalled the Provisionals' belief that, while present circumstances prevail, they can better achieve their objectives by suspending military operations rather than by continuing them. The IRA objective remains to obtain a seat at the negotiating table and hope that it can so orchestrate events that external pressure will convince the United Kingdom Government to make concessions, to compromise their commitment to Northern Ireland. Alternatively, the IRA could interpret UK intransigence as justification for resumed violence.

We must stand fast against IRA demands for an amnesty for prisoners. We must insist on the surrender of IRA and loyalist weapons and explosives before there can be meaningful talks. Most especially, we must take note of the fact that the IRA has rejected Northern Ireland's constitutional guarantee and the Prime Minister's promised referendum in the north in absolute terms. When Mr. Adams declared on 19 September that

> "the British government's imposed veto based on this artificial majority is undemocratic and unacceptable",

he was restating the Provisionals' willingness to impose a united Ireland, against the wishes, if need be, of the majority of people in the north.

The Government have followed the right course of action. The Government are charting the right way forward. It is right that we move towards "talks about talks" with the Provisionals. It is right that we search for an agreed Ireland under the three strand headings, clearly stressing that strand No. 1 has less to do with the Republic than the other strands. Above all, time and again, we must repeat our irrevocable and absolute commitment to the constitutional guarantee which we have given to the people of Northern Ireland. There will be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, nor will any cross-border structures or institutions be created unless that is the wish of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. That is the way forward.

7.35 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The speech of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) was delivered with his habitual acerbity, but it contained an important and unequivocal acceptance of the principle of consent and it recognised further that that meant that Northern Ireland would continue to be part of the United Kingdom. I hope that that means that he will accept and participate in any future institutions in Northern Ireland. I do not want to trail over the past, but the problems of Stormont were to a considerable extent due to the hostility and obstruction of nationalists. If, in the future, nationalists will be positive, they will be welcomed and mutual esteem will be generated from there.

The Secretary of State's speech made reference to the joint framework document and acknowledged that there were difficulties with regard to that document. Unfortunately, he did not go into detail on that matter and I would have welcomed more from him. Perhaps we shall hear more about that from the Minister in his winding-up speech.

I shall comment on what appeared to be some of the constitutional issues with regard to that joint framework document with which there appear to be difficulties at the moment. The Irish Prime Minister, Mr. Reynolds, has talked about the need for what he calls a balanced constitutional settlement. So far as we can determine, however, the proposals being advanced by the Irish Government are not balanced and would not lead to a settlement.

The Irish position with regard to articles 2 and 3 of their constitution is not satisfactory. Judging by press reports, they are apparently offering to insert into article 3 a qualification that unification, if it is to come about, will be by consent. That is not an acceptable position. Merely amending article 3 is not enough. It is not clear whether an amendment to article 3 would enable the Irish Government formally to acknowledge that Northern Ireland is de jure part of the United Kingdom, because it would leave intact the assertion in article 2 that the national territory is the whole of Ireland. Furthermore, it would preserve the territorial ambition or aspiration and so it would hold out no prospect of a stable relationship. Unless the territorial claim is explicitly renounced, the Irish Government are, in effect, serving notice that they will still continue to try to realise that claim or ambition and are merely forswearing a means which is not currently in their capacity.

The Irish try to justify that position by saying that they need article 2 to define the nation and they advance what to me seems the ridiculous argument that if they repealed article 2, towns in Northern Ireland would somehow cease to be Irish or that northern nationalists would not be entitled to be recognised in some way as part of the Irish nation.

If that is a real concern—I wonder whether it is merely a tactical argument—there is a solution. There is no difficulty, I should have thought, with drawing a distinction between the nation and the state. That is done in many other European countries, where a part of the nation lives outside the borders of the state. Indeed, that may be hinted at in some respects in the Irish constitution, which contains headings referring to the nation and the state, so that some sort of distinction along those lines may be implicit in their constitution. Unfortunately, the Irish constitution as currently drafted does not draw a clear distinction between the nation and the state. Indeed, the territorial claim comes in the section headed "nation" rather than "state".

There may be a solution to this point if the Irish were to clarify their constitution. They could do so in a way that recognised that northern nationalists were a part of the nation, provided, however, that the state was clearly defined as being only the present geographic entity known as the Republic of Ireland and that there was no implication of a territorial ambition — and, of course, provided that the Ulster British people were not insulted by being described as part of Mr. Reynolds's Irish nation. If there is legitimate Irish concern, it could be met in that way.

The Irish also apparently wish to see changes to the Government of Ireland Act 1920. They say that they are seeking only symbolic changes to that Act. That is a position and a claim by the Irish which I have always found somewhat difficult to follow. The Irish seem to believe that section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act 1920 in some way contains a British claim to Northern Ireland. That is simply nonsense. There is no British claim to Northern Ireland.

Section 75 of the 1920 Act is not a substantive section. It is purely a saving clause. It makes it clear that the Parliaments being created by the 1920 Act would not detract from the authority of this House. The authority of this House in no way derives from section 75. It derives from the Act of Union. Section 75 of the 1920 Act is not significant.

[Mr. David Trimble]

Section 75 of the 1920 Act has been kept on the statute book for reasons that are not altogether clear. The Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 repealed virtually all of the 1920 Act. Only three or four provisions from the 1920 Act remain on the statute book. They include some financial provisions which are of no great significance, section 1(2) which defines Northern Ireland and is the only important part of the Act, and section 75. Section 75 could be repealed and disappear tomorrow and make absolutely no difference to the constitutional position.

In some respects, repealing section 75 would be preferable to the sort of amendment that we suspect that the Irish are seeking. The text of a proposed amendment to section 75 was leaked some time ago to the press in Dublin. It was leaked by one of the three civil servants who are members of the liaison group with which Her Majesty's Government are supposed to be in negotiations and discussions. It is a remarkable reflection on the character and integrity of the people with whom Her Majesty's Government are discussing matters that a civil servant involved in the liaison group leaked that document to the press.

The leaked document is horrendous. It would turn section 75, which is purely a saving clause, into a substantive provision which could seriously damage the Union and would create great difficulties for future legislation and practice. The document contains the kind of gobbledegook and nonsense that one might allow to pass in an ephemeral document, but which if translated into law would cause enormous difficulties for this House and for a future Administration. I hope and trust that it will be the Government's position that an amendment in the terms of that leaked to the press will be firmly dealt with and sat on. I should like to hear comments about that in the Minister's winding-up speech.

The Irish are also pressing for cross-border institutions. On that point, the Irish Prime Minister has referred on several occasions to the Council of Ireland, which was provided for in the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Monday's *Irish Times* quotes the Irish Prime Minister as saying that meaningful north-south institutional links with executive functions

"were part of the original compromise on partition in the Government of Ireland Act 1920 and in the Treaty."

He is quite wrong. The 1920 Act, which merely provided for devolution within the United Kingdom to two regional assemblies, did indeed contain provision for common administration of railways, fisheries and contagious diseases in animals by a Council of Ireland. However, those were matters of no great political significance.

In Nicholas Mansergh's recent book "The Unresolved Question", which was published in 1991, the only reference to the Council of Ireland is an unidentified quotation—I think that it is actually from Asquith—in which the Council of Ireland is described as

"a fleshless and bloodless skeleton."

In fact, the council never functioned. The Northern Ireland Parliament appointed members to it in June 1921, but no members were appointed by the southern Parliament. The treaty of December 1921 provided for the abolition of the council with regard to the south. So much for the claim by the Taoiseach that that was part of the treaty.

For the north, the council remained in limbo until it was wound up by the 1925 agreement. Interestingly, the 1925 agreement provided for joint meetings of the two Governments—the Stormont Government and the Dublin Government—to discuss matters of common interest.

It may interest hon. Members to know that two meetings took place under the provisions of the Northern Ireland Act 1925 agreement. There was a meeting of Agriculture Ministers and a meeting at which the Dublin Cabinet Secretary attended a meeting of the Stormont Cabinet. However, those provisions were ended by the Irish Government. Cosgrave, the Irish Prime Minister, said at the time that it was too much of an embarrassment for him to meet his northern counterparts. By containing the territorial claim, the 1937 constitution ended the possibility of further meetings. That remains the case until the 1937 constitution is ended.

Mr. Reynolds's error with regard to the Council of Ireland may be a result of his ignorance. However, the references in the earlier parts cannot be described as ignorance. The conclusion that I draw from the inaccurate description by the Irish of what they are proposing is that they are not negotiating in good faith. The Irish sometimes—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman's time is up.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise, particularly to hon. Members from Northern Ireland, for impinging even briefly on the debate, but a matter of considerable importance has arisen and I seek your guidance.

Earlier this week there were reports in the *Evening Standard* about lobbying that had taken place in support of Ebbsfleet and Blue Circle with regard to the choice of an intermediate station on the proposed channel tunnel link. The central allegation was that the lobbying firm of which the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) is a director had used its influence to secure meetings with Ministers right up to the level of Prime Minister.

Tonight the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden has resigned as director of the lobbying firm concerned. In view of the gravity of the allegations and the fact that there appears to be a correlation between them and the fact that she now recognises a conflict of interest as she has resigned, it is of the utmost importance that we have a statement at the earliest possible opportunity on the circumstances surrounding the matter and, in particular, that we have a statement from the Prime Minister about what meetings took place and what influence was exerted on behalf of Ebbsfleet and Blue Circle.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I represent the Stratford area, which is one of the areas being considered for the intermediate station. Will you please advise me how I can possibly represent my constituents fairly and equitably if someone else can use influence with Ministers in a way that I cannot as I cannot therefore represent my constituents in the way that I would wish to?

Will this point of order be reported to Madam Speaker tomorrow, so that we shall have a chance of asking for a statement from the new Secretary of State for Transport and so that I can know that the interests of my constituency and of Stratford will be considered fairly in terms of the intermediate station and we do not have to involve ourselves with a public relations company that employs a vice-chairman of the Conservative party?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have heard no indication that a statement is to be made. No doubt the points that have been made will have been noted by those on the Government Front Bench.

7.48 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I welcome the progress that has been made on the peace initiative. Many tributes have already been paid to the work of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in achieving this stage. I add my tributes particularly to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, my constituency neighbour, for his ability and success so far. I am sure that his vision, tenacity and, on occasion, his undoubted good humour have helped to move the negotiations forward to the benefit of so many in the Province and in this country. I also pay tribute to the work of the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram).

I strongly support the Government's cautious approach. It is absolutely vital. Not all hon. Members agree with it, but the House generally supports that step-by-step approach. It would be a huge mistake if undue pressure broke that steady and careful approach. We cannot be confident that the ceasefire arrangements will hold while there is no clear way forward in terms of giving up arms and explosives. That must be the next step in the careful agenda.

In balancing the discussions, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has also demonstrated his readiness to judge the IRA by its action rather than its words, and he has rightly given the clear commitment that, if the ceasefire holds, we can have exploratory talks before the year is over. That must be a correct and sensible way forward. It has been proven beyond doubt by the stage that we have reached in the peace process that the early talks and contacts with the IRA, which were widely attacked at the time and which caused Ministers to stand up to great fire both in the press and elsewhere, have paid dividends.

I was interested in the point of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), which was that the Anglo-Irish Agreement had enabled discussions to take place between Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office and Ministers in the Irish Government. He said that that process had helped them to understand each other's point of view and, therefore, increase trust between them. That must be a sign of the way in which, as negotiations develop between the democratic parties in the Province, better working relationships can be established. Those are vital points.

I shall spend a moment or two referring to the importance of achieving greater employment prospects in the Province. Until now, there has been much discussion of the fact that many employment initiatives have been taken, and that, if only the terrorist problem no longer existed, many of the Province's unemployment problems would be solved. That will not be the case. It will take an awful lot of effort and continuous work by individual private entrepreneurs and statutory bodies to make progress. As has been mentioned, the reduced need for Government spending on the security forces could result in initially higher unemployment and that will not be an encouragement to people in the Province. Therefore, it is necessary that no opportunity is lost to use Government funding and, most important, to stimulate entrepreneurial activity in the Province, in particular in small businesses.

Obviously, inward investment by large companies will continue to be an important part of achieving economic development in the Province, but, as in many instances in the United Kingdom, small businesses will generate increased activity at many levels. Increased effort in education and training will be required to equip people for such entrepreneurial work. The Government should focus strongly on activities that will generate additional work within the Province.

My 10 years' experience of the Province gives me great confidence in the business acumen and ability of people there to grip a situation, to make progress and to achieve success. The people of the Province are admirable, as the way in which they have stood up to terrorist attacks from both sides of the political divide for 25 years has demonstrated. I am confident that they will bring such ability to bear in building a more vibrant and active economy and thereby will provide more job opportunities if the peace initiative holds and develops. They have great opportunities. Their history, commitment, energy and enthusiasm give me cautious confidence in the future.

7.55 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): It is almost unheard of for me to say anything good about the Government, but I must say that I warmly welcome the recent steps to further the peace process in Ireland. I recognise the important roles that the British and Irish Governments have played in that process. In order to encourage the peace process, it was very important—indeed, essential—for the British Government to respond fairly quickly and positively to the declared ceasefire by the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries. I am sure that there is wide support for the reopening of cross-border roads, the lower profile that is being adopted by the British Army, the lifting of the exclusion orders and, of course, the lifting of the ludicrous broadcasting ban. I also wish the Government every success in their efforts to enter exploratory talks with Sinn Fein by the end of the year.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), because it was largely due to his initiating the dialogue that the peace process got off the ground. He showed great courage and tenacity despite being subjected at times to a deluge of criticism and, indeed, vilification from certain hon. Members and others.

I also publicly thank my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who, for many years in the House and elsewhere, has consistently campaigned for peace and justice for all the people of Ireland. I trust that my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) will continue that good work, and I congratulate her on her appointment. While I am dishing out all those compliments—

Ms Mowlam: It is very unusual.

Mr. Canavan: It is very unusual, yes.

I also give credit to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who has a key role to play in the peace process. I firmly believe that the Downing street

[Mr. Canavan]

initiative of December 1993 would be as dead as the previous initiative of 1985 if the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and his party had taken the same intransigent attitude as the Democratic Unionist party. I look forward to the day when the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) shows the same flexibility. Unfortunately, judging by the speech of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), that day will not come soon.

I understand people's desire—particularly the Unionists' desire—for an assembly for Northern Ireland. If that assembly becomes a reality, it must not be simply a resurrection of the old Stormont system where the winner-takes-all attitude led to widespread discrimination and denial of human rights. If an assembly is to command wide respect, it must include real power sharing and be accompanied by a cross-border institution, or institutions, with real executive powers.

Previously, I have declared my belief that the partition of Ireland was a gross political blunder and a crime against the Irish people. I have also declared in the House and elsewhere my support for the peaceful reunification of Ireland, and I still see that as a legitimate democratic goal. But I am realistic enough to know—more importantly, the overwhelming majority of people in the island of Ireland are realistic enough to know this—that a united Ireland is not on the immediate agenda. However, what should be on the immediate agenda is the establishment of cross-border co-operation on such matters as trade, tourism, transport, energy sharing and a common strategy to attract inward investment. Such co-operation could be of immediate benefit to the people of Ireland, both north and south of the border. The other day, the chairman of the Northern Ireland tourist board, Mr. Hugh O'Neill, estimated that if the peace process lasts, tourism alone could generate an extra 20,000 jobs in the next five years. I therefore urge the Government to put more emphasis on the all-Ireland dimension with a view to bringing about peace and reconciliation between not only the different communities in Northern Ireland but all the people of Ireland, whether north or south of the border.

I shall finish on this note. Earlier, I was sorry to hear the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) say that he did not want to take part in the All-Ireland Forum. I put to him an alternative proposal that it is time that he and his Unionist colleagues of whatever party reconsidered the decision to boycott the British-Irish parliamentary body. It has no real executive decision-making powers, but nevertheless it is useful and valuable in terms of encouraging relations between parliamentarians in Britain and in Ireland both north and south of the border. Although it does not have any real executive power, it has some influence in that it is able to make representations to the British and Irish Governments.

Our work would be much more valuable if Unionist Members of Parliament from the various parties participated. They have nothing to lose and the people whom they represent—the Unionist community in Northern Ireland—might have something to gain. I believe that the people of Northern Ireland as a whole would have a great deal to gain if their elected representatives took part in such discussions. Surely, it is only through dialogue and democratic debate that the peace process will reach fruition and all the people of Ireland, whatever their traditions, will be able to live together in peace and harmony while respecting each other's different beliefs.

8.3 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): It is never easy to admit that one is wrong, but on this occasion I freely admit that my pessimism about the peace process has not been justified thus far. Indeed, I am delighted that my original doubts have not been confirmed by events. I hope and pray that the process will continue.

When one gets something wrong, it is important to understand why. On this occasion, I sense that there are two things that have prevented my misgivings from turning into reality: the active involvement of the Prime Minister, and the state of public opinion in Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister's role in the peace process has been pivotal. The Downing street declaration and the progress that has been made since are eloquent testimonies to his personal commitment to the cause, and his political courage and diplomatic skill. Whatever our personal party politics, all of us should unite in giving support and thanks to the Prime Minister for what he has done.

Another reason why I have not been proved right thus far is that public opinion has been overwhelmingly in favour of the peace process. I sense that public opinion has played a key part in producing flexibility in Dublin, establishing both ceasefires and prompting a positive response from the Unionists. The message that I get time and again is that the overwhelming majority of people of both traditions and on both sides of the border have never supported violence and, now that it has stopped, they are all determined to do everything in their power to prevent it from starting again. It is with that in mind that we should turn to the future of the peace process itself.

I sometimes worry that the peace process might be like a high-jump competition: each round sees the bar get higher, each round sees jumping it get ever harder and every high-jump competition ends when even the best fail to clear the final hurdle. I hope that it will not be like that in Northern Ireland.

While I have little doubt that the peace process will make more progress, I see two problems that may prove impossible to clear: the surrender of arms and explosives, and the premature release of terrorist prisoners both north and south of the border. As some people have said, securing the early surrender of arms and explosives is a formidable challenge. Some believe that to push too hard and too quickly for that will wreck the peace process. While I am a realist, I also believe that if we do not push hard and reasonably quickly, that will also wreck the peace process.

Despite everything that has been said today, and despite the experience of the past eight weeks, I agree with the Sinn Fein spokesman who said on Radio 4 today that there is a difference between a ceasefire and permanent peace, and one of those differences is arms and explosives. While the retention of arms and explosives does not need to be a barrier to starting exploratory talks, I at least want to make it clear that I could never vote for any settlement that was founded on the use of arms and explosives as a bargaining counter or where the surrender of them was a reward for promising political structures that are acceptable to the IRA.

Another difficult issue is the pressure that is building up for the premature release of terrorist prisoners. I choose my words with care, but I want to make my position crystal clear to the House. Murder is murder. It can never be an unfortunate but excusable consequence of political campaigning. I am not interested in why someone chooses to blow up an innocent child or gun down an elderly person who is enjoying a drink. Such evil acts can never be justified or excused in my book. I want my hon. Friends on the Front Bench and in the Whips Office to know that I shall never vote for any settlement that has been bought by or includes an amnesty for so-called political prisoners. I simply cannot go with that.

Despite those two grave reservations, we must press ahead with the peace process. As we do so, however, we need to be aware of two dangers—the danger of over-inflating the status of the IRA, Sinn Fein and Gerry Adams, and the danger of entering into negotiations without an objective that has been thought through clearly. First, we must not lose sight of the fact that the IRA, Sinn Fein and Gerry Adams do not speak for all nationalists. In recent general elections, Sinn Fein polled 10 per cent. in the north and 3 per cent. in the south. In the north, it is a minority within a minority; in the south, it is despised by the democratic voices of legitimate nationalism.

The second danger is that of sitting down with Sinn Fein without knowing exactly what we are trying to achieve. Sinn Fein knows exactly what it wants—a united Ireland—but do we know what we want? Negotiating with nothing more than a commitment to even-handed neutrality may not represent a clear enough objective. If the objective is not clear, the chance of the other side's getting its own way will be maximised. That worries me.

I applaud the progress made so far; I hope and pray that it will continue. I believe, however, that the House must not allow itself to be carried away by euphoria. I have no doubt that all hon. Members, and all those outside the House, want peace and a just settlement. This individual Member of Parliament, however, does not consider the retention of arms and explosives and the release of evil murderers to be the path to peace and a just settlement; I see both as an abject surrender to terrorism. I plead with the Government to avoid that at all costs. I have no doubt that, if they do, permanent peace will be possible; but I fear that, if they do not, I may be proved right after all.

8.11 pm

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) on her new position as shadow Secretary of State, and thank the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for the outstanding work that he has done for so many years. I also thank his colleagues, the hon. Members for Wigan (Mr. Stott) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), for their great work.

I am delighted to say that, since the announcement of the IRA ceasefire and the subsequent announcement of a loyalist ceasefire, the atmosphere on the streets of Belfast—and, indeed, throughout Northern Ireland—has been transformed. More people are returning to city-centre stores, families are more relaxed and parents are worrying less about the whereabouts of their teenage children. Young people, especially young adults, are now enjoying life: fear, apprehension and confrontation are no longer part of their daily lives. After 25 years of violence, murder and intimidation all around them, they are experiencing a peace and tranquillity that is entirely new to them.

I pay tribute to those who have worked so hard for the peace process, although much work remains to be done. Two priests from Clonard monastery have done a great deal of work, and I am sure that their names will be well known in years to come; indeed, many of those present this evening will know who they are. The Rev. Roy Magee also played a significant role. The Prime Minister, helped by the Secretary of State and his colleagues, put Northern Ireland at the top of his agenda; we are very grateful to him for that. I was in the Europa hotel when he made his speech last week, and the points that he made then were well taken.

The Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, and the Tanaiste, Dick Spring, continue to play their part to the full. I emphasised the part played by the Prime Minister because he faced considerable political risk. Both Prime Ministers showed courage in developing and signing the Downing street declaration, which I see as the political bible for the future of the island of Ireland. I also pay tribute to the leadership shown by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who has also incurred considerable risk.

I believe, however, that the central part in the peace process has been played by my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), without whom we would not have secured the Downing street declaration. History will record his noble and persistent efforts on behalf of all the people of the island of Ireland—especially, of course, those of Northern Ireland.

Reconciliation between our two communities must now be the top priority. Inward investment in deprived areas such as west and north Belfast to alleviate their massive unemployment is essential. The unemployment rate in my constituency is 35 per cent.—the highest constituency rate in the United Kingdom. At least 60 per cent. of the west Belfast unemployed population are long-term unemployed: that is, they have been out of work for more than a year.

When I visited the United States recently, I spoke to numerous top industrialists in New York and elsewhere. Many would be keen to come to Northern Ireland to get into the European market, but the Republic's 10 per cent. corporate tax rate makes that territory more attractive. Will the Government seriously consider encouraging the European Union, for a limited period—say 10 years—to provide the necessary derogations to enable the Government to apply a 10 per cent. corporation tax rate to new internationally mobile manufacturing projects locating in Northern Ireland? That would provide a level playing field for inward investment in the whole island.

The university of Ulster has proposed a fifth campus in the Springvale area. I strongly support that proposal, because I believe that a campus straddling the Unionist and nationalist parts of west Belfast could do nothing but good. Such a campus should conform to the highest standards of academic excellence, and, I hope, attract students from all over Northern Ireland—and, indeed, internationally. It should also have a close liaison with the Royal Victoria hospital, one of the finest hospitals in these islands.

[Dr. Joe Hendron]

People will say that we should draw a line under the past. I go along with that to some extent, but I also think of the thousands who have died, and the many hundreds who have died through violence in my constituency: most of them were murdered, and many were my friends. I do not think that people have suffered so much in any part of the island of Ireland, or Britain. I cannot tell others to draw a line under the past, or to forgive; forgiveness is personal, and it is up to those people themselves.

Nevertheless, we must look ahead. We hope that the two Governments will produce the framework document very soon, and I trust that its main points will be based on the principles of the Downing street declaration. A great responsibility rests on all of us to seize the present opportunity to work for a lasting peace in Ireland.

8.17 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Let me contribute to the wave of congratulations, and congratulate the very brave hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) on the role that he has played. I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, whose caution has been vindicated: had he not been cautious, the possibility of the paramilitaries announcing a ceasefire would have been very slim.

I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and, indeed, the Taoiseach. His acceptance, particularly in view of his membership of Fianna Fail, that change in Northern Ireland is possible only with the consent of the majority cuts across 70 years of cultural denial in his party. He has achieved something that Sean Lemass, Jack Lynch and Charlie Haughey never achieved.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), I have felt pessimistic at times. It is easy to wake up one morning and ask oneself what is actually in it for the IRA. The IRA has not renounced violence or given up any arms; Gerry Adams and his cohorts have paraded across media studios in the United States, building up propaganda credibility. Gerry Adams can make demands and, if he does not get what he wants, it will be easy for him to say that it is not his fault but that it is entirely the fault of the British Government. Back to violence he will then go, and back with him will go a great deal of extra money and credibility to boot.

On the other hand, during my recent visits to the Province, some of which have been paid in my capacity as a member of the British-Irish parliamentary body, I have detected a real determination among people throughout the island of Ireland to secure peace. That is why every single effort has to be made and why we must go that extra inch to try to achieve peace.

Probably no Conservative Member has as much of a vested interest in Ireland as me. I was brought up in Ireland, I have relations there and I am a sleeping partner in a business in Dublin. I have every interest in being able to go to Ireland without fearing for my own security. Yes, we have to go that extra inch and the prize is well worth having, but it cannot be peace at any price. That theme has run through the speeches of many Conservative Members.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne, I believe that some concessions will be demanded of us that we will not even begin to consider, and I share my hon. Friend's view on prisoners. Obviously I respect the great experience and wisdom of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), but many of my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss), whom I congratulate on his recent appointment, have fresh in their minds the IRA break-out from Whitemoor prison, which is in my hon. Friend's constituency. We also remember the violence that was shown against very brave prison officers. Many of my constituents would not accept any abnormal treatment for those prisoners, who have been sentenced for the most heinous of crimes.

I find it difficult to follow the logic of my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), who tried to draw a distinction between defensive and offensive weapons. I do not think that one can draw that distinction. Does he mean that the Light Barrett sniper rifle is offensive, whereas the Armalite is defensive? I think that that makes no sense at all.

I feel strongly that before we can move forward from the framework document to a proper discussion involving all parties there must be a settlement of the arms situation. Arms have to be handed over by all sides, and there can be no compromise on that.

There can also be no compromise on the prevention of terrorism Act, on which, in some ways, I was surprised by the remarks of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), because we have to carry with us the people of this country as well.

On the positive side, I welcome the statement that the Prime Minister made in Belfast the other day. At the previous meeting of the British-Irish parliamentary body, we discussed cross-border roads. It was interesting to hear the views of TDs who represent border constituencies, who said that the IRA is winning a great deal of local propaganda by lobbying to get those roads opened. They have now been opened, and I welcome that.

I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Hammersmith said about the Gaelic Athletics Association. I think that it was Ernest Blyth, the Finance Minister of the first Government of the Irish Free State, who understood the deep significance of Gaelic football to the nationalist sporting psyche. He said at the time that the free state had to try to bring the Unionist population on board, which meant that the RUC and British soldiers should be allowed into GAA grounds, that the tricolour should not fly and that they should not play on Sunday. Some of that is obviously out of date, but I believe that the Government must carefully consider ensuring that those athletics grounds are returned to athletics use as soon as possible, especially the ground at Crossmaglen. That point was emphasised to me by a number of my friends from the Dail who are on the parliamentary body.

On the economic front, I am optimistic. When the barrier to economic activity comes down, cross-border trade will increase. Artificial barriers to entrepreneurial activity on both sides of the border will come down, and activity will increase. There will be a breaking down of some of the cultural and political divides, which will be extremely healthy. We will then have an even closer economic union between the two countries and everyone to whom I have spoken would welcome that with open arms.

We must abide by the wishes of the majority in Ulster. I feel strongly that peace must not be bought at the price of their future and security. If they wish to leave the Union, that is entirely up to them, but, so long as they decide to remain in it, I will remain committed to their wishes and we must show that we have a commitment to them. We must remain persuaders of their opinions, just as I remain a persuader of my own constituents. In the meantime, I am becoming more optimistic and—like everyone in the House—I hope and pray that it will all work out.

8.25 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): When I spoke during the debate on the defence estimates on 18 October, I dealt with the need that the IRA had for a ceasefire in the wake of the Downing street declaration when the IRA's political justification—even in its own terms—was seen to be non-existent, and when it was seen that the United Kingdom and Irish Republic recognised the right of Northern Ireland alone to decide how it should be governed.

It slowly became apparent that those who used violence either had no mandate or, in the case of the IRA—which one must assume judges itself on an all-Ireland basis—represented fewer than 5 per cent. of the people on the island. The philosophy of Mao Tse Tung that power comes through the barrel of a rifle was the most powerful veto of the democratic process.

People tell us that the IRA has for some time been engaged in a debate as to whether it should cease violence and move into the political mode. One must recognise that this argument is taking place not for any moral reason but because the IRA believes that after 25 years it is moving farther away from achieving a united Ireland through using violence—and that more people throughout the United Kingdom are losing sympathy for it—than if it pursued its objective through political means.

The great problem about spending 25 years using violence to try to achieve one's end is that one detaches oneself from reality. The IRA somehow believed that if it offered to stop killing, people would consider that to be an act of courage; that there would be a great outpouring of sympathy and that it would be handed over—against the democratic wishes of the people of Northern Ireland—the route towards a united Ireland.

That is not going to happen. We must decide not how we drag the IRA forward—that is something that it will decide—but how we can place road blocks behind it so that it will not regress. We have been helped in that respect by the fact that all parties in this House have been discreet in the way in which they have looked at the problem as it evolves from day to day. They have recognised that we cannot tie ourselves to specific words, although in the beginning it was perhaps natural that we should tie ourselves to words such as "permanent". My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) was, I believe, the first to point out that actions speak louder than words, and that we must do that which is necessary to ensure that the IRA is not allowed to slip back into the violence mode.

The Prime Minister has been justified in accepting the evidence of almost eight weeks of ceasefire as justification for holding out some hope to the IRA—not hope that it will achieve its all-Ireland objective but hope that it can free the people of Northern Ireland from the violence to which it has subjected them for 25 years.

The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is to sit in Dublin from tomorrow onwards. Some people have asked why the Unionists are not participating in that forum. I do not need to be reconciled with anyone. I am reconciled with all those who follow and participate in the democratic process, as are my colleagues and the entire party to which I belong. We are reconciled. We have been at peace for 25 years when other people have been indulging in violence.

If the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is to be anything—I use that term in the best sense—the pan-nationalist membership of that forum must work to convince the IRA that it represents a minority of a minority and that it has a long way to come if it is to move from the side of the spectrum that deals with violence to the other side, which deals with the democratic process. It must learn that it cannot, for example, keep guns under the table or behind chairs when it moves into that process. If people wonder why we as a party continue to emphasise the need for total disarmament, the decommissioning of weapons and explosives and the verification of that process, I hope that I have given them some idea why. I hope that I have given them some idea why the IRA must make a tangible movement in that direction before it can hope to benefit and before the community can hope to benefit from any talks that take place. I concede that the forum has that job to do. If it does that job successfully, there will be reciprocal action from the loyalist paramilitaries. They have already said that they want future battles to be political battles. Implicit in that statement is an offer to give up their arms and explosives.

I now turn to those who have placed themselves between the community and the terrorists for the past 25 years. I refer specifically to the soldiers who come from Great Britain and who do their duties in Northern Ireland from the various barracks throughout the Province. At present, there is pressure to have those people removed from the streets. Let us be frank. We all want to see soldiers off our streets. We are not suggesting that if there is peace, they should be there. But in this period of limbo between a ceasefire and permanent and enduring peace, we shall keep those soldiers in Northern Ireland. I ask the Minister to reassure me that those young men, most of them between 18 and 25, will not be confined, day in and day out and night in and night out, to barracks. That is a recipe for disaster. They are active and energetic young men, and must be cared for. I do not want a gesture to be made to the community that victimises those who have given so much to the people of Northern Ireland.

As I said in the previous debate in which I spoke, this party is committed to peace. It is committed to helping everyone, including former terrorists, to move across the spectrum to the peace process. I hope that that offer of help, that gesture that we have made to people—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to tell the hon. Gentleman that his time is up.

8.35 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Today has been another enormously successful day in Northern Ireland. Families have been out shopping, the streets have been full of bustle and we expect that there will be a

[Lady Olga Maitland]

bumper build-up to Christmas. This is an enormous tribute to the Prime Minister. I have no doubt that if it had not been for his absolute determination, working closely and harmoniously with Mr. Albert Reynolds, we should never have seen the situation today in Northern Ireland.

The only thing I feel rather sorry about is that this week, the newspapers have been swamped by allegations and they have totally turned aside from the real issues—the lives of people about whom really serious debate is warranted. That is a pity and I hope that we can return to more important matters as time goes by.

I welcome the remarks of the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), although I felt that she focused a little too much on economic regeneration. I say that because it is tempting, when one sees success in the air, to start to leap ahead and to plan how suddenly to have a much better world. How tempting it is to see jobs being created and to see people being more settled. I totally understand that, but I believe that the trouble is that if we spend too much time planning that economic regeneration, tempting though it is, we shall turn our minds away from the infinitely more painful task of how to get Sinn Fein-IRA to knuckle down and to lay down its weapons. That is the big test.

I totally endorse the view of hon. Members who have recognised that this process will be stumbling. It could take months and our patience will be sorely tried. One thing I know for certain is that this is not the time for us to make any more concessions. We have already gone far enough. I am fearful that if we start to discuss, for instance, amnesties, we shall go down the wrong route and pass out the wrong message. What we should be doing is listening carefully to the Prime Minister who is rightly cautious—and I endorse that approach.

Today's announcements over the airwaves by the IRA spokesmen are indications that although there is a so-called "ceasefire", it will not necessarily be permanent. The word "ceasefire" means only a cessation of military operations. It does not mean permanence. Although there is a great debate in which people have said that we should not go down the road of semantics, we should listen carefully to the things people are saying. I do not find it very comforting to hear IRA spokesmen say that there will be

"no handing in of weapons until we have seen progress in talks."

They have said that this is "a pause" and that there is a

"difference between ceasefire and permanent peace."

All of that could indicate blackmail, which is why we must be extremely careful and determined. By all means, when we enter the stage of talks about talks, let them continue and let us keep the IRA talking. But we may reach a point where we find ourselves being dragged up avenues because the IRA-Sinn Fein may hope that, if they spin out talks about disarmament until a general election, they will achieve better favours. On that point, I was grateful that the hon. Member for Redcar said that that organisation should expect no favours from her party. That was important.

None the less, it is essential to establish the vital role of trust. It would be unrealistic to expect parties to sit down together at the same table knowing that they could be blackmailed and that a smoking gun could go off if negotiations went wrong. For a lasting peace, the IRA-Sinn Fein must pass the Semtex test. That also applies to the loyalist paramilitary groups and their weaponry, which is significant and can inflict appalling damage.

I welcome the Dublin Government's whole-hearted support of our endeavours in that particular area. It will be the most difficult stage of the entire peace process. In any case, it will be messy and probably not that satisfactory. The global trade in guns is so free that the IRA could hand over its 650 AK47 rifles, a dozen general purpose machine guns, 20 heavy calibre machine guns, 100 Webley revolvers and 40 RPG rocket grenade launchers and then replace them within weeks. After all, it is wealthy enough to be able to do so.

The litmus test will be the Semtex, which is not so easy to replace. It is calculated that the IRA took delivery of some 3 tonnes from Libya during the 1980s—more than enough to keep it in explosives until the end of the century. I understand that the bulk of that stockpile is thought to be in bunkers in the Irish Republic.

The omens, therefore, are not that encouraging. Only recently, Martin McGuinness said in an interview that he would be laughed out of the room if he asked the IRA to hand over its weapons. That may be so, but the Prime Minister is absolutely right to insist that he try. After all, if the paramilitaries are serious about peace, what possible use can they have for them? I support the remarks from this side of the House to the effect that it is absolutely fallacious to talk about weapons being "offensive" or "defensive", as though there is a right for one weapon as against another.

The Sinn Fein-IRA has entered the

"unarmed phase of the armed struggle".

I remind the House that there is no evidence that its runners have been stood down. I understand that they are still on active duty both in Ulster and on the mainland. At a moment's call, they could return to the use of fire power, so we need to be alert. If we can get through until the spring without a return to violence, it will be a watershed and we can then look more optimistically to the future.

However, matters are not helped when Mr. McGuinness is reported to have said that the whole process will be reviewed by Sinn Fein-IRA in March. If that is not a threat, I do not know what is. It is no use seeking so-called "British demilitarisation" if it cannot match such a move.

We should take great heart in our improved relations with Dublin. They have been significant in the progress that we have made today, especially with regard to security operations. It is an encouraging sign that the Gardai raided more than 50 homes of members of either the Republican Sinn Fein or the new hard-line military grouping, the Irish National Republican Army, or INRA. INRA is believed to have carried out extensive fund raising both in the Republic and the US over the past couple of months. The fear is that it is planning a series of terror attacks aimed at disrupting the peace process. Undoubtedly, it is the main threat, seeking to attract dissident IRA supporters who do not support the peace initiative.

Previous Gardai raids had sparked off the seizure of seven hand grenades, three pistols and 3,000 rounds of ammunition. A hand gun, ammunition and two walkie-talkie sets were found on another occasion. Also confiscated in the nationwide swoops were videos, policy documents, speeches and copies of the Republican Sinn Fein internal magazine.

The Gardai's intelligence has since reported that the raids have recently and seriously disrupted a number of terrorist strikes planned by INRA, a small splinter group of the IRA. All that work by the Gardai is an excellent start. After all, it is just as much in the Republic's interest as ours to have peace. That pincer movement is vital to the success of future peace, to show that the IRA-Sinn Fein will have nowhere to run and hide. I therefore congratulate the Taoiseach on his efforts to support our Prime Minister in his important work.

8.45 pm

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I wanted to participate in this debate because we have had so many debates on Northern Ireland in which we have denounced injustice and talked about catastrophe that it is a great moment for the House that we can celebrate an optimistic moment in Irish history.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I begin on a personal note. I am proud to represent a constituency in which I was born and grew up, but I am also proud of the fact that I am one of 8 million people of Irish origin who live in Britain. My father came from Crossmaglen in Northern Ireland, a fact with which I am constantly taunted as though I should be ashamed of it—I am not. My mother's great-grandfather came from Ireland during the famine, married a woman whom he met during that journey, and settled in Birmingham. So both sides of my family come out of the pain and tragedy of Irish history and its entanglement with Britain. That is part of what produces me and my politics and my place in my city.

Although I am typical of 8 million people who live in Britain, when we have tried to speak about our experience of the inter-relationship between Ireland and Britain, we have been denounced as fellow travellers of those who use violence in the nationalist cause. That has caused enormous anger among people of Irish descent. Those who know little of Irish history ignorantly tar everyone who simply seeks justice in Ireland with the same brush, imagining that we support terrorism. That has happened in the tabloid press and too often in this House.

The truth is that people of Irish origin in Britain have felt the pain of the violence more; have felt more angry at the IRA's use of violence because they are people who claim to speak on the side of the argument from which we come. So we feel it personally and hate it more. It is absolutely wrong that people should attempt to tar us with those views.

Many people criticise the Irish people's obsession with history. I agree that it is wrong to be obsessed with history, but it is also important to learn from history. In these days of instant politics, instant communication and too much television, too few people now read books and learn from history. This is an optimistic moment in the history of Ireland in Britain. But there have been other historical opportunities before and we have lost them. The success of this opportunity is not inevitable.

I shall not go through a long list, but we all remember the arguments in this House about home rule and how they divided the great parties. Home rule was never achieved and Ireland never had democracy. The history of the relationship between the two Irelands would have been utterly different had Ireland had democracy. That was a great failure of British history, yet there were moments when home rule was nearly achieved.

One can think back to 1916, the war against Britain and then the civil war. Talks took place between Britain and Ireland. Michael Collins came to London to talk to Lloyd George about a settlement. What a tragedy for Ireland that it came so early in the process of British decolonisation. Had India been decolonised earlier, and had Ireland been seen in the context of democratic settlements of countries that had been colonised, Britain would have been more generous towards Ireland, and the partition and bloodshed that followed might have been avoided.

The most recent drastic failure—the last time that a historic opportunity was missed—was after the time of the civil rights movement. People in Northern Ireland were determined to follow the example of the American civil rights movement and march peacefully to demand justice and equality in Northern Ireland. Those marches were beaten into ditches by the forces of so-called law and order in Northern Ireland, and the IRA was recreated as a result of the events that flowed from that. The IRA had ceased to exist in the 1960s. It was the call of people in west Belfast, who were being burnt out of their homes, for the young men of their communities to come and protect them that recreated the IRA. I say that only so that we learn the lessons, and do not miss the moment. We must ensure that, whatever happens to the current leaders of the IRA, there is not another period in history when those awful forces are recreated and more bloodshed is generated.

It is obvious to me that, although this is a precious and optimistic time, success is not inevitable. There are forces who would prefer failure. I am sorry to say that the speech that we heard from the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), a member of the Democratic Unionist party, showed that an extremist force prefers to have another extremist enemy to hate and protest against. Forces of extremism live on one another. There was no celebration of the peace, or any wish to nurture the peace, which benefits both sides in Northern Ireland.

There has been an over-obsession with the IRA in the debate. It is, of course, a creation of the disasters of the history of Ireland, but we should not be obsessed with it. It is wrong to say that everything that it demands must be opposed. We should do what is right because it is right. We should not be obsessed with what one of the IRA's extremist spokespeople might have said on one programme. History is bigger than that. Merely reacting to those small people who have used violence in an intolerable way as a trajectory of historic development will create great errors.

Many tributes have been paid to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister did not create the opportunity; history created the opportunity. As the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said, the people of Northern Ireland were tired of violence and determined to demand a better future. I think that then the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) worked hardest and underwent the greatest vilification to try to turn that historic opportunity into a process of peace. More than once, he entered talks with the IRA to try to achieve that end.

The previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), made an enormous contribution when he was Secretary of State. His

[Ms Clare Short]

successor, the present Secretary of State, has continued that good work. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara)—as might be thought unusual for an Opposition spokesperson—has helped the process along. The Irish Government have made an important contribution. Then the Prime Minister was big enough to take the historic opportunity and move the process forward.

During the Maastricht debate, when the Tory party needed Unionist votes to pass the European legislation, I believed that we would lose the historic opportunity because of the arithmetic of the House of Commons. Thankfully, we did not, and the Prime Minister was big enough to take the historic opportunity. [HON. MEMBERS: "You were wrong."] Obviously I was wrong; that is what I am saying. There is no need to heckle. I am trying, in a very short time, to make a serious speech. The House rarely rises to the seriousness of the moment. It deteriorates as time goes on.

The basis of peace is not only democracy and not only consent. The move that everyone makes to say, "We shall accept there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland," requires an extra dimension. It requires justice for the people of Northern Ireland.

Theoretically, there was the consent of a majority in the past, but grave injustice ensured that there was—to put it crudely—a greater rate of emigration from one community to the other, to entrench a majority that would never allow change. If there is justice, if both communities can live in peace and justice, if both can have jobs and both can prosper, I am content that, whatever decision is made, Ireland will be united or not united because the people who live there wish it.

However, I do not think that many hon. Members from the Government side of the House who have spoken are part of that settlement. They are really saying, "We are on one side; we are the Conservative and Unionist party; we cannot tolerate that the other side has a case. We must react to everything that the IRA ever says because that will lead our agenda."

We must not react in that way. We can, in our generation—in the next 10 or 15 years—secure a historic peace in Ireland that will bring to an end the conflict between these two islands and constant recurrence of violence and bloodshed. It is a precious moment in history; it is the duty of all of us to rise to it. It can be achieved, but it is not inevitable.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next Member to speak, may I point out that we have only a short time left, and I hope that those Members who next catch my eye will exercise considerable self-restraint.

8.54 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): This is an important debate for me, especially as it is one that the IRA intended and planned that I would never attend.

I say that because, in the month of July, while many hon. Members were in safety and in the quietness of their home, on the Sabbath evening, my wife, my family and I were to be slaughtered by the IRA murder machine. Forty bullets from an Armalite sprayed our home. My wife and my daughters escaped death by seconds. The IRA gunmen deliberately riddled my 13-year-old daughter's bedroom, having seen her standing at the window after changing for bed. I was, in the providence of God, delayed at church, and once again survived a republican murder bid on my life.

On behalf of my wife and my family, I want earnestly to thank those people who took the time to express their genuine concern, and those who made it known to me that they genuinely cared about that IRA murder attack.

In the light of that, and in the light of other murders of members of my family circle and some of my best friends, peace is something that I desire with all my heart for my beloved Province. Having, in my constituency, walked behind so many coffins, along blood-soaked and stained streets and highways of Ulster and, as a pastor, having sought to show genuine Christian love and comfort to the broken-hearted widows and children of innocent victims of violence, I know that peace—real, lasting and genuine peace—is something wonderful. I have earnestly prayed on bended knees for such a day to dawn.

I have represented the constituency of Mid-Ulster for the past 12 years. Without apology, I say that, during those years, I have wept with numerous families whose lives have been shattered by murder and disability, unparalleled in any part of the United Kingdom.

Every conceivable weapon of evil and destruction has been used in an endeavour to force people of Ulster to surrender to terrorism. In the House tonight I salute the fortitude of the people of Ulster in the face of such merciless republican slaughter. The British Ulster majority has proved beyond doubt that no one can defeat a people firmly rooted on the solid rock of truth, justice and democracy. My mind turns to the many households tonight who have suffered the pain and anguish of a father, mother, son or daughter who has been mercilessly slaughtered by terrorists. Many others sit in wheelchairs or lie totally unconscious, not knowing what the House is debating.

Tonight's debate is important as it permits those with a democratic mandate to express their genuinely held views and place them on the record of the House. I appreciate that there is a desire in some circles to frown on those who dare to challenge what is thought to be the common approach adopted by the Government and several Opposition parties. But my mandate did not come from any such people; it came from the people of Mid-Ulster. As an elected representative for the Province, and my constituency in particular, I shall endeavour to give my honest assessment of our present position, whether or not it is applauded. Much play has been made of the present ceasefire and the peace process. I wonder what evidence hon. Members are examining. Can I examine the evidence and confirm that a lasting, permanent peace is under way?

Eight weeks ago the IRA declared a ceasefire. The Prime Minister stated that he had to be sure that the ceasefire was permanent before civil servants could enter into exploratory talks with Sinn Fein. Our Prime Minister rightly requested those engaged in terrorist activity to express openly the permanency of the end of such violence. Due to the unwillingness of Provisional Sinn Fein to make such a commitment, the Prime Minister weakened the demand to any group of words that would mean that violence was over for all time under all circumstances. The Provisional Sinn Fein did not necessarily have to say the word "permanent". Again, silence was the order of the day. Dublin and America continued to pressurise London and, finally, that demand was dropped. Last week the Prime Minister came to Ulster to announce that he has a working assumption that violence has ended.

I have listened carefully to what right hon. and hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, have said. I have yet to hear many of them suggesting that they believe that there is an end to violence or that the IRA has repudiated violence. I should like to be directed to any statement from Provisional Sinn Fein which has made it abundantly clear that that so-called political party has renounced and repudiated violence. I have yet to hear that from Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness or any other Sinn Fein spokesperson. When the ceasefire was announced, rather than repudiating violence, the organisation applauded the heroes of the IRA who carried out the murderous activities and the slaughter of innocent policemen, soldiers and people throughout the Province.

Now we are told that actions will speak louder than words. What actions have there been since the ceasefire? It has become evident since the ceasefire that the IRA has not repudiated violence. Five hours after the ceasefire, gunfire was heard in my constituency outside Pomeroy, but it was not reported by the press. Some days later into the ceasefire, shots were fired at a Protestant home outside Keady—again, that was not reported in the press. Six masked men from the Provisionals entered a home in the Ballygawley road estate in Dungannon looking for a particular person. They knocked his wife to the ground. The incident was never reported in the press. Numerous brutal attacks against the Roman Catholic community have been continued by the IRA. Can one suggest that that is a repudiation of or an end to violence? For example, a grandmother in Armagh was beaten by the IRA as she shielded her grandchild. Is that an act of violence or not? In recent weeks two ordinary loyalist constituents of mine were interviewed by the security forces and were told that the IRA was targeting them for murder—the same grouping as is supposed to be holding a ceasefire. I wish to make a categorical statement that cannot be denied: no IRA unit in Mid-Ulster has been stood down by the IRA. These active service units continue to identify and openly target members of the security forces and of the loyalist community for future attack.

Such activity is known to the security forces, and in certain parts of Mid-Ulster the threat is viewed—I use yesterday's security term—as "very high" by those in intelligence circles. In the light of this evidence, how can the Prime Minister, who has all the intelligence reports that he needs, state his "working assumption" that the IRA has drawn its campaign to a close? Does the Secretary of State know that training camps for republican terrorists are still operating in Donegal? That fact is known to the security forces in Northern Ireland and in the south—yet we are told that there is a permanent ceasefire. Does the Minister possess those security reports?

Before the IRA ceasefire IRA weapons were permitted to be moved to the Irish Republic. Since the ceasefire began, the whereabouts of these arms dumps has become known—to the security forces in Northern Ireland, to the Prime Minister and the British Government—and the information has been passed to Mr. Reynolds. Although the actual position of the dumps is known and can be exactly described, they have not been raided. Why not? The dumps contain more than 200 AK47 rifles, sniper rifles and M60s. They have not been raided because, when it comes to talk about handing in weapons, it will be the dumps that are already compromised and hence lost to the IRA which will be regarded as having been found by the Irish establishment and then taken away from the IRA.

Given the will to do it, those arms could be lifted tomorrow. They are compromised weapons, lost to the terrorists, and they should form no part of any equation. It is known, however, that Reynolds wants to use them as a bargaining counter instead of lifting them now.

Last weekend certain republican Sinn Fein representatives were rounded up for questioning. My constituents and I wonder why so many well-known murderous terrorists were permitted to roam the Irish Republic for the past 25 years and have only now been lifted. Is that being done in response to the unease in the community?

As has been said, the cessation of violence is a cessation of military operations. It is to be reviewed by the IRA on 27 December, and if concessions have been made the IRA will put back a final decision until Easter. I warn the House that the IRA is currently targeting not only people in Ulster but people in London, and that is known to the security services and the security forces.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary has stood against slaughter and against much that has been thrown at it by the IRA. Will the Government give a categorical assurance that the RUC will not lose its revered title because of republican pressure but will be completely backed by the Government? For 25 long years that police force has stood between the people of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom and the terrorist onslaught.

The Minister spoke about the safety of the Union. Will the Government of Ireland Act 1920 be placed upon the table? If, as is acknowledged by so many, it poses no threat, it should not be up for negotiation. Is it correct that Gerry Adams's bodyguards are to be given the right to carry guns? He will have bodyguards because he would not accept the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The names of those people and a history of their terrorist activity, especially those who killed the British Army corporals in west Belfast, could be given.

These matters worry the people of Northern Ireland. There is a great deal of double talk and tongue in cheek, but these are serious matters. Martin McGuinness was and still is a known terrorist. He has been engaged in IRA activity and has not only been part of the gangs but has led gangs and has pulled the trigger. Why cannot Martin McGuinness be touched by the law? He has never been brought in to be interviewed, although two important television programmes were transmitted for everyone in the United Kingdom to see. Brave people from the Roman Catholic community risked their necks to give vital information. I have been told that a file on Martin McGuinness was recently sent to the DPP and that it is so detailed that if he were made amenable to the law, there is no doubt that he would have to be imprisoned.

In the name of justice, which my constituents and the people of the United Kingdom have a right to expect, why is Martin McGuinness the untouchable member of this society? Instead of going to prison he parades in the streets of England and elsewhere in the world as some kind of hero of peace. But no matter what jacket, coat or

[Rev. William McCrea]

tie he puts on instead of the jumper, he is still the murderer that he always was. Justice must be done for everyone, and no one has a right to stand beyond the law.

I desire with all my heart to see a genuine, lasting peace. I do not want the people of Ulster deluded or deceived. I do not want the people of the United Kingdom deluded or deceived. There is a real longing for peace. I have that in my heart and I know that other hon. Members who may disagree with me also have it in their hearts, but I have to say that peace, freedom and justice must walk side by side.

9.15 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I want immediately to welcome the appointment of the new shadow Front-Bench spokesman for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), and her assistant spokesman, the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). I wish them well in their positions and hope that their appointment will lead to the normalisation of relations between two of the main Opposition parties in the House.

On entering my 30th year as a elected Member of Parliament for Northern Ireland—10 years in Strasbourg, almost 10 years in the House of Commons in Stormont and the balance here in our national Parliament of the United Kingdom—I have never felt so optimistic about the future of Northern Ireland as I do tonight.

I have had personal experience in meeting IRA terrorists and I know the trauma and the hurt that thousands of families have suffered in Northern Ireland over the past 25 years. My family experienced it, and I know how so many others have felt in similar circumstances.

We now have a ceasefire. A ceasefire is only a halt to atrocities; it is not a permanent peace. However, one's gut reaction is that it is for real. The IRA commenced its campaign in order to bring about a united Ireland by force. It has failed because both the Conservative Government and the Labour Government, when required, provided the necessary security forces to ensure that terrorism did not triumph in Northern Ireland.

Likewise, the IRA thought that it would browbeat the Ulster people into accepting a united Ireland; yet today, 25 years later, the spirit of the Ulster people is more opposed to a united Ireland than at any time in the past 25 years.

In all that, we have to thank the security forces. Certainly the IRA has not been defeated, but as a former member of the Northern Ireland Security Council and a Minister of State at Stormont, on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland I thank all the regiments of the Army that have served in Northern Ireland over the past 25 years. We thank the Royal Ulster Constabulary, many of whom we know personally, and many who lost their lives. We thank them and their families for their service to Northern Ireland and, of course, we thank the Ulster Defence Regiment and its successor the Royal Irish Regiment because, having served in Northern Ireland, those men had to return to their isolated homes where they were in greater danger than anyone else. As a former Minister I have also to mention, the Ulster Special Constabulary, which took the brunt of the campaign at the beginning of the 1970s.

We have also to thank the Prime Minister. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said two years ago that it was time that the Prime Minister recognised that one of the most serious issues facing the United Kingdom was the present campaign of terrorism in Northern Ireland and that it should be the No. 1 issue for 10 Downing street. It certainly is today. We thank the Prime Minister for taking on board the problem of Northern Ireland and give him every encouragement in the way in which he is trying to resolve this terrible problem within the United Kingdom, which affects relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic and between the Republic and the United Kingdom.

We also should say, in passing, that we recognise the role that Mr. Reynolds has played in this matter, although as Unionists we obviously feel that he is too anxious to speed up the momentum. These things must be taken slowly and cautiously and at times he shows too much enthusiasm and could go overboard and damage the whole process.

There are two other people we must thank. One is, of course, the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party, who has made such a positive contribution. We cannot ignore that. He encouraged the process forward and we must recognise the role that he played. The other person we must thank is a silent little man who avoids publicity, who certainly does not have a loud mouth and who does not even like to be praised. I refer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the leader of the Ulster Unionist party.

Two main issues are before us today. One is, of course, the question of the arms retained by the terrorist organisations. There must obviously be preliminary talks with those who now say that they want to enter the political process, but in no way can there be meaningful talks with Sinn Fein while it retains Semtex and firearms under the table. That must be understood by everyone, including Conservative Back Benchers. We cannot negotiate under blackmail or under threat from any political party representing terrorism. Those firearms and Semtex must be decommissioned in some way or other before meaningful all-party talks can proceed in Northern Ireland.

Of course we look forward to a form of limited devolution in Northern Ireland, of responsibility sharing, in which those who are elected to the body share in the administration and good government of the state. If members of Sinn Fein eventually get elected, they must of course play their part in that system of administration. But Mr. Gerry Adams is not an elected person at the moment. He was rejected by the electorate, who elected the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) in his place. Until Mr. Adams is elected, he cannot be treated as a normal constitutional political party representative.

I should like to conclude on the issue of north-south co-operation, which will be a major issue as we look to the future. Reference has been made to it during the debate. As Ulster Unionists, we want to see meaningful co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Of that there is no doubt. In fairness, it was the Ulster Unionist party, when it formed the Government of Stormont, which created one of the first joint operations in the island of Ireland—the Foyle Fisheries Commission, which survives to this day and is successful. That is a good example of co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

The whole issue of co-operation, however, can be exaggerated. We have heard a certain claim by Dr. George Quigley that 75,000 jobs might be created if a new Belfast-Dublin economic corridor were created. Those of us involved in business in Northern Ireland look upon that suggestion as pie in the sky and consider it to be totally unrealistic. When the new Ireland forum discussed the subject, the then chairman of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, Sir Charles Carter, said:

"their effects [of greater North-South economic links] on unemployment would be equivalent to the products of nine bean rows on the Isle of Innisfree, when set against a requirement for new jobs in the North".

Queen's university's economics department produced an economic report this year entitled "The Road to Prosperity or a Road to Nowhere?" On page 65 the report says:

"gains from greater co-operation . . . are likely to be much smaller than those which could be expected from a higher level of competitiveness in the two economies . . . Scott and O'Reilly"—

two economists—

"projected total gains to manufacturing employment throughout the island of only 5,700 jobs."—

and not 75,000.

As I have said, we look forward to co-operation. But co-operation must not be a political means of bringing about a united Ireland. When Dublin talks about co-operation, it must not see it as a mechanism to create a republic of united Ireland. We want meaningful co-operation. There is co-operation right throughout the European Community now. We see co-operation among the regions—regions in various states such as in Germany, in Italy and in Switzerland—but the co-operation since 1972 right up to 1994 is limited to regions within sovereign states. It is never the case that there is co-operation between a sovereign nation and a region of another nation.

We must follow the European example and we can do it. If we agree to do it, it will mean certain things—such as Northern Ireland Electricity, which is a private company now, taking over part of the electricity system in the northern region of the Republic of Ireland. It will mean, perhaps, BT taking over a major part of the Irish telecom system, which is failing economically at the moment. More importantly, in matters of tourism and of transport, it should not be simply co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic; it should be the regions north of Dublin and Northern Ireland co-operating with the regions in the west of Scotland. That is the main economic route for Northern Ireland and parts of the Republic of Ireland. There can be regional co-operation, but not on the basis of a united Ireland, to which people with other political motives restrict their vision. Instead, co-operation must be between regions of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Time has cut my speech short, but I want to conclude as I commenced. This is a time of great opportunity in Northern Ireland. It is the responsibility of politicians of all parties to build on it, but if Dublin pushes too hard, the whole thing will collapse in tears. Let us ensure that the IRA does not gain in peace negotiations what it has failed to win through terrorism.

9.26 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): In the few minutes available, I shall make two points that I do not think have been made in the debate so far. The first is to urge the Government to use their imagination to try actively to include representatives of the Progressive Unionist party and of the Ulster Democratic party in the peace process as it develops—with, of course, all the caveats which have been already added in the debate about the involvement of, for example, Sinn Fein.

Of course, those two small parties do not have the electoral mandate enjoyed by the two larger Unionist parties, but there is no doubt that they give a voice to an important sector of the Northern Ireland people, and one that has to be included and consulted if a settlement is to succeed in the longer term. Moreover, those two parties have shown themselves to be committed to making democratic, peaceful politics work. I do not think that anybody could fail to be struck by the expression of abject and true remorse in the loyalist statement read out by Mr. Gusty Spence of the Progressive Unionists. The history of Mr. Spence was also referred to by the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott).

The Progressive Unionists and the Ulster Democrats articulate a new mood in part of the loyalist community. They have made it clear that they envisage no return to the old days of Stormont and they look positively at power sharing in Northern Ireland and at cross-border arrangements. They represent a unionism which now appears in some respects to be more flexible than that of the major parties, and certainly than what we have heard from the other side of the Chamber today. The two parties also enjoy a good deal of what one might call street credibility in parts of Northern Ireland. I urge the Government to take advantage of the new mood by involving those smaller parties actively in the peace process.

My second point is probably much less controversial. It relates to the content of the talks once they begin and it takes up where the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) left off. Of course north-south co-operation and arrangements are important, but what about east-west arrangements to link and build on the common interests of the British mainland and the island of Ireland?

The arguments for east-west co-operation are the same as those for north-south co-operation. There are obvious areas which cry out for that kind of enhanced co-operation. An example would be the management of the Irish sea, which could include pollution, fisheries management, shipping traffic, submarine activity and the threat that such activity sometimes poses to local fishermen, and creating new marine nature reserves. Such issues could be tackled jointly by the Governments of the United Kingdom and of Ireland in exactly the same way as it is envisaged that tourism could be handled jointly between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

There are many other examples of such co-operation. The virtue of east-west co-operation in parallel with north-south co-operation is not just that it makes practical sense, but that it sends a useful message that cross-border co-operation of that kind is not a slippery slope to a different constitutional relationship between north and south any more than east-west co-operation is a slippery slope towards a reunion between Britain and Ireland. Co-operation is simply a matter of mature voluntary engagement between different Governments and different Parliaments of a kind that we are going to need if we are to develop and build on the existing peace process.

9.31 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) referred in his impressive speech to the paramilitary disloyalists who apologise for what they have done in the past. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said in Coleraine, I believe that we should have intervened more than 25 years ago in respect of employment, housing and political discrimination.

I hope that Sinn Fein-IRA can apologise for what they have been doing over the past 25 years because that would, in effect, sweep the board.

I should like to see various developments. I should like to see the currencies of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom realigned so that they are not different across the border. I should like to see the Republic of Ireland apply to join the Commonwealth. Many people would welcome that.

More controversially, I look forward to a day when every police service in the United Kingdom has the same kind of title. It is noticeable that the only one of the 50-odd police forces which has the word "royal" in its title is in Northern Ireland, which is where that makes a difference. It is better that that sort of remark should come from me than from someone in Dublin. The point about Dublin pushing too hard is a serious one to which Dublin should pay attention.

I hope that people will accept that the border will not change very quickly, if at all in my lifetime, and that it becomes unimportant for most practical purposes. That is one of the aims of the New Consensus group in respect of which hon. Members in all parts of the House and I have shared an approach.

I hope that we shall recognise that we are going to allow people who are Irish to be within the United Kingdom but also to feel Irish. In that regard, I agree with Enoch Powell who, at a fringe meeting at the Tory party conference, said that people are of the nation of which they believe themselves to be part.

We cannot pretend that all 1.5 million people in the north of Ireland believe themselves to be British. One of the effects of the Sinn Fein-IRA campaign has been to persuade 1 million people in the north that they are not Irish at all. That is not something that is in my family's tradition.

I make this plea to those who care about Northern Ireland: let them visit it. If 45 million Americans could obtain passports and visit Northern Ireland in the same way as those of the Jewish faith or of Jewish origin go to Israel, or as those who follow Islam go to Mecca; if 45 million Americans went to Ireland—north and south—once in their lives to visit the border country, Rathlin island and the rest, it would transform the economy. It would also transform some of the ignorance that the American President has helped to overcome. We do not want ignorance or apathy—we want involvement. If all those people cannot visit, they should sleep in Irish linen sheets and drink Irish whiskey.

I look forward to two things. The first is to find political activists in Northern Ireland who are officers in constituency associations whose political parties do not indicate their denominations. That applies to my political association in Eltham, and I look forward to the day when it applies to the 17 Northern Ireland constituencies. I also look forward to the day when, after a gap of 22 years, a Northern Ireland Member is again a Minister in a United Kingdom Government. For too long, Northern Ireland Members have been excluded and, one way or another, I should like that to be changed.

9.34 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): The debate over the past six or seven hours causes me to think that, if we are to reform the way in which the House of Commons works, we should have more such Adjournment debates. It has been informed, extremely interesting, and, for someone such as myself who has had just 48 hours in a new job, it has been useful and educative. We have heard contributions from many former Northern Ireland Office Ministers, such as the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) and the hon. Members for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson). All made excellent contributions.

I pay special tribute to my hon. Friends who have served as Opposition spokesmen on Northern Irish matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has had deserved tributes from both sides—indeed, from all parties represented in Northern Ireland—for the assiduous way in which he has fought his case over the years. It is important to record the House's appreciation for his deputies, my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), who has spent many years dealing with Northern Ireland matters, and my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who brought his considerable experience of local government to the Opposition Front Bench.

My own Front-Bench experience has been limited to Wales, not Northern Ireland, but there are similarities. The economy of Wales—certainly that of south Wales—has suffered because of the decline of basic and staple industries. The same applies to Northern Ireland. South Wales and Northern Ireland have similar youth unemployment problems. Of course, there is also a strong cultural identity.

My name would suggest that my background is not Welsh but Irish. My great-grandfather emigrated from Ballincollig in County Cork in 1865 to work in the iron industry. Interestingly, he came across not just to find work but to flee what was happening in Ireland. In the 1860s, there were people who believed that they were oppressed by the British Government, and there were those who knew that they were outraged by Fenian bombs. My great-grandparents came across because they wanted to live ordinary lives. I rather suspect that the world has not changed and that the people who now live in the south and in Northern Ireland want to live ordinary lives, free from the disasters and the miseries that meant that my great-grandparents had to go to Wales.

My adult and political life over the past quarter of a century has been overshadowed by the misery, killings and constitutional and political failures in Northern Ireland, and people are wearied of it all. That explains the astonishing events of the past few months. Who would have thought a few years ago that both groups of paramilitaries would have initiated ceasefires, as the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) pointed out? Who would have thought that proper and real reconciliation, north and south, would start?

My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) admirably put the Labour party's view. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition has said that the problems of Northern Ireland and the peace process will be right at the top of his personal and party political agenda in years to come. That applies to all hon. Members.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), the right hon. Member for Chelsea and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) talked about a commitment based on respect for all traditions. That has been recognised by the British and Irish Governments and by all hon. Members. To that end, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) for all the work that they have done over the past few months to start the reconciliation.

I also thank the Irish Government and, of course, the British Government. As my hon. Friends the Members for Hammersmith and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) pointed out, the work of the British Government, in particular the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, has been exemplary. Without their efforts in respect of the settlement, today's debate would not have been as good or as sensible as it has been. All of us, whatever our party views, express our thanks to the Prime Minister and to those responsible.

It is easy for those of us who live in Great Britain to talk; it is difficult for those who represent Northern Ireland to talk because it is a different world altogether. I appreciate the misgivings of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), although the hon. Members for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) perhaps demonstrated extreme pessimism, if I can put it as strongly as that.

At the Labour party conference this year, we emphasised the need for agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework founded on consent. We entirely agreed with the Secretary of State when he referred to the three strands in his speech today. There must be arrangements that encompass relations between Ireland and Britain, between the north and the south and between the two traditions in Northern Ireland.

It is for the people of Ireland alone to exercise the right of self-determination. We welcome the Irish Government's recognition that agreement on constitutional status is possible only with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. That has been emphasised strongly today by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh and by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith.

How do we find out what consent is? Who measures it? What measures it? The opinion polls referred to by the hon. Member for Belfast, East might not be as reliable as he thought. Any opinion poll that says that one out of 10 supporters of Sinn Fein does not support a united Ireland must be suspect. A referendum, which the Government are proposing, is obviously the answer to find out what the consent is, and the feelings of the people of Northern Ireland.

Labour supports the referendum proposal. Generally, I am sceptical about referendums, but on certain constitutional matters, they are helpful, and indeed, in this case, vital. We had them on the Common Market and on devolution for Wales and Scotland in the late 1970s. On the question of devolution, the hon. Members for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) and for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) referred to the need to emphasise devolution in Northern Ireland much more than has occurred in the past.

It is certainly Labour's view that devolution should occur in Scotland, in Wales, in the regions of England and, of course, in the Province of Northern Ireland. That is especially important when we see it as part of Europe of the regions, which is fast becoming a reality. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith talked about the need to emphasise the European dimension. The Republic of Ireland has benefited considerably, both financially and in other ways, from its membership of the European Union, and that will be important to the north in the years to come.

One staggering figure that I read in the past two days is that more than 3,000 people have been killed in political violence in Northern Ireland since 1969. If, proportionately, we were to bring that figure into a British context, the equivalent carnage in Britain would mean that every man, woman and child in my south Wales constituency had been murdered. That is the extent of the problem, and it is something that hon. Members must bring to the attention of everyone of good will in Britain.

The right hon. Member for Strangford told us that he is more optimistic about the future of Northern Ireland now than he has ever been in 30 years' experience of government in Northern Ireland and in Britain. It is the duty of all who are involved in public affairs in this country and in Ireland, certainly to acknowledge the past, but to concentrate on the future and guarantee a better world for the children who are now growing up in Northern Ireland. The past quarter of a century has been characterised by despair. We have a responsibility to ensure that the next 25 years are characterised by renewal but, above all, by hope.

9.44 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Ancram): I welcome the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) to his new responsibilities. Having heard him speak tonight after such a short time in the job, we look forward to hearing many more speeches from him in the future. If he finds his responsibilities as fulfilling as I find mine, he will end his time in the job a very fulfilled man.

I think we would all agree that this has been an extraordinary debate: there has been an enormous amount of unanimity throughout the House. Since I began my period of service in Northern Ireland some 17 months ago, many significant steps have been taken—although I make no connection between those two facts—each of which has increased the chance of creating a new beginning for the people of Northern Ireland. The pace of events has quickened even further in recent months, and it is only right that we have had the opportunity to discuss those developments.

We have had a very good debate. I know that not every hon. Member who wished to speak was able to do so. I pay particular tribute to the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), who has been present throughout the debate: I know that he will give me his views, although he was not able to give us all the benefit of his wisdom.

[Mr. Michael Ancram]

I especially welcomed the speeches of hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies. I salute hon. Members who have continued to uphold the principles of democracy throughout the past 25 years, despite the actions of those from both sides of the community who sought to achieve their political objective by violent means. I also salute the courage of their constituents, many of whom have either suffered themselves or shared the suffering of others.

As the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said on another occasion,

> "The will of the greater number of solid, law-abiding citizens has prevailed . . . democracy has finally won".

He and his fellow Northern Ireland Members have all played their part in the search for peace. Of course, I also welcomed all the speeches made today by hon. Members representing other parts of the United Kingdom.

Numerous points have been raised; I shall try to deal with as many as possible. Let me begin generally by thanking all hon. Members on both sides of the House who congratulated my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on bringing the process this far. I know that those words of encouragement are very welcome, and will help to ensure that we continue the process in the future.

It was important for us to hear the speech of the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), who speaks with a great depth of experience not only of politics in the Province but of the direct results of terrorism. His statement that he had never felt so optimistic sent an important message to the House: I hope that it is heard by many more than those who were able to attend today's debate. His is a genuine voice of hope, and I know that it will encourage perhaps even those whose speeches were less than hopeful.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) on her new appointment. We listened to her speech with great interest, and will want to study it in detail. The hon. Lady raised the question of finance—as did a number of hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron). Let me quote to them what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in Belfast on Friday:

> "So let me assure you that the Government will take full account of Northern Ireland's special needs in setting future levels of public spending for the Province. We want to help the Province to enjoy higher levels of economic growth and much greater prosperity throughout the community in the years that lie ahead."

I hope that that demonstrates—not only to the hon. Member for Redcar, but to other hon. Members who raised the issue—that the Government are committed to ensuring that one of the benefits of peace is an increase in the economic prosperity of all who live and work in Northern Ireland.

As always, the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) made an interesting and encouraging speech. I was grateful for his words of support. He, and a number of other hon. Members—so many, indeed, that it would take a long time to read out the list—mentioned the important question of the surrender of weapons. I appreciate and share the concern that has been expressed during the debate in relation to arms, but our position is well known. It is quite simply that no one should hold illegal weapons, and that we shall continue to uphold the rule of law.

In that context, we intend to consult the Irish Government on a considered approach to the depositing and decommissioning of guns and explosives, and officials from both Governments have been asked to draw up a strategy setting out the logistics and mechanics of a surrender of arms to underpin the peace process. In any event, one purpose of the preliminary exploratory dialogue which we may enter into with Sinn Fein within three months is to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence, and the surrender of illegal weapons would provide some of the most convincing evidence of good faith in that regard.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) mentioned punishment beatings and intimidation, and I associate myself with his remarks about the tactics indulged in by certain paramilitaries in recent weeks. Such attacks are, of course, wholly unacceptable. The policing role is for the proper policing authority. That authority is the RUC—not self-appointed vigilante groups—and I hope that we can make that patently clear.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) raised a number of interesting points once again. He referred to the "working assumption" which the Government have announced to begin the process by which we can, I hope, in the end bring Sinn Fein to the negotiating table. The whole purpose of having a working assumption is that one cannot make an assumption based on certainty, and that assumption by definition is contingent on the assumption proving to be true over a period.

That is why the process has certain stages. There was the declaration of the working assumption by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last Friday in Belfast. Then there must be a period to be gone through, which we have said is there to allow us to confirm the commitment to peace of Sinn Fein and the IRA. If we have gone through that successfully, we shall get to the exploratory dialogue.

That dialogue is dealing not with political matters but with the consequences of the cessation of violence, and with how Sinn Fein can be brought back into the democratic process and, ultimately, to the negotiating table to talk about the political future of Northern Ireland. We did not need certainty, because we have adopted a system which, if we are proved wrong anywhere on that road, allows us to reverse the situation and go back to where we were before.

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) voiced his real fears, as I know he has done previously, in relation to an amnesty for prisoners. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said previously, there will be no secret deals for peace. Criminal law will continue to be applied vigorously with the intention of bringing those responsible for terrorist crimes before the court, and those who are convicted of crimes must expect to serve their sentences in accordance with the law.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith asked towards the end of his speech whether I could assure him that the strand 1 paper and the joint framework document would be taken together. I would like to take the opportunity to make it clear that that has always been the intention. The reason why the strand 1 document is to be published at the same time as the framework is that, if one were published without the other, the overall package would be unbalanced and the chances of it achieving its purposes would be very much minimised. I like to describe it as a three-legged stool, in which one of the legs is being manufactured separately. Unless it is attached to the stool when it is completed, the stool will be unbalanced.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea made an important speech. He was right to remind the House that, although a lot has happened recently, this has been a long process and goes back a long way. Tribute should be paid to many other people who have not had tribute paid to them tonight, including those involved in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the processes following that. From my experience, I certainly know that many of the advances which we are making now have been built on the back of work that was done by my predecessors. I pay tribute to all those who have been so involved.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea also cautioned us against moving too fast. It is the Government's purpose to move at the pace that is most likely to achieve success. Negotiations of this sort tend to have their own momentum. If one tries to force them to go too fast, they derail. If one moves them too slowly, they lose momentum. I can assure my right hon. Friend that we shall look at matters as we go along, with a careful eye to trying to ensure ultimate success.

Mr. McGrady: In the euphoria and the joy that are evident among the people of Northern Ireland because of the ceasefire and the absence of killing and atrocities, there is an urgent expectancy of a new beginning, of new structures and of new political dialogue. The Minister has used careful phraseology, and has said that he will hasten slowly. Will he take on board the fact that the people expect the political parties to get together to work out mutually satisfactory institutions?

Mr. Ancram: I very much accept that. I believe that much of the momentum has been created precisely because people are asking their political representatives to move. We certainly want to build on that. Equally, I am sure that the hon. Member appreciates that, if one moves too fast, one sometimes loses out of the train the people one needs on board if one is to have a successful conclusion.

I found the remarks of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and his colleague the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) distinctly depressing. They took a negative approach. They know that we are not seeking peace at any price and that we have to have a peace that is broadly acceptable in its form and in its structures to the people of Northern Ireland. That is why, as I said, we have a working assumption at present in terms of negotiations with Sinn Fein. That is why we have a process of dialogue which must be gone through, followed by a referendum, before any solution can be achieved in Northern Ireland.

I find the litany of unmitigated despair very discouraging. I hope that, one day, the hon. Members for Belfast, East and for Mid-Ulster will raise their eyes a little. I hope that they will begin to look forward, and that they will try to take a constructive approach. I assure them that, if they do, they will be welcomed by me and by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State back into the process, where I believe they should be.

I am sorry that I shall not be able to deal with all the other points raised in the debate. A number of suggestions have been made by hon. Members on both sides, which the Government will wish to consider. We meet today in a mood of cautious hope. It is cautious because history, especially the history of Northern Ireland, teaches us to be cautious.

There is hope because we now have a chance to achieve what many of us thought impossible—peace and political stability in Northern Ireland. We have a chance to achieve a society in which women and men from all parts of the community are able to play a role in the public life of the Province, taking responsibility for their own decisions, a society in which everyone, whatever his political persuasion, is treated with respect and a society in which all have equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem. I hope that those remarks will be heard by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who particularly asked that that should be the case.

Already, the atmosphere in Northern Ireland is different. There is now a real feeling of peace abroad, and we are determined to build on what has already been achieved. We now need to move forward with the aim of resuming negotiations with the various parties, with the object, in turn, of achieving an overall settlement which is widely acceptable in Northern Ireland. No one will be asked to forgo his fundamental principles, but there will need to be flexibility, as there always is in negotiations. At the end of the day, we have made it clear that there is no slippery slope in what we are about, and that the Government will continue to uphold the principles of democracy and consent.

It is worth remembering that, just one year ago, Northern Ireland was coming to the end of a week of unmitigated horror. It was a week that had begun with the horrific carnage of the Shankill bomb, which continued through vicious sectarian killings, and which ended with the terrible massacre at Greysteel. It was one of the darkest times in Northern Ireland's recent history, and it was hard to see any light to relieve that darkness. Yet here we are tonight, a year later, talking of hope in an atmosphere in which the guns and bombs are silent.

The two periods are not unrelated. Out of that horror was born an even stronger desire for peace, an even more insistent call that enough was enough, and an even greater demand that an answer had to be found. In turn, that gave greater impetus to the process that has led to where we are today, not least in the courage and vision of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which has played such a central part.

The way ahead is not easy. It will need further courage and vision, not just from the Government but from everyone who must be involved in this vital process. The people of Northern Ireland are looking to us all to provide it, and we must not fail them now.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

DRUG TRAFFICKING BILL [*LORDS*]

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Drug Trafficking Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

EDUCATION

Ordered,

That Sir Paul Beresford be discharged from the Education Committee and Mr. Graham Riddick be added to the Committee.— *[Mr. MacKay.]*

EMPLOYMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Sebastian Coe be discharged from the Employment Committee and Mr. Warren Hawksley be added to the Committee.— *[Mr. MacKay.]*

ENVIRONMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert B. Jones be discharged from the Environment Committee and Sir Irvine Patnick be added to the Committee.— *[Mr. MacKay.]*

INFORMATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Rod Richards be discharged from the Information Committee and Mr. Timothy Wood be added to the Committee.— *[Mr. MacKay.]*

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Dr Liam Fox be discharged from the Scottish Affairs Committee and Mrs. Jacqui Lait be added to the Committee.— *[Mr. MacKay.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Rod Richards be discharged from the Welsh Affairs Committee and Mr. Warren Hawksley be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

PETITION

Mrs. Helen Tinney

10 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of many people in the city of Glasgow, following the tragic death of Mrs. Helen Tinney on 12 September 1993. Her death followed the demolition of large multi-storey block in the city in circumstances that have given rise to considerable concern to many people in Glasgow.

The petition has been signed by 2,158 people, whose names have been collected mainly from the Gorbals district of Glasgow, but also from further afield within that city. Earlier this week, a further 3,000 names on other petitions were presented to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing street.

The concern of the people of Glasgow has been occasioned by the fact that the procurator fiscal has chosen at this stage not to prefer charges or identify someone as responsible for the death of Helen Tinney. Her family—specifically her widower, Mr. Eddie Tinney, her daughters Maureen and Elaine Tinney, and her son John—and many other people are very concerned about this matter.

I therefore present this petition:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will do all in its power to ensure that those persons responsible for the death of Helen Tinney are identified and duly prosecuted.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Civil Service (Redundancies)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): The debate arises from the announcement last week of a radical transformation of the role and staffing of the Treasury. I record my interest as secretary of the parliamentary Labour party's treasury affairs committee and as a parliamentary adviser to the First Division Association of Civil Servants.

No Opposition Member opposes good housekeeping, but the Treasury is already small, given the job that it does at the heart of Government. Its running costs represent only 0.4 per cent. of total Government running costs. So the downscaling of the Treasury cannot be justified on the ground of its financial burden to the nation. The Treasury's size has already been reduced dramatically under this Government. Only 1,400 people now work in the central Treasury, compared with 3,000 in 1982. Many top jobs were cut less than a year ago. Yet it is now proposed to remove as many as one third of the senior posts, with others to follow. In time, a quarter of the entire staff of the Treasury is to be axed.,

It is right to ask why that is being done and with what consequences for the ability of this and future Governments to run economic policies. It is also necessary to ask what wider motivation Ministers have for running down the civil service. A real fear is now growing within the Labour party that the current reforms will have such an impact on the whole government machine that there might hardly be a civil service worth its name, not only in the Treasury but throughout Whitehall, to implement the programme of an incoming Labour Administration if we have a change of Government at the next election.

I ask the Minister to describe clearly the way in which staff cuts will be implemented at the Treasury. By what process will individual civil servants be selected to stay or go, and will that process comply with European law? Will there be compulsory, as well as voluntary, redundancy? What severance terms will be provided, and at what public cost? How will individual civil servants' pension arrangements be safeguarded?

What criteria will be used to select individual civil servants for redundancy? How can the Minister assure the House that those criteria will not include, directly or indirectly, considerations of political suitability? Can he assure us also that there is no hit list of those individuals whom the Government want to remove? The civil servants involved, as well as Parliament, are entitled to answers to all those questions.

Let me suggest to the Minister that, in the approach that the Government are taking, they are in danger of creating the worst of all worlds as a result of the job insecurity that those changes are generating in the civil service.

Those officials with the most marketable credentials and contacts in the private sector will be the most tempted to take voluntary redundancy and go—and CVs are probably being brushed up in every corner of the Treasury as we speak. All too often, that group will contain some of the brightest and best, because they have been pushed into aspects of work, such as privatisation, that have been a high priority for the Government. On the other hand, the people with the strongest commitment to the public service, but who have not had such glamorous roles and have not had the same chances to develop, will be eager to stay.

Those people who want to get out but are refused will be disappointed and demoralised, which will affect their future work. Others, who are wanted at the top of the range, will have to be paid more to tie them in. That is not a happy or productive environment in which to work in the most crucial Department—or in any Department—in Whitehall.

What is the purpose of the disruption? The Government's justification is to de-layer management, devolve responsibility, focus on key objectives and move away from the "command and control" style of management, as the permanent secretary, Sir Terry Burns, put it in a lecture earlier this year. At one level, it is hard to argue with all that, and no one would if that was the whole story and the only motivation, but it is not. The Government have decided to swing their axe now because they desire to shred the civil service throughout every Department in Whitehall, and the Treasury is going first, to set an example to the others.

The Department of Health and the Department of the Environment are rumoured to be next in the firing line. Sweeping staff cuts in those Departments are predicted, regardless of the needs that those Departments serve and the services for which they are responsible—but the public's needs never have been the Government's priority.

What supposedly started as a cost-driven exercise is in danger of ending up as an ideological vendetta against the public sector, in which notions of quality, performance and standards of work in the civil service barely figure in Ministers' minds. The staff axe is being wielded not for the cause of better government but simply in aid of less government.

Dramatically scaling down the machine itself is the ultimate application of the Tory philosophy that the Government should withdraw—that they should take less responsibility and that they should intervene less. In other words, the radical downsizing of the Treasury is the logical outcome of the laissez-faire policies that have produced the shrunken economy for which the Treasury, under its present leadership, is responsible.

If one examines the proposed new, leaner, directorate structure proposed for the Treasury, its bias is clear to see. It is not proactive or interventionist; it is not pro-industry. It is barely engaged in the real economy—in what is happening among firms and companies, where Britain's true economic success lies. The Treasury's objectives, apparently, are only to maintain affordable public expenditure, improve the efficiency of markets, maintain a framework of Government accounting, maintain the financial regulatory regime, deliver permanently low inflation and promote United Kingdom interests abroad. Those are all laudable aims, but what about the United Kingdom's other interests at home?

The most important influence any Government have is through the money that they spend—44 per cent. of gross domestic product. An active Government who understand how the power of public action can be used creatively to strengthen the supply side in the economy and help create opportunities for every individual in society need a strong Treasury to co-ordinate that effort. Under the new regime,

[Mr. Peter Mandelson]

the Treasury will not only be failing in that task but its other important role—to manage public spending—will be weakened.

The withdrawal of the Treasury's detailed control over other Departments' spending, which is proposed in the changes, will have bad consequences if it leads to a relaxation of financial discipline throughout Whitehall and to a green light being offered to all the special interests that breed in the spending Departments. One has only to think of the Agriculture and Defence Ministries to recognise the dangers. The Government will have less ability centrally to enforce spending priorities throughout Whitehall. Whitehall needs a strong co-ordinating Department to bang the table and sort out priorities when departmental priorities conflict. That requires detailed knowledge that will be jeopardised by the proposed staff changes.

Ministers may think that in their quest for less government and a smaller public sector the morale and motivation of the civil service is a reasonable loss to incur; if so, they are making a big mistake. The loyalty and dedication of civil servants and their desire to give a lifetime of service to the good government of their country constitute a priceless asset that should not be squandered in the cause of endless fragmentation of that service—contracting out and buying in from outside consultants and numerous special political advisers. When the Prime Minister talks of the problems of maintaining standards of conduct in public life, he should understand that those problems would be much larger without the standards of integrity, independence and political neutrality that are the hallmarks of the British civil service.

There is a further constitutional as well as practical implication of what the Government are doing in the Treasury and elsewhere in Whitehall. It must be asked whether, as a result of the rundown of the civil service, the very machine that will be left behind will be adequate to administer the policies of an incoming Labour Government. It is true that the newly enshrined objectives of the Treasury could easily be "unshrined" or at least "reshrined". But a properly staffed, managed and equipped machine has to be in place to do that. Such consideration is too much to expect from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He has a record of undermining public service in each Department in which he has served. From doctors to teachers, from the police to the Treasury, he has destroyed public servants' pride in what they do.

The permanent secretary to the Treasury, however, has a personal responsibility, independent of the Government of the day, to secure the Treasury machine for subsequent Administrations. He has shown some dereliction of duty by not consulting the Opposition about the changes that he proposes. He should have considered whether they would be adequate for the needs of a different, Labour Administration. Upon a change of Government, the Treasury will need to shift radically and quickly to new priorities and ways of working, and there will be no time to waste.

The permanent secretary should not only fully consult the Opposition about the changes already under way—others' views have been sought—he should also, long before the next election and with the agreement and consent of the head of the home civil service, call on the shadow Chancellor to be fully briefed on Labour's plans so that the Treasury will be ready to implement them from day one.

As the civil service White Paper reminded us earlier this year:

> "The Government recognises that the Civil Service is not the property of any single Administration but will continue to serve Governments of whatever party."

I hope that Ministers will think again about what they are doing to the civil service and about the consequences of that for government and for our public life. In implementing any reforms, they have a duty to ensure that there remains a unified, properly staffed and motivated civil service to pass on to succeeding Administrations. I hope tonight for an unequivocal commitment from the Minister to that end, and that, on behalf of the Treasury, he will give me the undertakings that I have sought.

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert G. Hughes): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on securing this Adjournment debate and on his promotion to the ranks of the Opposition Whips Office. I am sure that serving as a Whip, as much in opposition as in government, is a valuable role; and that the hon. Gentleman, like anyone else who has served as one, will learn a great deal about government. Having heard his speech, however, I suggest that a period of silence on his part would be welcomed by many—especially by the people about whom he has been talking.

The hard-working civil servants whom the hon. Gentleman has attacked this evening have every right to resent his attack. As a Minister responsible for the civil service I certainly resent it on behalf of all the civil servants, of every grade, with whom I come into contact.

I am glad to have the opportunity to debate redundancies in the civil service and to set out clearly the true picture. There has been much ill-informed speculation of late, which I am pleased to have this chance to refute. The hon. Gentleman has tonight repeated some of the ill-informed exaggerations produced by the media and the trade unions.

This occasion allows me to discuss redundancy in the correct context of the reform of the civil service. This is an issue to which the Government attach the highest importance and on which, I believe, we have an excellent record. Our aim was well expressed in the citizens charter first report in 1992:

> "New management structures are being developed, competition is being introduced or extended; arrangements for pay are changing rapidly. All these changes are in pursuit of a single, worthwhile cause: the safeguarding and improvement of our public services, for the benefit of those who use them, at a cost which the nation can afford."

The hon. Gentleman said twice that he wants there to be enough civil servants in place to implement the programme of an incoming Labour Government. Repeating an argument does not make it true. The fact is that civil servants are there to carry out the functions of the civil service. Although he only alluded to this in his speech, it is common for the hon. Gentleman, the First Division Association and other Labour party spokesmen to say that there has been a change in the civil service's code of ethics and that it will not be capable of serving a Labour Government. That, too, is an insult to civil servants—

Mr. Mandelson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hughes: That was certainly the tenor of the discussion in which the hon. Gentleman took part at the seminar held by the FDA—and it certainly represents the burden of what the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said in a speech last week.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has done us all a favour. When I became a departmental Minister in the reshuffle, I was still in the middle of reading his excellent book, "How to be a Minister". In it, the right hon. Gentleman had some interesting things to say, among them the view that Labour politicians have of the civil service. He writes, on page 45:

"Some officials will just suggest one course of action, for you to take or leave. Others, more cunning, will attempt to confuse you with a choice, while carefully steering you in the direction they want you to go. The key of course is not necessarily to accept any of the courses of action they recommend, but to come up with some others yourself. The really inventive Minister will even reject the very problem posed to him, and map out another and more politically attractive scenario."

That is the sort of contempt with which the hon. Member for Hartlepool has spoken of the civil service.

The White Paper entitled "The Civil Service: Continuity and Change", which was published in July, was the first comprehensive statement of Government policy on the civil service since the Fulton report of 1968. In that document the subject of job losses was specifically and realistically addressed. It stated:

"On the basis of experience so far, recognising the challenging nature of running costs targets, and allowing for further opportunities for outsourcing and privatisation, the Government would expect Civil Service manpower to fall significantly below 500,000 over the next four years."

Incidentally, that fall is from a total at 1 April 1994 of 533,350. The White Paper continued:

"The Government does not intend to set specific manpower targets either globally or for departments; it firmly believes that control should continue to be exercised through running costs rather than staff numbers."

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I thought that the kernel of the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) was the management of Government finance. Does the Minister intend to address that topic, bearing in mind the fact that various reports by the Public Accounts Committee, the Select Committee on Defence and the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service have dealt with the whole issue of costing and control of finance? They have also commented on how the Treasury will deal with it if we lose a complete layer of management. For example, how are we to deal with the burgeoning costs of the Ministry of Defence?

Mr. Hughes: After that uncalled-for intervention, I shall have time to reply to slightly less of the speech by the hon. Member for Hartlepool. I was seeking to speak to those points, but the hon. Member for Hartlepool went wider and I am entitled to respond to the wider issues as well.

It is quite wrong to associate a reduction in civil service jobs with redundancies. One does not necessarily follow the other. As the White Paper went on to explain:

"The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the Civil Service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies. Normal turnover in a large organisation gives managers scope for this. In recent years about 5 per cent. of staff have been leaving the Civil Service each year and in the Civil Service, as elsewhere, this figure may rise as the labour market changes."

The Government's aim is borne out by the facts. Provisional figures for the financial year 1993-94 show a total of about 37,000 departures from the civil service, of which only 2,800 were redundancies, and 800 of those were voluntary. In addition, there were 3,100 early departures, and in some cases that avoided later compulsory redundancies. Therefore, when discussing redundancy in the civil service, we must be sure to keep things in perspective.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool made a specific and important point about pensions. Those made compulsorily redundant receive payments under the principal civil service pension scheme related to age, reckonable service and pensionable pay. Terms agreed with the civil service unions when present arrangements were introduced on 1 April 1987 remain in place. I understand that those terms compare favourably with those in the private sector and are on the same basis for all grades. Of course, people are right to be concerned, but I do not think that there is a basis for that concern.

I shall now refer specifically to the Treasury's fundamental expenditure review. I am quite astonished that that review could lead either to this debate or to the cuttings that I have read from newspapers. First, no decisions have yet been made. The fundamental expenditure review did no more than recommend that 31 senior posts should be cut. Two of them are to transfer to other Departments and another three are currently unoccupied. It is surprising that the possibility of 26 redundancies should cause headlines claiming that 100,000 jobs are to be cut and that it should lead to this debate and its tone.

The White Paper stated:

"Every effort will be made to ensure that civil servants will be treated in a way that is fair and reasonable."

I shall reply specifically to the scurrilous points made by the hon. Member for Hartlepool about redundancy on political grounds. Of course, that is not correct; it has never been like that. He also asked whether there would be a hit list. That is an outrageous suggestion, which I emphatically reject.

The Government recognise the value of their staff and they reaffirmed that in the "Continuity and Change" White Paper, which said:

"The Civil Service needs to make better use of its most important resource—the staff of departments and agencies—by providing the prospects of a career with a good employer, offering challenge and reward; by developing their skills to meet the managerial, technical and competitive challenges they face; and by ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of staff, irrespective of background, gender, race and disability."

The Government will not idly throw away staff who have been recruited and trained at expense to the public purse because we appreciate the value of a permanent, well-trained civil service.

[Mr. Hughes]

It is nonsense for the hon. Gentleman—the point was repeated by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara)—to talk in terms of the emasculation or destruction of the civil service as we know it. An emasculated and incapable civil service would be of no use to any Government, let alone an incoming Labour Government or, as is more likely, a continuing Conservative Government. Any wise Minister values the advice that he gets from his officials and, more to the point, knows that its quality is dependent on the robustness and impartiality with which it is delivered.

Good government in this country depends on a good and strong civil service, and the Government acknowledged that in the White Paper, which says:

> "Successive Governments have paid tribute to the service it has provided and have taken care that the Civil Service should maintain its impartiality and its ability to command the confidence of successive administrations. This Government are fully committed to maintaining this approach."

The idea that somehow, either in quality, in its disposition or in the numbers, the civil service would not be able to help or be of value to an incoming Labour Government is, in my judgment, a slur upon the civil servants who are there at the moment.

The exaggerated media stories and spurious figures on redundancies in the civil service that have been repeated tonight are inaccurate and, as I hope I have shown, will not help in the management of what is a difficult period of change for the civil service.

When the hon. Gentleman talks about demotivation and suggests that the Government have a desire to shred the civil service, what effect does he think that has on civil servants and their families? If anybody is demotivating those people, it is people such as the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McNamara: Market testing.

Mr. Hughes: Market testing is enabling civil servants to do the jobs that they want to do; it is getting good value for the taxpayer. I know that the hon. Gentleman does not care about that; he does not care whether the customers—the people paying the bill—get the service that they want, but what can be the argument against people getting the best quality service at the best possible price? I thought that nobody would argue with that, least of all what we keep being told is the modern Labour party, the new Labour party that believes in value for money. That idea is blown out of the water every time Labour spokesmen open their mouths.

I believe that what has been said tonight will not help in the management of what is a difficult period of change for the civil service. The Government know well the excellent service that the civil service has provided to the country over many years and are determined to maintain an apolitical permanent civil service that is honest, impartial and accountable through Ministers to Parliament. Those qualities have served us well in the past and will do so in future.

The Government are also determined to have a civil service that is effective and efficient. There is simply no reason to maintain within the civil service jobs that can be best done in the private sector. Let me remind the House that our criteria are best long-term value for money. We are seeking to safeguard services for the future, not to contract them out to the lowest bidder.

Alongside our determination for efficiency is an equal determination for quality of service. The citizens charter programme is a 10-year programme designed to raise the quality of public service across the board—and that includes the civil service.

Mr. Mandelson: Does the Minister accept that the fears of the Opposition might be greatly allayed if he were to take up my suggestion that the permanent secretary to the Treasury should call on the shadow Chancellor and reassure the Opposition that the Treasury machine that he is leaving intact, as the Minister has described, will be capable of implementing the policies and programmes of an incoming Labour Government? Why does not he accept my suggestion?

Mr. Hughes: Any reading of chapter four of the "Civil Service Management Code", which is a published document, not unwritten rules, would make the capability of the civil service abundantly clear to any sensible person from any party. That code covers the duty not to misuse official information, political neutrality, conflicts of interest, duties of civil servants in relation to Ministers and rules on accepting employment after leaving. The essential rules for being a civil servant are laid down centrally. They have everything to do with the hon. Gentleman's question. Those are the important issues for the Government to consider, not some fanciful idea of what an incoming Labour Government might or might not want to do.

The reorganisation of a management structure as large and as complex as the civil service is bound to be unsettling for those involved. We shall seek to keep redundancies, particularly compulsory ones, to a minimum. It is in no one's interests that there should be more than are necessary. It must be our aim to limit the number of redundancies as far as possible, in the interests not only of good personnel management, but of good economic management.

The Government now demand and get from the civil service better efficiency and better quality. For instance, the Benefits Agency has estimated that its productivity increase in the past four years means that it is now coping with a work load that would have required 15,000 more people in 1990. Demanding and getting value for money, looking for efficiencies and making the savings that are necessary are part of the duty of the Government to the taxpayer. I do not think that anyone would seriously argue about that duty and I do not believe that the Opposition will be taken seriously if they seek to do that.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 28 October 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Inward Investment

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

9.34 am

The Minister for Energy and Industry (Mr. Tim Eggar): This is the first ever full debate in the House on inward investment. That is somewhat surprising as inward investment is one of the Government's and this country's greatest success stories. That is a bold statement. Let me substantiate it.

Over 30 per cent. of all foreign direct investment in the European Union has come to the United Kingdom. Ninety-eight of the "Fortune" top 100 companies have chosen to locate in the UK. No less than 43 per cent. of all United States investment in the European Union made by more than 3,500 companies is situated here in the United Kingdom.

We have consistently attracted the major Japanese consumer, electronics and vehicle manufacturers. One thousand German companies have established facilities in Britain. Many of them are here to take advantage of Britain's more competitive environment. Nearly 50 per cent. of Korean investment in the European Union has been located in the United Kingdom. Since 1979, the Invest in Britain Bureau has registered more than 4,000 inward investment projects with more than 600,000 associated jobs. In the last financial year alone, almost 100,000 jobs were created by, or linked to, inward investment.

That has led to some spectacular export achievements. For example, over 35 per cent. of all personal computers in Europe and over 55 per cent. of Europe's workstations are now manufactured in Scotland. In addition, we are now a net exporter of televisions.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) may have some difficulty challenging those statistics, not least because the most significant recent inward investment, that of Samsung from Korea, will provide jobs to many hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of his constituents. Indeed, the statistics might not be very convenient from the Opposition's point of view. However, all those foreign business men cannot be wrong. Let me be slightly more specific than I have been in simply quoting the statistics. I shall list some of the major inward investment successes of the past decade.

I noticed my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) in the Chamber. She will be aware that Toyota has invested £700 million in its car plant at Burnaston. That has created 3,000 new jobs. Fujitsu of Japan invested £400 million in a semi-conductor factory in County Durham. Nissan currently employs more than 4,200 people at Washington, County Durham. MBNA of the United States invested £42·3 million at Chester in its new credit card undertaking. That has created 200 jobs. Yamazaki Mazak, the No. 1 CNC machine tool company in the world, invested £40 million in Worcester, employing 280 people in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff).

Oracle Systems of the United States announced in April this year that it was investing £50 million in its computer software factory at Thames Valley park east of Reading. Robert Bosch of Germany has invested £100 million in a new factory near Cardiff to produce car alternators. That has created 800 jobs. Sony of Japan has expanded its Bridgend factory, which produces colour televisions. It is spending £147 million and creating another 1,400 jobs.

NEC of Japan announced only last month its decision to invest £530 million in its wafer fabrication plant in Livingston, bringing the total number of employees to 1,370. Of course, there is not a word of criticism from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about that inward investment from Japan. Black and Decker now has the largest power tool plant in the world, which happens to be located in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), the Leader of the Opposition. Again, there is not a word of criticism of that. In June, Honda of Japan announced its decision to invest £330 million in its plant in Swindon. Tatung of Taiwan has expanded its Telford plant and it currently employs about 500 staff. I have already referred to Samsung's significant announcement last week.

Inward investment has had a significant impact along the length and breadth of this country. Hardly a town or county anywhere in the United Kingdom has not benefited either directly or indirectly from inward investment. I am delighted that, for the first time, London now has an inward investment agency, the London First Centre, for which the Government have provided a grant of £500,000 this year. Before that centre is fully established, it is handling more than 100 inquiries, many of them in the manufacturing sector.

That impressive, unparalleled list of success stories is a testimony to the excellent and continuing work of the Invest in Britain Bureau and of our overseas posts. I pay tribute to the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on behalf not only of the promotion of exports but of inward investment.

We should not forget, as we consider more recent inward investments, companies that have been established in this country for many years. I refer to well-known companies such as Ford, Vauxhall, IBM, Nestlé, and Proctor and Gamble. Many British citizens might be surprised to hear of their being examples of foreign companies investing in the United Kingdom, because many such companies are regarded as for ever having been British.

That matter goes to the core of the Government's attitude. Once overseas companies come to the United Kingdom, they are not foreign companies; they are British companies that happen to have foreign owners, and we shall fight for those companies in international forums as hard as we fight for directly British-owned companies. We will have no criticism from Opposition Members or from trade unions in particular, which demeans the value of jobs in the United Kingdom because those jobs happen to be created by companies that are domiciled overseas.

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

We should not forget that investment is not just a one-way street. We are part of an increasingly global economy. We cannot afford simply to assume that the world and its businesses will come to the United Kingdom. We must accept also that many of our most succesful companies will want to invest overseas. By value, we are the world's largest overseas investor after the United States of America. Just think of British companies that are world leaders: British Airways, British Gas, National Power, PowerGen and Thames Water, to name but a few. What have all those companies in common? It is no accident that prominent among British outward investors are companies that have only recently been freed from the shackles of state control as a result of our successful privatisation programme.

We should not forget that the United Kingdom is the second biggest investor overall in the United States and the biggest investor in the manufacturing sector there, with investment valued at more than $40 billion. Indeed, some of the great trade names in the United States are under British ownership—everything from the Jolly Green Giant to Smith and Wesson.

Investing in the United Kingdom is popular, as we have seen from the statistics, because of the advantages that we offer. Above all, we offer a Government who are committed to creating a commercial environment in which business can flourish and grow. We have one of the lowest rates of corporation tax in the European Union. Our personal tax rates are low, thereby allowing people to work hard to progress and to look after their families. We have no foreign exchange controls. Our labour costs are highly competitive—in some cases, they are half those of Germany. We have an able and willing work force who are ready to learn new skills, to adapt to new production processes and to work flexible hours with rostering, which allows production 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Only last Monday, I visited Fiat's New Holland tractor plant at Basildon—another example of successful inward investment. That factory had a very successful year in 1994. I asked management why that plant was so competitive. The answer was unequivocal: good labour relations and a flexible work force. Let me spell it out—average overtime at the plant this year has been 40 per cent. I talked to several people working on the production line and asked them whether they welcomed that overtime. Unequivocally, they said yes. They welcomed the opportunity to work long hours, to bring benefits to themselves and to their families. Of course, if we had been part of the social contract, they would have not been able to work those hours. They would have been limited to a maximum of 48 hours a week. Many of them were doing between 55 and 65 hours a week, week in, week out.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) shakes his head. He wants to deprive individuals of the ability to choose the number of hours that they work. Oh no, the hon. Gentleman knows best. He will determine the standard of living of those workers in Basildon. He will not give them the opportunity to decide for themselves. However, it is much more serious than that. The hon. Gentleman would deprive that plant of its ability to compete worldwide. He would deprive that plant of its overriding competitive advantage over any other plant within the New Holland group—that is, its flexibility, its responsiveness and the commitment of the work force and of management to maintain that competitiveness.

The hon. Gentleman sits back and smiles. I just hope that potential overseas investors in the United Kingdom do not pay too much attention to his smiles, because they send one message to them: that, if the Labour party ever formed a Government, they would deprive Britain of a major competitive advantage that the Government have given British business men by sticking strongly to our views and being prepared to do so against opposition from other European Union countries.

There is more, of course, and the Opposition do not like it. United Kingdom strike rates in the past two years were the lowest in Europe since records began 100 years ago. Ours is the only western European economy in which unemployment is falling. All that has been achieved against a backdrop of falling inflation. Britain recognises that price stability is essential to encourage businesses to plan and to invest. That is why the Government are determined to keep inflation low, and it is why underlying inflation is at its lowest for 25 years and has been under 3 per cent. for 12 consecutive months.

One of the great strengths of our inward investment record is the breadth of the companies that have chosen to establish not only manufacturing but their research and development facilities in the United Kingdom, and we attach great importance to that. Companies that have recently either come here and established research and development facilities or expanded existing facilities included Canon, Sony and Pfizer. Indeed, more than 100 Japanese companies have research and development facilities of different sizes in the United Kingdom. They have come here because the United Kingdom has long been renowned for scientific innovation and the quality of its research.

The Government have actively sought to assist companies in identifying suitable research areas, partners and sites, and we have helped inward investors and foreign companies to forge links with British research institutions. It is vital to the continuing competitiveness of the United Kingdom economy that we work closely with foreign companies and with our great research institutions to the benefit of us all.

There is another factor. It is well known that industry in the United Kingdom is not burdened by unnecessary rules and regulations. It is well known that where problems have been created for one reason or another, the Government will do everything that they can to sweep away those rules and regulations. It is also well known that the Government believe that it is business men who know best how to run their businesses, and that working practices should be settled between employers and employees without the heavy-handed intervention of local or central Government.

All those factors have been crucial to the commercial decisions of foreign investors when they come to set up their businesses in the United Kingdom. However, there is another important reason why they have come to the United Kingdom. They are confident that they will be welcomed here because the Government's policy over the past 15 years has been clear and consistent. We want foreign investors to come to the United Kingdom and we shall do what we can in what is an increasingly competitive world to ensure that they locate here.

Sometimes, our assistance to foreign investors requires the judicious use of financial incentives such as regional selective assistance to tip the balance in our favour. Of course, the whole RSA discretionary procedure is preferable to the indiscriminate handouts that were exemplified by regional development grants.

It is not only the creation of the right climate for inward investment that has brought about success. We need support for companies that can genuinely show that they will introduce long-term, quality employment to this country. Companies such as Nissan have not only created valuable employment directly but helped to transform the United Kingdom auto supplies sector. Compare that with the inward-looking, let-us-prop-up-anything-anywhere policies of the previous Labour Government. People should not forget that that Government devoted all their skills—that is, the skills of the previous Member for Bradford, South, the late Bob Cryer—to supporting failing companies, rather than encouraging successful ones.

We have made every effort to ensure that the process of setting up in the United Kingdom is as easy as possible, and that investors have quick access to the best advice that is available internationally. That commitment continues. It does not stop at the point at which investors have established their operations in the United Kingdom. We have built up an after-care programme that is designed to ensure that investors are fully satisfied with their operations in the United Kingdom, and that they are taking the best advantage of the benefits that the United Kingdom has to offer with regard to additional services for expansion, changes in manufacturing processes and so on, in response to market changes.

In other words, we want to see businesses flourish and prosper, and we shall do all that we properly can to help them succeed. They will continue to flourish and prosper as long as the United Kingdom Government follow the policies that have brought about our great success over the past 10 years. Central to those policies is our membership of the European Union.

There are some who claim that membership of the European Union has brought no tangible benefits to this country. The success of our inward investment programme is strong evidence to the contrary. Inward investment has created jobs, boosted our exports and spread best practice around our manufacturing industries. Much of that inward investment would not have come to the United Kingdom if we were not whole-heartedly committed to membership of the European Union. Foreign companies know that, by investing in Britain, they have access to the European single market and, with it, the 340 million consumers who form the largest single market in the world.

By coming to Britain, inward investors get the best of both worlds: access to the single market and a competitive commercial environment, while at the same time they are exempted from the clinging aspects of the social charter. Does anyone seriously suggest that we should have been as successful as we have been in inward investment without our membership of the European Union and without access to that single market? I do not think that any business man in the United Kingdom who has been associated with major inward investment decisions would suggest that for a moment.

Being in Europe does not mean accepting without question every measure that is proposed by our partners or by the Commission. As I said, the opt-out from the social charter proves that. The Commission's view is clear. It was Jacques Delors who remarked that the social charter opt-out makes Britain a paradise for foreign investment. Outside Europe, we should not be a paradise; we should be an irrelevance. Not all of our advantages flow from membership of the Union, but many of them in terms of the market do. Our inward investors know that they will also benefit from the transformation in the British supply side over the past 15 years.

Apart from the labour flexibility that I mentioned, inward investors also want access to our excellent academic institutions. They want to operate in a country that speaks English, and they want to enjoy the support of a Government who are committed to the success of business.

One of the most influential magazines on inward investment, *Corporate Location*, revealed last week the results of a major survey that showed that Britain is now the world's favourite location for inward investment over the next two years. Would that remain the case if we did not provide inward investors with access to the single market? Of course, it would not.

I have been speaking for almost half an hour. We had a Neanderthal wing of the Labour party shaking its head. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South should save her sympathy for someone else. There was no dissent as I listed the successes of our inward investment programme. We must ask about Labour's policies.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): My hon. Friend has only two minutes left.

Mr. Eggar: If I listed Labour's policies, I am sure that I should not be speaking for as long as two minutes. To coin a familiar phrase, the Labour party would be tough on inward investors and tough on the causes on inward investment. The Labour party has no real commitment to the success of business. It would rather strangle companies with the disastrous implications of the social chapter, which Opposition Members so readily embrace. We have seen evidence of that already this morning.

Do not let us delude ourselves. International companies would not be willing to locate in the United Kingdom and create thousands of skilled jobs if the United Kingdom allowed itself to be held back by the anti-business attitudes that are so endemic in the Labour party, by its belief in the social chapter or by its commitment to minimum wage policies. Such policies are enthusiastically espoused by the Labour party, but they would do so much damage to our competitiveness.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: No, I will not give way. I shall think about it in a minute or two.

Much as the new leader of the Labour party would like us to believe that there is a new Labour party as well as a new leader of the Labour party and would like to deceive the country into thinking that his party embraces the logic of open, free and competitive markets, we need to do only a very little digging to realise what his party really stands for.

[Mr. Eggar]

Only two years ago, when the hon. Member for Livingston was the leading Opposition spokesman on trade and industry, he pointed out at a Tribune rally that opinion polls showed that 31 per cent. of British people thought that

> "more socialist planning would be the best way to solve Britain's economic problems".

He picked out that statistic. That is all right, but then he made his intentions absolutely clear. He said:

> "How many people have they heard making the case for socialist planning of the economy? If we can almost get a majority without even trying, just think what we can do if we are confident and really give it a push."—

"it", of course, being socialist planning.

That quotation is not my invention. It comes from an excellent paper that I can recommend to hon. Members on both sides of the House. It comes from *Fabian Review*, volume 105, No. 3, from an article written by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones), in which she quoted her hon. Friend. No Opposition Member denies—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Middlesbrough wants to know when the hon. Member for Livingston said that. What he means is, "Oh dear, our marketing experts have not picked that up. I had better get the references. In any case, now that my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston has moved on to foreign affairs"—because he is a little dangerous and wayward when he speaks on the real world and the real economy—"perhaps we shall be able to rewrite or modify the quotation. Perhaps the wizards down at Walworth road will be able to rephrase it."

I have given the hon. Member for Middlesbrough the reference. There is no doubt about it. He ought to refer to the hon. Member for Selly Oak. She wrote the article. Presumably she checked that the quotation from the hon. Member for Livingston was accurate.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We know that the Minister is erroneous in most of his speech, but he could do my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) the courtesy of ceasing referring to her as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I am sure that that point is taken.

Mr. Eggar: I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Middlesbrough knows the members of his own party. Would the hon. Gentleman like to withdraw the assertion on a point of order?

Mr. Bell: The remarks seemed to be those of my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood. It may be that my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak made similar remarks.

Mr. Eggar: Now I see. The hon. Gentleman was prepared to dismiss the remarks if they were those of the hon. Member for Ladywood. She is one extreme of the Labour party, so she can be dismissed. Then it turns out that they were the remarks of the hon. Member for Selly Oak. The hon. Gentleman has now succeeded in offending two hon. Ladies in his party. There is a certain amount of sexism around here. I thought that the new Labour party was all about equality between the sexes and promoting the role of women—something of which I am sure you are in favour, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In one intervention—indeed, his only intervention so far during the debate—the hon. Member for Middlesbrough has knocked a couple of women aside. But that is the real voice of the Labour party. That is the north-east of the Labour party speaking, just as it was the real voice of the Labour party speaking when the hon. Member for Livingston, who was then the main Opposition spokesman on trade and industry, extolled the virtues of socialist planning. *[Interruption.]* Oh dear, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough had not even worked out that the hon. Member for Selly Oak had been a Member of Parliament for the past two and a half years. I should have thought that he would be delighted. This is bizarre. If the hon. Gentleman shows the same quality of research when he talks about trade and industry as when he analyses the membership of his parliamentary party, God help us.

We have had a little fun and a bit of knockabout, but behind it is a critical point. Large numbers of international companies have invested in the United Kingdom to the enormous benefit of our economy and employment because the Government have set out deliberately to create a climate in which inward investors know that they will be welcome and will be supported by the Government.

What do the Opposition want to do? At a time when NEC has created 500 jobs in the constituency of the hon. Member for Livingston, when Black and Decker has located all its manufacturing in Europe in the constituency of the hon. Member for Sedgefield, when the hon. Member for Middlesbrough knows full well that many hundreds of his constituents will be given employment by Samsung, the Labour party is making a great call to international investors. It is saying, "We, the main party of opposition in the United Kingdom, believe in socialist planning." I hope that that message gets across.

I look forward to hearing what the hon. Member for Middlesbrough's version of socialist planning is all about. I am sure that he will have discussed the matter at considerable length with the hon. Member for Livingston.

10.8 am

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): My first advice to the Minister is that he should keep taking the tablets. They obviously do him a world of good. He is in fine form and fine fettle this morning. We welcome his speech. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), who is now in the Whips Office, says that it was a fine speech. We certainly give him credit for that.

It was interesting to imagine that the ragged-trousered philanthropist was alive and well in Basildon when the Minister visited a Fiat factory and talked to the work force. He was told that working a 48 or 60-hour a week was a fine way of earning a living. That simply reflects the other side of the coin.

Where work is concerned, many years of Conservative government have resulted in a three-layer society—those people in work with highly paid jobs, who have to work for 48, 50 and 60 hours a week, those in lower-paid jobs, who have to work extremely hard, and those with no jobs at all.

The Minister was talking about inward investment, but uncertainty, vulnerability and insecurity are building up throughout the country. Opinion polls often ask, "What is your greatest worry?" The answer is, "That I will lose my job." The Minister therefore should not take too much credit for being part of a team who created such uncertainty from one end of the country to the other.

The Minister also referred to Neanderthal man, and we wondered who he was talking about. We all plead not guilty to being Neanderthal today. His evidence from the Fiat factory was anecdotal. Lord Howe visited the factory floor before the 1979 election and was told, "We want lower taxes." The Government thought that they were obliging by reducing the rate of income tax, increasing value added tax and increasing the burden on each worker. Anecdotal evidence might be helpful to the Minister, but it is certainly not a basis for building a policy, and I intend to go through various aspects of that policy.

The Minister mentioned rules and regulations, but he was forgetting who created them. There are four times as many now as there were in 1979, and Conservative Governments are responsible for that fourfold increase. In 1979, the President of the Board of Trade made a name for himself by getting rid of quangos, but he may have to start all over again and get rid of all the quangos created during the Conservative years.

As for the Labour party having an anti-business approach, the Minister will remember that the late John Smith made the best speech at the Confederation of British Industry conference last year. He got more applause than was ever given to a Conservative Minister. Also, there were more Labour Members of Parliament at that conference than ever before, and as many Labour Front-Bench spokesmen as Ministers of the Crown.

The Minister says that unemployment is falling here compared with other European countries, but that is due to the benefits of devaluation, which was forced on the Government in 1992. We accept that the rate is falling, and we want that decrease to continue, but it is not a good criterion for comparing our economy with those of other European countries where the exchange rates are stable, which are part of an exchange rate mechanism and which are tackling the unemployment problem in their own way and achieving results.

The Minister for Energy and Industry made a fine Friday morning speech. Lloyd George made his name with Friday morning speeches, and I wish the hon. Gentleman well on the same route.

Since there have been many references to Samsung this morning, I must say that, as a Cleveland Member of Parliament, I welcome that inward investment. Since it is a Friday morning and we can wander a little from the subject, although not too far, I might say that the fact that Samsung has chosen the Wynyard estate in Cleveland has some interesting historical parallels.

The estate was the seat of the Londonderry family. The Londonderrys understood the significance of Seaham for the embarkation of coal destined for London in the last century—it cut the cost of sending coal to Sunderland for shipment. They built the harbour there and established their family home. A century and a half later, the coal owners were bought out by a pitman's son.

Among the many achievements of Sir John Hall—whether in regard to the Gateshead Metro centre, Newcastle United football club, getting Mr. Kevin Keegan from the golf courses of Spain or even Mr. Andy Cole from a London football club—the most striking is that a pitman's son bought the coal owners' family seat.

In Cleveland, we welcome that investment, because we need it after 15 years of Conservative government, during which one steel mill has gone, although the other is still there, 80-odd foundries have closed, our coal mines have closed, the chemical and petrochemical industries have been reduced, our shipyards have closed and we have lost many jobs. They have been lost to people in work, and to their children who were seeking work. Ayresome park, the local football stadium, could be filled three times over with the unemployed.

There are many reasons why Samsung and other such companies have chosen our shores for their investment and the Minister touched on some. Notwithstanding the vicissitudes of the past few years—two recessions, both Government-induced—we remain a manufacturing nation in the eyes of the world. No matter how often the Government placed the emphasis on services—they did so in the 1980s with Lord Lawson—or attacked the industrial base of the trade unions by trying to make manufacturing more difficult, the outside world still looked upon us as the pioneers of the industrial revolution and as a country worthy of investment.

That has been the case under Labour as well as Conservative Governments. The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) will remember from his years as a member of a Labour Government that we had such inward investment, and that it was as successful as inward investment under the Conservatives.

The Minister suggested that the Labour party somehow criticised that inward investment. He said that the trade unions had also done so. Opposition Members have always taken the view that successful industries abroad should export their capital here, rather than their unemployment, and that they should manufacture here rather than simply export their products to this country. It is better to build locally than to import nationally, as I have no doubt the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will point out when she speaks, should she catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is better to build a strong local economy out of which a strong national economy will grow.

At the turn of the century, we made warships for the nations of the far east on the River Tyne. Now, on a 200-acre site at Wynyard in the Durham landscape, we shall be making 1 million computer monitors, 1.3 million microwave ovens, 250,000 facsimile machines, 150,000 personal computers, and 3 million monitor tubes, eight-inch semi-conductor wavers and colour televisions. They are not all for the same household, the same family, or even the same country—many are for export. They are a clear reflection of the different age in which we live. We have turned swords not into ploughshares, but into computers and modern technology.

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): The hon. Gentleman is going on at great length about manufacturing, and was making some points about the last Labour Government. He will remember that, despite some inward investment, that Government ceased to arrest the decline of United Kingdom manufacturing as a proportion of world trade. Conservative Governments during the past 15 years have done precisely that. For the first time in 50 or 60 years, United Kingdom manufacturing has ceased to decline as

[Mr. John Horam]

a proportion of world trade and has stabilised. Purely on the manufacturing front, that is an achievement that Labour Governments never managed.

Mr. Bell: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention, but he should have mentioned that manufacturing declined consistently until the last two years of Conservative government. We had 13 or 14 years of decline. He says that we have now arrested that decline, but he should look at what our competitors are doing.

The French have not only arrested the decline, but improved their share of world trade. If we compare ourselves to the French in manufacturing, we will find that we are behind them. The Government do not like that comparison, but I am making it. We are still losing ground compared to our competitors. It would not be acceptable to us simply to stand still after 15 years in government.

The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) referred to a number of issues, such as wage rates and the social chapter. The President of the Board of Trade was in Seoul recently when the announcement was made, and he added his own political spice when he said that Samsung had been attracted to the United Kingdom by our competitive wage rates, without the social chapter. He did not say, of course, that Samsung had been in the United Kingdom for 10 years before the social chapter was ever dreamed of. He did not say that the company's sales had gone up by 100 per cent. before Maastricht and the social chapter were ever debated.

In fact, the reasons given by the President to the Seoul correspondent of the *Financial Times*, John Burton, were more appropriate and exact. The right hon. Gentleman explained that the reasons why the United Kingdom had been selected included labour productivity, infrastructure, the Koreans' familiarity with the English language, and the previous success of Korean operations in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is it not true that the social chapter did not apply in this country when Samsung came here 10 years ago, whereas large amounts of it applied—and have long applied—in the rest of Europe, and particularly in countries which could match the requirements of Samsung, such as Germany?

Mr. Bell: There has never been any evidence that Samsung came to this country because of less social provision. I also think—I sure that the hon. Lady is not wishing to do this—that it is a great insult to firms such as Samsung to say to them, "Come to our country: the wages are low, we have no minimum wage and we do not have proper social provision."

We in the north-east are not coolie labour, nor slave labour. We have a highly skilled work force in our area, to which the Minister has paid a certain respect in his statements. A firm such as Samsung would have some resentment at the suggestion that it was coming here because of social conditions and wages. The company has never said that in any statement which it has put out.

One of the reasons stated by the President of the Board of Trade why Samsung wished to come to our country was the previous success of the Korean operations in the United Kingdom. The President did cite, as I said earlier, that Samsung's choice was supportive of the United Kingdom's decision to opt out of the European Union social chapter so that it could offer competitive wage rates. But the right hon. Gentleman moved quickly, and did not hang around on that point. He said that Samsung found the United Kingdom an attractive place to invest because of our membership of the European Union. The Minister has referred to that, and I shall come back to it later.

The UK is also an attractive place to invest because of our selective regional assistance. I found it strange—as I am sure did the House and those who follow business—that, in July this year, when the President of the Board of Trade was telling the country how well we were doing with record levels of inward investment, he was being undermined by the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, now the Secretary of State for Employment, who was writing to express his disappointment that the President of the Board of Trade, in his report on the fundamental expenditure review, had not gone far enough.

That was rather interesting because, at the time, the President said that almost 100,000 jobs had been created by or linked to inward investment in the United Kingdom. He said:

> "These are tremendous figures. Thousands of people are at work today because of our success at attracting inward investment. But we will not rest on our laurels. We will need to keep on fighting for every project."

At the same time, the former Chief Secretary said:

> "I see no strong case for retaining regional selective assistance".

The President added:

> "Once again the United Kingdom has proved to be a favourite location for the inward investor".

The former Chief Secretary then said:

> "I believe we need to distinguish carefully between enhancing business competitiveness and getting embroiled ourselves in a competition with foreign governments to pay market distorting subsidies . . . Much of our regional spending runs this risk".

Mr. Waterson: Was not the hon. Gentleman in the House 10 days ago, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment made it clear that he had never opposed selective regional assistance as such, but merely required that it be justified?

Mr. Bell: There are many ways of interpreting that, but I have quoted from the letter as it was printed, and the statements have never been denied.

I shall continue with my case, because the former Chief Secretary went further on the question of regional selective assistance. When the President of the Board of Trade was telling us in July that the number of projects was also at a record level—404 new or expanded operations—we also received the letter from the former Chief Secretary talking about market solutions.

We must give credit—and I do—to the President of the Board of Trade for the fact that, when he was negotiating through his Department to bring Samsung to these shores, he perceived no free market disciplines in the minds of the French or the Spanish, who were equally trying to get the business. They were offering a package of incentives, grants and soft loans to bring the business to their countries.

Turning to the intervention by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), I shall again refer to the annexe to the letter of the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He said that he saw no strong case for retaining regional selective assistance. That was in the annexe of the letter, and has never been denied.

That was not in the mind of the Secretary of State for Scotland this week when, at Scottish Question Time, he said that the regional selective assistance schemes should and did operate on a level basis across the whole of the United Kingdom, subject to standard criteria.

The Minister, who made a strong and interesting speech today, said on "The World At One" at the time of the Samsung announcement:

> "We have got to line in the real world and the real world is that major investment decisions of this kind inevitably involve a level of government assistance".

I was glad to see that the present Chief Secretary yesterday suggested that he would throw his weight behind the regional selective assistance schemes. He said that, in terms of inward investment, Britain was doing well and was

> "attracting the lion's share of foreign investment into the European union—far more than France and Germany combined."—*[Official Report*, 27 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 1000.]

We may be getting a hint from the Chief Secretary that he is supportive of the regional selective assistance schemes—much more supportive than the former Chief Secretary. But that gives us some difficulties.

Mr. Eggar: If, at the end of his five-minute analysis of apparently leaked letters, the hon. Gentleman believes that there is nothing in the issue and that the Government remain—as they do—committed to regional selective assistance, why has he sought to make these points? Why has the hon. Gentleman sought to try to imply that regional selective assistance is in some way under threat?

Mr. Bell: The Minister, in his usual perceptive way, has understood the particular drift of my speech. *[Interruption.]* It is better to drift and arrive safely than to plough on like a speedboat.

The essence of my speech is that a former Chief Secretary does not believe in regional selective assistance and has written that in a letter, while the President of the Board of Trade says he does believe in it. The Government wonder why it is that they are not comprehensible to the British people, and why business does not understand them too well. There is a feeling—if I may use the word again—of drift in the Government, because two members of the same Cabinet have different views on the same subject.

We will not allow the Government simply to come to the Dispatch Box today with a spectacular scenario of success on inward investment, without revealing the deep rift within the Government, not only on the question of regional selective assistance, but on Europe. As it is half-term, we can throw these matters into the ring. The former Chief Secretary and the President of the Board of Trade have different views on the same subject. They have different views on Europe and different views on regional selective assistance—

> "Back to back they faced each other, drew their swords and shot each other."

That is the essence of what the British Cabinet is about and how the public perceive it.

The Minister was correct to anticipate my point that the confusion in the heart of government is so profound on the central issue of regional selective assistance that it is hardly surprising that the public think that the Government have lost their way.

We have already referred today to the social chapter opt-out and how the Labour party wants to reduce hours of work and overtime. The fact is that the social chapter is not of the slightest significance in inward investment decisions. Indeed, even at this stage it is quite clear that the opt-out will not survive the intergovernmental conference in 1996.

Companies inwardly invest in Britain to gain the benefits of the European Union. It is called looking ahead and forward planning. They know and understand that a Labour Government will sign up to the full social chapter. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members can nod their heads sagely and say that there will never be a Labour Government, but they are living in the same cloud cuckoo land as the Government.

The Minister has referred to Samsung. Can he tell us what clause there is in the agreement with that company—or, indeed, any other inward investor—that would allow it to opt out of its investment when a Labour Government take office? What clause says that such companies can take their money out of Britain and withdraw their facilities and products? Where does it say that, when the Labour Government sign up to the social chapter, those companies will draw stumps and leave our country?

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): The hon. Gentleman says that the only reason why foreign companies come to Britain is the European Union, and that it has nothing to do with labour and social costs. Why, then, are so many German firms coming to Britain?

Mr. Bell: The Government, with the help of the City of London, are not prepared to give the same long-term investment and support to such companies as, for example, Land Rover, which was then bought by BMW. The reason is that simple.

In fact, I did not say "only reason"; I also said that such companies came to Britain because of our traditional manufacturing base—we are the pioneers of the industrial revolution—and because our work force have the skills, discipline and commitment required. The Government would do themselves a political favour if they ceased to try to gain some advantage from the fact that Britain has opted out of the social chapter. No firm coming to our country has ever said that it was doing so because of our lack of the social chapter and a minimum wage.

Commissioner Padraig Flynn this week called for equality of action and minimum standards in the workplace. He said that that would apply in every part of the European Union. The European Commission, which does not always have the support of those on the Treasury Front Bench, has found no evidence to support the Conservative view on the social chapter. It says that Britain's non-participation has little or no bearing on decisions by multinationals on whether to open plants in Britain.

What the Commisision's analysis does show—the Minister touched upon it—is that Britain's attraction lies in the quality of our physical and communications infrastructure, the availability of skilled labour, and the scale of regional development grants. Those are the points made by Samsung.

Mr. Eggar: Taking what the hon. Gentleman said at face value, he and the Commission are paying tribute to the Government's policies over the past 15 years that have created such competitive advantages. Is he saying that the

[Mr. Eggar]

Commission is specifically disavowing Jacques Delors's statement that the social chapter opt-out meant that Britain would be a "paradise" for foreign investment?

Mr. Bell: I have no idea of the context in which Mr. Delors made that statement, but it is palpably false to say that Britain, rather than France or the other countries in the EU, is attracting investment because of our opt-out. In fact, global inward investment in France is greater than in Britain. Britain is an island, but no man is an island entire of himself. The Minister painted a distorted picture—a laser beam. We shall put the proper picture on the record today.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should send a copy of his speech to the Labour spokesmen on education, transport and Treasury matters. It is a tribute to the Government's education policies, to investment and infrastructure and to the growth that has enabled all that to happen.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. I shall answer his point later in my speech, because I had anticipated that it would be made.

The subject today is inward investment. The Minister referred to outward investment and said how powerful and strong Britain was in the world. The fact is that, from 1981 to 1990, Britain's outward investment was $55.2 billion greater than its inward investment. That was the pattern throughout the 1980s, when the United Kingdom invested overseas on the same scale as Japan and the United States, even though the size of our economy was smaller. The average investment abroad was 3.1 per cent. of our gross domestic product. In 1992, Britain received 11 per cent. of global inward investment and was third behind France and the United States.

The greatest flow of investment came in the run-up to the single market. As the Minister confirmed, that run-up had the most significant impact on inward investment, with £17.4 billion coming into Britain during that year. The figure for 1993 was £9 billion.

Mrs. Currie: I hesitate to accuse anyone of the hon. Gentleman's distinction of massaging statistics and being selective. However, I refer him to the Library research paper 94/100, published on 25 October, which states:

"In 1993"

a heck of a lot more recent than the period the hon. Gentleman is quoting—

> "in common with most recent years other than 1992, the UK was host to more inward direct investment than any other EU member state."

Mr. Bell: In the years to which I have referred, Britain was third. Inward investment in France was significant. The hon. Lady has not made the distinction between manufacturing and financial services. Financial services are not included in that document. If she adds financial services—

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is scraping around and knocking Britain.

Mr. Bell: I am not. We resent the notion that only the Conservatives are cloaked in patriotism; that only the Conservatives can have a perspective on our country, on its direction, on business and on investment.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): It is a strange perspective to choose the worst year out of the past 15 on which to build a case. The hon. Gentleman implied that outward investment was not good a good thing. Does he understand that we earn a return on that investment? Can he clarify his position on that?

Mr. Bell: The figure which the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) gave was assisted by the devaluation of the pound, which was a great help to us. The hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) makes his point some nine years too late, because the same point was made by Mr. Stefan Terlezki in this House in 1985, when he said that the return on our investment at that time was some £5,000 million a year. The balance of inward and outward investment does not tilt in our favour, because we are sending more money abroad than we are getting back into the country. That is the point that I am trying to make.

In any event, during the 1980s the flow of investment between states greatly increased. Foreign investment by companies based in the 24 member states of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development has increased fourfold, driven by the increased globalisation of the world economy. Vast trading blocs have been created in the shape of the European Union, and now the North American Free Trade Area and the new bloc—organised, structured and coherent—developing in the so-called Pacific rim.

Traditional industries throughout the whole of the European Union are in decline. All the states of the European Union have sought to attract foreign investment to areas where the decline has been steepest and unemployment highest. On the point made by the hon. Member for Surrey, East, we have continued consistently and persistently throughout all those years to send more money abroad than we have received. While we welcome inward investment, we cannot help but wonder how our economy would have fared if even half that money had been invested in our own country and we had not had to rely on others.

On the myth and shibboleth of a national minimum wage, how is it that the French and Americans do so well? Most inward investment is into the United States, and both countries have massive inward investment as well as a national minimum wage. Studies by the Japanese External Trade Organisation—a little more distant but much more succinct than the document turned out by the Library, which I do not criticise, as it was turned out at short notice for this debate—and by the French Government, show that labour costs are not a major determinant of inward investment.

Recent research by the International Labour Agency shows that local demand for goods and Government support for industry are as important as wage costs. We have already seen that the main drivers of investment are the infrastructure and the availability of a skilled work force. Important as inward investment is for job creation, a coherent industrial policy is more important to job creation. The Labour party has studied in depth the book by the President of the Board of Trade, "Where There's a Will", in which he tried to create a coherent strategy. Whether he succeeded is open to doubt, and Labour Members certainly have their doubts.

I refer again to the wider picture of inward investment. Samsung has made a major investment in 200 acres of green and pleasant land around Wynyard and, last year, some 58 per cent. of our inward investment was in the form of acquisitions. In 1989, it was some 70 per cent. of all inward investment.

Is it not strange—this point was touched on briefly, but passed over quickly by the Minister—that foreign companies are prepared to invest in the skills of our work force, whereas the City of London is not? Our banks and financial institutions operate in the short rather than the long term, and those very institutions cannot see beyond the next takeover bid, thus inhibiting investment in our industries, which should be built up here rather than sold abroad.

The Minister will accept that not all inward investment is successful. The President of the Board of Trade certainly did at his last Question Time in July. Raytheon Jets in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is closing less than 18 months after it was bought from British Aerospace. Incidentally, it is one of the most advanced production facilities in the aerospace industry.

Du Pont on Teesside is closing down the fibre business which it bought from ICI, with the loss of 520 jobs. Du Pont has made a substantial investment in our country, employing some 6,000 people, but the loss of the fibre business has been sad for those who had such high hopes when Du Pont took over the plant. The loss of those 520 jobs is in the here and now, and the 3,000 jobs that we expect from Samsung will come in 1998-99.

The Minister for Energy and Industry made a side swipe at his right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). Although he did not mention him by name, we all knew who he had in mind. At a well-advertised fringe meeting at the Tory party conference, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames declared categorically that he could not pinpoint a single concrete economic advantage that came to the United Kingdom from its membership of the Union.

The divisions within the Conservative party are profound when a member of the Government throughout the years leading up to the single market, who was aware of the massive inward investment consequent upon that single market, could make such a statement. One wonders how the Conservative party can continue to govern. It is three parties in one: partly pro-European and partly anti-European; partly in favour of regional selective assistance and partly not in favour. Divisions, schisms, doubts, uncertainties and incompetence run throughout the Government, including the Back Benches—

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is smiling as he says that.

Mr. Bell: No, I am not.

We shall not allow the Minister of State to put forward a false argument, even though it may be Friday. What the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the current Secretary of State for Employment, did not understand—it was clear from his letter that he did not understand it—is that selective regional assistance not only enables the United Kingdom to compete but enables the worker, backed by investment, to show his skills.

The Government's greatest failure over the past 15 years has been to spread uncertainty from one end of the land to another. Even those in work now feel uncertainty and insecurity in their place of work.

Let us imagine someone working in Basildon receiving a visit from the Minister on the factory floor, like the Japanese general in the film "Bridge On the River Kwai". The Minister asks, "Are you happy at your work?" and the employee replies, "Yes, sir." He then asks, "Are you happy working 48 hours a week?" and the employee replies, "Yes, sir." He asks, "Are you happy working 60 hours a week?" and the employee replies, "Yes, sir." He asks, "Do you want the social chapter or a minimum wage?" and the employee replies, "No, sir, thank you, sir."

That is the ragged-trousered philanthropist philosophy which this Government have sought to inculcate in the land. The sense of vulnerability which they have created throughout our society has not made for a happy society.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bell: No, I shall not. I am reaching the end of my speech. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South is becoming a little concerned that I might continue a little too long and she will not be able to take credit for bringing Toyota to our country, so I shall try to wrap up as quickly as I can.

The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) spoke about the education system. It was not the Labour Opposition who sacked the Secretary of State for Education, but the Conservative Government. We want inward investment into our communications and infrastructure, and we want it in areas of social need, to create better homes, better schools and better hospitals. We want more private sector investment in this country, which is still held back by uncertainty about the future. All that needs to be borne in mind when we debate the narrow section of inward investment.

When the outside world looks at us, it sees an unstable and unbalanced economy. It also sees a Government who are leaderless, rudderless, witless and incompatible one with another. There is incompatibility between the Secretary of State for Employment and the President of the Board of Trade. There is incompatibility between those who are pro-Europe and those who are anti-Europe. The Government are unsure about the direction that Europe should take—whether it should be a free trade

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area or a true union, and whether it should be a true market economy without intervention or one with intervention.

There is no selective regional assistance and no hefty push for our industries. The Government are a parody of themselves. They must spend too much of their time watching puppet shows on television because they act like puppets. They are like characters out of "Spitting Image".

Mr. Eggar: Before the hon. Gentleman gets to the next 15 pages of his speech, will he tell us whether the Labour party is committed to planning, as his hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) appears to be, or not?

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman should not incite me into reading the next 15 pages of my speech. I should hate to deprive Conservative Members who have been sitting here this morning of an opportunity to speak.

Planning and strategy are clearly a better way in which to look at our industry than the short-termism that we have seen over the past few years. We believe, of course, in long-termism. We believe in planning. We believe in the work force, and we believe in the work force having a say in the affairs of the companies in which they invest their working lives.

We believe in inward investment, but we shall have a coherent strategy for it all, rather than getting by on a wing and a prayer. At present, there is no fixed exchange rate for the pound, there is no certainty about inflation, interest rates are rising and there is no certainty for members of the public or the work force. We offer a great deal more reassurance than this Government have offered. Much to the relief—*[Interruption.]* I am happy to stay on my feet for longer if the Minister so wishes.

Mr. Eggar: I think I detected a commitment from the Labour Front-Bench spokesman to membership of a single European currency. Can he confirm that?

Mr. Bell: I am sorry, I did not hear that. Would the Minister repeat his question?

Mr. Eggar: I think that I detected from the Labour Front-Bench spokesman a commitment to a single European currency. Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that that is his position?

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman should not be so sharp that he cuts himself. We shall look at the intergovernmental conference as it comes up. We have made a variety of observations on all that. We know that the opt-out clause will go at that conference. The movement towards a single currency will continue. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition has said that there may be a referendum on that subject, thus shooting the fox of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames. We are clear about where we are going.

The Government are not clear about where they are going. For the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box today to vaunt a series of segments of inward investment, which we welcome, is no strategy and no economic policy. Not only do we know that, but the British public know that. If the Minister does not believe it, he should look at the latest opinion polls.

10.52 am

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) in occupying the Floor for almost an hour and managing to say almost nothing. However, I agreed with his generous tribute to the fine Friday morning speech by my hon. Friend the Minister. I parted company with the hon. Gentleman thereafter, not least in his attempt to suggest that there was some degree of comparability between inward investment under the last Labour Government and inward investment under the present Government. There is no comparability. I vividly remember the years 1974 to 1979, not least the decisions taken by the major American car manufacturers that were looking at Europe. They looked at Britain, at Belgium and at Germany and they gave Labour Britain the thumbs down time and time again.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, what has been achieved in inward investment since 1979 has been a huge success story. It has probably been the single most dramatic and furthest reaching economic and industrial success story for any Government in the post-war period. The benefits to our country in terms of jobs created, in balance of payments terms and in terms of potential tax revenue from the companies that have set up here are profound.

It is instructive to consider the reasons why this country has been so conspicuously successful in attracting inward investment on a scale wholly unmatched in the post-war history of this country and unmatched by any other member of the European Union. The one point on which there seems to be agreement on both sides is that our membership of the European Community is essential in attracting inward investment. I share my hon. Friend the Minister's view that it is eccentric for anyone to suggest that our membership of the European Community has brought no tangible benefit to this country.

In my constituency, I need only look at the largest single employer, SCA, which is one of the leading Swedish paper manufacturers. As the House will know, my constituency is not in a development area with all the huge attractions of regional assistance. Nevertheless, SCA is making a £260 million investment in Aylesford, a decision that was critically helped by a £20 million grant obtainable from the Department of Trade and Industry, thanks to this Government. That investment was competed for fiercely by Germany and by the Netherlands, but it eventually came to this country. There is no conceivable way in which that £260 million would have come to this country if we had not been a member of the European Community. That position is mirrored throughout the country, in one constituency after another.

As has been said, our membership of the European Community is not the only explanation for inward investment. It clearly cannot be, because inward investors have 12 countries from which to choose. There must be factors peculiar to this country which explain why the overwhelming proportion of Japanese investment and American investment, and a great deal of Scandinavian investment, has come to this country in preference to other countries within the European Community.

As some hon. Members may know, I am heavily involved in the all-party groups in the House on Japan and on Korea. In that capacity, I have many opportunities to speak to Korean and Japanese companies, both in

Korea and Japan and in this country, that have made investment decisions to come here. I have found their responses extremely instructive. Although, of course, there is some variation in their responses, I have found that they have given four principal reasons, time and again, in answer to the question why they decided to come to the United Kingdom, which I always ask.

Grant availability, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, is not one of those four reasons. I agree with him that if the grants were not available, one could forget about investment. However, the availability of grant is not peculiar to this country. The grants are on offer elsewhere in the European Union, and, in some countries, the grants on offer may be even greater than those available in this country. One cannot say that availability of grants is one of the reasons.

The first reason that the companies give me is that on making their detailed analysis, they find that the cost base for an industrial manufacturing operation in this country is now extremely attractive and in most cases more favourable than that in any other country in the European Union in which they might want to make such investment. The cost base is critical in a highly competitive world and a highly competitive market, where every company is anxious about its costs. Due to the success of Government policy in reducing inflation and creating a competitive wage market and labour market here, and because the Government have been careful not to put unnecessary financial and fiscal burdens on companies, through our policies we have created that highly competitive cost base.

If the hon. Member for Middlesbrough wants to reply with jibes about a coolie market, I remind him that, alongside our huge success with inward investment, we have managed to achieve a marked increase in real disposable income in this country—significantly higher than it was under the last Labour Government. If the hon. Member for Middlesbrough wants to characterise our country as a coolie economy, all I can say is that it was a darned sight more of a coolie economy in the 1970s.

Mr. Bell: The right hon. Gentleman is making a good speech and I hope that he will not spoil it by rewriting history so quickly, within the space of minutes. I never said that we had a coolie economy. I said that countries which invest here do not do so because they think that we are a coolie economy. We would not accept—in the north-east of England or anywhere else—that it is because we are such a low-wage, low-skill region that other countries invest here. That is contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman is now saying.

Sir John Stanley: I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said and we can both look at *Hansard*. I have certainly heard some of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends make jibes to the effect that we have turned Britain into a sweatshop economy. That has been said on many occasions. However, we can let the matter rest on what is said in *Hansard*.

The first reason why companies come here is the competitive cost base that we have established. The second reason that they give is that for the first time they have confidence in the stability and sense of our industrial relations legislation and industrial relations climate. There is no doubt that the profoundly important changes and reforms in industrial relations legislation have created a climate of confidence for inward investors into Britain which simply did not exist previously.

The third reason that companies give is that they have done their sums—as any company would do, particularly on taxes—and when they consider the tax position for companies in this country, including local taxes and corporation tax, they find that it is fiscally attractive to come here. The uniform business rate is now firmly pegged to increase no more than the rate of inflation. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy and Industry said, our corporation tax rate is one of the lowest in Europe. Those benefits flow directly from Government policies.

The fourth reason that companies give involves the language. There is no doubt that the fact that we speak English in this country is of profound economic and commercial importance to us. I believe that that is recognised in all parts of the House, as is the importance of supporting organisations such as the British Council which are in the business of promoting and expanding the use and knowledge of English around the world. Those four reasons are given again and again.

I have another worry, which affects the whole country. Although I am confident that the factors that are encouraging the utterly unprecedented and huge infusion of overseas investment into our country will continue under the present Government because present policies will continue, I am deeply concerned about the commitments that the Labour party has made. I do not think that it will make any changes relating to the use of the English language—I feel secure about that. But when I consider the other three factors, I see Labour party policies that will work directly against the confidence of inward investors.

The Labour party has made a collection of commitments, including commitments to the minimum wage and the social chapter, which is bound to trigger off a spate of wage inflation that will have a direct impact on the cost base. It will almost certainly be driven to place other social costs on employers that will adversely affect their cost base. When I consider the collection of Labour party policies, I can foresee only the surrendering of this country's critical advantage—a highly competitive cost base for industrial operations, which is probably the biggest single factor bringing inward investment to this country.

The Labour party's intentions on trade union relations are still extremely vague—indeed, worryingly vague. The Labour party conference passed a resolution stating that Labour would repeal anti-trade union legislation; that amounts to a blank cheque.

Mr. Bell: The right hon. Gentleman is once again rewriting history, although over a longer time span. The party conference passed no such resolution.

Sir John Stanley: I looked closely at the reports, but if I have misread them I will certainly withdraw my comment. I am in no doubt from the speeches that I have heard again and again from shadow employment spokesmen that the Labour party is committed to repeal elements of trade union legislation which are now on the statute book—the exact elements are so far unknown. I hope that the Labour party will take early steps to clarify which bits of the legislation it intends to appeal. Any attempt to take us back to the position under the legislation of the mid-1970s will greatly frighten inward investors and deter them from returning here. Clearly, negotiations will be taking place in the Labour party on the withdrawal of clause IV. I should be very surprised if

[Sir John Stanley]

the hugely influential trade union element within the party does not exact its pound of flesh in return for the abolition of clause IV. We shall wait to see the detail of those policies.

If previous history is anything to go by, I see no prospect of the attractive rates of corporation tax surviving a change of Government in this country. There will be a substantial hike in corporation tax and the fiscal advantage that we offer inward investors will disappear. I am extremely worried about the continuation of one of the Government's most precious achievements, which is of profound importance not least to the regions that are heavily represented in Parliament by Opposition Members. I am worried that that priceless advantage could be surrendered if attempts are made to implement Labour party policies.

I warmly applaud the Government Front-Bench team on the achievement of the huge success story of inward investment. It is one of the signal achievements of the Government since 1979 and is of profound benefit to literally hundreds of thousands of individuals who have jobs, the security of good jobs and good earnings as a result of the inward investment that we have achieved. I am certain that my right hon. and hon. Friends will continue to ensure that that success story of inward investment survives.

11.8 am

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) who, like me, shares an interest in and, I hope, a friendship with, the people of Korea.

The Minister asked for a definition of socialist planning. The right hon. Gentleman knows that Korea's great growth in the 1970s and 1980s came at a time when all the banks belonged to the state, all credit was allocated by the state and there was heavy investment in education. Korea now has far more PhDs per capita than we do. As a result, Korea has emerged as a leading industrial nation; in some sectors its workers earn more than their equivalents in the United Kingdom. I am not sure whether that is a form of centralised state, dirigiste planning of which I approve, but it is far from the failed economy theory being applied in this country. The core question is why, despite long years of inward investment—which started in the 1970s, when Sony and other Japanese companies established plants here under a Labour Government—it has not made our country richer. The UK has the highest rate of inward investment of any European country; yet since 1980 the average growth in gross domestic product was significantly below all our European competitors, let alone the new dynamic economies of Asia.

The World Development Forum based in Switzerland, which is not a socialist organisation, has just published its world competitive report, which ranks the UK 14th—significantly below Sweden, Norway and other partnership economies. According to the Office of Economic Co-operation and Development, the increase in GDP per capita between 1981 and 1991 was $6,663 in the UK. In Germany it was 25 per cent. more, in France 17 per cent. more and in Italy 13 per cent. more.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chancellor, is mocked without mercy for his use of the term "endogenous growth theory". Soon after making that phrase the subject of international discussion at the Labour party's international economic conference last month, a distinguished colleague on the Labour Front Bench, who is not in the Chamber at present, told me that she had misheard the phrase as "erogenous growth theory" and had thought that, at long last, Labour was on to a surefire winner.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East was right. Nations that have focused on endogenous growth—that is, growth generated within the economy—have handsomely outperformed the UK in all the main indices of comparative international economic league tables.

Mr. Waterson: For the sake of completeness, does the hon. Gentleman realise that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) is also mocked for his prediction that unemployment would rise month by month, when the opposite has been the case?

Mr. MacShane: The mocking was about a choice of words. The English language is noble, and perhaps all that is left to us after 15 years of Tory misrule. I shudder when I hear Greek words such as "endogenous" creeping into national discourse.

Total inward investment between 1985 and 1990 was £64.9 billion. The UK's outward investment over the same period was £143 billion. In 1993, £9 billion came into the UK, but £17 billion left to be invested overseas. For every £1 coming into the country, £2 has left to create jobs in other nations. The standard of living and of investment of all British people has been held back and sacrificed to create a rentier economy in line with Tory exogenous or externally generated growth theory.

Inward investment has not helped to recreate the manufacturing sector that was destroyed in the early 1990s. The bulk of it has been in the primary and tertiary sectors—oil, trade and distribution, and financial services. I have figures only for the late 1980s because more up-to-date statistics were not available from the Library. They show that the percentage of inward investment in secondary or manufacturing sectors was higher in Germany, Italy and France than in the UK. Much was made of the investment in the north-east recently announced by Samsung, which we all welcome—but only this week, Daewoo announced a £600 million investment to build Korean cars in Romania, which is £150 million more than Samsung's investment in the north-east. That shows Britain in competition with Romania as a low-wage nation on the fringe of Europe as a target for Korean inward investment.

Although Japan is much talked about, Japanese investment in the UK is barely half that of Australia and one tenth that of the United States of America. Japanese investment represents only 40 per cent. of investment from European Free Trade Association countries. We must consider more than the dynamic Asian economies when identifying sources of inward investment.

The flow of inward investment from non-EC countries peaked after the setting in train of the single European market. Investment in the UK was made because we were part of the European Community and were committed in the mid and late 1980s to an integrated Europe. Since then, and despite the Minister's assurances, Government policy has changed. Instead of opting into Europe, the Prime Minister proclaims his pride in the UK being the opt-out nation of Europe.

At the Tory conference three weeks ago, we heard from the platform and at fringe meetings the cry, "Europe, Europe, Europe—out, out, out!" The "Euro-septics", who are not represented in this debate, are the new Tory trotskyists before whom the Prime Minister must run. If they have their way, not only will the flow of inward investment dry up but the rest of Europe will take great pleasure in shutting out foreign-owned UK production from its current access to the European market.

As to the reasons why the Japanese and others invest in the UK, I cannot share the running order given by the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling. Claims by Government spokespersons that foreign companies are attracted to the UK by its deregulated, low-wage, low-tax economy are not confirmed by any professional or scientific survey. In each case, the main reason given was familiarity with the English language and the fact that other linked companies were already established here.

Other reasons produced by the Government fall to the ground. As to low tax, another Library research paper, published in May, shows that in terms of the percentage of gross earnings less cash benefits to a couple with two children, the UK employee has a higher tax burden than his or her equivalent in France, Belgium or Austria. The UK tax burden in that category, which covers most managerial and skilled workers, is higher than the average for European OECD nations.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the UK's rate of corporation tax is the lowest of the G7 countries?

Mr. MacShane: My recollection is that the same research paper showed that tax on capital was 0.1 per cent. lower in 1990-1991 than in 1979. Exclusion from the social chapter is given as a reason, but that was not mentioned by any inward investing company. The peak flow of inward investment occurred prior to the Maastricht treaty.

The competition at world level for investment that developed in the 1980s is now so intense that we must find other ways to attract inward investment to the UK, rather than see it go to China, Latin America and eastern Europe. Reference was made to trade union legislation; yet the Japanese have sought out pro-active union agreements. It is sad that only the Opposition pay tribute to the partnership policies of the Amalgamated Engineering Union with Toyota and Nissan, and of the Transport and General Workers Union, the Manufacturing, Science Finance Union and the AEU with Rover, now owned by BMW. Those innovative union agreements are welcomed by the investing companies. I wish that the Government would pay greater tribute to the work of the unions in that respect.

Low pay may figure, and competitive costs were mentioned; yet two days ago the Secretary of State for Employment said at Harrogate that he wants a high-wage economy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy (Mr. Charles Wardle): Of course he says that.

Mr. MacShane: Of course he says that, says the Minister, but we cannot have it both ways: we cannot have a high-wage UK economy and at the same time offer low wages as a reason for investors to come to Britain.

I am not sure whether Labour Members should be pleased that the Secretary of State for Employment is now repeating the speeches made by the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Chancellor, or whether it is merely another example from the Department of Employment of the tribute that vice pays to virtue. At any event, the proclamation that the UK is to become a high-wage economy will not play well in the board rooms of Taipei and Texas where investment decisions are being made.

The question of wages is significant. Thomson, France's biggest electronics company, is just moving all its factories out of high-wage Singapore into low-wage Indonesia. If we consider the cause and consequences of foreign direct investment, the role of Governments and Members of Parliament may be more modest than this debate suggests. One third of world output is now controlled by multi-national corporations. In 1993, there were 206,000 multi-national corporations around the world, compared with 3,500 just 30 years ago. One third of world trade now takes place within companies. They and not we are the new deciders of the world economy. That unaccountable power has grown, is growing, and needs to be balanced by a responsible, new world economic system based on a new Bretton Woods system and reforms in the world economic policy-making bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World bank, the OECD so on.

A new global social settlement is needed. If it is not achieved, we shall see the rise of nationalist and regionalist protectionism of the kind proposed by Sir James Goldsmith, the Italian fascists in the Berlusconi Government and other reactionary forces. The UK must again opt fully into the debate on the future of how we decide and regulate foreign direct investment. We have to avoid the problem that the United States has faced in paying out huge sums by way of tax breaks or even direct grants to companies and ending up with a net loss in state finances. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent in America for each job.

The search for big-ticket investment, the giant projects, may be a mistake. The most successful state in America in attracting inward investment is Ohio, which has focused on seeking smaller firms based on intermediate or even low technology. I made notes for this speech using a pen handed out by British Airways at the Labour party conference. I am sure that they are available—[HON. MEMBERS: "Declare it."] It is not yet in the register. Where was this pen made? It was made in Switzerland, a country with wages 50 per cent. higher than the UK and a full employment partnership economy, yet one which can make this humble pen at a low cost. I presume that British

[Mr. MacShane]

Airways can buy the pen more cheaply there than in the UK. That tells us about middle and low-technology investment.

The Minister for Energy and Industry, who has left the Chamber, made much of the 60-hour working week of workers at a firm that he recently visited. He was proud—not like a Japanese general, I must say to my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), but more like a colonial official of the old days—to see workers hard at it day and night, ever willing, ever ready, putting in the longest hours in Europe for the lowest wages. That allows companies to focus on extensive rather than intensive production and on securing quantitative rather than qualitative output.

I met a foundry worker in Rotherham the other day who told me that he worked seven days a week, day and night shifts, to earn just £20,000 a year.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that he was exceedingly fortunate to meet a foundry worker as such workers are very much a diminishing breed in this country, thanks to the Government's policies?

Mr. MacShane: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Four million industrial jobs have been wiped out cold-bloodedly since 1980 and we shall pay a price for that destruction of our manufacturing base.

The young man whom I met was 29 years old. He looked older than nearly all the Conservative Members present. I would have put him at about 55 or 60. He was exhausted by the long hours that the Minister is so proud to proclaim. For those long hours, he was earning some £20,000 a year. Not only on that kind of wage could he not afford a weekend at the Ritz in Paris, but he would not even be able to find the time. He said that his boss was on £63,000 a year only—far lower than the equivalent executive of a foundry in Germany, France or Italy, because low wages at the bottom drag down wages in middle management as well.

I conclude by paying tribute to the Rotherham economic partnership, which gave me the honour of addressing a group of employers recently. It is a private and public sector initiative. It involves elected representatives and it involves trade unions. I offer that as a model for new ideas and how to make inward investment work successfully in this country. As the world contest for inward investment increases, Britain must offer a new vision of economic development. That has to be based on partnership.

At the Rotherham economic partnership conference, the focus was Rotherham in the world economy. I strongly welcome that outward-looking approach. In general, however—I do not know if my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) will refer to this—we in Yorkshire are worse off for inward investment than Scotland and Wales. The Scots and the Welsh are lucky because they have their own Cabinet Ministers and dedicated Departments who can speak, to a certain extent, outside the centralised framework which has so seriously weakened local government in England. If Rotherham is to succeed in securing a share of inward investment, in addition to its own energies it needs to be part of a regional framework which can fit into the growing European and global pattern of regions, forming the core of the new economic clusters, which are mutually supporting and reinforcing.

We all welcome inward investment in Britain, but it cannot replace the lack of an economic policy for internal growth. Inward investment will be enhanced by three concepts: partnership, decentralisation of power from Ministers and bureaucrats, and opting into Europe. The Conservative party can offer none of those. Labour stands ready.

11.27 am

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I was going to preface my remarks with the hope that there were few, if any, hon. Members in the Chamber who would seriously question the proposition that inward investment brings in new jobs, new techniques, new processes and, on occasions, we hope, enlightened managerial techniques. But, having heard some of the remarks of Opposition Members, I realise that I am not on such firm ground.

I do not think that it is possible to underestimate the benefits to the UK economy of inward investment, which often, in the case of hard-pressed areas, provides a significant lifeline to rural and urban communities. The politics and economics of peripherality are inseparable from any discussion about inward investment, whether it be through overseas investment or the domestic mechanism of, for instance, regional selective assistance grants.

In 1993, overseas companies spent some £5.2 billion on 257 acquisitions and mergers. That inward flow, that success story in that year was no different from most years, in which the UK was host to more inward direct investment than any other European member state, in fact, grabbing some 40 per cent. of the European Union total of about £9 billion in net inward direct investment. Net earnings by overseas investors were some £10 billion last year and that has to be applauded, especially the significant increase on 1992 figures, which has been reflected dramatically in increased profitability of non-oil UK subsidiaries and associates. Let us not forget that more than half all net earnings from that sector were in the form of retained profits which, of course, were reinvested in the United Kingdom. There was also an added and very welcome contribution to our domestic tax yield.

The value of inward direct investment assets has more than doubled since 1987. Only last week, an international survey of business found that the UK is set to be the world's most popular destination for foreign investment over the next two years. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, that endorsement comes only a year after a business monitor survey showed that company directors across Europe believe that the United Kingdom has the best potential for manufacturing investment of all the major European Union members.

Since 1979, total foreign investment in the UK has increased nearly eightfold. It is no coincidence that, throughout that period, the solid economic gains of this Government's supply side reforms have helped to free up the marketplace. Trade union reform, for example, has been an undeniable attraction to companies which have been able to negotiate single-union deals.

I was a member of the Employment Select Committee last year when it undertook two inquiries: one into the import and export of jobs in manufacturing industry and the other into the future of trade unions. On virtually every occasion that a domestic or foreign-based company gave evidence, two overwhelming reasons for siting in this country were given. First, it was said that we were not in a headlong rush to unify welfare payments with our European partners. Secondly, it was clear that trade union reform has made it incredibly convenient for many companies to enter into the types of relationships, mentioned by the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) a moment ago, which have made a significant difference to joint ventures, and there has been the convenience of single-union deals, which would have been something of a pipe dream before 1979.

It is important to remember that, in assessing the benefits of inward investment, we are talking not just about new jobs created, important as they are, but about existing jobs, which are underpinned and safeguarded. The Invest in Britain Bureau assesses that number of jobs as [illegible]70,000 for 1993-94 while the number of new jobs created nationally is said to be just under 30,000.

It is perhaps worth highlighting the fact that Scotland accounted for nearly 8,000 of those new jobs while Wales accounted for nearly 4,000. While 83 projects in the west midlands accounted for 3,000 new jobs, nearly 43,000 existing jobs were safeguarded. However, by national standards, the south-west has had more modest success. Twelve projects, which can by definition be described as inward investment, have accounted for some 1,200 jobs and can be said to have safeguarded a further 1,000 jobs.

New jobs may not be created immediately. It sometimes takes time. In the south-west in general, and in Cornwall in particular, the largest sums of inward investment do not involve foreign concerns looking to relocate or even domestic relocation. They come from the public purse. Department of Trade and Industry regional policy has operated in Cornwall since the 1950s. It has been directed towards the underlying problems of the local economy and, just as important, towards increasing the competitiveness of businesses operating in the county.

Many sectors that have traditionally formed the cornerstone of Cornwall's economy are now experiencing severe structural changes, which have made economic regeneration harder. Those changes have occurred in agriculture, fishing and tourism. The rundown of tin mining in my constituency has left Cornwall with its last working mine in South Crofty. Thankfully, that mine has been saved by the writing off of nearly £24 million of Government loans with the assistance of the DTI and by a notable share issue, which was so stunningly supported by many of my constituents and the combined labours of management and the work force. In the south-east of the county, the effect of the Royal Navy cuts—sadly, the impact of the welcome peace dividend—and continuous armed service reviews have meant an average annual loss of income to the area, which is significant and will be difficult to replace.

However, the county has so many positive characteristics that are reflected throughout the region. They include the reputation of the work force for hard work and committed loyalty and an unmatched history in industrial relations. There are excellent facilities for higher and further education, established road, rail and air links and port facilities, which belie many common misconceptions about the distance from markets and communications shortcomings.

In chasing inward investment, whether it be of foreign origin or domestic, from the public or the private purse, it is inevitable that we enter the political arena of scarce resources. Those who make the strongest cases and the best arguments, those who sell themselves, tend to take the spoils. My constituency has benefited from the positive effects of DTI regional policy. That was certainly instrumental in the location of Contico Plastics to Redruth in my constituency, which is now its European manufacturing base. That is a good example of partnership between the public and private sectors. Jobs have been created and more will follow.

Last year, Cornwall First ran a campaign to attract the national lottery headquarters to the county. Unfortunately, it failed in its primary objective. However, by introducing the county to many potential foreign investors, it secured the contract for Stralfors, a Swedish-owned printing company in Falmouth, to provide the national lottery with continuous printing for its tickets and some of its games—jobs created and safeguarded.

The success or otherwise of public sector funding in attracting inward investment depends on the regional implications of so many other factors. In Cornwall's case, it is not helpful to have utility charges that are significantly higher than in other competing regions. I am increasingly concerned that the disadvantageous effect of price differentials in the cost of water, electricity and gas could act as a barrier to the investment decisions that are everyday occurrences in board rooms.

At present, average water charges are 53 per cent. higher in Cornwall and electricity charges 7 per cent. higher. If hon. Members will pardon the pun, there is growing pressure on the cost of gas, and that is in a county where wages are 20 per cent. lower than the national average and the cost of living is 8 per cent. higher.

It has also long been a major source of irritation in the county that, as the hon. Member for Rotherham said, other areas, particularly in Scotland and Wales, receive disproportionately higher benefits from regional policy than Cornwall. However, when considered as an individual entity, Cornwall is very close to the level of gross domestic product per head of population for objective 1 status under the European Union structural funds.

There are calculated to be 25 to 30 agencies and organisations in Cornwall engaged in some form of economic development activity. In the two counties of Devon and Cornwall, that figure rises to nearly 70. I do not wish to detract from their efforts, but I must question the duplication of effort, time and precious resources that are being managed and distributed by so many structures, all tilling the same soil.

In large part, for the business community in my constituency, those agencies and organisations remain a confusion of acronyms. When I addressed a group of small business men in Falmouth the other day, I discovered that the local banks, which still account for so much start-up capital, had little or no idea what those organisations and agencies do. It is also not uncommon to find the same faces turning up on one or more of those organisations.

[Mr. Sebastian Coe]

I hope that the business link scheme, a one-stop point of contact for information and support for local businesses, will fill the gap and ease some of the confusion. I visited one such scheme in my constituency last week, which is making an exceptionally good start.

Regional selective assistance, which takes the form of discretionary grants to support projects in areas of assisted area status, has been very helpful in the location of business in Cornwall. It is right, however, that such grants are not available simply to relocate jobs from one part of the country to another.

Yesterday, I was perturbed to have a conversation with a would-be investor in the county, who simply could not remain in business where he currently is. A new sail-making process under licence from the United States of America, which requires the labour skills, size of plant and availability of labour where he currently is, is not available. I shall not belabour the House with the minutiae of detail of the case. Suffice it to say that, halfway through negotiations with the Department of Trade and Industry in Bristol, he finds himself the subject of an approach from a Welsh council to relocate there, supported by the Welsh Office and underpinned by the local training and enterprise council, two jobcentres and the local councils. He is now in a Dutch auction, with offer and counter-offer being made with public money. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister has clear views about the acceptability of that case, and I should welcome them.

Full-time, meaningful and sustainable jobs are created by the strategic decisions of the business community. When they are the result of overseas investment, it is because our economy offers a more attractive location. That is not a happy accident. It is the synthesis of sound economic policy underpinned by selectively targeted regional policy. It is the economic prerequisite of deregulation, competitiveness, a flexible labour market and continued downward pressure on labour costs.

Here lies a message for future European success: we must guard strenuously against uniform welfare costs in the European Union. If ignored, they will help countries in the Pacific rim to cream off the global flows of inward investment to which we have successfully become the natural home.

11.41 am

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): Like other hon. Members, I enjoyed listening to the Minister give an entertaining Friday morning description of the inward investment that has been achieved and, with justification, claiming some of the credit for it. I welcome the inward investment that has been achieved—the record has been good—and I hope that there will be more in future. I agree that, by attempting to promote successful businesses in the regions where they are needed, regional selective assistance is, in principle, the right way to go about such matters.

However, the Minister was churlish in trying to provoke the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and others into suggesting that they would not welcome the success that there has been in their parts of the world. All hon. Members welcome Samsung's decision to come to the north-east of England. I, too, from the south-west, hope to speak to the Minister shortly about a prospect in my constituency.

The remarks of the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) are only too true. The problem of the south-west, as a peripheral region of England, in trying to compete with Scotland and Wales, is that the public authorities representing Scotland and Wales have more political power and more money than those representing the south-west. However, I pay tribute to the work of officials in the Department's regional office in the south-west and to those to whom the Minister referred who are promoting our cause abroad.

It was good that we heard from the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) and not from the right hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo). In view of the exchanges that took place, I shall choose my words with care. Let them be simply that the right hon. Gentleman appears to have questioned the value of regional selective assistance. I do not. I think that it has been useful. It is welcome to see the Government pursuing that approach and not that which was promoted by a former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Lord Tebbit, who took the view that people should get on their bike and go where the work is. I am glad that the Government believe in intervention and strategic planning, at least to the extent that they see advantage in jobs going where the workers are.

Foreign investment in Britain contrasts rather strongly with British investment in Britain. A reminder that playing host to foreign successes is a poor second to enjoying one's own success is probably best expressed by the President of the Board of Trade, when, in 1987, he wrote in his book:

> "An ominous development has been an increase in foreign ownership and control . . . When the going gets rough, as it always will in such a cyclical industrial sector, foreign subsidiaries in Britain will bear the bruit of the cutbacks. The skills in Research and Development will be lost."

Those were not the remarks of a conspiracy theorist representing what the Minister chose to refer to as the Neanderthal wing of the Labour party; they are the remarks of the President of the Board of Trade. He could have pointed out that some companies' commitment to Britain can be even less. In many cases, research and development is consigned to the home country or to other centres. That is not surprising when one considers some of the evident infrastructure weaknesses in Britain's manufacturing industry. Nor is it uncommon to see multinationals using British labour as an assembly force of often part-time and peripheral workers while the more secure and skilled work is carried out elsewhere. The President of the Board of Trade himself proved that basic points have not passed him by when, in reference to the sanctity of Rover cars, he said:

> "For major parts of the British motor industry to fall entirely into foreign hands would leave it a hostage to decisions in Detroit, Paris, Turin and perhaps Tokyo."

That is exactly where much of the profits are accruing.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has read the Trade and Industry Select Committee's report, which was published this year. It considered the potential disadvantages of British inward investment, to which the hon. Gentleman alluded. If he has read that report, he will know that there were few examples of the type of disadvantage that he mentions.

The report concluded that they were not typical of inward investment generally and that the advantages of inward investment heavily outweigh the disadvantages. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear that point in mind.

Mr. Harvey: There can be no doubt that the advantages of inward investment outweigh the disadvantages. I did not seek for one moment to suggest the contrary. That was the purpose of my welcoming inward investment. None the less, the fact remains that there are some inherent weaknesses in inward investment, which would not be inherent in British investment. All hon. Members want more British investment, particularly as we come, we hope, out of a long recession.

One reason why inward investment has come here has been the transformation in labour markets which has been caused by mass unemployment. It is strange that the Government are so proud that British labour markets have changed by dint of the fact that so many are out of work and that some of those who are in work are on such low wages. That Britain is becoming a low-wage economy is beyond doubt.

It has been a common boast of Conservative Members in recent times that their success in delivering low labour costs has been one of the things that has attracted foreign investment. Indeed, the Minister said as much. That is a curious stance for them to take when one remembers that in 1979, as the Conservatives were determined to sweep out an era that they considered to be unsuccessful, they said in their manifesto that the party wanted

> "a high productivity, high wage, low tax economy".

What a pity it is that we have waited 15 years only for the Tories to deliver the opposite of all three. We have lower productivity than many of our competitors, a part-time, casual and low-paid labour market, and we have just experienced the biggest tax hike since world war two. It is reassuring to know that the consequences of those policies have not always escaped the Tories. Their 1979 manifesto went on to state:

> "At the moment we have the reverse—an economy in which the Government has to hold wages down in order to try to make us competitive with other countries where higher real wages are paid for by higher output."

That is poignant when one considers the backdrop of continuing decline, and when every country in the EC except Denmark and Greece has managed to increase output at a greater rate than we have over the past 15 years. The trade deficit of the early 1980s has been a recurring problem.

The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) made the point that many countries in south-east Asia—many of the newly industrialised countries—which have been successful in attracting investment have done so on the basis of high levels of skill and, in many cases, relatively high pay. Low wages on their own would be one thing, but the country currently bears testament to the fact that low pay buys low skill.

On the sell-off of Rover, the Government announced with not inconsiderable pride that the British work force are paid 25 per cent. less than their German counterparts. Surely, the fact that the German counterparts have vocational qualifications that are three times higher than those in Britain is not unrelated. In a world that becomes more competitive by the day, it is nothing short of a tragedy that we are becoming less able to compete with our high-tech, high-skill and highly productive economic rivals. If the hon. Member for Rotherham was perhaps exaggerating slightly when he compared our position with that in Romania, one nevertheless understood the point that he was making.

Tory Members referred to the social chapter and the impact that it might have on our ability to attract inward investment. They cannot have their cake and eat it. They tried to claim that the great success of the Government's policy on a broad front is what has attracted investors to the United Kingdom and then in the next breath claimed that it was almost only the fact that we have opted out of the social chapter that attracted investors, and that in the event that the policy was reversed, everything else would be undone.

Hon. Members have talked about German investment. We know that German companies, when they make investment decisions, are much better than many of our companies at looking at the long term. No one doubts that, in the foreseeable future, the British opt-out from the social chapter will come to an end. It was only a short-term political device to get the Government off the hook at the time. If one looks ahead two or three years and considers some of the directives that have resulted from the social chapter—I readily acknowledge that they have been too detailed and too prescriptive in their terms—one reflects that Britain has yet again put itself at a disadvantage by not being able to argue those points when they were being considered.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying about the merits of German long-term planning. Why does he suppose that some 1,500 German companies have invested in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Harvey: I welcome inward investment, and I welcome very much German inward investment. My specific point is that the Germans must be reckoning that we shall end up inside the social chapter. If anyone reckons that the Germans have come to the United Kingdom simply and specifically because we are not inside it, they fail to see the quality of German decision making.

We need investment to be made a matter of national urgency. The whole problem of post-war British industry has been a continued pattern of underinvestment. As many hon. Members know, history has proven time and again that British people have great potential for innovation and enterprise. It is a pity that we have seen recently that our home-grown investment has not been the success story that the Government have painted.

As a nation, we need to invest in education and science and technology, and we need to see more commitment to research and development on the part of British industry and the Government. At present, the United Kingdom is 19th out of 22 OECD countries in terms of spending on industrial research and development. Investment is also needed in the national infrastructure—that point was made earlier. We have seen the lowest investment growth of any G7 country over the past 15 years, and the Government have presided over an historic reduction in investment as a proportion of gross domestic product.

Our manufacturing base has declined—it would be an exaggeration to say that it had declined almost to the point of extinction, but it certainly is not the powerhouse that it was previously. Our ability to meet demand with supply is even weaker. Only last month, the Government raised

[Mr. Harvey]

interest rates because they were afraid of overheating. They thought that the additional demand in the economy could not be met by our capacity to supply. That says something about the present state of our industry.

Tackling financial short-termism and the cost of capital—the figure for the United Kingdom is far in excess of that of many of our competitor countries—is a priority that the Government should be setting. Without the Government needing to resort to dismissing all the help that is given to industry as socialist planning, there is a role for them to provide the structures and support that industry needs. The Government now stand almost alone in the developing world in suggesting that there is not.

Perhaps a symptom of the Government's attitude has been the remarks made by the President of the Board of Trade, who said:

> "The most constructive thing the Government could do for business would be to close down the Department of Trade and Industry."

Of course, he said that during the time that he was out of government. If that is representative of the views of the President, it is hardly surprising that we end up discussing other people's successes, rather than our own.

11.55 am

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey). As he spoke, my mind occasionally wandered, and I thought about my experiences in the wonderful part of the country that he represents. It is one of the most beautiful parts of England.

I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman may have been in north Devon too long, because he is out of touch with what is happening in industry. Certainly, his speech did not have much to do with inward investment. If he examined the pharmaceutical industry, he would find that firms such as ICI and Zeneca were leaders; five of the top 12 drugs in the world come from Great Britain. Our motor manufacturing companies are increasing their output every year, and their exports to Europe have increased. Our machine tool companies, having gone down in earlier years through a lot of folly—there is no time to debate that matter today—are now beginning to rise again.

I do not know where the hon. Gentleman has been. Perhaps he has spent too much time on the beaches in north Devon—I do not blame him for that. He should raise his horizon a little and see what is happening in the country at large.

I hope that the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) does not meet too many foreigners, because if he does, we will not get any more inward investment. Talk about a prophet of gloom. He must have spent hours every night dragging out every dismal, boring, negative figure. I might send him on a positive-thinking course, which would make him a little more cheerful. He was Mr. Gloom—pushing everything down and ignoring everything positive.

It is generally accepted that the United Kingdom—we should be thrilled about this—is in a uniquely strong position. That is perhaps strange, given our history. We are getting some of the advantages of developing industrial economies such as Korea and Taiwan. We are getting the sort of characteristics which they have been enjoying. They have fast-growing productivity; we have fast-growing productivity in the United Kingdom.

I did not hear the hon. Member for Rotherham mention that; perhaps I was not listening at that moment. One of the characteristics of fast-growing economies is that they are based on technological catch-up—they are leapfrogging technologies and putting new technologies in place. As has already been said, they have the advantage of relatively low labour costs.

Britain is in a similar position, certainly with regard to the European Community. In terms of hourly labour costs—these figures were produced by the United States Bureau of Statistics—West Germany has a figure of 152, while the United Kingdom's figure is 76. The figures for other countries are 127 for Belgium, 97 for France, and 95 for Italy—compared with 76 for the United Kingdom. That includes social costs. Let us compare the social costs in Germany with those in Britain. The social costs in Germany almost double the money that the firms have to produce to pay to the men. We are in a uniquely favourable position, and we cannot buck it.

I agree with the hon. Member for North Devon in one respect. Inward investment is not only about the opt-out from the social chapter. It is about all sorts of factors, which have rightly been referred to during this morning. Nevertheless, unnecessary social costs imposed on companies are a real factor. I can give examples of British companies which operate in the German market. They bring British workers into Germany to do the job because it is more economical. I do not suppose that the Germans much like it, but I expect that the British are rather pleased to have jobs in Germany.

Mr. Frank Cook: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, in addition to the social factors to which he refers, one of the principal elements of added costs in the past 15 years in Britain as compared with Japan and Germany has been the excessive cost of money?

Sir Michael Grylls: That has been true of the British economy for too many years. All Governments—if we can be ecumenical for a brief moment—in the past 20, 30 or 40 years have failed Britain by not keeping inflation properly under control.

The hon. Gentleman cannot point that finger at this Government. We have record low inflation. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right—*[Interruption.]* I gave way to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) and he might do me the courtesy of listening. It will take time for business to realise and believe not only that we are in a low inflation period but that we will remain so.

If we are honest, we will admit that we in politics are on trust—on trial is perhaps a better phrase. People out there do not necessarily believe that inflation will remain low for a long time. We have to prove it. The advantages will come when we have had—let us hope and pray—20 years of old-fashioned low rates of inflation. Then there will be a huge benefit to industrial investment. So perhaps Conservative and Opposition Members are not too far apart on that. It is true that there is a lack of faith among many investors about how long low inflation will remain, but I am confident that, while the Conservative Government remain in power, it will remain low.

The United Kingdom has become like a developing industrial economy such as Korea or Thailand, because, before the 1980s, we were shackled by outdated trade union laws. We reformed those laws. It sounds old-fashioned now to talk about the activities of the National Graphical Association, but it almost destroyed the newspaper industry and the printing industry.

Mr. Cook: That might have been no bad thing.

Sir Michael Grylls: Perhaps it might not. Some Conservative Members might say so. I am not sure whether Opposition Members would say so, but I must not stray into that subject. The reform of trade union law has enabled us to be a flexible economy.

To be successful nowadays, whether we like it or not, we have to have flexible hiring. The hon. Member for Rotherham, Mr. Gloom himself, does not like it, but he is living in a different, past world. He has gone back to Geneva to check his Swiss bank account, with his Swiss pen no doubt. I did not really mean that.

That is like a red rag to a bull to the old Labour party—perhaps it is to the present Labour party. It is rather a test of whether the Labour party has changed or not. If it truly wants the number of people employed in Great Britain to rise, it has to accept that that will happen only if we can provide a climate of flexible employment legislation. It is vital that we maintain that.

It is true—even Mr. Delors has said so—that Britain is a paradise for foreign investment. My hon. Friends do not expect me to quote Mr. Delors, even on a Friday, but in that respect, he is bang on. We are getting foreign investment from Japan and many other countries. Those companies bring into Britain the most modern machinery and manufacturing and management techniques. There is cross-fertilisation between them and our British home-based firms.

We are perhaps not terribly good as a country at changing. Industry over many years has not been good at changing, perhaps because we were first into the industrial revolution—I do not know. I believe that some of the ideas, machinery and techniques, such as the just-in-time technology, have come from foreign firms which have set up in Britain and have been a tremendous advantage.

I was in Japan just when Nissan was contemplating an investment in our country. I asked one of the Nissan people what they thought about British component manufacturers. I received an honest reply. He said that one or two of the bigger companies were world class. They exported all over the world and did very well. But he added that the great mass of them, in Nissan's judgment—it had done a study by that period—were not nearly so efficient as they should be. He said, "I think that we will help them." I did not have the impression that it was said in an arrogant way. It was said in a sensible, practical way. He predicted that Nissan, which required demanding standards and prices from its component manufacturers, would have a good effect on our home-based component industry. I believe that that is exactly what has happened.

The advantage is that the component manufacturers which have pulled their socks up, are much more efficient and are doing much better can now export to the continent and supply continental motor firms. Perhaps they would never have been able to do that if they had not been driven into it when the huge Nissan company set up in Sunderland, produced lots of motor cars and said, "Supply us if you are good enough."

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Does my hon. Friend agree that we are fortunate that Nissan decided to come here when it did, given that, at the time when it was contemplating the investment, the Trades Union Congress described the potential investment as alien?

Sir Michael Grylls: It shows how out of date the TUC was. I hope that it never utters such words again.

I am sure that inward investment has brought a clear benefit for jobs, broadened our industrial base, brought huge benefits by bringing new technology to manufacturing, management and production, and helped some of our smaller firms which were perhaps a little stuck in the mud. We are stuck in the mud in this place, too, but that is neither here nor there. We are not talking down to anyone. It is perhaps a British characteristic. The influx of ideas and new management techniques is one of the most important things that inward investment has brought to Britain.

I say to my hon. Friend the Minister, "Keep up the good work. Use your influence or perhaps all our influence to maintain the right business climate here—a sensible, flexible business climate with low corporate taxation. Then the investment will continue to come into Britain and all the people who live and work in Britain will benefit hugely."

12.8 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I was highly amused to hear the Minister for Energy and Industry describe me as part of the Neanderthal section of the Labour party on inward investment, especially as I was chairman of the Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association for 12 years, from 1981 to 1993. It was one of the regional development organisations that the Government supported as a mechanism for regional involvement in attracting inward investment.

In that role, I met the Minister of State's predecessors from the early 1980s until the right hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), who recently parted with that responsibility. As I co-operated with all those people, I was entertained to hear that I suddenly became a Neanderthal as soon as I entered the House and sat on the Opposition Benches.

That subject was one of the interesting aspects of the Minister's speech. Outside this Chamber, inward investment means partnership and co-operation. I do not know anyone who does not want to attract industry to the United Kingdom. In the House, that partnership suddenly disappears because so many people are committed to being combative that they cannot see the important issues at stake.

If one works for a regional development organisation for 12 years, one obviously experiences some periods of drought when there is no inward investment, and other periods of success when investments go well. One also experiences changes in Government policy. Sometimes the Government want organisations to do such and such, at other times they do not—that goes with ministerial responsibility.

[Mr. John Gunnell]

Some Governments value the work of regional development organisations and accept that one must have partnership between the centre and the regions if one wants to attract investment effectively. Others think that everything should be done from the centre.

For the most part, the job was entirely voluntary—until the last year— and I would not have done it for so long if it had not given me considerable satisfaction. Obviously, part of that satisfaction was gained from achieving a specific success and from inward investment coming to one's area.

The companies whose representatives I met before they decided that they would invest, invested and now operate on Humberside, included Citizen, Pioneer and Kimberley-Clark. Those companies are household names and each of their Yorkshire facilities was won against strong competition from the continent. They are household names partly because of their products, and that is especially true of those companies that make various forms of electrical equipment.

Apart from the household names, I met a host of other companies, many from the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and the United States. Just before I stopped doing the job, I was involved with Exsa—the first Turkish inward-investing company—which recently set up a factory in Leeds.

Those companies came to the United Kingdom partly as a result of work done by the Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association—work that was done in conjunction with the Department of Trade and Industry, and especially with the Invest in Britain Bureau.

Having done that job for a considerable time, I must make some observations on the factors that are important in achieving inward investment and on some of my worries as a Member of Parliament about the risks that the Government are taking with the future of that investment.

Despite the comments that the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) made about my colleague the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane), I agree with the hon. Gentleman's arguments that achieving inward investment involves partnership. It will not work otherwise. The Government alone cannot bring in a company; nor can the regions do so without the Government. One therefore needs co-operation. There has to be a partnership between Government and the agencies that want to attract investment to a region. That partnership has to cross the political divide.

For electoral reasons, local authorities are largely under Labour control. I know of no such authority that would want to turn away inward investment. Achieving a working relationship is all-important. Throughout my time as chairman of the YHDA, there were political differences among the councils in the region. North Yorkshire county council has been solidly Conservative. For at least six of the years that I was chairman, my vice-chairman was a Conservative member of that county council.

I operated with Gerald Turton as my vice-chairman for a considerable time. He was the son of a distinguished former Member of this House. We worked together to ensure that investment came to the region and had no difficulties in doing so. One is trying to get inward investment and to get the proportion of that investment that comes to one's own region as high as possible. It is a great mistake to make inward investment a combative issue, as the Minister attempted to do this morning.

People do work together. One of the most difficult aspects of my last years in that job was that I had to get nine district councils and two counties to work together on inward investment. It was a constant headache ensuring that everyone was on board. Political difference was not the most divisive factor—it was that one wanted everyone to contribute to the organisation. Financially, they contributed per head of population, but the chances of winning an inward investment project were not equal because, if selective regional assistance applied to one area, it had a greater chance of success.

During the past five years, I was involved in 17 projects that involved a serious number of jobs and in which regional selective assistance was involved. Of the 17, eight were on Humberside and the others were spread around six other councils. A group of councils therefore did not win projects, because they were among those that did not get regional selective assistance, and because the arguments for such assistance going to them were not necessarily thought so strong.

One has to keep all those people on board. It is important for a regional development organisation to market the region as a whole, so one has to build partnerships which are not merely effective for the council areas that gain investment but which ensure that everyone gains something.

Private sector involvement in regional development organisations is enormously important. We developed strong private sector links, which paid off financially. At one time, the larger proportion of our income came from the private sector. We concentrated on that. One Minister of State—I think that it was the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins)—set targets for the amount of private sector investment, which was probably quite a good thing. Most people think that he set the targets too high, and they were subsequently reduced.

It is important that the private sector is involved, but not just for its money. When one meets companies from Japan and the United States—one has met plenty of them—it is very important for the public sector to meet them together with the private sector, so that the companies can see that the welcome which one brings spreads across both public and private sectors.

The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) made a good point about the cost of utilities in our country in comparison with some of our competitors. Utilities have a big role to play, because some of the investments which come in—particularly major investments—are major users of water or power, and establishing a relationship with the utilities is very important.

In Yorkshire, following the privatisation of the major utilities—whatever one thought about the legislation—we thought that it was important to work with them and to get them on board in assisting us in attracting inward investment. I must say that Yorkshire Electricity, Yorkshire Water and others have worked very well with us in recognising the priority of getting companies in. That is a part of the partnership which has not been mentioned this morning.

I agree with the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) that we now have many more suppliers who can meet the standards required by investors, and not just standards of quality. The "just in time" philosophy which we have picked up from Japan is now being applied much more widely in our industry than was the case 10 years ago. Obviously such a practice is good, not only for overseas companies which come here and want their supplies on time, but for our indigenous industry.

Whatever one says about the role of the private sector and of local authorities, the role of the Government is critical. In doing that job for a period, the co-operation of the Invest in Britain Bureau has been very good indeed. I believe that we should pay tribute to it in this debate; it works well with the regional development organisations.

Obviously, each regional development organisation probably feels that it could do with more funding, and I shall come to a comparison between Scotland and the English regions in a few moments. But it is important that that organisation, which is part of the Department of Trade and Industry, is properly funded, and that one looks at strengthening the role of the regions in promoting inward investment.

A ministerial lead is important, and I have seen very different attitudes struck by some Ministers. The first Minister who invited me to London to talk about what Yorkshire and Humberside were doing was the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont).

It is surprising that the right hon. Gentleman takes the view of the European Union that he does now, because we all knew in the mid to late 1980s that the reason why companies from overseas were interested in coming to this country was that they wanted to get into the single market. There was no doubt about that, and when one met Japanese and American companies, they told one so. Companies from the federal republic also gave clear reasons why they wanted to be located here, as well as at home.

I came to meet the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames when Yorkshire and Humberside first got into working in Japan, and he wanted to urge me to see that as little as possible of the association's budget was spent in japan. He took the view—it was obviously the view at the DTI at that time—that there was not much to be gained from working in Japan, and that we were not likely to get major investments coming in through a regional development organisation. At that time, we took his point on board, and we did not expand our service in Japan for quite a while.

Subsequently, the policy changed and we changed. I must say that, had we not changed, companies such as Citizen, Pioneer and Koyo Seiko would not now be located here. As I have said, each of these firms won against competition from continental Europe.

There also has to be a case for ministerial decisions which are different from the advice given by the Department. I can recall an investment from a company called Devalit—a West German family business—which came here and created some 300 jobs in the Scunthorpe area. Officials in the Department had turned the company down for regional selective assistance, and I thought—as chairman of the association—that was a mistake. The company was bringing technology to the country which was not available, even though some of products which it produced were being manufactured in the United Kingdom.

The Minister involved at that time was the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) and, although I was told that writing to him would be a waste of time, it proved not to be at all. The right hon. and learned Gentleman decided that the company should get regional selective assistance, and those 300 jobs are still there in Scunthorpe.

One must take the view that the partnership necessary to make inward investment effective is one that stretches all the way from Labour local authorities, to regional development organisations which may have some dominance from Labour members, to the Department and to ministerial level. The partnership must take place across the political divide if one wishes to get the maximum from inward investment.

I shall come back to funding. The funding of investment in the English regions, or the arrangements which we make for investment, is obviously different from the levels of funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. That owes something to the fact that there is direct ministerial responsibility in those areas.

While we welcome the changes in Northern Ireland, we must recognise that it means that Northern Ireland will provide stiffer competition for inward investment coming into the United Kingdom than it did before. Given the employment situation in Northern Ireland, we must welcome that, but we must remember that it also provides competition for other English regions. One must look at the amount of funding which the IBB is able to receive, because the good job that it is doing must continue.

I hope that the Government will remember that no actual inward investment is possible without the co-operation of local authorities. In our region, Humberside county council has been involved in at least half the significant investments. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) frequently refers to the Kimberley-Clark investment, and the site which Kimberley-Clark chose for its company was developed by Humberside county council.

I am quite sure that the people who processed the recent changes in local government will find that business men in Humberside are not enthusiastic about the abolition of the county, because it has brought together the economic needs of both sides of the Humber.

The Humber estuary area has a high potential for inward investment. It is one of the few areas where considerable land is available that would be suitable for chemical companies, which generally have difficulty gaining planning permission. Splitting the Humber area in terms of local responsibility for its economic development is a big mistake—a view shared by many in the area. That is not to say that Hull city council has not been extremely supportive of inward investment, but the area deserved unitary consideration.

The Government's officers overseas are extremely helpful. The Foreign Office's arrangements in Japan are different from its arrangements in the United States, which is wise. I found the British officers in the consulates in the United States very helpful and constructive. That was especially so with a number of the secondees whom the Department of Trade and Industry is funding to operate in consular offices around that country.

[Mr. John Gunnell]

The position is different in Japan. In the United States, a great deal of investment does not come through the embassy, whereas in Japan the embassy is the natural first port of call for potential investors. The embassy in Tokyo and the consulate in Osaka were especially helpful on inward investment. They do not suffer from the illusion, which seems prevalent in this country, that the Conservative party is in favour of inward investment and the Labour party is not.

Indeed, on two or thee occasions the embassy asked me to allay the fears of Japanese investors that an incoming Labour Government would end Japanese investment, and that those companies that had already invested in the United Kingdom would find life very difficult. The officials are not so naive as some of the statements made in this House suggest.

I want to explain why I believe that a future Labour Government would be positive about inward investment. The social chapter is not the offputting factor suggested by Conservative Members. Pioneer is typical of Japanese companies, because it said before it came that it was anxious to have a single-union agreement. The trade union movement have now come to accept that, and various trade unions compete for such agreements. The only unions that still make a great fuss about that are those that have never won any.

In the case of Pioneer, what was then the EEPTU—the Electrical, Electronic, Plumbing and Telecommunications Union—and is now part of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, won the agreement. Its officials have told me, both at the time and since, that the conditions for workers in that company are superior to those in almost any other company in the region. Indeed, they said that, if they could get the same conditions of service across the region, they would be delighted.

The social chapter will not cause such major companies much of a problem. People talk about the minimum wage, but most of the companies that I have helped to bring to this country would be insulted by any suggestion that they would want to pay any less than the suggested minimum wage. The bogeys invented by some have no real basis.

Indeed, it is a dangerous policy for the Government continually to say that a change of Government would mean the end of inward investment and cause a great deal of discomfort for those companies that have come to this country. That message is picked up abroad. It was reported to me on the recent YHDA visit to the United States. Previously, the social chapter was not mentioned on my visits, because it was not part of the vocabulary of the time, but now it is mentioned.

In conjunction with opinion polls, companies are citing the Conservative Government's fears as one reason to think twice about investment. The Government's false propaganda on that issue is a disservice to inward investment. Certain members of the Government are far more interested in peddling a party political line in order to build up their support for the next general election than in giving people a realistic idea of what is permanent in our way of working and what will ensure that any company that comes here will thrive.

It is therefore a dangerous policy. It is not funny to attack the Opposition by saying that we are not interested in inward investment. It is not only wrong but dangerous, and counter-productive for the prospects of inward investment.

I did not disagree with much of what the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) said. However, a major factor in Japanese investment is language. But the Japanese are also concerned with skills and communication. The policies put forward by the Labour party show that we are paying far more attention to skills training, and a great deal must be said about communications. Future inward investors should not be made afraid that a change of Government will jeopardise their investment. On the contrary, I am confident that it will be good for it.

I am concerned about the fact that Yorkshire and Humberside is currently receiving less inward investment. Some £490 million were invested in 1991, but in 1992-93 the figure went down to £130 million. I do not have the figure for 1993-94. The Library paper shows that, in 1991, 11,500 jobs were created or safeguarded and, in 1992-93, the figure was 6,500. The figure shown in the research paper is just short of 6,000 for 1993-94. That seems to indicate a drop, and I am concerned that, despite Kimberly-Clark, the proportion of inward investment is not quite standing up.

Two practical matters should be dealt with in terms of how the Invest in Britain Bureau operates. It would sometimes be helpful if people from the IBB spent a little time working in the regions on a secondment basis. Those of us who represent Yorkshire and Humberside feel that we may not have had a good deal over Samsung. Naturally, we are delighted that Samsung has come to this country, but we know that it seriously considered coming to Doncaster. However, our efforts to attract Samsung were largely dissipated because of political priorities for where the company should be located.

It is important that the Government be even-handed when dealing with the regions, although I congratulate the north-east on its acquisition. I realise that the DTI has priorities. I congratulate, among others, Mr. John Bridge of the Northern Development Company, who happens to have left Yorkshire and Humberside to join the NDC for a higher salary.

When I approached the Department of Trade and Industry at the request of my association—all the members wanted to match the salary so that Mr. Bridge stayed—I was told that we were not allowed to match the salary paid by the Northern Development Company. I do not object to that, because Mr. Bridge has done an excellent job there, but I believe that there should be even-handedness for the regions.

The IBB carries out some central research for regional development organisations. It might be helpful if some of that research was done in the regional development organisations rather than at the centre.

We should at all times bear in mind the importance of the European Union, and I agree with what the Minister said in his introduction. Our membership of the European Union is essential to much decision-making, and it is notable that, over the past five years, almost £1 billion has been invested in Yorkshire and Humberside. Some 18 per cent. of that is American money, 13 per cent. is from the far east and 50 per cent. is European money. That emphasises the importance of Europe in the whole process.

We should therefore try to avoid the expressions of national virility that we often hear from Conservative Members, and which are associated with maintaining our separateness from Europe. Economically, our strength is our association with other members of the European Union.

A Labour Government would be extremely positive for the whole process of inward investment, because we would incorporate the English regional development organisations into the regional development agencies, which would also cover aspects such as regional investment and organisations such as venture capital organisations which operate on a profit basis.

A united organisation, which would include an element of devolution such as there is with the function of English Estates, would be able not only to market the area as an area for investment, but to take more positive steps to bring about investment and to ensure that sites and premises were available for those looking for them.

The positive moves that we shall take in creating regional development organisations for England and Wales will not detract from the investment going to Scotland and Wales, but will ensure that the English regions compete on an equal basis for inward investment.

12.42 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I welcome the opportunity to make a brief contribution to this debate, which is timely in view of the recent excellent news about inward investment. We heard some excellent news from the north-east. We heard a great deal about the north-east today and we heard a great deal about Yorkshire in the speech by the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell). I should like to shift some of the attention away from those regions and to focus on the south-east in general and on Hertfordshire in particular.

Before turning to that subject, I take issue with some of what was said by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman. I do not doubt the depth of his concern for the north-east and for Cleveland, and I am sure that he shares our delight in the excellent news about Samsung coming to his constituency and in the excellence of inward investment in the north-east. I take issue with him, however, on the economic rationale and policies that underlie his sentiments. The hon. Gentleman told the House that the reason for our success in attracting inward investment was the strength of our manufacturing tradition and the potential and excellent skills of our work force. I take issue with the hon. Gentleman about that. If we are to live up to our great manufacturing tradition and to realise the tremendous potential of our labour force in this country, we must have the right economic policies to create the right economic conditions for inward investment. The hon. Gentleman looked back to the 1970s as a sort of golden age of inward investment which compared favourably with the 1980s and 1990s, when those conditions were in place and the right policies were being pursued.

We have heard a number of statistics in today's debate and I hope that I am not being unkind to the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) if I say that he did not skimp on statistics—certainly not on the selectivity of those statistics. I wish to draw the attention of the House to some other statistics, which are broadly based and representative, and which answer the point made by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough. They involve inward investment in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and I confess that I am relying on a piece of work prepared by the Library. If the hon. Gentleman has any better evidence, I suggest that he produces it.

The Library has produced a document for me comparing inward investment in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s at constant 1993 prices. It shows that throughout the 1970s inward investment had an annual average of just over £6 billion. In the 1980s that figure rose to almost £9 billion, and in the 1990s so far we have had annual inward investment of almost £12 billion—almost double this country's performance in attracting inward investment in the 1970s. The reasons for that are clear to see.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) made an eloquent speech about the conditions experienced in this country in the 1970s. There was a worry at that time that the country was failing to attract inward investment. Surveys were carried out which found that United States inward investment was declining and we were not living up to our potential. One of the reports of that period talked to prospective inward investors and found that they had

> "concern over inflation, the perceived lack of long-range Government policy on taxes and nationalisation, industrial unrest, the restrictive practices of trade unions, a social system which produced a disincentive to work and the better growth prospects of most other European countries."

It was found that all those factors in the 1970s militated against inward investment into this country. Overseas investors came to this country and saw exactly what we were experiencing in this country at the time—over-regulation, over-taxation, bad union practices, a disastrous educational system and an economy that was chronically inflationary.

The longer I listened to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, the more worried I became about the Labour party's proposed march towards a free market economy. The longer the hon. Gentleman talked, the more doubtful that proposition became—nowhere more so than when he talked about the difference in the relationship between outward and inward investment. I could not believe what the hon. Gentleman was saying about outward investment. If what he was saying was right—that an imbalance between inward and outward investment was the mark of economic failure—countries such as Japan and Germany, with a huge tilt between outward and inward investment, would be economic basket cases. I do not know where one would look in the world to find an example of a country where inward and outward investment were in perfect equilibrium. Perhaps one could look to somewhere like Albania, where there is nothing much going in or out except the people. The hon. Gentleman was holding up somewhere like Albania as a model of economic success.

By the time the hon. Gentleman reached the end of his speech, I doubted whether the march towards a market economy had begun. The hon. Gentleman rightly started his speech talking about the successes of inward investment in this country. At the end of his speech, he was talking about companies which had failed in this

[Mr. James Clappison]

country and failures in inward investment. The hon. Gentleman and the Labour party must realise that that is part and parcel of a free market global economy in which some businesses succeed and some fail. Thankfully, more businesses have been succeeding than failing in this country which is why more and more inward investment is coming here. It would help to attract the inward investment about which the hon. Member for Leeds, South is so anxious if, instead of talking about failures, Labour Members talked about our successes in promoting inward investment to the rest of the world. Conservative Members unequivocally believe that inward investment is a good thing. It creates tens of thousands of jobs and makes a major contribution to our balance of payments. I suspect that one reason why UK exporters and exports are doing so well is the major contribution from inward investment in high-technology export manufacturing industries. Inward investment also spreads good management and business practices.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to bear in mind the particular case for inward investment in the south-east and in Hertfordshire. We were delighted to hear earlier of the tens of thousands of jobs created in the UK by inward investment, many of them in the north-east. Of the new jobs created last year, fewer than 1,000 were created in the south-east. Hertfordshire and Hertsmere, which I have the privilege to represent, have a positive attitude to inward investment. There is real determination on the part of local authorities, businesses and communities to work together to create the right conditions for inward investment.

In 1992, the Hertfordshire development organisation was established specifically to promote the county to investors in this country and overseas. It has enjoyed some notable successes in attracting interest, but there is some way to go. My constituency has benefited substantially from inward investment, and is benefiting now from jobs and prospective jobs created by overseas investors. I enter a plea that when inward investment is being considered, the south-east should not be forgotten. Inward investment will receive a warm welcome there.

The south-east offers particular advantages to certain types of inward investment. It has an excellent, highly skilled labour force, good communications and a first-rate location in relation to the European single market. The latter is especially true of my constituency, which is particularly well located in respect of the road and rail networks.

Inward investment will not be attracted to any part of the UK unless it offers the right economic conditions. Although the Government have a role to play, and there is a place for partnership, we must not lose sight of the fundamental economic conditions that attract inward investment to this country and the link that investors see between those economic conditions, profitability and investment.

Some policies described by Labour Members in this debate give more than a hint of a return to high regulation, high taxation and the sort of labour practices that had such a disastrous effect in the 1970s.

This week saw the timely publication of a book on the Labour party's Commission on Social Justice. I have not yet completely mastered it, for it is a long read—perhaps it should be kept for sleepless nights—but its proposals for what is described as intelligent regulation and its commitments to spending and taxation are unlikely to prove instantly attractive to inward investors, who would be most attracted by continuing the economic policies which have brought the UK such great and growing success throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

12.53 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for being late for the debate. I was unable to be here for the opening speeches as I had an appointment with my physician at the Middlesex hospital.

Before starting on the meat of my speech, if it can be called that, I shall comment on the remarks of the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison), who tried to take my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) to task about his comments on tilt between outward and inward investment. The hon. Gentleman's remarks would have been a good deal more acceptable if he had given the full picture. In comparing Japan's attitude to Germany with that of the UK, his remarks would have been more acceptable if he had mentioned the high proportion of Japan's budget which is spent on research and development, unlike the position in this country. There are other aspects, too, to take into account, which would bear a good deal more honest scrutiny were any careful consideration given to those comparisons. Let us represent the facts properly, please, because that is what I am seeking today.

The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) who, sadly, is not in his place, referred to the pipe dream of a single union agreement. I know that the hon. Member has been quick off the blocks today and that in the past he has shown a rare turn of foot. Indeed, with the rest of country, I have been electrified when I have seen him turn it on in the back straight and leave others standing, but we cannot let him skate over issues such as single union agreements. I must put it on record that long before the hon. Gentleman was beginning to go round the bend, I was concluding—having negotiated—single union agreements. He really ought to study trade union history a little more.

The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) said that he did not know where the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) had been and criticised my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) for quoting unfavourable statistics. If we are to be realistic, I do not know what we are supposed to do. The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West quoted Imperial Chemical Industries plc. If I went to some kind of progress meeting with ICI, as I used to do on a weekly basis, which was chaired by Denys Henderson or John Harvey-Jones, they would quickly tell me if I tried to ignore the disadvantageous aspects of the subject under discussion. So, any kind of selectivity or preference of statistics is, frankly, being dishonest with the nation and the sort of optimism which gave rise to the south sea bubble. Criticism of Opposition Members on that basis is therefore totally unwarranted.

The debate is liberal because it is simply a debate on inward investment. I would like to take the opportunity to take the subject out of the normal hack party and partisan point scoring which goes on in this Chamber in such a negative and fruitless way, and to talk about a subject which has been referred to on many occasions this morning—Samsung.

Eight years ago or thereabouts, Rediffusion, which had a production unit in Billingham in Cleveland and another in Shildon in County Durham, announced that, sadly, it was going to have to close. The staff at Rediffusion were largely female. They were all well skilled in the fine, manipulative skills necessary for small-scale work because they used to produce visual display terminals. As the hon. Member for Stockton, North at that time, I was anxious to preserve that unit, preserve the jobs and keep the team together, so I suggested that the planners and developers should turn their faces towards the far east because, as it happened, I had recently returned from a Select Committee visit to Japan.

Some time later, those planners and developers came back to me to tell me that the Japanese were not interested in investment in Billingham, but that a Korean company had been located which was interested but was disturbed by the then newly introduced European Community anti-dumping regime. When I asked about details of that, I was told that Samsung—the company to which they referred—was nervous that it would be unable to reach the required quota levels of indigenously produced components. As Brussels was very nervous about permitting the advent of another screwdriver operation simply to gain a gateway to Europe, Samsung did not think that it would be able to meet the requirements from Brussels.

When I asked the planning committee what it intended to do about that, it seemed somewhat nonplussed until I said, "It's pointless sitting here crying into our beer and wringing our hands; let's get off our seats"—I do not think that that was quite the word that I used—"and go to Brussels and argue the case." I led a delegation which included Councillor John Scott and the chief planning officer Russell Ward and we even took a member of the Conservative group to prove that we were of one political mind and not partisan. We went to Brussels and pleaded Stockton's case. We referred to the unemployment and the availability of already trained staff. We referred to the other advantages that we could offer.

The Commissioner and the directorate-general suggested that we should gain from Samsung an undertaking to help United Kingdom and European producers to lift their production levels and standards and specification to the level required for its components. We were told that if Samsung gave an assurance to assist in that process, Brussels would not for the moment apply the full weight of the regulations.

We brought that agreement back to Teeside and offered it to Samsung. On that basis, Samsung came to Billingham and took over the Rediffusion operation when it closed. Since then, Samsung has relocated and extended several times. It has a repeatedly proven production record which is exemplary by any standards and its industrial relations track record is there for all to see: it is flawless.

Furthermore, the company and its senior management have put down roots in the community. They have taken an active role in the Billingham international folklore festival, which is the pre-eminent event of its kind in the world. They have adopted a prominent role. They have become part and parcel of the community. That is an important point for me to register here today because of the comments that I am about to make.

Many claims and counter-claims have been made about Samsung's current decision to place its European headquarters not in Middlesbrough, but in Stockton. The headquarters will straddle the borders of Stockton and Hartlepool.

We are told that Samsung's decision was secured with the help of a regional selective assistance grant of £58 million. That is very true, but we must remember that the darling of this year's Conservative party conference, the right hon. but excessively ambitious Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) has preached a faith which would eradicate that kind of support for such a move.

Nevertheless, credit for placing the grant on Teeside's table must be given to the Department of Trade and Industry. I give unstinting credit to the Department for that. However, we must remember that Lanarkshire, which was in competition for the establishment and which is already an enterprise zone and had all the inducements to offer that such status allows, was also offered a £58 million RSA grant.

That brings me to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). At Scottish Question Time this week he said

"that the package that attracted Samsung to the north of England was not the reported £58 million, but £71 million, the extra £13 million given in stealth being meant to counteract our enterprise zone status and financial assistance?"—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 882.]

My hon. Friend is right. Extra moneys were offered for Samsung to come to Teeside, but it was not £13 million—it was £19 million. That £19 million was put together in a package by agencies such as Cleveland county council, Stockport borough council, Hartlepool borough council, the Northern Development Company, English Estates, Teeside training and enterprise council, and Cameron Hall Developments. There was a whole team working to attract Samsung to Cleveland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North, in putting his point, did nothing less than his duty. He has received information from a source of which I am not aware which leads him to believe that there was something unhealthy about the matter. It was entirely proper for him to put that question to the Secretary of State for Scotland and to seek an inquiry into the propriety of the deal.

I must say to my hon. Friend that the money was given not in stealth but in desperation, because the community badly needed that development. My hon. Friend accuses the Department of Trade and Industry of giving the additional money. I cannot believe that for one second. The only advantage to Her Majesty's Government of giving additional money would have been to safeguard the seats of the hon. Members for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin). For the life of me, I cannot believe that they are worth £9.5 million each. It just does not make sense.

The simple truth is that credit must go to all the agencies which co-operated in successfully putting the package together. Credit must go to officers of Cleveland county council who captained and coached the team. Indeed, we must congratulate Bruce Stephenson, who led the team to Japan to play the final minutes of the game. Credit was given to Cleveland county council in particular by Sir John Hall, the chief executive of Cameron Hall

[Mr. Frank Cook]

Developments—and, incidentally, chairman of Newcastle United, an eminently successful football team at the moment.

Sir John Hall also gave credit to the Minister, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), for his support and assistance in securing the package. However, apart from giving him credit, I must do him the favour of pointing out that, as much as he was helping Teesside, he was also helping Strathclyde. I am pretty sure that he was also rendering the same assistance to Doncaster. My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) pleaded for even-handedness. I am sure that he received no less than even-handedness from the hon. Member for Enfield, North.

I have not offered my comments in the spirit of cheap party hacking which occurs in the House and which I find fruitless and boring. I would not be here unless I was doing a proper job. It is about time we managed to focus our minds more positively, constructively and, dare I say it, in the national interest and in the interests of the people whom we represent, rather than in the interests of seeking cheap party political advantage. I am not talking to any party in particular, although it is fairly plain, bearing in mind the direction in which I am looking: I offer my comments for the good sense and the good health of the House because, by God, it is in need of an injection of good humour.

1.9 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): It is a great pleasure to speak in this debate on inward investment because it is such an important subject for all parties and for all our constituencies. As the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) rightly said, it is important to avoid petty party political points on this matter or, indeed, on any other matter. The hon. Gentleman sounds like an admirable candidate for the Privileges Committee because cheap party political points do not get anyone anywhere.

I shall make not a party political point but a point about the Labour party. Inward investment is important because of the jobs and prosperity that it brings to all parts of the country. It is also important because it is a touchstone—a sort of litmus test—as to whether the Labour party is new and has learnt any of the lessons of recent years. Sooner or later the sleaze smokescreen will lift, whether the allegations have been sustained or proven to be false and falsely motivated, and the Labour party will be left exactly where it was before, which is—to use the word of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell)—in a state of "drift" on matters such as industrial policy. We shall then be able to discover whether the new pistachio-flavoured, sharp-suited Labour party is any different from the old Labour party because in its heart it remains deeply hostile to inward investment.

As I said, inward investment brings prosperity and jobs. I shall use the analogy—I do not intend to be overly party political—of the road-building programme. For example, the Liberal Democrats are implacably opposed to building new roads on a national basis but incredibly enthusiastic about them on a local basis, in their constituencies. It has been estimated that since 1979, inward investment has created or safeguarded—the safeguarding of jobs is also important—a total of 622,247 jobs in the United Kingdom, with some 51,920 in my region of the south-east. That is an important set of figures.

Surely, it must be a massive tribute to the Conservative Government's policies that people around the world are literally queuing up to invest in the United Kingdom. That is a far cry from the bad old days that I remember. I used to travel a great deal in my business before the Conservative Government as well as after 1979 and I can remember the attitude of sympathy and pity that I sometimes encountered in countries such as the United States with regard to the state of the British economy and British politics. What is now regarded as an aberration—for example, the appearance of Mr. Jimmy Knapp on our television screens—was almost a regular, if not nightly, event in those days. I do not think that I need remind hon. Members how disgraceful our industrial relations were in that era and how much of a disincentive they were not only to inward investment but to endogenous inward investment.

Mr. Coe: What does that mean?

Mr. Waterson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; I wish that I could answer his question.

I shall refer to one classic example: Rover. How could Labour have got it so spectacularly wrong? On 31 January 1994, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), the Opposition spokesman on these matters, said:

> "Does not the Minister and those Conservative Members baying from the Back Benches understand the apprehension felt by Rover's work force today now that they have seen their company sold to BMW, with which they are in direct competition across Europe?"

He went on to talk about promises made by BMW and asked what collateral the Minister held for those promises. He continued:

> "What assurance can the Minister offer those currently employed at Rover that their employment is as secure today as it was yesterday?"—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. 620.]

Is not that the historical, kneejerk, typical Labour Member's reaction to any such deal?

Yet how wrong can one be? As we now know, BMW is to create 1,450 new jobs at Rover plants over the next six months. We have heard endlessly and rightly during the debate about the Samsung announcement of more and more jobs. It seems to me that the message has not yet got across to our friends in the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties about just how damaging their slavish support for the social chapter is. It seriously threatens the success that we need, about which the hon. Member for Stockton, North spoke with his usual eloquence.

Mr. Frank Cook: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waterson: May I finish this point? Then I shall happily give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cook: As long as the hon. Gentleman does not go off it.

Mr. Waterson: I promise that I shall not go off it.

It is clear that in France 29 per cent. of total labour costs go on non-wage social costs. In Germany the figure is 23 per cent. while in Britain it is just 17 per cent. Those are significant figures.

Mr. Cook: It is not for me to speak for the Liberal Democrat party. The hon. Gentleman can take my comments to represent the views of Liberal Democrat

Members if he wishes, or they can do so if they wish. The hon. Gentleman refers to the attitude of the Labour party in a derogatory way as if the party was opposed to inward investment. Let me put it on record that Cleveland county council, Stockton borough council and Hartlepool borough council are Labour controlled and the Northern Development Company is staffed largely by Labour politicians. I do not know how far the hon. Gentleman wants to take it. How much proof do we need to give?

Mr. Waterson: Nothing that the hon. Gentleman says cuts across what I said. I was drawing an analogy with the Liberal Democrats. Frankly, I regard the two parties as indistinguishable. Labour politicians locally are very much into the cracker barrel aspect of politics and the notion of getting jobs and trying to take the credit—where it is due, no doubt justifiably. However, nationally, there is an innate suspicion of inward investment. The suspicion of foreign interests taking over companies is unjustified.

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Stockton, North was in the Chamber when my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) said that the TUC had described one of the major Japanese investments as "alien". I think that I quote correctly.

I do not know whether hon. Members saw *The Sunday Times* only last weekend. It dealt at some length with inward investment in a long and perceptive article. It referred particularly to the French, who in the 1980s were terribly scornful of investment by the Japanese in Britain and even for a time, despite claiming to be more communautaire than anyone else, resisted the import into France of Nissans and Toyotas made in Britain. Jacques Calvet, whom hon. Members will instantly recognise as the head of Peugeot, memorably described Britain as an aircraft carrier for the Japanese. What are the French doing now? They are working terribly hard—at least as hard as us—to bring in foreign investors.

The Sunday Times article also referred to the fresh wave of investment from the so-called tiger economies, of which we have rightly heard a great deal during the debate—Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. Samsung is not an isolated incident in the story. The article says:

> "In the last year alone, Kong Wah of Hong Kong has invested £9 million in a TV plant in Tyne and Wear; CMC of Taiwan has invested £26 million and is creating 550 jobs making floppy discs in Northumberland; and Siam Furniture has set up in Middlesbrough, the UK's first manufacturing investment from Thailand. . . . up to 50 'tiger' companies may be investing in Europe in the next few years."

On the basis of recent history, we can say that the lion's share of those investments will come to this country.

I shall move closer to home, to my constituency, to share what is happening in Eastbourne and elsewhere. The Nobo group will be instantly recognisable to many hon. Members and is located in my constituency. It makes notice boards and visual aids—the sort of boards that one often sees in meetings to help the speaker make his or her point. Only recently—completion took place on the 21st of this month—it acquired De Visu and Lara, two French companies. That acquisition will nearly double the company's sales, which is quite something in itself. Estimated total sales of the combined companies will approach £50 million per annum.

Nobo's strategy is to be very much a United Kingdom manufacturer. As a result of the acquisitions, opportunities have arisen to expand its UK manufacturing base. That is not merely good news for my constituency, as a 20,000 sq ft extension to its factory in Wales is nearing completion, as well as a 12,000 sq ft extension to its factory in Manchester. In Eastbourne, it has taken on an extra 40 employees, which is a 17 per cent. increase in the work force in the past three months, and additional factory space of about 7,000 sq ft is being rented. That means more jobs to come—not only new jobs created because of its expertise and ability to get even more out of the companies that it acquired, but the genuine possibility of importing jobs from France. Jobs that were in France might now come to my constituency, to Wales and elsewhere. There is no better example than that, to underline the importance of the fact that we opted out of the social chapter, and I am sure that we would all wish Nobo all the best in its continued expansion, especially under the expert helmsmanship of Reg Barr and Roger Colvin.

We have heard a variety of theories explaining why such companies are attracted to a particular country within the European Union and to particular parts of this country, whether the reasons be grants, labour costs or whatever. We underestimate at our peril the importance of a modern transport infrastructure. There are people in and near my constituency who oppose any road-building or road improvement scheme on principle—a combination of people whose homes are near the schemes, professional protestors and people with a political axe to grind. If we are to keep such companies and to encourage new ones to come, it is vital that we have a proper road and rail infrastructure linking us to centres such as London and to the channel tunnel.

I am delighted, as I know you will be, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that work on the long-promised A22 new route into my constituency is to start on 1 November. It is a £25 million scheme, which is backed by the Government. I hope that not too long thereafter work will start on the Polegate bypass and before too long I want a decision on the building of the improved A27 route from Lewes to Polegate.

Several hon. Members have asked whether we are to become a low-wage economy. The expression "coolie economy" was used, but the precise context is unclear, so I shall draw a veil over that. I would like to refer specifically to a speech made in the past few days by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to the Institute of Personnel and Development. He said:

> "Low wage economies present formidable competition. Their wages are so much lower than ours that we cannot hope to compete by driving down our wage levels."

He added that Britain instead had to

> "climb the ladder of technology"

and improve our competitive edge through creating products that owed more to

> "human knowledge than to human muscle".

That gives the lie to the obsession that some Opposition Members have that my right hon. Friend and other members of the Government are determined to drive down wage rates and to oppress the working man.

How good it was to hear that the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) had met a foundry worker. I am sure that that was a deeply moving experience for the foundry worker, and it is good to hear that apparently there are now direct flights between Geneva and Rotherham.

[Mr. Waterson]

I shall also talk about outward investment, because there was the old suspicion in some of the speeches from the Opposition Benches that inward investment really means big corporations from abroad taking control of British companies and factories to the detriment of the British people. But we should remember—in fairness, this point was made by more than one hon. Member on both sides of the House—that the UK is second only to the US in terms of outward investment, and that we are even ahead of Japan. In 1992, our outward investment totalled about £100 billion. The example that I gave of the Nobo company in my constituency shows that side of the coin as well.

I wanted to finish by mentioning Labour's "Business Plan for Britain", which was published earlier this year. It is not what I would describe as a gripping document, but it is certainly worth reading. It is a fascinating document, with some wonderful echoes of the past in this country.

I think that the best comment on that document came from Stanley Kalms, the chairman of the succesful Dixons group—we might well expect similar comments from foreign investors if there were ever the remotest possibility of another Labour Government—who wrote in a letter to *The Times* on 11 February:

> "I had an awful sense of having been there before. We went through all this in the 1960s and 70s, and it did not work. British business doesn't want a national plan. It wants low inflation, it wants low interest rates, it wants good industrial relations. But some great blueprint drawn up by civil servants, politicians and economists—no thank you".

I do not think that I can improve on those eloquent words from somebody who really should know about these things. I am delighted to have been able to participate in this important debate.

1.27 pm

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): I should like to begin by endorsing wholly what my hon. Friends have said about the importance of outward investment, as well as inward investment. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) made a compelling case on that point, and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) has just illustrated clearly how outward investment can be of great benefit to British firms.

When we look at trade and investment, we are talking about a global situation, global movements of money, global telecommunications and global brands, trades and competitiveness. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) rightly said in his opening remarks that it is no good for the UK to be isolated, and that we could not be entire of ourselves. The idea of Britain being isolated would have seemed absurd to our ancestors, who knew perfectly well that Britain's best interests lay in the world outside. Yet it seems to me that, in the course of this century, we went through a prolonged period when we were isolated from the rest of the world and when we started to focus not on what we might offer the world, but on our internal problems, issues and difficulties.

We are all familiar with the performance of the British economy during the 1960s and 1970s. Whatever the party political arguments, there is no escaping the figures. Britain went through an extremely bad patch. However, it is often a salutary reminder to look further back. For example, manufacturing productivity between 1880 and 1914 grew by less than 1 per cent. The problems are deep rooted and long-standing and, as my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade said, reversing more than 100 years of relative economic decline is not an easy task.

During the 1980s, the reverse began. Manufacturing productivity grew faster in the United Kingdom than in the United States, France and Germany. As was said earlier, our share of the volume of world trade stabilised during that period, which was important, and our overall growth rate began to match that of our competitors in Europe. In short, confidence started to return and Britain began to find a role again—one that built on our ancient strengths, such as language, our links with the wider world—not just the European Union—and our belief in free trade. That role is constantly evolving to meet the ever-changing challenges of the global market, where inward and outward investment are expanding. Our exports are rising strongly, especially to countries where economic growth is fastest. They are not yet our most important export markets, but we are making great strides in the most rapidly growing areas of the world.

The United Kingdom is the world's largest outward investor after the United States. What matters most is where that outward investment is going. Currently, the great majority goes to highly developed countries such as the United States and the other European Union countries. Those large markets are important and always will be, but they are not the fastest-growing markets in the world. Over the past 10 years, our average return on outward investment has been about 10 per cent. It is my hope—and I believe that it is Government policy—that we reinvigorate our attempts to get capital into the parts of the world that are growing fastest and where the return will be greatest. We are making significant progress in that, but there is still much to be done.

Most importantly, perhaps, we have learnt to adapt to the globalisation of trade by making ourselves available to inward investment. We have heard much today about the rewards from that. We want to import capital to build up our industrial base, to import the skills and working practices of overseas companies and to learn to adapt to and accommodate new ideas.

The Trade and Industry Select Committee report, "Competitiveness of UK Manufacturing Industry", has an important section that states:

> "Apart from new jobs and improvement in the balance of trade, the main advantage"—

of inward investment—

> "is the dissemination of new management practices to other parts of UK manufacturing, through direct influence on suppliers, the example provided to competitors and others, and (eventually) the movement of personnel."

The report continues:

> "Some of the new practices, such as partnership relationships between customers and suppliers and the 'empowerment' of workforces, are radical changes from past UK practice, and would have been difficult to bring about in any other way."

I believe that to be very much the case.

Everybody in the developed world, certainly in the European Community, aims to attract inward investment. As has been said in the debate, we are attracting far more than our fair share, and we are entitled to ask why that might be so. The first reason is that we have a large and skilled work force—the second largest in the European

Community. We have heard much today about manufacturing and about the north-east, which is fair because a great deal has been achieved there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere made the point for the south-east, and I should like to emphasise non-manufacturing skills, because we also have enormous skills in the service sector and are attracting a lot of inward investment in terms of corporate head office relocations in service industries. I have yet to have it confirmed, but I heard today the remarkable news that the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt has decided to establish the headquarters of its investment bank in the City of London. Had anybody told me that a few years ago, I should not have believed it.

The service industry has a role to play. Many Opposition Members spend a lot of time discussing manufacturing. I have no problem with that, but in our attempt to stress the importance of manufacturing, we must not begin to turn the tables of argument against services, which are huge employers and great businesses.

The result of all that inward investment is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere said, unequivocal good news for Britain's productivity, manufacturing, exports and, above all, jobs. It would not be reasonable for the Government to claim the entire credit for that good news because a great deal of credit must go to the people in those businesses who make the environment attractive to outside investors, as well as to the managers and people on the shop floor who are making it happen. They are now going out into the world in a way that was not done for far too many years, and selling Britain to the world.

An example of that is taking place in Surrey, where my constituency is located. We have already heard an advertisement for Hertfordshire, so I shall now advertise Surrey. About a year ago, a remarkable organisation called Surrey First was established. It is a partnership between the county council; the DTI, which has put in some pump-priming funding through the local TEC; local businesses; and the university. All those groups have got together to spend not enormous sums of money but a little money wisely to promote the attractions of Surrey to the outside world in order to attract inward investors.

In the past few days, Surrey First has produced a brochure. We have heard much argument today about what business men do or do not look for in Britain when seeking to relocate and invest and whether they look at such matters as wage rates. The brochure is clear evidence of what business men really believe in. The companies behind the Surrey First scheme include Sony, Ericsson, Colgate-Palmolive, and Procter and Gamble, and they give their reasons for investing in Britain. The first reason is low labour costs, the second is record productivity and the third is low taxation. The companies mention the lack of exchange control, the skilled work force and low inflation. They say that 24-hour, seven-days-a-week production is standard in many industries. Those are the reasons that international business men give for investing in Britain and I hope that that settles the argument once and for all about the importance of having a flexible labour market. Opposition Members have been doubtful about that. I have quoted what the business community is saying.

I shall spare my blushes by not going on to read out the section of this excellent book that says:

> "Why Surrey represents the best in Britain."

However, I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere that we are highly competitive with Hertfordshire and that we shall give it a good run for its money.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough made a good point when he said that we live in the real world and that the real world involves some form of selective Government assistance. No Conservative Member would disagree with that. The other important point to bear in mind is that in the real world, there is no point in putting taxpayers' money into industry if the basic requirements are not being met. Our worry is that the Labour party's policies would ensure that those basic requirements were not met.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Nonsense.

Mr. Ainsworth: The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) says that that is nonsense. Not only Conservative Members, but the *Financial Times* disagrees with his analysis. Last year, the paper said:

> "Labour's corporatist, interventionist instincts are alive and putting the boot into the free market. Those who thought Labour had forsaken the 'profits are dirty, bash big business' mentality of the post-war decades are in for a rude awakening."

On almost every front, in terms of the key criteria that international business men hope to see in a country in which they are looking to invest, Labour policies would be disadvantageous. Labour would reduce the flexibility of the labour market. Labour would, of course, build a relationship with the European Community and we are all in favour of that, but it would also bind Britain to the social chapter and to rigid, dirigiste employment formulas that do not reflect real life.

Labour would substantially put up rates of corporate tax. I notice that the proposals by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) to close loopholes, as he put it, in the corporate tax system were interpreted as follows by Mr. Howard Davies, the director general of the Confederation of British Industry. He said:

> "what Gordon Brown is talking about on the business front is not a 'loophole closing exercise' at all, rather a massive increase in business taxation . . . an almost 25 per cent. increase in the current corporation tax yield."

That is hardly likely to attract Japanese investors and other investors whom we need so much if we are to continue to build our economic prosperity.

What would Labour do on the important front of deregulation, where the Government are making determined strides to cut red tape and to get the bureaucrats off the backs of our business men? The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said of the deregulation initiative that it was an attempt to extend new killing fields to industry. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) said in a debate on deregulation that in the old days, Labour thought that an element of state control was needed to bring a social benefit into industrial policy, but that now it could do so with regulation. I fear that that is not the message that international business people want to hear.

The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) made an excellent point against himself in his long speech. I was listening carefully, and the hon. Gentleman dwelt at some length on the extreme concern in the international business community about the, albeit remote, prospect of a Labour Government in the United Kingdom. After the debate, the hon. Member for Brent,

[Mr. Ainsworth]

South will be interested to read at his leisure what his hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South said on the subject. It was the only true comment that he made during his long speech.

The growth in world trade, the economic regeneration that has occurred and is continuing to occur in this country, and the opportunities that are opening up for inward and outward investment are fundamentally the product of capitalism. The House would do well to remind itself of that fact. Those developments are not the product of socialism, however prettily dressed up or nicely presented.

1.45 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I welcome this important debate on inward investment. I particularly welcomed the exuberant and competent speech by my hon. Friend the Minister, who told the House about our tremendous success story over the years. I found it strange that, when the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) replied, we listened to him for 50 minutes and did not once hear from his lips a single Labour party policy to attract inward investment. That may have been because Labour Members know that, if they told the truth, inward investors would run away.

When challenged, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough chose not to develop the theme of Labour's socialist planning. It is not surprising that he did not examine the cost to industry caused by a Labour party policy such as its commitment to the social chapter. It is right for Conservative Members to draw attention to the weaknesses of that policy, but I want to focus on the minimum wage.

The Opposition have failed to understand that, if they introduce a minimum wage, they increase wages. If one man's wage is increased, the price of the product is increased and another jobless figure is created because another man will be put out of work to support that job increase.

Mr. Boateng: How many jobs have the exorbitant increases given to the chairman and directors of numerous privatised industries cost? How does the hon. Lady justify her attack on the minimum wage when, time and again, company directors have awarded themselves, or had awarded to them, increases out of all proportion to their own productivity? Is not the hon. Lady applying double standards in this case, as in so much else?

Lady Olga Maitland: I fear that the Opposition have been stung. The hon. Gentleman should have been asking why 1,000 German companies have chosen to come to Britain. It is because we have not signed up to the social chapter. We need to concentrate on the real issues, rather than trying to create a fog.

I shall focus on the investment that we receive from Japan. At present, 41 per cent. of Japan's inward investment into Europe comes directly to Britain. Germany attracts just 9 per cent., and France even less. In total, the United Kingdom benefits by £29 billion, embracing an estimated 75,000 jobs—a success story. Overall, inward investment from all over the globe has brought nearly 52,000 jobs to the south-east.

My constituency has benefited to that end. Overseas investors say that they are attracted by a combination of factors. Good communications are important. On that score, I totally beat both Hertsmere and Surrey, for Sutton has excellent access to two major airports—Gatwick and Heathrow. My hon. Friends cannot beat that. Furthermore, in respect of Japanese inward investment, we can offer a number of excellent golf courses. That is not a major reason for coming to our part of the world, but it is an important factor.

More serious factors have been mentioned by a number of my hon. Friends, notably by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley). English is a common business language, and the UK has a well-trained work force at reasonable cost and good labour relations. The size of our domestic market, good co-operation between local and national government, good infrastructure and the speed at which overseas companies can set up new plants are other considerations.

Perhaps the most important factor of all is the UK's membership of the single European market. It is seen as an asset, while at the same time making it possible to obtain the best deal. It ensures that employers are not shackled by the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty, and preserves employers' freedom from over-regulation and under-flexibility of labour. In short, the UK provides a good jumping-off point to the rest of the continent. It embraces the best of the European Union and sidesteps the worst.

I make no apology for repeating the point made earlier that it is not surprising that Jacques Delors said of our opt-out that Britain would become a "paradise for Japanese investment". That point was not lost on UK industry. In June, a Gallup survey revealed that eight out of 10 of Britain's top companies supported opting out of the social chapter, and the same proportion believed that Labour's commitment to signing the social chapter would damage British business.

In a memo to the Trade and Industry Select Committee when it was inquiring into the competitiveness of UK industry, Toyota said that it chose the UK as a base because Europe is seen as its best single market, and that Toyota had long held the view that it was beneficial to manufacture products in or near the place where they are used. Hence the attraction to Toyota of being based in Britain, close to what it sees as its biggest single market.

Toyota said that the UK already had a reasonably sized domestic market, a tradition of car manufacturing, and a work force well equipped to produce quality work. Other companies have also made the point that being based in England provides them with good access by air to the continent.

However, some take a different view. Earlier this month, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) said that Britain should think again about whether it should remain a member of the European Union. He said:

> "One day it may mean contemplating withdrawal . . . As a former Chancellor, I can only say that I cannot pinpoint a single concrete economic advantage that unambiguously comes to this country because of our membership of the European Union."

Predictably, those comments were headline news within hours. Not so predictable was the reaction overseas.

Little did my right hon. Friend realise that, as news of his speech percolated through to Japan, the telephones began to ring at the British embassy in Tokyo. During my visit to Japan last week with the Education Select Committee, I was told that concerned business men were asking whether it was really true that Britain was planning to withdraw from the European Union—because if so, they would have to rethink their strategy. They want their companies based in the European Union, not outside it.

The UK's membership of the European Union on our terms, unshackled by burdensome restrictions, is what makes it so attractive. Overseas companies consider it more important to be in the European Union than to try to sell into Europe from their domestic locations.

A good example of the response comes from the international toy-making company Tomy Toys, whose European headquarters are in my constituency. It is the main distribution point for this country and the whole of Europe. The managing director left me in no doubt at all where the company stood. He told me:

> "Mr. Lamont's proposal is positively detrimental. The implications are extremely serious for us. We regard Britain as our flagship in Europe and jumping board to the rest of the continent. Our board of directors in Tokyo chose Britain because of its membership of the European Community.
>
> If Britain left the EC we would not wish to become isolated from the rest of Europe. I have no doubt we would move our main operations to Brussels leaving a small English company here."

Indeed, the net result would be redundancies and job losses.

More significantly, the many companies which benefit from subcontracted work would lose out as well. Tomy's contribution in the United Kingdom to income and jobs for others who support them is very significant. For example, all the advertising and public relations agencies which have earned millions popularising brand names would be affected. All the millions that go to transporting the toys would be lost as well. The toys, in future, would go straight to Brussels. Therefore, P and O shipping would be badly hit. Jobs would undoubtedly suffer.

The same would be the case for British companies which had been contracted to make toys. At present, a toy factory in Essex is poised to land an excellent contract, which would mean more local jobs. It won that contract in the face of stiff competition, but it would shrivel away.

A Britain outside the European Union would mean that those contracts would go elsewhere. The director of Tomy concluded:

> "Our work in Britain would be severely curtailed. We have no intention of operating outside the European Union."

They are sobering words indeed.

Another company, Nissan, made a similar point when it said that, after having invested £900 million, if Britain were to move outside the EU, it would cease future investment here. Nissan, too, has plants in other parts of Europe, especially in Spain, which would benefit, not Britain. That would be a great pity, bearing in mind that Britain has been such an attractive inward investment jumping board. To kill the very advantages that we have built up would be, to my mind, totally pointless.

We have a tremendous track record. I emphasise that we must keep the very best, we must fight like tigers in the European Community to maintain our standing. I do not believe that it is a foregone conclusion that we would lose any of our ground. It is the Opposition only who are making such assertions, which are totally erroneous. We tell a success story, and we should continue in that area of business.

1.57 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I am grateful to be able to contribute to this rather important debate. We have heard advertisements for the attractions of inward investment in all parts of the United Kingdom. Now it is time to listen to the voice, if not the accent, of the north-west of England, where, I suppose, in many ways, I am an example of inward investment from Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A highly successful example.

Mr. Evans: If you say so, Minister.

I am extremely grateful to be able to point out some of the attractions, not only of the north-west, but of the United Kingdom. During the debate, we have heard the roll of honour of companies who have come to the UK from all parts of the world. They could have set up in various other parts of the European Union and taken the advantages of the Union, but they decided to come to the UK, and for very good reasons.

It has been estimated that inward investment in the UK affects around 275,000 jobs, but when families are brought into the equation, we are talking about more than 500,000 people. I do not need to over-emphasise the fact, because it speaks for itself how important those jobs are. One of the major attractions to inward investment is the Government's approach, which stresses free trade to maximise world economic growth, as seen by the Government's role in the GATT talks. That economic policy aims to create an arena for lasting growth. As has often been said, it is a policy of deregulation—I had the benefit of being a member of the Standing Committee which considered the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill—which attracts inward investment.

Various other factors are important. They include creating the right environment. That is what the Government are doing. They also involve low inflation. I was rather surprised that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) referred to inflation. I should have thought that Labour Members would be the last people to draw attention to inflation.

Industrial relations have also greatly improved as a result of the changing policies for trade unions. Productivity has been enhanced. When that is coupled with a lower tax environment—more so than our partners overseas—we can understand why foreign investors wish to come here.

One of the greatest achievements of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister related to the negotiations on the opt-out in respect of the social chapter in the Maastricht treaty. There is now increasing support for our opposition to that absurd piece of socialist claptrap. If people want socialism in this country, they have an opportunity to vote for it in general elections.: they certainly do not want it to be rammed down their throats from the European Community. Such a policy could only cost jobs. Clearly, our refusal to sign up to it has encouraged inward investment at the expense of our European colleagues, as we have heard from Jacques Delors.

The north-west is doing extremely well with regard to inward investment. Much of that must be due to INWARD, the agency in the north-west. Much reference has been made to partnership in the debate. INWARD's latest report reveals the partnership between leading figures in the north-west, all the major local authorities—

[Mr. Evans]

including, I am proud to say, Ribble Valley and Preston councils and Lancashire county council—and a host of major industries which are keen to see other industries come in and enjoy the skills and advantages that we have to offer in the north-west.

In September, INWARD announced that, in the last six months, it has attracted 25 new inward investments involving £90 million-worth of direct capital investment, with more than 1,300 jobs being created or safeguarded. Much of the credit for that must go to the managing director, Basil Jeuda.

INWARD is fortunate because the product that it is selling has a relatively highly skilled work force. In that regard, I draw the attention of the House to ELTEC, which is the training and enterprise council in my area. It is doing so much to ensure that we have investment in the training force of the north-west with Investors in People, and that as much as possible is done to take advantage of national vocational qualifications and the GNVQ in schools. ELTEC is playing an important role in the region to ensure that, when companies come to the north-west, they can take advantage of a properly trained and skilled work force.

I said that we have done rather well in the north-west, but we could do even better. We have a wonderful infrastructure, but it could be improved. Manchester airport is the 16th largest international airport in the world. With the recently announced "open skies" policy, Manchester airport will do even better in future. There has been wonderful investment in Manchester airport, and I hope that there will be further investment to ensure that it does not lose its role as an important regional airport.

We believe that more freight should be carried by rail. In that regard, there should be more investment in the west coast line, to ensure that we have the proper infrastructure to carry goods. While there should be investment in rail, there should also be investment in roads. There should not be investment in one at the expense of the other. Anyone who has travelled down the M6 to the M5 will be aware of the massive bottleneck that people face whenever they approach Birmingham. That can add one or two hours to journey times. We must ensure that there is a balanced approach to road, rail and air infrastructures.

We have seen some fantastic successes in the north-west. Last month, I visited 3M in Clitheroe, and I saw its wonderful work in precision metering aerosol valves which are used by asthmatics. Also, there is research into producing chemicals to replace chlorofluorocarbons, so that we do not damage the environment. That is a result of the protocol we signed, and it is to be applauded.

At the Conservative party conference, I was able to see what Nynex was doing in Bournemouth as a forerunner of what it will do in our area. It has already announced a £1.2 billion investment in what is called the super-highway. That must be welcomed as well. The project will be worth 5,000 jobs.

Champion Spark Plugs, an American company, has its headquarters in the Wirral. Sanko Gosei, a Japanese firm and one of the world's leading plastics technology companies, has its European base in Skelmersdale. New Balance has found the north-west an ideal location for the manufacture and distribution of its performance athletic shoes. Its European headquarters are in Warrington, and its manufacturing facilities are in west Cumbria.

INWARD has convinced the Siemens Group of the advantages of its newly developed gas meters being manufactured in Oldham rather than in Germany. That has resulted in that German company investing almost £10 million in the region, and safeguarding more than 100 direct jobs.

I am proud of the investment in the north-west. I have much information on the Labour party's reaction to it, but, because of the new-found partnership with the Labour party, I shall put it to one side. *[Interruption.]* I shall keep it. I had hoped that Labour Members would say something, but they did not. We have become used to that.

We must continue to attract as many companies as possible. The Government's policies are the right ones to do so. It would cost thousands, if not millions, of jobs if we turned our backs on those policies and followed the Labour party's policies.

2.6 pm

Mr. Bell: With the leave of the House, I shall respond briefly and without too much detail.

I welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box in his new capacity in respect of trade and industry matters. I am sure that he will enjoy future debates as much as he has enjoyed this one.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) caused me to have an hallucination at the Labour party conference. I wondered whether I had had too much to drink, too much to eat or too little sleep, because there he was, promenading along the corridors of the great and the good. I was relieved to learn that he was doing a Granada Television programme.

The hon. Gentleman made an important point about something that I tried to say—probably not too well—which was that our infrastructure is one reason why we attract inward investment. Our present infrastructure must be improved.

I wish to rectify one slight point. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said that in 1993 the United Kingdom was host to more inward direct investment than any other European Union member state. I said that in 1992, the latest year for which comprehensive information is available, the United Kingdom was host to 11.5 per cent. of global inward direct investment and was the third most important host country after the United States and France. There was no contradiction between us. I wish to record my appreciation of the Library's work in producing its research document at such short notice.

The debate wandered a little. I was accused of asking the country to adopt Albanian-style policies. I do not quite know—

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): They were Romanian.

Mr. Bell: No, that was my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane). I was accused of Albanian-style policies. I have been almost as maligned as the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). He was the ghost at the feast, wandering along the corridors of the House and on to the Floor of the House without being mentioned.

I appreciated the interventions of the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir. J. Stanley) and of the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), who made a constructive speech in the interests of his area and of the wider subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham was maligned; somehow Geneva and Rotherham were linked. A foundry worker ended up being a resident of Geneva. These things happen in debates on Friday.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) made a weighty contribution that added considerably to our knowledge of the subject. He made the important point, which was taken up towards the end of the debate, that it does not do our country any good to threaten or warn that the introduction of the social chapter by a future Labour Government would diminish inward investment. Anything that can weaken confidence abroad is not in the interests of the United Kingdom. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) in his place because he made a cogent intervention as well.

I was grateful for the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) because he was able to put the investment from Samsung into a context that we had not had previously, taking us back to the days of Rediffusion. He mentioned the chief executive of Cleveland county council, Bruce Stevenson, whom I met on a plane to London. I asked him where he was going and he said Seoul, South Korea. Cleveland county council put a lot of effort into attracting the Samsung contract to that area, and got it.

We must put inward direct investment in context. In 1993, we had inward investment of £9 billion. Our total gross domestic product was £630 billion, our total fixed investment was £95 billion, our total exports of goods and services were £158 billion and total expenditure on mergers and acquisitions of industrial and commercial companies within the United Kingdom was £7 billion.

Labour has constantly supported the concept of inward investment; no one would be foolish enough to say that it has not. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) referred to inward investment into Middlesbrough. What we want is a balanced debate and a balanced argument, taking inward and outward investment together. If we held the sort of debates to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North referred—less partisan and more constructive debates—there would be an echo from the public.

2.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy (Mr. Charles Wardle): I hear what the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) says. When he and his colleagues appear to be on weak ground, they talk about a less partisan approach. I do not doubt the sincerity of his suggestion that he and his colleagues believe in inward direct investment. However, in speech after speech, we heard that there is a contradiction in saying that and at the same time subscribing to the idea of the social chapter, as the Labour party does.

We have had a thoroughly interesting debate. We had some powerful speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to respond in the few minutes that remain.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said so clearly, eloquently and rigorously at the outset, inward investment is a key element in improving competitiveness. It creates employment, offers important new opportunities for suppliers and challenges established United Kingdom companies to improve their performance, as several hon. Members said. Our record in attracting inward investment is second to none, but that does not mean that there is room for complacency.

In inward investment, as across the whole competitiveness agenda, we need to go on improving our performance ever more. Improving competitiveness is not a one-off objective; it is an on-going process with no end date. It requires continual, incremental business. It is a tough business.

As for tough business, we listened to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough for about one hour. He had some fascinating things to say and I listened with respect and interest. I am always interested in history. The hon. Gentleman talked about the important industrial history of Cleveland over a span of some 150 years. With great respect, I do not dispute the importance of the number of warships that were built in the past century, but it is productive investment for the next century that we should be concerned about in this debate.

Once or twice, the hon. Gentleman resorted to the old music hall jokes which are tried by his party. He talked about the last two world recessions as though they had been the responsibility of this Government. I suggest that he talk to people employed in France, Germany, and many other countries which have experienced recessions to see whether that is the case. Just for good measure, he threw in a word about the City of London, and that was fairly disparaging.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough, like several hon. Members, spoke about labour costs. It is worth pointing out that labour costs in Germany are 93 per cent. higher than in Britain. In Belgium they are 64 per cent. higher. In the Netherlands they are 56 per cent. higher and in France they are 29 per cent. higher. There is no doubt that a considerable element of that is the social payroll costs which are add-ons. That is not to say that that represents good management in any sense. It does not. We should leave individual companies and managers to decide how to meet those responsibilities. That is what counts.

It is worth highlighting that between 1987 and 1993 the stock of United Kingdom inward investment more than doubled. In 1987 it was some £63 billion. In 1993 it was £131 billion. It now represents 17 per cent. of all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development inward investment stock. That is to be compared with the fact that Britain has some 6 per cent. of OECD gross domestic product.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), in an extremely interesting and powerful speech, talked about the key elements which cause foreign companies to decide to invest in Britain and to have British operations. He talked about a competitive cost base. He talked about the stability of the industrial relations climate that has been achieved in Britain, so largely as a result of the industrial relations legislation introduced in the past decade. He talked about the fiscal regime and about language. Of course, he was right on all those counts. That was acknowledged generously from the other side of the Chamber.

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

I wonder whether I might add two other elements which I believe are almost as important. I certainly heard about them during a recent trip to Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong in pursuit of further inward investment into Britain. One key element was that when an overseas company makes an investment in Britain, its subsidiary here is regarded from day one as a British company. No one knows that better than Japanese automotive companies such as Nissan. When Nissan began to build on its success here and wanted to export to the huge market among our partners in the European Union, some countries, particularly France, wanted to challenge the fact that the products were British. But they are British: whatever their ownership in this new global theatre of business, those companies are British companies.

The second key element, which was alluded to by the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) when he spoke about Samsung, is the approach of services. We do not merely promise companies that they will be well received before they come here. When they have set up and begun operating, the services provided by the Department of Trade and Industry, other Government Departments and most definitely local agencies and local authorities all show a willingness to help and a friendship about which I heard time and again during the recent visit to which I have just alluded.

The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) raised the subject of endogenous growth theory. I was glad to hear him suggest that the shadow Chancellor should put that sort of jargon into English and that he shuddered when the shadow Chancellor spoke in that fashion. Don't we all—I am sure that Conservative Members do. The hon. Member for Rotherham talked as though a high-wage economy was not an ambition of this country. Of course it is. That is what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment said the other day and has said repeatedly. It can be achieved by gains in productivity. That is the important thing, provided that we do not succumb to a series of runaway payroll costs and add-ons such as those in the social chapter which make that difficult.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), in an excellent speech, was right to highlight the success of supply side reforms, trade union reforms and the need to contain social and welfare costs, as he put it. Surely, as he said, we must remain free to tailor our employment and social policies to our own needs. Let management manage. We must not impose the rigidities and burdens on employers that some centrist organisations have ambitions to impose.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne also referred to the multiplicity of organisations dealing with the business of attracting inward investment. The Government offices and the DTI sector divisions have developed plans to ensure that we are more focused and to follow up on the White Paper on competitiveness. Their aim is for an altogether more coherent structure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne will be aware of the appointment of the chief executive for the Invest in Britain Bureau, who set among his priorities the requirement to focus on client needs and to think in terms of aftercare. It is all very well always looking for new companies to invest in this country, but as time passes we must ensure that we talk to the companies that are here about their needs—to return to what the hon. Member for Stockton, North said—and that in the process we identify their plans and are there in support.

The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) spoke of the need to compete with our rivals in high technology. In fact, more than 90 Japanese companies have established research and development facilities in this country many of which are linked to British universities for applied research.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) was absolutely right to extol the achievements of the major British players in global markets and to talk of our success overseas. As they are producing in this country and exporting abroad, it is worth bearing in mind the fact that between 1985 and 1991 the league table for average annual percentage change in output per hour in manufacturing reads Japan 4.4 per cent., the United Kingdom 4 per cent., France, Italy and the United States 3 per cent. and Germany down at 1 per cent.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West described the attractions of investing in this country, it is worth echoing the words of Ambassador Kitamura, who was until recently the Japanese ambassador here. He recently addressed an "Invest in Britain" seminar in Tokyo, which I also addressed. He said:

> "We see Britain as the trailblazer for an open trading Europe."

As my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, that is due to our attitude to the social chapter, but it is also due to progress with the single market—implementing all those measures and in many cases taking the lead in doing so—and to taking the lead in market liberalisation.

One brief example is gas—gas delivered on the beach in this country costs about the same as gas delivered to the frontier of most of our European Union partners, but gas delivered to the domestic household and industrial user tends to be substantially cheaper because we have taken the first steps in the liberalisation of that market. That is a very useful pointer.

The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) mentioned the Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association and I agreed with much of what he said. The association was most successful and what he said about partnership is absolutely right. I will give him the figures for 1993-94—1,906 new jobs were created and 3,998 jobs were safeguarded, making a total of 5,904.

The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South also talked about single union agreements—as did one or two of his colleagues—and it is worth bearing it in mind that if we had not changed the climate or introduced industrial relations legislation, those achievements would never have been made. One need only hark back to 1987—the House will correct me if I have the date wrong—when the Ford motor company was contemplating investment plans in Dundee and was seeking a single union agreement, and the trouble that it landed in because of intransigence on the part of the Transport and General Workers Union and other unions. I am delighted that we have moved past that, but let us give credit where it is due. It is due to the changed climate achieved by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his predecessor.

In an absolutely excellent and fluent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) highlighted the upward trend in inward investment during the 1980s and 1990s. He was absolutely right to say that it is complete nonsense to suggest that we can somehow look to the good old days of the 1970s and imagine that things were just as good then. It was not a golden era. Anyone who remembers high inflation, the talk of the "British disease", the brain drain, the low morale in so many factories, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer going cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund, the message from the IMF that we had to get our public spending in order if we were not to go bankrupt, will know what I mean.

My hon. Friend also made a powerful plug for greater inward investment in the south-east, and he echoed a number of my hon. Friends in doing so. He was right to highlight that matter. The south-east is a varied region which does not easily lend itself to a single marketing approach. But it is important to avoid a fragmented promotion which confuses investors. We are looking to tackle precisely that challenge.

There are, of course, other examples as well as Nobo, the company mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) in an excellent speech. There is also Daewoo, which established a research facility in Worthing, and the Oracle corporation of the US which is doing well in the Thames valley. The Swiss electronics company Huber and Suhner is another example of that kind of success.

I have already alluded to the remarks of the hon. Member for Stockton, North. He spoke of the Japanese belief in research and development, and I hope that he will take heart from the fact that a number of Japanese companies are saying "Let's do it here". It is now a global arena in which international companies want to be in the Pacific basin market, the north American market and the European market, and they want to set up facilities in all of those markets.

I said a moment ago that the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne was excellent. It is the second time he has impressed recently with his silver tongue. He was in my constituency recently, and I know that he impressed hugely all of my constituents who amassed to hear him. My hon. Friend was right to speak so bluntly about the sharp differences between the Liberal Democrats' national policies and what one hears locally on the street, which sometimes seems to be made up as they go along—and go along they do, do they not?

My hon. Friend spoke of Labour's "Business Plan for Britain". It must be right that we avoid any idea of such a national plan. The plan was the kind of book which, once one puts it down, one cannot bring oneself to pick up again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) talked about the global theatre of business, and he was absolutely right. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend report to the House that the Deutsche bank was to centre its investment activities, presumably at its subsidiary Morgan Grenfell. He spoke of the need for new management practices springing from inward investment, and what we learn from companies abroad, and he was absolutely right about that.

My hon. Friends the Members for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) and for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) were also absolutely right in speaking up for their constituents and talking—as other hon. Friends have done—about the nonsense of suggesting that if we had the social chapter we could continue as if things were as they are now, thanks to Government policies.

UK companies will generate the wealth on which our future prosperity will be founded, wherever ownership comes from. These companies will win the share of world markets which is needed to keep Britain economically strong and vigorous. Britain is the preferred location for inward investment because it is demonstrably the best location.

Inward investment is all about partnership—a partnership of national, regional and local organisations and individuals from the private, public and central Government sectors—a partnership that works, with all dedicated to providing a quality service for inward investors, all working together towards the common goal of securing inward investment and its benefits for the United Kingdom.

I agree with all those hon. Members who said that the efforts already made have been more than justified by the results, but that is not to suggest a hint of complacency. We must ensure that, through British competitiveness, we continue to attract further investment—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That this House do meet on Thursday 3rd November at half-past Nine o'clock.—*[Mr. Burns.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to the draft Local Government Act 1988 (Competition) (Defined Activities) Order 1994 and the draft Local Government Act 1988 (Competition) (Defined Activities) (Construction and Property Services) Order 1994 not later than one and a half hours after the first such Motion has been entered upon; and the said Motions may be entered upon and proceeded with at any hour, though opposed.—*[Mr. Burns.]*

Orange Badge Scheme

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Burns.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I understand that today is the debut of my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts), the new Minister for Public Transport. He and I are both lucky that this debate is taking place at a comparatively civilised time. I fear that, in the course of his Government career, he will have to face Adjournment debates at less agreeable times. On behalf of the whole House, I say that we hope that he will enjoy his job in the Government and that he will be able to make the contribution that we all know he can make.

The orange badge scheme is a very valuable facility for people with disabilities. It has existed since 1970, and during the period between 1986 and 1989 it was extensively reviewed by my hon Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who introduced a number of important modifications. They were supplemented in 1991 by announcements from the former Minister, Christopher Chope, whom we sadly miss from the House.

I think that we all understand very well the justification for the review in the late 1980s. My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham had an absolutely cast-iron justification when he pointed out that, in 1986, there were almost 800,000 valid orange badges in circulation, and that one in 20 cars in operation at that time could legally ignore some of the parking restrictions that applied to others.

I understand, therefore, that there was a need for some tightening of the rules of eligibility; I am not quarrelling with that. On the other hand, like every other hon. Member, I have been approached by constituents who were formerly thought eligible for orange badges, but who then found that they were no longer deemed to be qualified.

One category where it seems to be especially difficult to draw the line is in respect of those who, for reasons of a psychological disorder, have considerable difficulty in walking. Another category is those whose disability may be severe but intermittent. They would normally not be entitled to an orange badge.

One instance is that of a young man, cared for by his parents, who not only has severe learning disabilities but is liable to epileptic fits. During and following those fits, his mobility is severely restricted, and his parents would like to be able to park close to the facilities to which they need to take him for help. Cases like that are difficult to accommodate under the present regulations.

Another such case is that of a young man who, due to his heart condition, should not walk for long distances but, because he cannot get a badge, may find himself obliged to do so. Then there are those who have problems with bowel and bladder. Oxfordshire county council social services tell me that far more people than is generally realised suffer from those distressing conditions, and it has given me some examples. Many of those cases are not eligible under the revised regulations.

That is also true for a number of people with mental impairments and behavioural problems, which are not so severe as to make them eligible for the higher rate of mobility allowance—which is one of the conditions of eligibility.

On a lighter note, one particular case from my constituency stands out in my memory—that of Mr. Harry Crookes, who had been conducting research in the Bodleian library in Oxford on issues connected with the International Churchill Society, leading to the publication of a fascinating article, like the one published in "Finest Hour" in 1993, entitled "Fact or Fish Story? A Look at Salisbury Hall". That is the former residence of Sir Winston Churchill's mother.

The subtitle of the article was "Did the Pike caught at his mother's country home really inspire the famous RAF mosquito aircraft? And how did Winston kill the fish? A Churchillian investigates". Mr. Crookes had difficulty getting into the Bodleian library to conduct his research when he lost his orange badge, which was not reinstated despite my representations. However, I was able to persuade the Bodleian library to give him parking facilities, so at least his story ends on a happy note.

The problem with all the cases that I have mentioned is that they involve drawing a line, which will always strike those who are just on the wrong side of it as arbitrary and unjustified. Wherever we draw the line, people will have those feelings because they are in the nature of line drawing.

I guess that the Minister must consider whether the number and weight of those who feel aggrieved about the revised regulation justifies a more liberal redrawing of the boundaries. He must weigh that against the important consideration that, if the orange badge scheme is to work properly for those who need it, it must be respected by the general public. In turn, that requires the issue of orange badges to be controlled and their use to be policed.

I am concerned not about where we draw the line but about a point of principle connected with the regulations. This matter arose recently in a meeting that I had with officials of Oxfordshire county council social services, who drew my attention to a point that could be dealt with in a more flexible scheme.

Apparently, the local authority must determine whether people who do not have automatic entitlement to concessionary permits are eligible. The criteria which they are asked to apply in making that decision relates to the applicant having a disability that is permanent and substantial and causes inability to work or a considerable difficulty in walking.

May I draw attention to the word "permanent"? A problem arises for those whose condition or need for a badge is temporary. Many of us have constituents who are immobilised following a traffic accident or a surgical procedure that requires them to wear, temporarily at least, an orthopaedic plaster cast. Others may be waiting for an operation which, they hope, will cure their condition, such as a hip replacement. Their position is complicated if, as is too often the case, the date of the medical intervention and the outcome of the procedure are uncertain. Constituents have told me that, until successful surgery takes place, they are permanently disabled.

Officials of Oxfordshire social services have told me of a further category of which we should take account, despite the fact that no one in the House represents it—temporary visitors from abroad, who, if resident, would be entitled to an orange badge. Oxfordshire social services consider that, under the regulations, the condition of "permanent disability" can be interpreted as being disabled for three or more years. That means that the disability is likely to continue for the period of the badge's validity.

They also tell me that decisions on that point are made by senior members of staff. That approach is probably as liberal as it is possible to be under the regulations, which suggests that the regulations should allow more flexibility in respect of the issuing of temporary orange badges.

Now that the system has been tightened up, and especially now that the passport photograph has been introduced, will the Minister think again about that point?

2.38 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. John Watts): May I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) for his generous welcome to me on my first appearance at the Dispatch Box? Certainly, 2.30 on a Friday afternoon is a good time to make a debut.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend on securing a debate on this important subject, which invokes much interest in the House and outside. My hon. Friend has been in frequent correspondence with my predecessors about this subject over the years and takes a close personal interest in it, as his speech to the House this afternoon has shown. I am grateful for this opportunity to respond to the points that he made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage rightly identified a number of areas of important concern with which I shall deal. Before I respond to his specific points, however, it may be helpful for me to say a few words about the general background to the issue.

The Department of Transport has a long-standing commitment to promoting the improvement of transport facilities and opportunities for people with disabilities. Recent innovations in which the Department has played a major part include the introduction of wheelchair-accessible taxis, significant advances in bus design to improve access for elderly and ambulant disabled people and a new type of powered outdoor vehicle for road and pavement use. We now also provide funding support for two trials of low-floor, wheelchair-accessible buses in London and in north Tyneside.

Personal mobility is a major priority and the ability of disabled people to park close to the facilities and services they need is an essential part of the process. I was encouraged by what my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage said about the concession made by the Bodleian to one of his constituents who was finding access to those facilities difficult.

The orange badge scheme provides an important facility in assisting the mobility of people with disabilities. It came into operation in December 1971 by means of regulations made under section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. The scheme has always been principally intended to help those with severe difficulty in walking, but in 1975, further regulations extended the scheme to blind people, and eligibility was extended to people with severe upper limb disabilities.

I now come to the conflict that is inevitable in such a scheme. The scheme gives great benefit, and rightly so, to those who hold the badge, but it does so at the expense of other road users who may be held up by parking that would not otherwise be allowed.

People who are close to eligibility—as my hon. Friend said, those who fall just outside the eligibility criteria—naturally want the scheme to be extended to include them. Parliament, however, as the guardian of the scheme, needs to keep eligibility under tight control, in the interests of other road users and to preserve public respect for this important scheme. For the same reasons, it is important to take firm action against abuses of the scheme when they occur.

Since the scheme began, there have been two major reviews of its operation. One started in 1976 and led to new regulations in 1983. The other started in 1986 and led to new regulations in 1992. The length of time that the review took shows the care with which my Department reviewed the scheme and its future operation.

The second review identified the main problems. Badges were being issued too freely; there were variations in the number of badges reissued by local authorities; the value of the scheme was being questioned by many people, especially when, sadly, many able-bodied motorists misused badges, which brought the scheme into some disrepute; and parking concessions for genuinely disabled people were much too limited.

In response to those problems, the changes implemented in 1992 included the introduction of a passport-style badge, which has space for a photograph of the holder of the permit. I emphasise that it does not require the photograph to be visible when it is on the vehicle, so concerns about people being targeted for whatever malicious reason as a result of the photograph being displayed should be allayed.

The second change was an increase from two hours to three in the limit on the time that people with badges could spend parked on yellow lines. Thirdly, eligibility was extended to people with a severe disability in both upper limbs who regularly drive a motor vehicle, but who cannot turn the steering wheel by hand. Fourthly, entitlement was extended to people in respect of the war pensioners' mobility supplement.

Throughout the review, we were advised by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, a statutory body which advises the Secretary of State on transport issues affecting disabled people. Its advice has been invaluable.

I know that one of the most contentious matters of the scheme relates to the eligibility criteria. It might be helpful to give a more detailed explanation of how we have arrived at the current position. As I have said, there has been great concern about the number of badges on issue—indeed, the number on issue in England, Scotland and Wales has risen from about 800,000 in 1986 to about 1.5 million in 1993.

One of the original proposals arising from the review was to accept the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee's main recommendation—that eligibility for badges should be more closely related to eligibility for the old mobility allowance. However, it became apparent during our consultation that some organisations felt that that would be too draconian a measure, and, after careful consideration, we decided not to change the scheme in that way. Instead, we wrote to the local authorities that operate the scheme requesting that they give greater emphasis to ensuring that badges are issued only to those entitled to receive them.

[Mr. John Watts]

One change was the adoption of new measures for undertaking medical assessments of applicants for badges. Under the old scheme, the medical advice form that general practitioners had to complete when there was any doubt about an applicant's eligibility effectively put the doctor in the position of saying whether or not the applicant should be issued with a badge. That placed GPs in an invidious position.

A new medical advice form has been introduced. It requires doctors to provide factual answers to a series of questions. On the basis of those answers, the local authority can determine whether the eligibility criteria are met.

In general, the new procedures seem to have been well received, but there is always pressure to extend eligibility. I shall say a few words about that, and pick up some of the issues raised by my hon. Friend.

I know that many people think that a badge should be available to temporarily disabled people. The main difficulty with that is that having temporary badges would further increase the number in circulation, leading to the scheme possibly becoming unworkable in its current form. Their issue would also impose financial and administrative burdens on both local authorities and health authorities.

That said, I know that some authorities issue badges to people awaiting surgery—for example, for a hip replacement—on the basis that, until the surgery has taken place, those people are permanently disabled. I can understand that approach, but I think that any such judgments are best left to local authorities applying their common sense and good judgment to the permanence or otherwise of the disability that causes the problem.

I am also aware that people with psychological disorders or suffering from bowel disorders feel that they should be eligible for a badge. Provided a person's actual ability to walk is sufficiently impaired to meet the eligibility criteria, the cause of the impairment is immaterial to his or her entitlement to a badge. But I am afraid that, distressing as many of those ailments are, they are not in their own right sufficient to qualify for a badge.

Another difficult subject involves the issue of badges to those under two years of age. Children under the age of two have been ineligible for an orange badge since 1983. The rule was introduced because it was considered that disabled children below that age could reasonably be carried in a pram or pushchair, in much the same way as able-bodied children of a similar age.

I can understand the view that there should not be an age limit for qualification for an orange badge. In 1992 and 1993, we considered the question in some detail with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee. The main concern at that time was whether eligibility for a badge should be extended to children under the age of two with tracheostomies.

One of the arguments put to that committee was that, as it was obviously demanding for a parent to look after a baby with a tracheostomy, such a parent deserved all the relief that could be secured. On a humanitarian basis, everyone would have sympathy with that argument. In so far as an orange badge gives some relief from the strain of finding convenient parking for whatever purpose the journey serves, it would be of assistance.

I have a great deal of sympathy for that argument, but the DPTAC chairman advised in his report that it should not in itself be considered a reason for conceding the case. The committee recommended instead that badges should continue to be restricted to those for whom a badge is a necessity, however deserving other circumstances might be.

My hon. Friend raised the question of overseas visitors. While there is an argument for assisting someone visiting this country who has a disability that would qualify him or her if resident here, there would be considerable difficulties in administering a temporary scheme. Such badges would have to be issued for varying lengths of time, and would need to be specially identifiable as being for overseas visitors.

Mr. Robert Jackson: My hon. Friend said that he knew that some local authorities are issuing temporary badges. I understand that Oxfordshire does not believe that it has the power to do so. Can my hon. Friend make it clear to local authorities that they possess that power?

Mr. Watts: I will certainly reflect further on my hon. Friend's question. It is difficult precisely to define what is and what is not permanent. My hon. Friend cited the example of a person waiting for a hip replacement. It is arguable that, with a condition that can only be remedied after successful surgery, unless and until that surgery is completed, the individual is as permanently disabled as someone who, for other reasons, does not have the use of his or her limbs.

It is perfectly reasonable for local authorities, in exercising their judgment and discretion, to take a fairly broad view of what is permanent in some instances. However, I would be reluctant to enter into an off-the-cuff commitment to issue further guidance. My Department does not believe that that aspect causes great practical difficulty for local authorities in administering the scheme, although I acknowledge the difficulties of interpretation and judgment that must confront them. My hon. Friend described what happens in Oxfordshire, and that seems an eminently sensible way of approaching the problem.

We will always be faced with the dilemma that some people will be just excluded from the scheme who consider that their circumstances are similar to those of people who do qualify. Wherever we draw a line, there will always be claims of unfairness—and in some instances, they will be justified.

I invite my hon. Friend to agree, in the light of my remarks about the number of badges currently in issue and of the growth in that number over a relatively short time, that, if we were, with immediate effect, to permit further relaxation, we would run the risk of running into the same problems that existed before the 1986 review. So many badges would be in issue that the scheme would start to come into disrepute and motorists who were not entitled, because they are able-bodied, to parking concessions would consider the rules unreasonable, unfair and impinging too much on their right as motorists to find places to park and to have free passage on the highway.

Earlier, I mentioned some of the changes made in the medical assessment required before eligibility can be agreed. One of the points which is often raised in that connection is the matter of how far someone should have to be able to walk or how impaired their ability to walk a certain distance should be for them to be eligible for a badge. I stress that, although one of the questions which doctors have to answer relates to how far the applicant can walk, there is no particular statutory distance laid down in the regulations to determine how far they need to be able to walk before they cease to be eligible for a badge.

That is another instance in which the freedom of discretion available to local authorities in exercising their administration of the scheme works to the advantage of disabled people. If we were to have a rigid distance limit—beyond that point, no eligibility, up to that point, eligibility—it would make it difficult for other relevant factors to be taken properly into account. It is clearly advisable that they should have the right to take those other factors into account in deciding whether a badge should be issued.

It is also important that we always look on this scheme in the context of the whole panoply of measures which the Government, across Departments, seek to take to make life easier for disabled people. In the case of my Department, that is especially true with regard to public transport.

Under the Railways Act 1993, there is an obligation on rail service operators to publish a code of practice and a plan as to how they will ensure that the needs of disabled travellers are met. There is already the extensive availability of wheelchair access ramps, so that, for example, I believe that the whole inter-city network is now wheelchair-accessible. The rail regulator and the franchising director will pay particular attention to the way in which the needs of disabled people are taken into account in the services which franchisees offer under the new franchising arrangements.

The scheme is valuable and extensive. It allows badge holders to park free of charge and without time limit at parking meters, or in other places where other people may only park for a limited time. They may also park on single or double yellow lines for up to three hours in England and Wales, although, in that case, they have to display a time clock, so that there is certainty that no abuse is committed. However, in Scotland, they are allowed to park without time limit. They must not, of course, park in bus lanes, which would affect the mobility of other people, including disabled people using public transport. They must not park where loading or unloading vans are in force, or where there is a double white line in the centre of the road, which would clearly be a safety hazard.

However, the scheme provides exemption from other parking restrictions. For example, orange badge holders cannot be wheel-clamped. Badge holders, though, still have the same obligation as other road users to ensure that they do not park dangerously or obstructively.

The scheme does not cover off-street car parks, and it is often argued that it should. But there is a good counter-argument that many local authorities choose to make special provision for disabled drivers, such as reserving for them parking spaces which are most convenient for points of exit from a car park, or those which are nearest to the shops which a car park serves.

It is right and proper that local authorities do that, but most people would accept that a general free concession in car parks is not justifiable, since a disabled driver finding a convenient car parking space in a car park is in no different a position from any other motor car user seeking somewhere to park his car while he goes about his business. However, I certainly commend and encourage local authorities to try to maximise the provision of parking spaces reserved for disabled people in places which are convenient for them to use.

I hope that my hon. Friend will conclude from my remarks that the Government are strongly committed to making life as convenient as possible for disabled people in moving about this country. While I cannot announce any immediate changes to the scheme, I thank my hon. Friend for bringing the matter before the House again today. It is important that it should be constantly before the House, so that, over time, we may take account of the very powerful arguments which he has advanced in support of disabled people.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 31 October 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I shall take points of order after questions.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Company Mergers

1. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he will next meet the chairman of the Independent Television Commission to discuss television company mergers.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I shall meet the chairman of the Independent Television Commission on 2 November. I expect to discuss a number of broadcasting issues, including ownership.

Mr. Rooker: It is clear that, following its purchase of Central Television, Carlton is asset-stripping it, with massive job losses and the abandonment of the commitment to keep two studios for regional programmes and news in Birmingham. When the Secretary of State meets the chairman, will he ask whether it was known when Central Television bid for the franchise that, with only £2,000 a year on offer and no competition, Carlton Television was waiting in the wings to buy it up and strip it?

Mr. Dorrell: With respect, the hon. Gentleman is concentrating on the wrong issue. What matters to residents of the midlands region is the quality of television output that is available to them. The ITC is there to monitor the standards set out in the Broadcasting Act 1990 and in the licence, and that is what it will do.

Mr. McLoughlin: When my hon. Friend meets the chairman, will he bear in mind the fact that BBC1 and BBC2 can both provide nationwide services, as can Channel 4? Is it not about time that we had a radical review of the ownership of television companies, which are prevented from undertaking mergers at present?

Mr. Dorrell: As my hon. Friend will be aware, a review of the ownership provisions for Channel 3 television companies is being undertaken. When we have had an opportunity to assess our views, and the responses that we have received from others in the industry, we shall publish our conclusions.

Mr. Grocott: Cannot the Secretary of State appreciate that, six short years ago, there were four thriving studios at Central Television in Birmingham—three large ones and a news one—and a whole range of specialisms and professional groups covering the film industry? We now face the prospect of there being one small news studio, and there has been a haemorrhage of jobs. Surely it is common sense to review the decision that was made last year to allow the takeover of Central by Carlton. It is viewers and, indeed, people who work in the industry who matter, not those who seem to have been the only concern of the Government so far—the owners of the industry and a few people who have made a huge amount of money out of it.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman was right in at least one respect when he said that it is viewers who matter. The ITC is there to police standards set out in the Act and the licence, and to ensure that all Channel 3 licensees observe those standards. That is precisely what it is doing. Of course, companies are much better placed to be able to deliver those commitments if their finances are strong and they are looking forward to a secure commercial future.

Mr. Allen: I welcome the Secretary of State to his new duties. As I have been in my present position for all of four days, I shall ask what is perhaps a naive question—it may not happen again. When the right hon. Gentleman meets the chair of the ITC, will he discuss what seems to be an obvious trend towards coalitions of regional companies, perhaps resulting in one company only for independent television in this country? Is that something that the Secretary of State would facilitate, is it something that he would discourage or is it something that he feels should be left entirely to the free market?

Mr. Dorrell: As I said in my original answer, we shall certainly discuss a range of broadcasting issues, including ownership. As the hon. Gentleman will know, even after the changes that took place earlier this year, there are still substantial restrictions on a trend, which he may fear, towards a single Channel 3 broadcasting combine. That is certainly not the direction in which the Government expect broadcasting to go.

National Lottery

2. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the progress of the national lottery.

Mr. Dorrell: Everything is well on course for the launch of the national lottery on 14 November. The press advertising campaign began yesterday, and ticket sales are due to start on 14 November for the first live jackpot draw on 19 November. Money for the good causes that the national lottery has been established to support will flow through just a few days later.

I have today issued directions to the distributing bodies for which I am responsible to ensure the proper financial management and control of national lottery proceeds. I can also announce that the Arts Council, sports councils, the national heritage memorial fund and the Millennium Commission have now established firm dates for the publication of their application forms and detailed guidance to applicants for national lottery funds. The first applications for funds will be invited on 4 January, and the first national lottery grants will be announced in early 1995.

The National Lottery Charities Board is conducting widespread consultations to ensure that the procedures that it puts in place best serve the interests of the voluntary sector. The board will issue detailed guidance when that process is complete.

The financial directions that I have issued today to the distributing bodies that fall within my departmental responsibility are also being issued by the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Madam Speaker: That was not an answer to a question but a statement.

Ms Eagle: It was the first time I had ever listened to such a long reply from a Minister to such a simple question.

Will the Secretary of State explain why, amid all this frantic activity, Mr. Nicholas Hinton, the chief executive of the Millennium Commission, was sacked? Who took that decision, and why?

Mr. Dorrell: I apologise to you, Madam Speaker, if my answer took the form of a statement. I was asked what assessment I had made of the progress of the national lottery and I was anxious that the House should have a full impression of that assessment.

Madam Speaker: I, too, am anxious that the House should have a full impression, but I am also anxious that questions and answers should be brisk and to the point.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Lady asked who decided that Mr. Hinton's employment should be terminated. The answer is the Millennium Commission. She also asked why. The Millennium Commission believed that differences of opinion had arisen between itself and Mr. Hinton that would not allow his employment to be a success.

Mr. Key: Will my right hon. Friend join me in sending good wishes to the thousands of lottery ticket sellers and operators throughout the country? Will he join me in congratulating the football pools on responding to the competition so magnificently, as a result of which we have better pools and a new national lottery? Will he join me in saying how pleased we are that at last we are beginning to take the guilt out of gambling?

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The launch of the national lottery is a great success story. In the months since the lottery licence was awarded, almost 11,500 outlets have been prepared for the launch of the national lottery and almost 33,000 employees have been trained to ensure that it is a success when it is launched.

Mr. Maclennan: Did the Secretary of State participate in the dismissal of Mr. Hinton from his position? Will he give us a clear understanding of whether he intends to maintain an arm's-length relationship from all the bodies that will be funded and the distribution of their funds?

Mr. Dorrell: I am not in a good position to maintain an arm's-length relationship with the Millennium Commission, as I am its chairman. The answer to the question whether I was there when the decision was taken is yes.

National Lottery

3. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent representations he has received about potential uses of receipts from the national lottery.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I have received many representations from a wide range of individuals and organisations.

Mr. Marshall: May I have an assurance from my hon. Friend that any advertisement placed by the national lottery in *The Guardian* will be neither a forgery nor placed on stolen newspaper?

Mr. Sproat: That is a matter for Camelot and *The Guardian*.

Mr. Skinner: What provisions have been made for those who make losses on the national lottery? I ask that question because I read in the paper today that, for that posh gambling den, Lloyd's, taxpayers in Britain will have to find £1.3 billion, including for 51 Tory Members of Parliament who made losses in that—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going wide of the question. I am sure that the Minister can deal with it.

Mr. Skinner: If it is all right for the toffs—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Minister is capable of dealing with the first part of that question.

Mr. Sproat: None.

National Lottery

4. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the issue of guidelines for applications for funds from the proceeds of the national lottery.

Mr. Dorrell: As I have already said, I understand that most of the distributing bodies intend to publish their guidelines for applicants in November.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that the success of the national lottery is dependent on the widest possible spread of applications being made and, indeed, on many of them being successful? Does he agree that user-friendliness should be the key to the applications? When he reviews and gives his view on them, will he ensure that people are encouraged to opt in, rather than in any way to opt out, by making the guidelines on who may apply and be successful as wide as possible?

Mr. Dorrell: It is obviously important that the guidelines communicate the purpose for which the lottery was established and the rules that the distributing bodies will apply in making their decisions. With that proviso, I agree with my hon. Friend that the lottery's success will be determined, in part, by the quality and range of the applications received by the distributor bodies. I would encourage any organisation that feels that it has a project that could benefit from lottery funding to get in touch with its distributor body and ensure that its project meets the criteria laid down.

Mr. Maxton: When issuing guidelines to the various sports councils about how the money will be distributed, will the Secretary of State make it clear that they should not give money or grants to any sport that discriminates against women's participation?

Mr. Dorrell: I am sure that it is the sports councils' policy not to distribute resources from the lottery or any other source to sporting bodies that engage in such discrimination.

Mr. Jessel: Does my right hon. Friend think that more funds will be raised than was thought in the original, and apparently rather cautious, estimates?

Mr. Dorrell: I have very good news for my hon. Friend. Our original estimates were quite cautious when set against those offered by Camelot in its offer for the licence. It estimates that, at its peak, the lottery will raise £1.6 billion a year for the five good causes—an increase in resources for those activities in our national life on a scale that could not have been envisaged from any other source.

Ms Hoey: Does the Secretary of State agree that the success of the national lottery will depend very much on whether the public feel totally confident that the maximum amount of money is going to good causes? Will he assure us that he will keep a careful watch on Camelot's profits, as other bidders wanted to run the lottery without making a profit? How will he monitor that?

Mr. Dorrell: Opposition Members have a unique capacity to focus on the wrong thing. In an earlier question, we discussed television ownership, and concern was expressed not about the rights of the viewer but about profits and shareholders. In the lottery, the key is not the profits earned by Camelot but the scale of the resources raised for good causes as a result of the lottery. The director general of Oflot is bound to apply that criterion when selecting licensees, and it is precisely the criterion that he applied when reaching the conclusion that Camelot offered the best deal to the distributor bodies of the various applicants for the lottery.

National Lottery

5. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proportion of the proceeds from the national lottery is to be used to retain in Britain more of the artistic heritage.

Mr. Sproat: The allocation of lottery proceeds is a matter for the distributing bodies. The distribution of lottery funds to the heritage will be the responsibility of the national heritage memorial fund and it will be for it to decide which grants to make. It will receive 20 per cent. of the proceeds going to good causes, which could amount to more than £300 million a year when the lottery reaches its peak.

Mr. Carrington: In view of the failure to retain many works of art that met the Waverley criteria, will my hon. Friend make it clear to the national heritage memorial fund that the retention of Waverley standard works of art in this country should be a priority use of lottery proceeds?

Mr. Sproat: I know that my hon. Friend has a long and distinguished history of interest in and grip of the subject, and he is right to say that artefacts that the Waverley committee deemed should have a deferral whacked on them should be eligible for lottery funds. I will ensure that the fund understands that.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Does the Secretary of State share his predecessor's view that a substantial proportion of lottery funds should be used to support scientific projects and those that promote public understanding of science?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, that will be taken into full consideration.

Sir Anthony Grant: I appreciate the importance of purely artistic heritage, but will the guidelines be wide enough to include such excellent projects as museums—for instance, the imperial war museum at Duxford in my constituency? Will the Minister accept an invitation to come and see the good work that goes on there?

Mr. Sproat: I certainly will accept such an invitation, but I gather that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has done so for tomorrow. The answer to the main part of my hon. Friend's question is yes.

National Lottery

6. **Ms Hodge:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage to what extent the lottery distributors bodies have been required to consult his Department when setting up their operations.

Mr. Sproat: The distributing bodies have kept my Department and other Departments with lottery responsibilities closely informed about the development of their systems. The bodies will be required to have their systems certified by the National Audit Office before they will be allowed to draw down lottery money to make grants.

Ms Hodge: Does the Minister agree that publishing the financial regulations today—two weeks before the lottery begins—was too late? Will the financial regulations be made available to us, and not just to the lottery bodies? Does he further agree that publishing the regulations just two weeks before the lottery begins is mismanagement and incompetence on a par with the payment of bills at the Ritz hotel in Paris?

Mr. Sproat: The answers to the hon. Lady's questions are no, yes and no.

Mr. Chris Smith: Returning to the question of the millennium fund, is it not astonishing that the commissioners saw fit to sack Mr. Nicholas Hinton—who had an absolutely outstanding reputation at organisations where he had previously served—before he had even taken up his formal post? Surely that must suggest that something is seriously wrong with the way in which the commission is going about its work. Does not that bode ill for a process that, so far, has no ground rules, no application criteria, no proper guidelines and now, it would seem, no one in charge?

Mr. Sproat: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new responsibilities.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has explained the circumstances of Mr. Hinton's dismissal. The hon. Gentleman will know that an appointee of the Labour party sits as a commissioner. That appointee was involved not only in the decision to appoint Mr. Hinton but in the decision to terminate his contract. The fact that the position of chief executive is now being readvertised will not delay what the millennium fund will do.

Mr. Barry Porter: Has my hon. Friend received any representations from the Opposition that would help us to understand why they are whingeing and griping about something that is clearly going to be a great success?

Mr. Sproat: It will be a great success, and I welcome my hon. Friend's support.

Central Television

7. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he is next due to meet the chairman of the Independent Television Commission to discuss the future of Central Television.

Mr. Dorrell: I shall meet the chairman of the Independent Television Commission on 2 November and expect to discuss a number of broadcasting issues. The future of Central Television is a matter for the company itself.

Mr. O'Brien: Given the inadequacy of the Secretary of State's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), does the Minister understand that there is deep concern in the west midlands, not only about the 180 redundancies but about the breach of the licensing application promises to build a new studio? Does regional television now mean nothing? Is Birmingham to be just an outpost of the lucrative empire that Carlton runs from London?

Mr. Dorrell: No, it will not be simply an outpost of the Carlton franchise in London. It will be a separate and free-standing franchise, which the ITC will police. The key issue for viewers in the west midlands—and, indeed, for my constituents in the east midlands—is the quality of the output that is broadcast by Central Television. That must determine the future of the Channel 3 licence in the midlands.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I agree with my right hon. Friend that the quality of the output of regional television is extremely important, but is it not also important that production takes place within the regions and within the biggest city of a region? Is it not at least regrettable, therefore, that Central Television is now reconsidering its decision to site production at Birmingham rather than at Nottingham?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Broadcasting Act and the licence, granted to Central require the production of regional material, and that that material is produced within the region of the franchise. That is laid down in principle in the Act and in detail in each Channel 3 company's licence. That licence will be enforced.

Mr. Fisher: It is breaking the franchise agreement.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman says that Central is breaking the licence agreement. If that is true, the hon. Gentleman should report the matter to the ITC, which is responsible for enforcing the licence. If he can substantiate his charge, I have no doubt that the ITC will take appropriate action.

Tourism (North-West)

8. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to encourage inward tourism to Britain, with particular reference to north-west England.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department is providing a grant in aid to the British Tourist Authority of £33.2 million in the current financial year to promote the United Kingdom overseas as a tourist destination. It is an objective of the British Tourist Authority to encourage the distribution of tourists throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that the most important tourist attraction in the north-west is the world-famous Blackpool illuminations? Will he join me in condemning the irresponsible action of Blackpool's Labour council, which has proposed to cut three quarters of a mile of those illuminations in my constituency? I thank my right hon. Friend for agreeing to meet me and my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr.Elletson) to consider a more constructive way of addressing the problem than that so far suggested by the Labour council.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend makes his own point extremely effectively. Every Member of the House is fully aware of the importance to Blackpool of the illuminations and of their economic effects during the autumn of each year. I am sure that my hon. Friend will want to pursue that argument vigorously with his local Labour council.

Mr. Pike: Is the Secretary of State aware of the tremendous industrial heritage of Burnley and north-east Lancashire in the north-west, which attracts many people? Will he consider promoting that industrial heritage as part of the campaign to attract tourists to the country?

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that our industrial heritage is a tourist resource that could and should be more effectively exploited than it has been. I look forward to receiving his support in making economic sense of some of those proposals.

Mr. David Nicholson: As someone who was brought up in the north-west, I naturally share the interest the House has shown in Blackpool tower and tourism throughout that region, but does my right hon. Friend recognise that those who are involved in tourism in my constituency in the south-west are extremely anxious that the English regions should be able to compete on a level playing field with Scotland and Wales to attract tourists? Will he address that important issue?

Mr. Dorrell: I agree that every region of the country has an important interest in ensuring that its tourist industry is vigorously and successfully expanded. As I have told representatives of the industry, the key responsibility for doing so rests, of course, with the industry itself. It is an enormously successful industry, which accounts for roughly 7 per cent. of our national income, and it does not need a pension-taxpayer subsidy. What it needs is the clear and vigorous support of the Government, and that it will have.

Sports Facilities (Hampshire)

9. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the provision of sports facilities in Hampshire.

Mr. Sproat: Provision of sport facilities in Hampshire is in line with that for other counties in the region.

Mr. Denham: Is the Minister aware that planning permission has now been confirmed for a new community stadium at the northern edge of Southampton, which will not only provide a 25,000-seater stadium for the Saints football club, but an international-class athletics stadium, all-weather pitches and an indoor sports hall? As that project would make Southampton the sports capital of the south of England, does the Minister agree that everyone concerned in the project, especially the county council, should join in the efforts of the Saints football club and Southampton city council to complete it at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Sproat: I know that the hon. Gentleman has taken a keen interest in this matter for a long time. I was interested to see that the crowd at the Dell on Saturday was more than 15,000, which is jolly near capacity. That makes the point for moving to Stoneham. I hope that that important project will be successful and that all the complexities that have bedevilled it for so long will reach a conclusion so that Southampton football club can move to a new, decent ground with lots of athletics facilities for other sports for the wider community.

Mr. Pendry: On the subject of sports facilities, was it not a bit rich of our supposedly sports-loving Prime Minister at the Tory party conference to deplore those who are selling off playing fields—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but this question relates specifically to sports facilities in Hampshire. Will he relate his question to Hampshire?

Mr. Pendry:—including playing fields in Hampshire. Why did not the Prime Minister say instead that the Government would scrap the circular that allows councils to do just that?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point about Hampshire and the rest of the country. I am extremely keen to ensure that so many school sports pitches are not sold off in future. We shall look again at the 1980 regulation and the planning policy guidance note of September 1991, and see what we can do to improve matters.

Tourism (Deregulation)

10. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he plans to take with regard to deregulation in the tourist industry.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department has already taken up a number of regulatory issues of concern to the tourist industry and some progress has been made. We shall continue to seek the easing or removal of administrative and bureaucratic burdens that impair the industry's ability to compete effectively with other countries.

Mr. Sweeney: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the relief that that will bring to many of my constituents given that tourism is important in the Vale of Glamorgan, where we have several miles of lovely coastline, some beautiful scenery and a number of beaches? Barry island has been much improved in recent years with the help of a grant from the Welsh Office. When an opportunity arises, would my right hon. Friend care to visit the Vale of Glamorgan and experience for himself some of the excellent hotels and guest houses available at a reasonable price?

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his invitation. He makes an important point, because any industry that is subject to a regulatory burden is subject to costs being imposed on it by Parliament or the Government. It is essential that, before imposing those costs, we ask whether good value will be incurred as a result. That is the test that we shall apply to each regulation, existing and proposed, that affects the tourist industry.

Rugby Football

11. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to deal with discrimination against rugby league players by the Rugby Football Union.

Mr. Sproat: The regulations of independent and properly constituted governing bodies of sport are a matter for them, but I have met representatives from the Rugby Football Union, the Rugby Football League and the International Rugby Football Board to discuss the issue of discrimination, and I remain hopeful that there can be positive dialogue between the two codes for the benefit of the sport as a whole.

Mr. Hinchliffe: In the course of the Minister's welcome efforts to deal with that matter, has he had an opportunity to study the comments of Mr. Mike Catt, the England rugby union international who is currently under investigation for receiving payments for playing rugby union? He is reported as having said this weekend that, if he is banned, everybody else will have to be banned as well. Given that the only real difference now between top league and union players is the fact that league players pay national insurance and income tax, is it not about time that the rugby union authorities recognised the utter nonsense of its proposed three-year ban on league players who choose to return to union?

Mr. Sproat: I had the great pleasure and privilege this weekend of speaking to Mr. Mike Catt and the rest of the Bath team—and what a team, what a club! I agree that we have a serious problem with professionalism and amateurism. I pay tribute to the work that the hon. Gentleman did on the Sports Discrimination Bill, which concentrated minds on the matter and as a consequence of which we are making progress. I also saw Mr. Vernon Pugh, who said that we must all be "reasonable" about this matter. I hope that he will be. I am sure that the authorities will be and that we shall make real progress—it is to be hoped, next year, which is the centenary year of rugby league.

Mr. Waller: Has my hon. Friend noticed recent legal developments in Australia which have evidently caused the International Rugby Football Board to consider a change in its position relating to those players who have formerly played rugby league? As the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) said, among the best-paid sportsmen in this country are some top rugby union players. Might it not be reasonable to conclude that a ban on former rugby league players would be a restraint on trade?

Mr. Sproat: I have studied the cases of Brett Papworth, Tony Melrose, and Brett Iti in New Zealand, and it would be interesting if those were to provide precedents for what happened in our courts.

As for restraint of trade, it is true that the Rugby Football Union allows rugby union players to make money—not directly from rugby, although obviously that money is made because they play rugby. Although I am no lawyer, I should have thought that, prima facie, the court would want to take that into account if someone such as Mr. Stuart Evans wanted to take his case to court.

Mr. Bermingham: But does the Minister agree that discrimination between the two codes extends not only to payment but to investment? Perhaps he and his Department will bear in mind the needs of rugby league, and especially the effects on rugby league grounds of the Taylor committee's findings, which now restrict the sport.

Mr. Sproat: I agree, and there is a basic unfairness about the central point that trouble at football grounds is mainly caused at soccer matches and soccer receives all the help, whereas no trouble is caused at rugby league matches and rugby league receives little help. I want to find a way of sorting that out.

Encouragement of Sport

12. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to ensure that sport plays a regular part in the life of every (a) child and (b) adult.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage supports the provision of sporting opportunities for both children and adults through the grant in aid that we give the Sports Council and the funding that we provide for Sportsmatch. The Department has also been responsible for the establishment of the national lottery, which will provide a significant new source of funding for sport.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although it is most valuable for children to play games outside the school curriculum, in clubs where adults also play and enjoy them, it is extremely valuable and important for children to play games at school, in the school ethos, with all the civilising influences that that has? Does he agree that there is something in team games for every child at school, including the rabbit?

Mr. Sproat: Yes. Nothing has been said in the House this afternoon with which I agree more. It is extremely important that team games be taught, not only through governing bodies and outside sports clubs—which is vital—but in the ethos of schools. Team games are just as beneficial for rabbits as they are for anyone else.

Mr. Miller: Will the Minister discuss with his colleagues in the Department of the Environment the gap of provision that occurs in the context of medium-sized towns such as Ellesmere Port, where, because money has tended to drift towards the larger centres in and around the north-west, there are enormous gaps? The Minister can tackle that in consultation with his friends in the Department of the Environment and the Department for Education. It is about time that they did something about it.

Mr. Sproat: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. At this moment, we are having extremely helpful talks with the Department for Education, which are advancing steadily. We also have a register of sports pitches for the first time—we got it at the end of last year. I would be glad to have a talk with the hon. Gentleman to discuss any detailed proposals that he has in mind.

Mr. Haselhurst: In emphasising the importance of sport in school, will my hon. Friend accept that a sport such as cricket is especially difficult for many schools to handle out of hours because of transport problems and so on, and that it is therefore important, if that sport is to receive the boost that it deserves, that support be given to the voluntary clubs that are willing to play a part in coaching and encouraging youngsters to develop and extend their love of what is, after all, one of our most traditional games?

Mr. Sproat: What my hon. Friend says is absolutely true. I have asked the Sports Council specifically to make recommendations as to how sports clubs can help young people—how they can link with schools more to achieve the ends that my right hon. Friend and I wish to be achieved with regard to cricket and other team games.

National Lottery

17. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which bodies will be responsible for distributing national lottery funds to organisations seeking to promote and assist children's play in England and Wales.

Mr. Sproat: It is for all the national lottery distributing bodies operating in England and Wales to consider the eligibility of projects submitted by children's play organisations in the light of the requirements of the

National Lottery Etc. Act 1993 and the policy directions issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under that Act.

Mr. Ainger: Does the Minister accept that, now that we are a fortnight away from the introduction of the national lottery, it is unacceptable that organisations supporting children's play still do not know which distribution body will deal with play? Is it not outrageous that, literally 14 days away from the start of the national lottery, those many organisations throughout England and Wales do not know to whom they should apply?

Mr. Sproat: No, it is not outrageous. In practice, applications will be received from 4 January so there is plenty of time. The overwhelming majority of the 11 distributing bodies will issue their guidelines this month. The matter will then be clear. To be fair, a difference of opinion exists as to whether children's play comes under the Sports Council but it certainly comes under charities and the Millennium Commission. We shall sort out the Sports Council point in good time.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is gratifying that hon. Members on both sides of the House—even the Liberal Democrats—are keen to see money from the lotteries that have been set up by the Government being spent? Will he take the warmest congratulations of the House on pushing forward with that policy? All hon. Members look forward to having the opportunity on 14 November to buy a ticket and to donate to a charity at the same time.

Mr. Sproat: Yes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Matrix Churchill

30. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received in the last month about the impact of decisions he has made on the former workers at Matrix Churchill.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I have received only one representation on this matter. It arrived from the hon. Gentleman this morning.

Mr. O'Brien: I just wanted to be sure that the Attorney-General did not forget, as national newspapers seem to have forgotten, that hundreds of Matrix Churchill workers lost their jobs as a result of his decision to prosecute the directors. If he has any sympathy for those workers, many of whom are my constituents, will he say that, if the Government are criticised in the Scott report, he and the Government will take steps to ensure that those workers and their families are compensated for the loss of their livelihood which arose as a result of their decision?

The Attorney-General: Without being unsympathetic to the workers, I should like to say that the hon. Gentleman should not start rewriting history. First, he knows that Customs and Excise is an independent prosecuting authority and took its decision in that capacity some 18 months before I became significantly involved. Secondly, he has understandably already ventilated his views on the matter—in a debate on 14 April this year involving his hon. Friends, my hon. Friends and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm and make it clear to the House that the decision to prosecute in this case was taken early in 1991 before any reference was made to my right hon. and learned Friend? Will he also confirm that, in any case, he would not normally be involved in such a decision to prosecute, given that Customs and Excise is an independent prosecuting authority?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right on both of those two points. There was an 18-month gap between the two. Any future questions on this matter must await the views of the inquiry and Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Asil Nadir

31. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about progress in the case of Mr. Asil Nadir.

The Attorney General: Mr. Asil Nadir remains outside the jurisdiction in circumstances which make it impossible at present to execute the warrant for his arrest or to seek his extradition. Interpol has been notified of the warrant.

Mr. Spellar: Is it not about time that the Government started to progress with a little bit more enthusiasm and energy? Will the Minister accept that, if they do not, there will be considerable suspicion not just in the House but in the rest of the country that they do not want Mr. Nadir back because they are afraid that he will do the same to them as Mr. Al Fayed did?

The Attorney-General: The Serious Fraud Office and I would welcome Mr. Asil Nadir's return at once to face trial on the charges on which he stands charged. The SFO is ready to prosecute him as soon as he returns.

Mrs. Angela Knight: While investigating the case of Mr. Asil Nadir, will my right hon. and learned Friend also ask the SFO to investigate the case of the editor of *The Guardian* who has used a stolen letter heading—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must resume her seat. Her comments do not relate to this question.

Mr. John Morris: Will the Attorney-General assure the House that—unlike what happens with many other wealthy defendants—there will be no question of legal aid being granted in this case? As the Lord Chancellor is investigating the whole question of criminal legal aid being granted to people with considerable resources, when the right hon. and learned Gentleman is consulted on this matter, will he bear in mind the criteria of fairness and efficiency in the courts on the one hand and the lack of civil legal aid for many of our constituents on the other?

The Attorney-General: The right hon. and learned Gentleman—

Mr. Peter Bottomley: That is disgraceful; biased.

Madam Speaker: Order. If there is a point of order for me, perhaps the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) will raise it at the end of questions. I did not quite hear what he said, and I should like to hear it clearly then. *[Interruption.]* Order. I shall hear the point of order at the end of questions.

The Attorney-General: As the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) knows, although legal aid questions used to be answered by Law Officers, they are now a matter for the Lord Chancellor. I have no doubt that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will want to raise his question on a more appropriate occasion.

War Crimes Act 1991

32. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the operation of the War Crimes Act 1991.

The Attorney-General: Police investigations in seven cases have now reached the stage where they have been referred to the Crown Prosecution Service to consider whether or not to seek my consent to prosecute. Investigations continue in these and other cases.

Mr. Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that those prosecutions will be brought speedily while the witnesses are still alive and that the war crimes unit will be retained until decisions are made in each of these cases?

The Attorney-General: As my hon. Friend realises, these cases are extremely complex, but they are being pressed forward as fast as is reasonably possible. I shall certainly bear my hon. Friend's important points in mind.

Mr. Janner: Will the Attorney-General recognise that what the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) has said is right? The longer time goes on, the more difficult it becomes to prosecute people even if there is sufficient evidence of personal involvement in mass murder. What sort of time scale does the right hon. and learned Gentleman have in mind for these cases to come to him?

The Attorney-General: Of course I recognise what the hon. and learned Gentleman says. Not only did these events happen a very long time ago but those involved are necessarily quite old—and that does require that the cases be pushed forward as fast as they properly can be. That is how they will be pushed forward.

Scott Inquiry

33. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Attorney-General what requests his Department has received to give further evidence to the Scott inquiry.

The Attorney-General: Since 12 May 1994 when I last answered a question on this subject, three officials in the Departments for which I have ministerial responsibility have been asked to give some further evidence in writing.

Mrs. Roche: In consideration of that further evidence, does the Attorney-General now agree with Lord Justice Scott that it is unthinkable that public interest immunity was used to cover documents in the Matrix Churchill affair? Will he answer my question with a straight yes or no?

The Attorney-General: The answer to the hon. Lady's first question is a matter for Lord Justice Scott, so I shall not answer that one. And I do not believe that she correctly quotes him in any event.

Crown Prosecution Service

34. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Attorney-General how many offices of the Crown Prosecution Service he has visited in the last six months; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney General: Since April I have visited four offices of the Crown Prosecution Service—in Maidstone, Newcastle, Chippenham, and Camberwell.

Mr. Waterson: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Is he wholly satisfied that the relationship between the police and the Crown Prosecution Service is all that it might be, particularly when it comes to preparing cases for prosecution?

The Attorney-General: A good and close working relationship between the police and the CPS is essential if cases are to be brought speedily and efficiently to trial. I know from my visits that in most parts of the country that is well realised. The challenge is to bring the standard in both services up to the level of the best in both services. That done, we shall be doing very well indeed.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Attorney-General agree that in the 13 areas in which the CPS and its offices are contained there is a wide divergence of prosecuting policy? Quality control, for want of a better word, is not always the same in one area as in another. Would it not be a good idea to take steps to strengthen that side of the service, giving staff more input, so that people prosecuted in Newcastle and Exeter are prosecuted on the same basis?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is thinking along the same lines as the Crown Prosecution Service in the sense that it and the police are working to establish high standards of charging practice, to cut paperwork and bureaucracy to that which is strictly necessary for the task, and to see that high standards of liaison exist between the police and the CPS and vice versa. They are making significant progress in those directions.

Lenient Sentences

35. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the recent extension of his powers to refer cases to the Court of Appeal as unduly lenient sentences.

The Attorney-General: My power to apply for leave to refer a sentence which I consider to be unduly lenient was extended in March 1994 to cover offences of indecent assault, making threats to kill, and cruelty or neglect of a child.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has now announced the Government's intention further to extend my power to include sentences imposed in cases of serious or complex fraud.

Mr. Hawkins: I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's answer. Can he confirm that, so far, sentences have been increased in 83 per cent. of cases referred to the Court of Appeal under the measure? The Labour party voted against that measure in 1991. So much for being "tough on crime". Will my right hon. and learned Friend further confirm that one of the sentences that it may be possible to refer is that for the crime of forgery? Will he look carefully at forgery offences, even those that are committed by editors of national newspapers?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right to say that the Court of Appeal has increased sentences in about 83 per cent. of those cases for which it has given me leave to refer to it. It is also worth pointing out that the legislation has produced a significant increase in sentences in areas where it bites. That is valuable, and should be recognised by all hon. Members irrespective of whether they voted for the legislation.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh

39. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of British Government aid to Bangladesh.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): I estimate that Britain provided more than £55 million in aid to Bangladesh in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware that, through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, an all-party delegation went to Bangladesh in September and looked directly at the way in which that country is tackling some enormous problems? As a member of that delegation, I impress upon the Minister the crucial role of British aid for many of the projects that are helping Bangladesh to recover from some extreme difficulties. Will he look specifically at the impact of British overseas aid on Bangladesh and, in particular, will he defend our contribution in the current budgetary process?

Mr. Baldry: I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a close interest in Bangladesh, which is the recipient of Britain's second largest, bilateral aid programme. That shows that we are focusing our efforts where they are most needed—on the poorest. That is why nearly 80 per cent. of our bilateral aid goes to the poorest countries.

In Bangladesh we are helping to tackle the root causes of poverty by investment through Government and non-governmental organisations and through help with family planning, health, education and rural credits. We also support infrastructure projects such as the Dhaka power project and electricity distribution. That has meant that new workshops and factories for textiles and metalworking have sprung up to take advantage of newly available power supplies. We estimate that nearly 250,000 jobs are being created in that way, primarily for women. I fully support what the hon. Gentleman says about the quality of our aid programme for Bangladesh, which we shall certainly continue to support.

Miss Emma Nicholson: What proportion of the aid for Bangladesh is spent on preventive health care? I am thinking particularly of the outcome in Bangladesh, with reference to British aid, of the recent world population conference in Cairo.

Mr. Baldry: I cannot give my hon. Friend exact figures, but clearly the international conference in Cairo on population and development was a notable success. The conference agreed strategies for better reproductive health, which include access to family planning facilities. Over the next two years, we intend to approve 50 new health and population projects and commit more than £100 million to help to ensure that mothers are better able to have children by choice and not by chance. Some of those projects will certainly be in Bangladesh.

Rwanda

40. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to the new Government of Rwanda to help with rehabilitation and reconstruction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Since April, we have provided £60 million of emergency aid. Of that, almost £2 million has gone to non-governmental organisations involved in programmes for immediate rehabilitation in Rwanda, mainly concerned with seeds and tool provision, the restarting of health care services and tracing and registration of unaccompanied children.

Mr. Corbett: That help is welcome, but can the hon. Gentleman confirm that the Government plan to cut bilateral aid to Africa by £60 million over the next three years? Does he understand that money invested now in long-term development will save lives and money in future emergencies?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman heard me say that we have just committed £60 million to Rwanda alone. British aid has grown significantly during recent years—by 10 per cent. in real terms since 1987-88. This year's budget is almost £50 million higher than last year's. Indeed, in 1993 the United Kingdom was one of only seven countries in the world to increase its aid in real terms. We are the sixth largest aid donor worldwide.

The size of our programmes is by no means the only factor; quality is also important, and our programmes are practical and effective. The quality of our aid programme is recognised worldwide, and it is one of which we can all be proud.

Mr. Waterson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the speed of reaction and the generosity of this country in responding to tragedies such as that in Rwanda is second to none? Is it not positively churlish to suggest otherwise?

Mr. Baldry: I hope that our achievements in Rwanda speak for themselves. The United Kingdom can be proud of what we have been doing in Rwanda. We have provided considerable support to a number of voluntary and non-governmental organisations; ODA cargo-handling teams have been working in the region since the start of the crisis; and since mid-July the ODA has organised more than 30 relief flights from the United Kingdom to Goma, containing vehicles, blankets, high-energy biscuits, water tankers, plastic sheeting and specialist staff. The water tanker team daily provides a third of a million litres of clean, life-saving water to refugee camps around Goma. We have contributed £60 million to relief aid in Rwanda. Britain is playing her part in the reconstruction of Rwanda and is helping to save lives there.

Miss Lestor: The hon. Gentleman referred to the need for water. Is he aware of the report in the *Daily Mirror* today, which has been confirmed by Oxfam, to the effect that a fleet of water tanker lorries intended for Rwanda and already painted in the United Nations white colours is rotting away on a disused airfield in Diss in Norfolk? The Minister must be aware, as the whole country is aware, that in Rwanda in July, 6,000 people a day were dying from lack of clean water. The use of those water tankers could have saved the lives of people who died from cholera and waterborne diseases.

Will the hon. Gentleman authorise an immediate investigation into the truth of the report and the role that the UN played—or failed to play—in getting that water to Rwanda?

Mr. Baldry: I welcome the hon. Lady to her new post on the Opposition Front Bench. We are investigating the allegations, as we want all humanitarian actions to be as effective as possible. However, she may have been misled. I have a copy of a fax showing that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees told the *Daily Mirror* on 28 October—some three days ago—that the UNHCR owns no water tankers in Britain, is not negotiating to purchase any in Britain and has never been in any negotiations to purchase any in Britain. My understanding is that the water tankers to which the hon. Lady referred were bought by an American firm from the Soviet army some time ago. That firm has never been in negotiations to sell them to the UN.

On the question of action by the ODA, we made immediate arrangements to transfer water tankers from Bosnia to Rwanda to meet the needs there. As I said earlier, water tankers from the United Kingdom are daily providing a third of a million litres of clean water to refugee camps around Goma.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not the quantity of aid to Rwanda that is significant but its quality? In any case, the British overseas aid programme is one of the finest of its kind in the world.

Mr. Baldry: I entirely agree. All independent assessments of overseas aid programmes have concluded that United Kingdom programmes are of high quality, and we are determined that they will remain so.

42. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support is being given to help non-governmental work in Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: Since 6 April we have specifically provided £15.5 million to non-governmental organisations implementing emergency relief programmes to displaced and refugee Rwandans.

Mr. Carrington: Does my hon. Friend agree that NGOs are providing effective assistance in Rwanda and that their work is the best way of getting assistance to the people in that unhappy country?

Mr. Baldry: I entirely agree, which is why we have been providing considerable support to NGOs for CARE's emergency relief operations in south-west Rwanda, and have part-funded Oxfam's water provision programme in Goma and the Save the Children Fund's health and child-tracing programme in north-west and south-west Rwanda. Often, NGOs can get to areas that recognised Governments or Government bodies cannot reach, which is why we have increasingly been working with NGOs in Rwanda and elsewhere in the world.

House of Commons Writing Paper

Madam Speaker: I have a brief statement to make following accounts of the misuse of House of Commons writing paper by *The Guardian* newspaper.

The House makes facilities available to the press so that our proceedings may be reported, not so that the name of the House can be used to give false authority to a newspaper's own activities. I take this matter very seriously indeed. I have asked the Serjeant at Arms to investigate all the circumstances, so that I can decide what further action it would be appropriate to take. I shall not have anything further to say until I receive the Serjeant's report.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Legal aid is a matter for the Lord Chancellor's Department. On Question 31, there were three supplementaries. The first might be judged a smear. You, Madam Speaker, ruled the second out of order. The third was a lengthy question from the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who asked about civil legal aid. As the question went on, I accused him of bias and of moving away from the point.

If that was interpreted as a comment on your ruling, Madam Speaker, I apologise unreservedly. However, it is very exasperating when a right hon. Member is allowed to ramble on, away from the point, so that right hon. and hon. Members on this side of the House are held up when they try to deal with points relating to your own statement. Nevertheless, I apologise if my remarks came out wrong.

Madam Speaker: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Of course I am always willing to learn, but I do not think that I need any lessons from the hon. Gentleman. However, if he thinks that there are lessons that I can learn from that exchange, perhaps he will use the Order Paper to put down a substantive question.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Further to that point of order—

Madam Speaker: Order. I understood the hon. Gentleman, and I certainly accept his apology, if he has apologised to me. That matter is ended now, and I would like it to finish right away. I have made my point.

Mr. Bottomley: In my point of order, Madam Speaker, I plainly explained what was in my mind, and I unreservedly withdrew my remarks if they were interpreted as criticism of the Chair. If I may respectfully say so, the remarks that followed were not called for.

Hon. Members: Order!

Madam Speaker: Order. All through Question Time, I have my ears riveted to what is being said, but I can also hear what goes on in other parts of the Chamber. I think that I heard clearly, but I accept the right hon. Gentleman's apology, which I believe is what it was, if there was any misunderstanding. I think that the matter should be left there.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received any request for a statement to be made in respect of the proposed acquisition of—Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. in my constituency by GEC or British Aerospace? Six thousand jobs in my constituency are completely dependent on VSEL, and my constituents would welcome the opportunity for the Government to clear up any confusion about whether they would block either of those bids for VSEL.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it not extraordinary, when many thousands of jobs are at stake, not only at Barrow-in-Furness but on the Clyde at Yarrow, when there are hugely important matters of national interest in warship building, and the taxpayer's interest facing the prospect of a single provider and a single purchaser—

Madam Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must come to his point of order for me. We are not in debate.

Dr. Cunningham: Is it not extraordinary that the House is denied the opportunity to question Ministers? Will the Leader of the House assure us that a statement will be made to the House of the Government's intentions? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I can respond to those points of order. I should prefer that they had been put to me correctly. I have not received any request by a Minister to make a statement on these matters.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would it be in order for the Committee of Privileges to start a separate inquiry, in addition to your own, into the behaviour of the editor of *The Guardian* so that—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

As I think the hon. Gentleman and the House knows—if they do not, let me make it quite clear—I will always look at matters of privilege, which the hon. Gentleman is now raising, but they must be put to me in writing. I hope that any other hon. Member who wishes to raise such matters will first put them to me in writing, so that I may look at them and respond properly.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you aware that Westminster underground station has been closed for most of today, first because a scaffolding pole fell on to the platform, and now because it has flooded? Obviously that is to the inconvenience of hon. Members and others, but there is also concern about the amount of work that is being undertaken in that area.

We heard over the weekend that Big Ben, apparently, was trying to relocate itself—though somewhat slowly—from the building, and, of course, we know that Members of Parliament are very capable of digging themselves into holes, but I would not like us to fall into a hole dug by someone else. Can you call for a report from London Underground and those responsible for the construction that is going on, so that we know that the highest safety standards are being adhered to and that corners are not being cut on the grounds of expense?

Madam Speaker: I have been informed that, shortly after 9 am, a metal object fell through a glass roof on to the walkway leading to Westminster station. The station was closed and work on the Westminster station section of the Jubilee line extension suspended while a full inquiry was carried out. I understand that London Underground is working to reopen the subway under Bridge street and Westminster station at the earliest opportunity.

So far as Big Ben is concerned, no excavations have begun. If there are any, we shall be monitoring them, and let me tell the House that, as I am the one person who lives under Big Ben, I shall be the first to see that everything is in order in that area.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Further to your statement, Madam Speaker. In addition to his unsavoury

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relationship with Mr. Al Fayed, which I understand goes back rather further than the House or the public have been led to believe, the editor of *The Guardian*, who has misappropriated paper from the House, has forged a letter purporting to come from a Minister of the Crown and has sought to impersonate a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Defence. I have written to you, Madam Speaker, to ask that Mr. Preston be brought to the Bar of this House. Will you please arrange for that to be done?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman had looked at his mail, he would have seen that I have replied to him. I signed the letter before I came to the House this very afternoon. I will take no further points of order on this matter. I made it quite clear to the House, in a very carefully worded statement, what I was about to do, and I shall not have anything further to say until I receive the Sergeant's report. That is the way in which we proceed in this House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When the debate takes place later today, there will be a need for some hon. Members to declare their interests, as usual when debates take place in the House. In view of the developments over the weekend, when it was reported that 51 Tory Members of Parliament have benefited by having a tax write-off because they invested in the Lloyd's gambling den and lost money, will they have to declare that interest? Will they have to declare their interests in the debate this afternoon?

Madam Speaker: All hon. Members are fully aware of their obligation to the House. If there is any interest, they must declare it at the beginning of their speech.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The House will rise for a short period in four days' time. Can you give us an undertaking that the Serjeant-at-Arms will report to you before it rises, so that these serious matters can be examined before we leave?

Madam Speaker: As the House knows, the rising of the House is not in my hands. I am working every minute of the day on the issue.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received any request from a Minister in either the Scottish Office or the Department of Transport to make a statement to the House about the grounding this morning of yet another factory vessel in my constituency? I ask particularly in the light of Lord Donaldson's recommendation in May that, before the onset of winter, the United Kingdom's Fisheries Departments should state that they would not entertain an application for a transshipment licence unless the master showed adequate insurance and a minimum of safety standards.

Madam Speaker: I have not been told that a Minister is seeking to make any statement on the issue raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You made it perfectly clear that you were already examining the question of Mr. Preston. May I ask you whether it is within the competence of the Select Committee that has already been established to include an inquiry into that case in its terms of reference, without a further reference of a complaint from the House?

Madam Speaker: The answer to that is a clear no. As I tried to explain earlier—perhaps I did not make myself clear—if there are references of that nature, they must come to me in writing for examination in the first instance.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Further to your statement, should not the editor of *The Guardian* have asked you whether he could come here—

Madam Speaker: Order. The House is now carrying things too far. I have made a carefully worded statement, but I believe that hon. Members came here fully determined to put a point of order irrespective of whether I had made a statement. I ask them to respect the proceedings of the House, and to look very carefully at the statement that I have just made. I think that we should now make some progress on the important debate that is to follow.

BILL PRESENTED

PRIVATE SECURITY (REGISTRATION)

Mr. Bruce George, supported by Mr. David Atkinson, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Mr. Menzies Campbell, Mr. Don Dixon, Dr. John Gilbert, Mr. Keith Hill, Mr. John Home Robertson, Ms Glenda Jackson, Mr. Michael Shersby, Sir James Spicer and Sir Keith Speed. presented a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Private Security Registration Council and to give that Council powers and functions for the regulation of firms offering private security services and of persons employed as private security agents; to require the registration of such firms and persons with the Council; to impose requirements upon such firms and persons; to make provision for training of persons employed as private security agents; to make provision for compensation to be paid in respect of inadequately insured death or injury arising from the activities of such firms and persons; to define offences and specify penalties; and for connected purposes: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Thursday 3 November, and to be printed. [Bill 170.]

Opposition Day

[20TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Committee of Privileges (Evidence)

Madam Speaker: Before we embark on the motion before us, let me say that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. I have not been able to select the manuscript amendment submitted to me by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), but, if he catches my eye during the debate, he will be able to deploy his arguments as he would have done had the amendment been selected.

Let me make a plea for short speeches. This is only a half-day debate. I also remind the House of the terms of the motion, which are confined to a single issue.

3.42 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to move,

That, in the opinion of this House, the Committee of Privileges should exercise its powers under Standing Order No. 108 so as to secure that when examining witnesses it sits in public, except when for clear and compelling reasons, especially for reasons of natural justice, it is more expedient that press and public should be excluded and all or part of the evidence heard in private.

I welcome your comments relating to *The Guardian*, Madam Speaker. While I accept that that investigation has clearly been in the public interest, the use of House of Commons writing paper on false authority is deplorable and must be fully investigated.

This debate is not about the rights and wrongs of individual Members or individual cases; that has been given an extensive airing in the media. Nor do we seek party political gain from our deliberations. Far from it: it is clear from recent events that all of us—all hon. Members—are to some extent on trial. People should remind themselves that the television records such events, and the country at large will be watching to see how we handle the matter under discussion.

This debate is about the public's faith in Parliament. It is about whether the public will be satisfied by private inquiries into very public allegations of how the actions of hon. Members should be held to public account. It would be absolutely absurd to continue to read in the press, hear on the radio, see on the television and hear in this Chamber allegations about Members of Parliament, but not be allowed to see, hear or read about the examination of those allegations in the Privileges Committee.

Today's debate is about whether the public trust Members of Parliament to investigate other Members of Parliament, free from party political considerations. I fear that they do not, in the current climate. We should not fear open investigation and debate, as it is in the interests of all of us that malpractice is rooted out and guidelines are devised which are easily understood by both us and the public.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): The right hon. Gentleman said that he would like the inquiry to take place in public. Will he publicly declare how much of the £800 fine that was imposed on three Labour Members by Customs and Excise for bringing in cameras which they did not declare was met by him, and how much was met by his two colleagues?

Mr. Prescott: It is wrong to say that I smuggled in a camera. I paid the duty on the camera as required, and declared it when I went through the channel.

I am trying to make the point that this debate should be about serious matters. You, Madam Speaker, have made it clear that matters of individuals will not be raised in the debate. We are dealing with the issue of the House—*[Interruption.]* That is what you said, Madam Speaker, and I respect that. There are no allegations whatever about individual Members in my contribution. Indeed, that is your ruling, Madam Speaker, in this debate.

I shall address directly the point about the House dealing with individual complaints made against hon. Members. That is the point I make. In calling for the Privileges Committee to hear evidence in public, we are supporting a move that we believe is in Parliament's long-term interests. We must restore the esteem of Parliament, and this is the first step. It is not, as has been suggested, an invitation to peddle any old allegation in public.

Madam Speaker, you must decide whether there is a prima facie complaint to answer, and the House has leave to debate a motion to refer a matter to the Privileges Committee. You have already decided that there may be a case to answer. That is why you referred the current matters to the Privileges Committee on 12 July.

More recent allegations have led to ministerial resignations, so the Prime Minister is wrong to call them simply matters of "tittle-tattle". This is a serious issue of genuine public concern, which requires public examination, and I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree with that.

This debate is about openness and standards in public life. It is about the nature and quality of our democracy. It is about whether we have procedures that will enable us to regulate ourselves. That is the issue that we are discussing today—and not for the first time. But let us be clear: the days when we could take those procedures for granted are over.

The Privileges Committee is a major Committee of the House, which is convened to investigate serious matters of breaches of privilege. But it is the last major Select Committee to continue to sit in private. The House is aware that the members of the Committee are divided over whether it is proper to sit in private or in public to conduct the inquiry that was established on 12 July. The Committee was divided and voted to remain in private on the casting vote of the Chairman.

I have been told by the Clerk to the Committee that I am not entitled to know that the Committee was even divided, and I am not entitled to raise the matter in the Chamber. However, we are aware that the Leader of the House, the Chairman of the Committee, made a statement about the issue when he left the last meeting of the Committee, so it is proper for the House to discuss the issue. It is already a matter of public knowledge, having been reported in the press.

Society, democracy and Parliament are evolving systems. As society has changed, attitudes have changed. So must Parliament change, and it is changing. When the electorate demand greater accountability for our actions

[Mr. Prescott]

and intentions, we must be more accountable to them. The matter of the abuse of privilege is a parliamentary matter, and it is proper for Parliament to deal with it.

That is why the Opposition have in the past few moments made the decision that Opposition Members will be allowed a free vote at the conclusion of the debate as our contribution to removing the party politics from this issue. I hope that the Leader of the House will accept that as a serious contribution to the House making decisions about Members of the House of Commons.

Will the Leader of the House likewise remove the party Whip from Conservative Members, and allow them the freedom to vote according to their conscience? I hope that he will give us his response.

The matters that have led my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to table today's motion are of major public concern, and the public demand the right to hear the investigation of those matters. Concern has been growing for some time. It is concern about the growth of quangos, the influence of lobbyists, the practice of former Ministers joining the boards of companies they have privatised, and the recent allegations about Members of Parliament. Their proliferation has created a culture that has undermined public standards and the public's faith in those standards.

Recent events show the seriousness of the matters. Two Members of this House are being investigated by the Committee of Privileges. Two Ministers have resigned. There is controversy about other Ministers. There is talk of blackmail and misleading information. All that has undoubtedly increased public concern about standards and the accountability of the House. It is not a simple party political matter.

Even *The Daily Mail*, in its editorial on Friday, said:

> "What is at stake here is the reputation, not just of Government, but of our whole Parliamentary process. John Major must change his mind. And let the Privileges Committee work in public."

If I cannot convince Conservative Members on whether the issue is about party politics or not, I assume that the *Daily Mail* editorial might persuade them that there is a proper issue to be considered in the question whether the Committee should conduct its work in public.

In response to public concern and pressure from the Opposition, the Prime Minister has set up the Nolan inquiry into public standards. I welcome it, but it does not go far enough. It does not cover everything that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition requested last week. It does not cover the specific allegations that have been made, and it will leave many questions unanswered.

The Government's handling of the whole affair has been questionable. The Prime Minister has dithered, been made to look foolish, been buffeted by events. Finally, he lost his temper in public. He has publicly supported Ministers—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Prescott: But he is the Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker: Order. I appear to have a point of order.

Mr. Brazier: I should be most grateful for your ruling on whether the alleged conduct of the Government or, indeed, the Prime Minister is relevant to the motion before the House.

Madam Speaker: As I said earlier, the motion before the House is a very narrow one, but references of that nature are reasonably in order. I am sure that hon. Members will make similar references throughout the debate.

Mr. Prescott: Thank you for that ruling, Madam Speaker. The way in which the House deals with these matters—whether it is the Prime Minister or the Committees of the House—is an important issue. The Prime Minister has made several statements to the House on that very issue, and it is obviously right to refer to him.

Mind you, if I was a Minister in the Prime Minister's Government I would be a little uneasy— [HON. MEMBERS: "No chance."] No chance may be the case for those Ministers in whom the Prime Minister said he had full confidence, but whom he got rid of within 48 hours. If the right hon. Gentleman says that he has confidence in you, it is the surest sign that you should be clearing your desk.

It is also not sufficient for the Prime Minister to instruct the Cabinet Secretary to prepare a report. Anyone reading about recent events cannot be satisfied that the Prime Minister has not compromised the Cabinet Secretary. It is clear from statements to the House that Sir Robin Butler's report is insufficient and incomplete.

Sir Robin did not have all the information available to him at the appropriate time. In the absence of evidence, he was forced to accept the word of those he interviewed, and he was unable to interview the chief complainant, Mr. Al Fayed. He has already given the House a report, to which the Prime Minister referred. Some people may also feel that Sir Robin's meeting with the Conservative party Whips may well have compromised his role as the head of the civil service.

The real question today is whether Parliament can regulate the actions of its Members. The issue under debate is whether the Select Committee on Privileges should meet in public.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): It may surprise the right hon. Gentleman to know that I have taken some heart from his argument, apart from the party political rhetoric. Could he develop his argument about why the House should break with precedent in this matter? Is the free vote that he announced genuine, in the sense that it means that there has been some difference of opinion within the Opposition parties as to whether there should be such a vote?

Mr. Prescott: The issue is very important, and events have developed, even over the weekend, sufficiently for us to say that we would like to contribute to the House making an honest decision about whether the Committee should meet in public. It is clear that things have developed quickly. I will come to the matter of precedent, as it is important. Other matters of accountability clearly involve the Prime Minister, and I dealt with those.

I think that the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) will accept that the Cabinet Secretary was asked to undertake investigations and to report back to the Prime Minister. There has been considerable coverage of that matter in the press and a report to the Prime Minister, which was published in this place last week. Events have moved on since that report, which is why I referred to the different pieces of information and dates.

You have ruled, Madam Speaker, that we cannot refer to all those matters, and I shall not do so, but I want to deal with the accountability of the House and of Members to it. The real question is whether Parliament regulates the actions of its Members.

The issue under debate is whether the Privileges Committee should meet in public. It is not a question of whether it can do so, as we all know that it can. Standing Order No. 108 makes it clear that a Select Committee

> "shall have power, if it so orders, to admit strangers during the examination of witnesses."

The question is whether it should, and that is the question posed in the motion.

It is up to the Privileges Committee to take that decision, but as it is deadlocked, the House can guide it. There is much talk of precedent, but one precedent can give way to another. The evolution of the procedures of the House has required precedents to be set on several occasions. The admission of the press to report our proceedings in 1803, the admission of television and radio to provide live coverage of events in this Chamber and in Committees, and the opening of other Committees to public scrutiny, were all unprecedented and controversial decisions at the time. All those decisions made the House more accountable to the public, and they were all to the benefit of greater democracy.

It is true that Privileges Committees have never sat in public before, but they can do so, as I have shown. The motion merely asks the Committee to exercise its powers under Standing Order No. 108 and to sit in public now, except when there are clear and compelling reasons why it should not do so.

Last week, the Prime Minister said:

> "It is necessary to have an investigation in depth, without unsubstantiated allegations subsequently being made. That is a matter of natural justice."

It is right that there are checks and balances to prevent unwarranted slurs being made, but those exist in the procedures of this House.

Let me repeat what I said earlie: if a complaint is made by a Member of this House, Madam Speaker will decide whether there is a prima facie complaint before she will allow a motion of referral to the Privileges Committee. The motion of referral can be debated in this House, as it was some weeks ago on a recent referral, and the Committee can decide whether it wishes to hear evidence in public or in private.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): If we assume for the moment that we accept the right hon. Gentleman's proposal that the Committee hears evidence in public and then allows itself to vote to go private on certain issues, will he now give an undertaking that, if the Committee voted to go private, the Opposition members of the Committee will not walk out and make a public spectacle of it?

Mr. Prescott: The House is generally agreed that members of the Privileges Committee will make their own decisions on the matter. The issue here is that we have divided along party political lines. All the Opposition parties have opposed the Government Members on that Committee. The issue—if I am allowed to refer to it—is that a motion which would have allowed the Committee the possibility of sitting in public and taking certain evidence in private was not put before the Committee, and the Committee now finds itself deeply divided along party political lines.

I should have thought that it was in the interests of the House not to have further debates along party political lines, and for the House to have this debate. We are trying on this occasion—*[Interruption.]* I have made it clear that we are not whipping the Labour members of the Committee, and I presume that the Government are not whipping their Committee members. But since the Government are so bitterly divided, we have said that we should debate the issue, and we have provided an opportunity for the House to do so.

The Committee could have a public hearing of evidence, it could deliberate in private and—in those areas where the Committee so decided—it could take evidence in private. That applies to all of the Committees of the House. We do not dispute the rights of the Committee to hear evidence—

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Prescott: I shall not give way, because the hon. Gentleman does not have an intelligent intervention to make.

We do not dispute the right of Committees to hear evidence in private when it is in the interests of natural justice to do so. We ask that there be a reasonable balance between public and private hearings—as there is already in the majority of our Committees—that the evidence be heard in public and the deliberations take place in private, that the conclusions be published and debated by this House, and that to sit in public should be the norm and in private the exception.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): May I follow down the road of hearings being held in private where the interests of natural justice dictate that that should be the case? What would the effect be on the media if the Committee decided that some of its hearings would be held in private and some held in public? Surely the media will

[Sir Jim Spicer]

immediately focus on that, and ask what the Committee has to hide. Will not the media say that the Committee is covering up by having some hearings in private?

Mr. Prescott: The obvious answer is that it depends on the reasons which are given. The courts and professional bodies often make such judgments, and the press has to live with the fact that it cannot observe matters because the agreement of that professional body—or the Privileges Committee—is that they believe it to be right to have private hearings.

We disagree about the decision that has been made that the Committee will never take any hearings in public—quite contrary to the rest of the Committees. All we are saying is that the Committee members should make the judgment, and that that judgement should start from the proposition that evidence should be heard in public unless there are special reasons not to do so. That is the simple point which we are trying to make.

Sir John Gorst: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: I must get on, as an awful lot of hon. Members wish to take part.

Sir John Gorst *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Prescott: I am bound to say that, when the argument of natural justice is invoked, there are some contradictions in Government Members' arguments.

Sir John Gorst: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I plead with you to find out whether it is possible to obtain information during this debate as to whether any Labour member of the Select Committee will address himself without party politics in mind when he is heard in public.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order. Were the hon. Gentleman fortunate enough to catch my eye, he might employ such a point during the debate.

Mr. Prescott: I was right the first time—the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst) is not capable of making an intelligent intervention: he has amply proven that.

Some contradictions are apparent when the argument about natural justice is invoked. If it is in the interests of natural justice to suppress all the evidence from the hearings of the Privileges Committee until the report is published, why is it not equally in the interests of natural justice to suppress all the evidence given at a Crown court trial until the verdict is reached? On Thursday, the Prime Minister told the House:

> "I am not prepared to see confidence in elected or unelected public servants undermined by the public parading of unsubstantiated slurs and innuendo."—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 1002.]

Why is he therefore prepared to allow the public parading of unsubstantiated allegations against defendants in a court of law? It is the central tenet of justice that, for justice to be done, it must be seen to be done. If it is seen to be done in the courts, why will the Prime Minister not agree that it should be seen to be done in Parliament?

We live in a different climate today, because professional bodies are becoming more open. The professional conduct committee of the General Medical Council meets in public; the solicitors disciplinary tribunal now meets in public, and the barristers disciplinary tribunal is now considering a report that recommends that it should also meet in public. Other Parliaments are moving towards greater openness, and some have even accepted the recommendation that to accept money is a criminal offence. That recommendation was made in 1975 by the Royal Commission on Standards of Conduct in Public Life, but the House did not accept it.

The Government themselves are moving towards greater openness in their inquiries. Ten years ago, the Scott inquiry would never have been held in public. Now, the Nolan inquiry has been established, and we will be able to hear its evidence in public. The reputation of our public life is at stake, and only public examination will satisfy the public's concern.

The House has nothing to fear from supporting the Opposition motion, but the public will assume that we have something to hide if we continue to investigate such matters in private. We need to display to our constituents the simple truth that we are here to serve them before we serve ourselves. That is best done by being open and by holding the investigations of the Privileges Committee in public. I commend the motion to the House.

4.6 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> 'this House re-affirms the long established practice that decisions as to how a Select Committee once established should proceed are for the Committee itself.'.

Before turning specifically to the terms of the motion and the amendment, I think it right to make as clear as I can, both to the House itself and to those who follow and comment on these matters outside, four very important points about the background to today's debate.

The first is that the Committee of Privileges is not a Committee appointed by the Government, or with terms of reference determined by the Government. It is a Committee appointed by this House, on a motion moved by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), following your statement on 12 July, Madam Speaker, and with a remit determined by what you said in that statement.

Secondly, I am its Chairman not on the basis of having been imposed on the Committee by any group of members on the Committee, let alone by the Government, but on the basis of a motion moved, in accordance with precedent, by a member of the Committee and accepted without dissent by the Committee as a whole. It is in that spirit that I have sought to act as Chairman and it is in that spirit that I shall speak in the debate.

The third point is one that takes me into somewhat more difficult territory, but which I nevertheless think it right to make, given that public reference has already been made to the fact that the decision to maintain the precedent of taking evidence in private followed a tied vote in the Committee, so that the matter necessarily had to be settled by my casting vote as Chairman.

I need to make two things clear. One is that I had not intervened in the very full discussion that had taken place, except to assist in elucidating points made in the course of it. The other is that the vote I eventually had to cast was cast quite explicitly on the basis of the nearest parallel to what you, Madam Speaker, would be expected to do following a tied vote here in the House: that is to say, to maintain the status quo. In this case, it seemed to me that that meant my vote should be cast to maintain the established precedent, never before breached, that the Committee of Privileges conducts its proceedings in private.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): On status quo and precedent, why did the Attorney-General, when writing to advise the Committee, say:

"There are no settled rules governing the proceedings of the Committee of Privileges"—

Madam Speaker: Order. We must be very careful in this debate. The hon. Gentleman is now bringing Committee proceedings to the Floor of the House. We should not use Committee proceedings in this debate because the Committee has not yet reported to the House.

Mr. Newton: Without following the hon. Gentleman fully down that path, I can properly make the point that it is not in dispute that the Committee has the power, as it has accurately been stated, to take evidence in public if it thinks it right to do so. But the Committee did not think it right to do so and my vote was cast on the basis that I have just set out: to maintain the status quo, which, in this case, meant preserving a long-standing precedent.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. When my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) described what happened in Committee, you properly drew attention to the normal rule that proceedings are not mentioned until a Committee has reported. Understandably, the Leader of the House has described proceedings, including the fact that I moved the motion that he be in the Chair, according to precedent. *[Interruption.]* Well, of course I did. As the senior member, I convened the Committee on instructions from the Clerks.

The point that I am making is that this debate is about the Privileges Committee while it is proceeding, so it must be in order for us to refer to what has happened. We would not be having this debate had there not been a vote in the House. I therefore hope that you will relax your judgment on the matter or those of us on the Committee will be unable to explain what went on and why we take a different view.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) was speaking about a deliberative meeting that is not mentioned in the motion. If he reads the motion carefully, he will see that it is about the Committee exercising its powers under a particular Standing Order

"so as to secure that when examining witnesses it sits in public".

The motion is extremely narrow and does not deal with what has taken place in Committee. I understand the point that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) puts to me. It is difficult to debate this matter without making some reference to the Committee's proceedings. But we must be careful about how we proceed and keep in mind the fact that the Committee has not yet reported to us.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for your guidance, Madam Speaker. If the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) reads my words when they are reported in *Hansard*, he will find that I was careful not to mention which Member moved the motion to put me in the Chair. I simply said "a member of the Committee" and that I was put in the Chair without dissent.

Mr. Benn: The precedent is that the senior Member moves the Leader of the House into the Chair. The Clerks told me to do that. It was not my desire to put him in the Chair, but it was my duty to convene the Committee and then perform that function. It is no good the Leader of the House saying that, in not mentioning my name, he was not reporting proceedings. He was, and the House must discuss the proceedings in the course of this debate.

Mr. Newton: I cannot sensibly add to what I have already said on that point. May I make it clear, if it was not already clear, that in no sense was I levelling what the right hon. Gentleman has treated almost as an accusation. I merely recorded the fact against the background of the sedentary interventions in this debate suggesting that I was somehow imposed on the Committee by the Government and that I voted as instructed by the Government. That is simply not the case.

The last of my preliminary points is another on which I hope that I will carry all members of the Committee, regardless of their opinions about the way in which evidence should be taken; it is that there is no equation between what has been called a "cover-up" and the hearing of evidence in private session.

Every member of the Committee is determined that its inquiry should be conscientious and thorough. Its report and any recommendations that it may make will be published, and would be expected to be discussed and debated in the House. Most important of all, in that context, the evidence that it heard would be published in full with its report, for all to read. That is subject only to some very limited possible reservations, notably where publication of part of the evidence could clearly be held to be prejudicial in relation to legal proceedings that were taking place.

Sir John Gorst: Will my right hon. Friend say whether any part of his reservations with regard to the Committee's meeting in public has to do with the fear that the opportunity may arise for certain members of the Committee to deploy party political arguments? That would seem to me to be a strong indication in favour of retaining the procedures that have previously prevailed.

Mr. Newton: If my hon. Friend will allow me, I shall shortly make some of the arguments that I hope the House will bear in mind in considering the motion and the amendment.

Let me now turn to the motion that the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) moved, which seeks to bring about a situation in which the Committee's hearings of evidence would be in public—that is to say, with press reporters, radio microphones and television cameras present.

[Mr. Newton]

The right hon. Gentleman set out his arguments in favour of that proposal. I think that what I can best do is to set out as clearly as I can what I believe to be the anxieties that led those people who wished to maintain the precedent of private hearings to take that view, and which hitherto—I make no apology for repeating the point—have led all the Committee's predecessors to the same conclusion, believing that that was what was required in defence of natural justice.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Leader of the House repeatedly talks about precedent. Will he accept that precedents are set and precedents end? The current situation is unprecedented—that is the whole point. Therefore, we are asking the Leader of the House to recognise the significance of what is going on, and the interest outside the House. We need the information to be in the public domain, for the public interest. That is what we should be thinking about—not the interests of Members to keep things quiet.

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I do not accept the proposition that the circumstances of the moment are unprecedented. I shall return to that later.

In essence, the anxieties of those who believe that the Committee should take evidence in private and publish that evidence only at a later stage arise from the nature of the Committee of Privileges, and especially of the parliamentary privilege under which it operates.

Although one of the Committee's functions is to establish the facts in the case, it is not, as is sometimes suggested—and a parallel is sometimes drawn—comparable to a court. It has none of the protections that a court offers to its defendants. Witnesses who give evidence to it do not have the benefit of legal representation.

The Chairman does not have the same powers as a judge to rule questions out of order. Witnesses can therefore be subject to questioning from as many as 17 people. Some of those questions, perhaps making allegations of which the witness has had no previous notice, asked under the protection of parliamentary privilege, could be highly damaging. Later in the proceedings—as has happened in the past—the allegations may well prove to be unfounded, but if the evidence has been taken in public, the damage to a witness would already have been done.

Sir Jim Spicer: May I ask my right hon. Friend to amplify that subject? In those circumstances, surely the Committee could never meet without those people appearing before it employing, if they wish to do so, lawyers to sit alongside them, as happens in all courts in America.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend raises an important point about what would be strongly argued for in the circumstances envisaged by Opposition Members. Undoubtedly, there would be pressure for what my hon. Friend has suggested, and it would dramatically change the nature of the inquiry that could take place, and hitherto has taken place.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As one of the very few people who were unfortunate enough to be called in front of the Privileges Committee back in the 1960s, may I suggest that the Leader of the House should be a little careful on the concept of justice to witnesses? If giving evidence in public can be damaging, let me assure him from personal experience that giving it in private can be very damaging. I think I can now say that the then Chairman Elwyn Jones had great doubts before he died about the Privileges Committee acting in private.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that I have enough respect for him not simply to make a debating point, and I hope that he will not think that what I am about to say is a debating point. His argument, however, is rather more on my side than on his. I accept that it will not be comfortable or easy for people if suggestions that they have done something against the rules or order of the House are investigated by such a Committee. He talks about the damage caused when investigations are conducted in private, but it can hardly be other than that that damage would be compounded if the investigation were in full view of television cameras.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Newton: I shall give way, but I should advert to the fact that Madam Speaker has asked hon. Members to keep their speeches reasonably brief and that interventions are considerably extending this one.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if proceedings were conducted in public, the person being investigated should have the right to have counsel cross-examining all witnesses and to call witnesses on his own behalf, as would happen in a court? Does he further agree that anything less than that would amount to a kangaroo court?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes another important point which I am sure would be raised and many people would wish to pursue were the House to take the decision that the Opposition have invited it to take today.

The effect of the potential prejudice to witnesses giving evidence in public could operate in two ways: on the one hand, it might result, as I have already said, in damage to witnesses; on the other, it could constrain Committee members from asking questions that they think should be answered. In either case, the Committee's objective of achieving a thorough and fair investigation and of reaching balanced and considered conclusions in the light of all the evidence would be gravely damaged.

Moreover, we need to be clear that this cloak of parliamentary privilege would be available not only to hon. Members called before the Committee and to members of it, whom we would all expect to use its protection responsibly, but to any outside witnesses called before the Committee who could, if they wished, use the opportunity to make any allegation, however unfounded, against anyone that they chose to name. In the light of some of the things that we have read in recent times, I do not think that anyone can say that that is a negligible risk.

If Opposition Members think that these arguments have been assembled only in the circumstances of today, perhaps I may remind them—this is why I said that I did not entirely accept that the circumstances are unprecedented, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) suggested—of the words of Lord Callaghan. I make no apology for quoting what was said by Lord Callaghan, then Prime Minister, in the debate establishing the Select Committee on the Conduct of Members in 1976 following the Poulson affair. He said:

> "There are important differences between the proceedings of the courts and those of a Select Committee. In the courts, there are specified charges, known to defendants beforehand. The evidence brought forward has to be relevant to those charges. In this case there are no specified charges, nor is the identity known of all those against whom allegations might be made. There are no rules of the House which say this or that evidence is inadmissible."

There was a great deal of comment along those lines.

Lord Callaghan went on:

> "It is our view"—

that is, the then Labour Government's view—

> "that, if the Committee sat in public, evidence, whatever its basis—whether it was groundless or not—would be subject to daily public sifting. A lie can be half-way around the world before truth has got its boots on. We should have instant judgments on allegations before the Committee had been able to weigh them, before the reputations at stake could be properly upheld or cast down, which might do unnecessary harm not only to the individuals concerned but also to the standing of this House."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1976; Vol. 918, c. 973-76]

I am bound to say that I see nothing that has happened in the intervening period to lead me to dismiss what Lord Callaghan said then; and the introduction of television, in my view, multiplies the risk.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. Gentleman will recall that the Poulson case involved Members from both sides of the House. There had already been an investigation by the prosecuting authority and a royal commission inquiry into standards of public life, and the Committee itself was specially set up for the circumstances. It was not related to the Privileges Committee.

Mr. Newton: That point does not dent my argument one bit. I am of course aware that, in a sense, the motion recognises these problems by conceding the risk to natural justice. It has the air of attempting to suggest some kind of halfway house, in which the Committee might take part of the evidence from individual cases in private and part in public—or even perhaps move from one mode to the other in the course of a hearing. There is no evidence, either in the motion or in anything else that I have heard or read, to show that such arrangements could be made to work.

In relation to the cases that have been referred to the Committee, I cannot see how it would be fair to hear some witnesses in public and others in private—perhaps the Members of Parliament in private and *The Sunday Times* in public, or vice versa. That would not be seen to be fair. Nor do I see how, in practice, the Committee could make judgments in the course of a hearing as to whether matter might be introduced that would more appropriately be heard in private. Even if it did, the result would all too readily become a form of complete chaos, with the public shuffling in and out of the Committee in accordance with what was going on.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not, however, of some interest to note that Lord Nolan observed to the press that a large amount of the evidence that he is to hear—much of it allegations—will be heard in public? Does not that show that times have changed and that people believe that such allegations should be aired mainly in public? Obviously, as the motion concedes, some cases should be heard in private, but generally the public should be satisfied that justice has been seen to be done. The secrecy that used to prevail must no longer be allowed.

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has already effectively made the point that Lord Nolan's committee will not be looking into complaints against individuals. It will scrutinise general issues surrounding standards of conduct in public life—so the hon. Gentleman's parallel does not stand up.

I very much doubt whether the difficulties of this halfway house can be overcome. I am sure, however, that unless it is sure that they can be, it would be very unwise of the House to pass the motion.

There are also wider arguments for not proceeding as the motion proposes, and they are reflected in the Government amendment:

> "this House reaffirms the long-established practice that decisions as to how a Select Committee once established should proceed are for the Committee itself."

The House is rightly firm in its defence of the integrity and independence of its Select Committees. I have to say bluntly that it seems to me no more acceptable for the official Opposition to seek to determine how such a Committee should go about its work than it would be thought acceptable for Ministers or the Government to do so.

If we are to go down this path, I believe that we put at risk exactly those attributes of our Select Committees which the House itself most values and which is the basis of their public reputation: the fact that Members, once appointed, serve as individuals, not party representatives; not as part of a caucus, and not on the basis of voting in accordance with a party line. I believe that the House should think long and hard before going down the path to which the motion invites us, and I hope that it will instead endorse the amendment.

Mr. Barry Porter: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. If, as has been claimed, this is a House of Commons issue and not a party issue, it does not seem to me to matter much whether the motion or the amendment is passed. Will it not still be for the Privileges Committee to determine its own procedure, regardless of what the House decides this evening? If that is so, it is a matter for the Committee to decide whether it is to be a party vote. I intend to vote as a House of Commons man.

Madam Speaker: What meaning is attached to the motion is for Members to decide. It is not for me as Speaker to interpret for Members what is before them. They must make their own judgment as to what is in the motion and the amendment.

4.29 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): This is a major parliamentary debate, and it is appropriate that the Clerk of the House, Sir Clifford Boulton, should be in the Clerk's Chair for the last debate of his period of office. I am sure that his background advice will have been helpful.

I declare my interests, as recorded in the Register of Members' Interests, as a writer, broadcaster and shareholder, but my real interest is as a Member of this House. I have been 10 years on the Privileges Committee, and I moved the Leader of the House into the Chair,

[Mr. Tony Benn]

which demonstrates a non-partisan inclination. I must be the only Member of Parliament who was expelled from the House by the Privileges Committee on a motion.

When my father died, I was summoned to the Committee and ordered to produce my birth certificate and my father's death certificate. On the advice of the Privileges Committee, the House moved to declare a by-election in my room, which I won. I was subsequently removed by the House. I therefore have some interest in the workings of the Privileges Committee.

I have been in the House for 44 years and have been elected 15 times because, by a coincidence, I have won four by-elections. I shall not go into those. My only interest in this matter is that of the people who sent us here. I do not accept the view that we are here to protect Parliament, as if Parliament were a little club. We are here to protect our electors. That is the basis of privilege, because it protects Parliament only in so far as it can do its business in the interests of our constituents. The word "privilege" is an unhappy one because it gives the impression that it relates to the privilege of hon. Members, whereas it relates to the privilege of an elected body to do its job without improper interference.

The debate is not a trial of Members who may be involved in the matters that we are discussing. I am not by instinct a muck-raker and I do not think that the House should today consider who may have done what. It is not a trial of the Government because they are responsible for their own conduct. Happily, the electors will judge both Members and Government—all of us—at the next election. We are accountable to the electorate and the only consideration in deciding how to vote must be based upon that.

Serious allegations have been made about individuals, hon. Members, lobbyists and the media. My argument is extremely simple: that the only way in which the electors' rights can be considered is for everything—evidence and deliberations—to be held in public. Otherwise, rightly or wrongly, there will be a feeling that the parliamentary club has got together to cover up what is happening so that Parliament's reputation can survive. Parliament must live on the confidence of the people or people will not have confidence in it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As my right hon. Friend says, the Privileges Committee has certain duties and powers in respect of the electorate. Notwithstanding that, does he agree that it would make much more sense if the Committee did not investigate Members of Parliament—that such investigations should not be undertaken by members of the club, as my right hon. Friend calls it—but by an independent body?

Mr. Benn: By a strange coincidence, I have experience of that too, because after the House had thrown me out and when I reappeared and was kept out, I was referred to an election court. In the 19th century, the House used to deal with contested elections but, in view of the partisan nature of election Committees of the House, the matter was referred to a judge. In fact there were two judges, and they came to an absurd conclusion, which I need not go into, which kept me out of the House.

The principle mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—that the House is not the right place in which to consider these matters—has been recognised. My point, however, is that not just the evidence but the deliberations should be heard in public.

I do not know whether I will be on the Committee after I complete my speech, but some of the matters that we on that Committee will discuss are of the highest importance. What rules should there be? Why should not hon. Members be entitled to hear the views expressed by Committee members about what the rules should be, what the obligations should be, what the sanctions should be and what legislation is required?

I have my own opinion, and I have expressed it already—that the rules should be similar to those that apply to Ministers and that those who do not adhere to them should be dealt with by the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975. Of course, that is just one view; others may wish to put their views. The whole Committee should be held in public.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I shall do so only if it is a serious and important point; otherwise, I want to get on with my speech. I rely on the hon. Gentleman to assist me in that regard.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, but that is rather like the problem of deciding, before one has heard the evidence, whether it is in breach of natural justice for it to be heard in public.

Will the right hon. Gentleman accept a serious point? It is that, as a new Member, one of my privileges in this House is actually being able to listen to him. Will he explain where any problem arises, as all the evidence, any motions—including defeated motions—and the report will be published and debated in full on the Floor of the House? Taking part in that debate will be members of the Committee as well as hon. Members who did not serve on it. How can that be secret, and in what way is the public interest not served? In what way is information hidden from the public by that procedure?

Mr. Benn: The Clerk or the Attorney-General would be better able to give an authoritative view, but, as I understand the matter, and as the Attorney-General said in the Committee, the Committee is entitled to do as it likes and either hear evidence in public or refuse to do so. The Committee voted, for the reasons given by the Lord President, on his casting vote, against my motion that we should hear the evidence in public.

Of course, the deliberations have never been heard in public in the Privileges Committee. My argument, to which I shall return, is that the deliberations are important because they will set the framework for the recommendations that I hope the House will pursue.

I want to make a statement—

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: No, I am on a serious point.

As Madam Speaker said earlier, I sought permission today to move a manuscript amendment in the following terms:

> "That the House instructs the Committee of Privileges to hold all its meetings, both when evidence is taken, and when it deliberates, in public."

As I said a moment ago, I moved a motion in the Committee that the evidence be heard in public. The Lord President will recall that I argued that all the Committee's deliberations should also be held in public. That is because I am no longer prepared to accept the traditional practice of the Committee of Privileges that its proceedings, including the hearing of evidence, should be held in private. My first responsibility is to those who have elected me to Parliament and who are entitled to know what is being done in their names. In my judgment, that duty must take precedence over any conventions of the House.

House of Commons debates were held in secret for many years. There was great resistance from some Members of Parliament to the public reporting of proceedings. From 1803 to 1811—a year or two before I came to the House—William Cobbett reported the proceedings of the House in the pages of the "Political Register" and was reported to the House for an alleged breach of privilege in the way in which he reported them. Cobbett, who later became the Member of Parliament for Oldham, was at one stage imprisoned for sedition for a pamphlet that he wrote, as was Thomas Hansard, who printed it. It was not until 1855 that parliamentary reports by *Hansard* were officially sanctioned.

The secrecy of Committee proceedings raises exactly the same questions as the proceedings of the House, and the time has come when they, too, should be held in public and properly reported. I very much hope that the House will now intervene to change the existing practice of the Committees of the House, including the Privileges Committee, so that the evidence taken and the deliberations of those Committees are held in public.

Whatever the decision of the House or the Committee, I am no longer prepared to accept the present restrictions, and if I return to attend future meetings of the Committee of Privileges, it is my intention to issue my personal report of those proceedings that I attend. My reports will be based on notes made at meetings of the Privileges Committee and they will be as fair and accurate as I can make them. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] It will be for the House to determine how to deal with that matter, but I believe that I have a duty to make my own position plain in advance. I hope that the House will understand and respect my reasons for doing so.

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In view of the right hon. Gentleman's statement, will it be in order at some stage to table a manuscript amendment seeking to have him removed from the Committee?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): No. That would be beyond the scope of our proceedings today.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Given the information shared by the right hon. Gentleman, may the House be told what Standing Orders say would happen if he does as he says?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I trust that all right hon. and hon. Members are capable of reading Standing Orders.

4.40 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): The Government's amendment refers to the long-standing practice whereby the Select Committee on Privileges makes its own decisions. That is absolutely right and is why I shall support the Government amendment tonight. Later, however, I will make certain suggestions about the Committee's consideration of the problem, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

There are other long-standing practices of the Privileges Committee. One is that debates in the House on such matters are always treated with the utmost seriousness and on a non-party basis, for two reasons: first, such a debate can affect either side of the House—reference has already been made to some cases that have been heard by the Privileges Committee—and, secondly, such matters are of the utmost seriousness to the right hon. or hon. Members directly involved. We have heard little about them this afternoon, but we know from past exercises that an hon. Member's life can be at stake, as can the future of his family, his relationship with his constituency and other interests of a political nature.

Mention was made of the Poulson case, which involved hon. Members on both sides of the House and a member of the Cabinet, who resigned. He was cleared, but that incident affected the whole of Reggie Maudling's life. I hope that debate on the Opposition motion and on the Government amendment continues with the utmost seriousness.

I fully accept the four points made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House in opening, and I am glad that he made them. I am sure that he was perfectly justified in doing so.

On the question whether the hearings should be in public or private, I served on the Privileges Committee in the 1968 and 1969 Sessions. I acknowledge that that was 25 years ago and that many changes have occurred since in not only the House but public life and in the presentation of politics and technology. Twenty-five years ago, the proceedings of the House were not heard on radio, let alone seen on television. Similarly, our Committees did not exist in their present form. Today, they are televised as well as heard on radio, and the press attend them. We must take account of that.

All the signs are that the standing of the House in the eyes of the public has fallen in recent years, and that is a matter that we all want to redress. I do not place quite the emphasis on that as does the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), but it is essential that the House re-establishes itself in public high opinion. I should like the Committee to re-examine the problem and to consider again whether its proceedings should not be in public.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is unnecessarily worried. Some newspaper leaders have already commented that, if people offer to give evidence in public, that would lead to some persons showing off—asking to appear and then using the Committee for their own purposes. When I served on the Privileges Committee, the Attorney-General attended—and I believe that he does so today. He is at the top of the legal profession, and is there to challenge any witness on anything that he says, at the very moment that he says it. The dangers foreseen by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House could be dealt with by the Attorney-General.

I agree that we would have to face the fact that persons called before the Committee might request legal assistance, but there is a precedent. When Robert Maxwell's sons were to appear before a Select

[Sir Edward Heath]

Committee, they asked to be accompanied by their lawyers, and the Committee agreed. Everybody knew that a case was to be taken before the courts, but that did not present any constitutional problem. The Maxwells' lawyers were there to advise them on the spot and to make suggestions to the Chairman of the Committee on how matters should be handled. We should have to face up to that with the Privileges Committee.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, when the Maxwell brothers appeared before the Committee, they did not answer a single question? They merely said, "Our legal advisers have advised us to say nothing."

Sir Edward Heath: The Committee drew its own conclusions, and the Privileges Committee would do the same.

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): I suggest that there is an important difference between the Privileges Committee and run-of-the-mill Select Committees, if I may use that term. In any case, the Maxwell brothers were not accused of possible contempt of Parliament.

Sir Edward Heath: My right hon. Friend says that there is a difference. The question is whether that difference should continue. In the present situation of public doubt about the House and the operation of politics, political parties and political systems, we must face up to that new situation.

Another point that affects right hon. and hon. Members in particular is the inordinate length of time that the House takes to deal with such matters. The House sent the present case to the Privileges Committee before the summer recess. We are now heading for prorogation, followed by the Christmas recess, and no progress has been made. Change is essential. We cannot carry on like that in the modern world.

A Committee dealing with matters of such personal importance to an individual Member of Parliament must be prepared to sit continuously until it has reached a decision. That must be taken into account by the Whips in regard to parliamentary proceedings. In fact, it should please the Whips because they would know that members of the Committee would be here in any case. The time factor is of immense importance for particular Members of Parliament.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): The lives of the persons who are under investigation and who are perhaps accused are of great importance. If my right hon. Friend's suggestion were adopted, does he believe, in absolute fairness, that the persons concerned should have legal representation to cross-question other witnesses, rather than leave it to the Attorney-General or to the Committee to protect their reputation? Would not that alter the structure of the Committee as we know it?

Sir Edward Heath: That, again, will have to be decided by the Committee, but the Attorney-General could advise on the matter. If it means changing the structure, so be it, because I believe that it is necessary to deal fairly with Members who are brought before the Committee. I am dealing with the fair treatment of Members as well as with the status of the House.

Sir John Gorst: Will my right hon. Friend address himself to another consideration—that some of the matters to be considered might be the subject of criminal charges at the end of the hearing? If they were, would not that prejudice the cases of the individuals concerned? Is it not better, therefore, that matters be considered in private until it has been decided whether any criminal charges might arise?

Sir Edward Heath: Of course it must be taken into account, but that could not have arisen in most of the cases that have come before the Privileges Committee.

I shall now deal with the last point made by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield about the Committee's deliberations and evidence being taken in public. In his years in politics, the right hon. Gentleman has made many persuasive and many important points, but again—it has characterised the whole of his political life, and I have known him since Oxford days—he went a bridge too far. Anybody who sits on an organisation that must reach final decisions knows that there will be a point at which one will want to discuss the matter informally and not take up a fixed position—to say, "I want to ask about this to clarify my own mind and decide exactly where I stand."

That cannot be done in a public hearing; people have to take a fixed position. They are then accused of abandoning their previous positions and are asked why they have done so. I cannot see any difficulty in having private discussion. There is nothing that I regret more than people coming up to me after a meeting and saying, "Of course, what I really wanted to ask was so and so, but I didn't like to because I knew that it would then become known outside." That is a great drawback. In fact, it is a great loss not only to any Committee but to the individual.

I ask the right hon. Member for Chesterfield to reconsider and agree that there can be such discussion—there will be in any case, because he cannot stop it—before people take up fixed positions, which they then feel they must justify in public.

Mr. Benn: The right hon. Gentleman must recognise that the public are intelligent. They know that, in arriving at a new recommendation about a matter, views will have been put tentatively, and then a final view taken. He underestimates the extent to which people understand the tentative nature of deliberations leading to a recommendation.

Sir Edward Heath: I have taken part in a good many tentative deliberations in my time, and I am absolutely convinced that they are necessary to reach a sound solution.

I support the motion tabled by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I agree with its first four points, which are absolutely right, but I hope that the Committee will reconsider its position to permit public hearings, after which it could continue its discussions in private and publish its report, which would be discussed in this House.

4.53 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The Father of the House has given us wise advice today. I particularly support his remarks about the wisdom of having deliberative meetings in private, as that enables members to move their positions should that be their wish.

We have listened to some interesting points, but it should be said at the outset that the motion that was moved by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) establishes a clear principle, and it is on that principle alone that the House will be invited to vote this evening. I will be supporting the right hon. Gentleman's motion and I shall recommend my right hon. and hon. Friends to do likewise.

It does, perhaps, illustrate the way in which the Committee has been proceeding that the points that were made, first, by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East about there being a third way, and, secondly, by the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) about the value of deliberative sessions, were put before it.

Indeed, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and I suggested that there was a third option—that we should assert the value of meeting in public but be prepared to derogate from that. There would be times when we would want to meet in camera—for example, where issues of natural justice were involved; where we might be given compelling advice by the Attorney-General; or for whatever reasons we might sometimes wish to meet behind closed doors. But the principle should be that we should start out with the determination to meet in public wherever possible.

That is not an unknown principle to the House or to democratic bodies throughout the nation. I was sorry that that compromise—if I may call it that—was not accepted. That was no fault of the Leader of the House. In fairness to the right hon. Gentleman—and without digressing too much into the meanderings of what happened in the Committee—it should be said that he took on board the voices in that Committee; that everyone put their view; and that there was a genuinely held difference of opinion. Those differences were arrived at for different reasons of principle.

The issue tonight is whether any Conservative Members have changed their minds, because if they have not, I cannot see how there will be any change in the way in which the Committee should proceed. Perhaps the most interesting speeches this evening will be those of Conservative Members, who, having listened to the thrust of the debate, will recognise the importance of trying to re-engage Her Majesty's Opposition in the debate. It will be interesting to see whether they will be prepared to find any room for manoeuvre. If they are able to do so, it will serve the House well, not least for the reasons advanced this evening by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup: the reputation of this House has been damaged publicly and that reputation needs to be reasserted.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: Let me make a little progress first, because time is short and many other hon. Members wish to speak; then I will happily give way to the hon. Gentleman.

A week ago, the Prime Minister stood at the Dispatch Box and told the House of his intention to set up the Nolan committee. My right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said that he supported that move—indeed, there was a general welcome for it throughout the House. The Prime Minister set out the terms of reference of Lord Nolan's committee and said that it would be established to look at standards, the level of integrity and the level of ethics in public life and the proprieties of lobbying. He said that, if it wants to, it can go on to look at accountability and appointments to quangos, perhaps the political honours system and the remuneration of Members of Parliament. In all those respects, the Nolan committee is long overdue and welcome.

The Prime Minister also said in his statement that specific allegations concerning Members of the House or the conduct of the House would have to be met and dealt with by Committees of the House. That must mean the Procedure Committee or the Committee on Members' interests. So we have not only been charged with a responsibility by Parliament itself—the House of Commons having passed a motion establishing the Privileges Committee for the duration of this Session: we have been told quite clearly by the Prime Minister that the terms of reference, which have already been established for that Committee, must be continued and maintained as our inquiry proceeds.

Mr. Winnick: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, although this is not a matter for those outside the House, it is certainly a matter for us in the House, and that we must bear in mind the fact that much opinion outside is undoubtedly in favour of the Committee meeting in public, of which I am in favour? Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, if justice is to be done, the Committee should meet in public, but that, if the deliberations are also to be in public, it could well be argued that that is a denial of justice, because the Committee should be in a position, as the Father of the House said, to deliberate? It will be extremely difficult to do that in public and could well be a denial of justice for the people involved.

Mr. Alton: I agree. I made that point a little earlier in my speech. The hon. Gentleman makes a proper point. There are areas between which we much distinguish in determining the way in which we proceed.

Mr. Ashby: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: I will give way once more, but after that the House would expect me to get on with my speech.

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman's party has always believed in justice. We have always heard that, if justice is to be done, it must be seen to be done. That is nonsense, because this is an inquisition. The Committee is not a court; it is conducting an inquiry. Once it has opened its doors, its procedures—which give defendants no rights whatever—will be exactly the same as those of the old Star Chamber courts that were hated by everyone because they were so unjust. The hon. Gentleman is opting for injustice, not justice.

Mr. Alton: It is precisely because I believe in natural justice that I readily agreed to serve on the Committee. I used the very phrase that the hon. Gentleman has just used: I said that I would oppose any move to turn it into a Star Chamber or a kangaroo court. I believe that the Committee could consider many matters in public rather than in private.

There is no question of the Committee's meeting in secret. All the transcripts will be made public eventually, apart from those relating to the deliberations. The issue is whether the proceedings should be transmitted

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simultaneously by television, radio, journalists and, indeed, members of the public who might wish to be present.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: No, I will not give way again.

A longer-term issue is the question of self-regulation, and whether ours is indeed the right body to make such decisions and conduct such investigations. We should ask ourselves whether we ought to employ procedures that smack of the blackballing associated with the more prestigious gentlemen's clubs, or whether, in all cases such as this, we should invite someone from outside to sit in deliberation.

The Father of the House alluded to the Poulson scandal. I was in local government at that time, and local government was a difficult place to be: everyone assumed that all those in local government were on the make, with their fingers in the till. Indeed, during my service as deputy leader of a city council and as its housing chairman, I often had to deal with contracts and tenders involving considerable sums.

After the Poulson scandal, the House decided that it was not enough to expect local government to deal with its own affairs on a self-regulatory basis. A panoply of bodies was established—comprising the fraud squad, district auditors and local government ombudsmen—to be called in when a local councillor was thought to be in disrepute. The councillor might then risk criminal proceedings. I hope that Lord Nolan will examine the precedent of local government.

In local government, people do not simply declare a pecuniary interest in advance; they must subsequently withdraw from all proceedings connected with that interest, and take no further part in them. That is a good precedent for the House of Commons to follow. We should be open to the same charges of dishonesty, fraud and criminal action. Many of my friends and colleagues who are still in local government do not understand why we exercise such double standards.

For now, the Committee of Privileges is the body charged with investigating the most recent accusations levelled against Parliament. The first issue, on which I have already touched, is whether it should meet in private or in public. I believe that we should meet in public unless there are good reasons for us not to do so. Secondly, there is the question of precedent, which has been mentioned regularly during the debate. Precedents need not be slavishly adhered to; there are times when we can change the way in which we go about things.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was right: times have changed over the past 30 years. It is not a partisan issue. People expect our affairs to be more open—which is why the Prime Minister himself has identified a more open approach to many realms of Government life as one of the features that the Government can be proud of. I believe that, on the whole, such openness will be possible in this instance as well.

Thirdly, there is the question of natural justice. Let me take up a point made by a Conservative Member. It can be argued that, when criminal proceedings are likely or writs have already been issued—we can think of one example immediately—the Attorney-General will in any event advise the Committee that that part of the proceedings cannot take place in the open. Any hon. Member who did not accept that, or who left the Committee and reported the circumstances, would prejudice the outcome of any court hearing that subsequently took place. In that context, I ask the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to reflect on one of the points that he made in an otherwise excellent and thought-provoking speech.

The fourth issue is reputation. That is the most important issue of all. Parliament's reputation has been damaged in an extremely high-profile way, and unless we put the matter right in a high-profile way, confidence in our institutions will continue to be sapped. Public cynicism about our institutions and politics has reached dangerous new depths: the Church, Parliament, the royal family, the City, financial institutions and publicly appointed bodies are all among the casualties of the new cynicism.

Thoreau said, prophetically:

> "If you cut down all the trees, there will be nowhere left for the birds to sing."

If our institutions are cut down one after another, we shall leave it to others with whose views we may strongly disagree to provide the answer to the new civic reckoning that is now under way.

Another issue that arises—as it did in the Committee—is what should be done if the motion is rejected tonight. Before our Committee debate, we had already agreed a timetable and modus vivendi: the Committee's proceedings have already been put in motion. We met last week to listen to tapes, and it is no secret that two hon. Members will come before the Committee tomorrow to give evidence. It will continue to hear evidence as the House has charged it to do, come what may. The inquiry has been proceeding as we all agreed that it should, but it must now be deepened and widened.

We need to hear from other hon. Members who have been named, from Mr. Al Fayed and Mr. Tiny Rowland, from the editor of *The Guardian* and from a number of others who have been mentioned—very publicly—in the media. I hope that members of the official Opposition will be present at tomorrow's meeting to support calls for the widening and deepening of the inquiry, but even if they are not, the Committee will be duty bound to proceed with the task entrusted to it by the House and by the Prime Minister last Tuesday.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: No. I said that I was going to conclude my speech, and it is nearly finished.

Until the House makes a resolution to do otherwise, it is the House's duty to proceed. That is why I, for one, will remain a member of the Committee until it has completed its task . That task is no more or less than what the public want and expect: they want us to clean out the Augean stables, and to put our own house—the House of Commons—in order. Political trench warfare would be a pitiful response to that expectation.

Sir Edward Heath: Is it not possible for the Committee, when it next meets to discuss the proposal of one of its members, to reconsider the decision to hear all matters in private and to decide that it is prepared to hear witnesses in public?

Mr. Alton: Of course that is open to the Committee. I should be happy to raise the issue, but, if the right hon. Gentleman could persuade one of his colleagues on the Committee to reflect on the issue, the proposal would be far better coming from that source. As the Leader of the House has told the Committee, the issue was determined on a single casting vote.

In 1695, the House of Commons resolved, in not dissimilar circumstances, that

> "the offer of money, or other advantage, to a Member of Parliament for the promoting of any matter whatsoever, depending or to be transacted in Parliament, is a high crime and misdemeanour."

Surely it is not too much to expect that, 300 years later, we may effectively circumscribe the malign effects of an industry that is suffocating Parliament and destroying its reputation. It will be a sorry reflection on the state of our contemporary House of Commons if we cannot find a common-sense way forward tonight.

5.8 pm

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made a typical speech; I rather agreed with the criticism made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath). The views that the right hon. Gentleman expressed about the results of a vote on deliberation in public are not the views that he held when he was last a member of the Privileges Committee. On that occasion, the question which he put to the vote was defeated; all three of his colleagues voted with the rest of the Committee against his proposition. I am glad to say that he attended at least two subsequent meetings of the Committee and I am not aware that he has divulged, except in the privacy of his diaries, the proceedings that took place. I hope that he will reflect carefully on the threat which he seemed to issue.

To come back to the motion and the amendment, the House should remember that it has given the Privileges Committee two distinct tasks. One of them is an instruction to investigate matters relating to the conduct of two of our colleagues, and the involvement therein of *The Sunday Times*; to establish the facts so far as we can to give our opinion on whether they show that a contempt has been committed; and to recommend in a report the appropriate action to be taken by the House as a whole.

I want to devote most of what I have to say to that specific matter, but the other wider-ranging remit contained in the Speaker's instruction to the Committee is much more general. It relates to matters which are complicated and involved; which may bring the Committee into a position of overlap with the Nolan inquiry; which may bring us into conflict with the Committee on Members' Interests; which we certainly cannot resolve in a hurry; and which will require a great deal of deliberation on all parts.

Against that background, it is important that the Committee should be allowed to go on as fast as possible with the first part of its inquiry and try to get that out of the way as expeditiously as we can. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup knows, as I do, that it is not the Committee's fault that it has not been able to make more progress throughout the autumn. The Committee is not empowered to sit when the House is not sitting but perhaps it should be so empowered. That point could be pursued. As matters stand, my right hon. Friend must not blame the Committee; he must blame the House's rules of order.

We must also bear in mind the requirements of natural justice. I am glad that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred to that; my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred to it as well. It may surprise hon. Members to hear that "Erskine May" is not an authority on the subject of natural justice. Even the law books are not especially helpful. I asked someone I know well, who is a lawyer, to see if he could provide me with any authority on the subject. I received a note from him which says:

> "The courts in the interest of fairness impose certain obligations upon those with power to take decisions affecting other people. These obligations arise from the rules of natural justice which, although 'sadly lacking in precision' have generally been subsumed under two heads"—

the House will understand the rules when I read them in Latin—

> "the audi alteram partem rule and the nemo judex in re sua rule".

I will not insult the intelligence of hon. Members by attempting to translate them. The note goes on to say:

> "By virtue of these rules decision makers must act fairly, in good faith and without bias, and must afford each party the opportunity to adequately state his case."

I do not believe that if we met in public to consider the specific matters relating to the conduct of our two colleagues and *The Sunday Times*, it would be at all easy to meet the requirements of natural justice, even if we were a court of law, which the Privileges Committee is not. Not being a court of law, the Committee has no provision for legal representation, as my right hon. Friend and others have pointed out. There is no possibility of cross-examination and there are not even any charges set out—not even that old catch-all of section 40 of the Army Act 1955 with regard to conduct that is prejudicial to good order and military discipline. The whole situation is inverted, in that the Committee's task is first to establish what the rules may be and then to judge whether its opinion is that someone has offended against them.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Does my right hon. Friend consider that the Committee's task would be made much more difficult by the introduction of television and, to a lesser extent, radio? When the hearing takes place, the atmosphere in the Committee will be charged. Does my right hon. Friend realise that those who are accused cannot expect a fair trial or hearing? If he has any doubts, he should look at what is happening in America, where a celebrated murder trial is in absolute chaos because television cameras are giving it wall-to-wall coverage.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who anticipates the very point that I was about to make. I do not need to look to America for evidence to support his argument and mine. It is essential that individual witnesses who come before the Privileges Committee should be protected when the proceedings may result in the Committee recommending a penalty against them, whether they are Members of Parliament or editors of national newspapers.

[Sir Cranley Onslow]

We have a duty under natural justice to provide protection in those terms for those who appear before us. As my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) pointed out, to do otherwise—to meet in public—would be an absolute media circus. For a start, we should need to hold our meetings in the Grand Committee Room, if not in Westminster Hall. No room on the Committee corridor would be big enough to contain all those who want to come and listen to our proceedings and report them.

As I said, we have evidence on our own shores of the way in which press coverage can frustrate the purposes of justice. On 15 June 1993, *The Times Law Reports* reported the result of an appeal hearing in an important case. The appeal was based on two grounds, the second of which was the concern that arose as a result of press coverage of the trial. I quote:

> "In granting the appellants leave to appeal the single judge described that coverage as 'unremitting, extensive, sensational, inaccurate and misleading'. Having had the opportunity of reading a substantial selection of the newspaper reports in question, their Lordships saw no reason to dissent . . . They were satisfied that the press coverage of the trial did create a real risk of prejudice against the defendants and for that second reason as well the convictions were unsafe and unsatisfactory and had to be quashed."

We are not in exactly that position with regard to the offence or the forum in which it was heard, but we do not need to use our imaginations vividly to see that there might well be unremitting, extensive, sensational, inaccurate and misleading reporting of Privileges Committee sittings if they were held in public.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I have a great deal of sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman's point of view, especially with regard to publicity. Can he explain who the publicity will influence? Clearly, in a court of law, there is a possibility that jurors can be influenced by publicity. How can the publicity which might attach to the right hon. Gentleman's illustration influence the members of the Committee who will, in the final analysis, make the judgment?

Sir Cranley Onslow: The hon. Gentleman's imagination must be limited if he cannot see that. Even if he thinks that some of his colleagues may sometimes think that there is a compromise position to be adopted—a sort of halfway house where witnesses can be interrogated half in public and half in private—I recommend that he read the second leader in today's *Evening Standard*, which points out that it is disingenuous for Opposition Members to think that interviewing witnesses partly in private and partly in public would work. I quote:

> "Can they imagine the effect on press coverage if reporters were removed from the room for part, and only part, of the proceedings?"

The leader goes on to recommend that the status quo—the traditional precedent by which the Committee meets in private—should continue.

Whatever view one takes of that, it must surely be right that the Committee must make up its own mind as to how it does its work. It is not for the Leader of the Opposition to request the Prime Minister to allow the Committee to meet in public. It is not for the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to blame someone else if we choose to meet in private. The decision depends on the individual views of members of the—and it is not members hunting as a pack or acting in concert but making up their own minds in their own way and in accordance with their own beliefs.

The editorial in the *Daily Mail*, which the right hon. Gentleman quoted, was misconceived in its arguments. I have no sympathy with them. It is up to each of us to make our own judgment and to do so in the light of our interest in Parliament as a whole and our belief in the parliamentary process. I do not believe that we shall be able to retain the public confidence we need if we are to keep authority over our procedures unless we pass the amendment tonight.

5.19 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Happily, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir Edward Heath) took a much higher view of the abilities and standing of the Privileges Committee's membership than some of his colleagues have taken in their interventions today. As the right hon. Gentleman said, the legal profession is represented by some distinguished lawyers, not only by the Attorney-General but also, for example, by my right hon. and learned Friend and namesake the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). He also is held in the highest respect in this House.

I have no intention of exciting any avoidable controversy in the debate, and I know how seriously and conscientiously the Leader of the House takes his role and responsibilities in this extremely sensitive affair. In that spirit, may I ask him for a response, not now but before the debate concludes, to the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) about whether there will be a free vote for Conservative Members of Parliament as well as on this side of the House?

I want now briefly to explain, as a member of the Privileges Committee, why I oppose the holding of its proceedings solely behind closed doors. In my view, secrecy is permissible only when there is a clear and compelling reason, more especially a legal reason, and even more especially any risk of infringing natural justice.

For me, the issue is not one of party or parliamentary tactics. The accusation has been made that the Committee's Labour members acted like spoilsports, taking our ball home because we did not get our way. But we were not playing a game. The issue was one of very important principle and, for my part, I simply could not bring myself to say, when the vote for secrecy was decided, "That's fine. I will change my principles."

There was no meeting of the Committee's Labour members to discuss its proceedings before the meeting on 18 October. Nor at any time have we met outside the Committee since then. Those are matters of ascertainable fact. We voted as individuals and were joined in opposing the motion for secrecy, as you heard, by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), the representative on the Committee of the Liberal Democrats.

Who in this debate can deny that, on 18 October, we acted in accord with the wishes of the vast majority of the British people? We put our votes where the Prime Minister's rhetoric was when he said that standards in public life should be "seen and recognised to be beyond criticism".—[*Official Report*, 25 October 1994; Vol.248, c.759.]

That cannot be achieved on the basis of total secrecy.

Urgency is now extremely urgent if we are to allay mounting public disquiet at the failure of this House to deal effectively with allegations of malfeasance. The public resent being kept in the dark.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I am listening carefully. The proceedings will not be secret. They will be published in full. Therefore, every member of the public who wants to read the whole transcript will have the chance of doing so.

Mr. Morris: I am glad to have an opportunity to correct what the hon. Gentleman says. It was said also by some other hon. Members earlier in the debate. Let me make it clear that it will be for the Committee of Privileges to decide whether the evidence is published in total, just as it was for the Select Committee on Members' Interests to decide, as it did, that large sections of the evidence given in the case of our former colleague, John Browne, the then Member for Winchester, would be deleted from its report.

Sir Jim Spicer: It is not a matter of dispute—certainly with me—that the evidence should be given in total at the end of the proceedings. The only exception would be that, where criminal prosecutions might follow from the proceedings, of necessity and on the advice of the Attorney-General, the evidence would have to be debarred from going into the public domain. That surely negates half of what has been said in the Chamber tonight.

Mr. Morris: The hon. Gentleman has already entered his own caveat. I repeat that it would be for the Committee of Privileges, not for any individual member of the Committee, to decide whether or not the proceedings were to be reported in their entirety. I am certain that the Committee will consider in due time very carefully whether it is legally proper for it to publish every aspect and detail of the evidence.

Sir John Gorst: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morris: I must proceed. The hon. Gentleman has intervened several times previously. I must proceed because I have been asked, as we have all been asked by the Chair, to speak as briefly as possible.

I was saying that the public resented being kept in the dark: "They have lost faith in their leaders."

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): No.

Mr. Morris: The hon. and learned Gentleman says no. They are not my words. They are the verdict given last Friday by Lord Nolan, appointed by the Prime Minister to chair the committee which will review standards in public life. His verdict makes it all the more important that all Committees of this House should now meet in secret only where sensitive or potentially prejudicial evidence makes it essential for them to do so.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly insisted that the Privileges Committee must meet only in private because it has always met in private, but other important Committees have already dragged themselves into the 20th century while there are still a few years of it left. Until fairly recently, the Defence Select Committee always met in private, but today, like other Select Committees which always used to meet in private, it now very often meets in public.

There has been a sea change since my book "The Growth of Parliamentary Scrutiny by Committee" was published in 1971. Then it was almost unheard of for Select Committees to meet in public, but millions of people of all persuasions now find it incomprehensible that the Prime Minister is insisting on secrecy. Not only *The Guardian* and the Observer, but the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun*, among many other national newspapers, most strongly back the motion for this debate.

The Prime Minister must presumably have known since 18 October of the suggestion to allow the Committee to meet in camera if, for any legal or other compelling reason, more especially one of natural justice, it was proper for it to do so. The same balance is struck between open and private hearings in thousands of courtrooms up and down this country every week. It is the British way. The Prime Minister must also know that Select Committees and other important Committees of the House would still be meeting by lamp and candlelight if precedent had been all that mattered.

Why then is he so obviously angry, notwithstanding the safeguards available, about all suggestions for open sittings of the Committee? The anger of his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) last Tuesday, and again in replying to my right hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) last Thursday, was seen by huge audiences. Perhaps the most charitable way of describing his behaviour in this House on both occasions is to say that he blew in, blew up and blew out.

In 16 years as a Privy Councillor, I cannot remember a moment when the need to improve Parliament's standing with the British people was more pressing than it is today. Not only is the conduct of Ministers and Members of Parliament under attack. Parliament as a whole is demeaned and diminished by the widely held conception now that the democratic process can no longer be trusted. That was why I wanted, and want now, the compromise between total secrecy and meeting only in public that I suggested on 18 October.

A question put to me at the weekend was why, in the very week when the Government ended the right to silence by means of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, the Prime Minister should so strongly have insisted on secrecy for proceedings in this building. There is public concern as well that the majority of 9:8 for allowing the Privileges Committee to meet only in private—as revealed in the statement by the Leader of the House to parliamentary journalists after the Committee's meeting on 18 October—included two senior members of the Government. Had they left the non-Ministers on the Committee to decide the issue, the Committee would now be meeting in public.

This debate provides all of us with the opportunity to restore confidence in this House. Let us grasp the opportunity without either individual or party animus, as our contribution to improving standards in public life.

5.30 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): I agree with all those hon. Members who have said that this ought not to be a

[Sir Terence Higgins]

party political matter, and that in a very real sense the public's faith in Parliament is at issue. Having said that, we must recognise that the public expect things to be done in public. Since I support the amendment and believe that the existing arrangements for the Privileges Committee should stand, I have a responsibility to explain why the Committee should not sit in public. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House put forward the usual fundamental, traditional and entirely valid arguments as to why that should be so.

I shall elaborate on those reasons, and I hope to persuade even those hon. Members who have spoken—perhaps even the Leader of the Opposition—why the amendment to the motion should be carried and the matter left in the hands of the Privileges Committee. I hope that it will continue to press for the traditional view, which successive Committees have set out.

I am Chairman of the Liaison Committee, and have for a long while been heavily involved with Select Committees. The fact that those Committees take evidence in public has been of tremendous importance in holding the Executive to account. Very often, the evidence given in public and on television has been more important than the reports produced, or even than debates on the Floor of this House. Having said that, I go along with the traditional view that the Privileges Committee ought not to sit in public.

One thing that one learns in this place is that our proceedings might seem old-fashioned, anachronistic or strange, but it is only when one changes them that one discovers why they were as they were in the first place. It is therefore worth while setting out the reasons for the precedent—which is not to say that the Committee cannot change it if it so wishes, as that is its right. None the less, the traditional arguments why the Committee should sit in private are very strong.

The Leader of the Opposition exemplified some of the confusion when he said:

"the normal procedure in courts of law is that hearings are held in public . . . Why will the Prime Minister not allow the investigations"

by the Privileges Committee

"to be held in public?"—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1994; Vol.248, c. 1003.]

First, it has nothing to do with the Prime Minister: it is a matter for the Privileges Committee. In any case, the Committee is not a court of law, and none of the protections of natural justice that people have in a court of law exist in that Committee.

The Opposition motion refers to "natural justice" and the need to preserve it. The dilemma is that it is difficult to understand how the Committee will be able to ensure that natural justice is preserved if the hearings are held in public. To elaborate, the Committee will have to make some difficult choices about which evidence to take in public. The decisions will undoubtedly create a furore. If we have a problem at present because people ask why the Committee sits in private at all, there will be constant questions in the press once it is decided that some matters are to be discussed in private and others in public.

Even if the Committee makes that difficult choice, it is still far from clear whether the protections of natural justice will apply overall. Some of the people who give evidence and are discussed and examined in private might be protected, but they will not be protected from what other people might say in public. It is not merely a question of protecting the accused, even if they have been accused only in very vague terms: it will also be a question of protecting them from what witnesses may say in public.

To recap and elaborate on some of the arguments of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House—

Sir John Gorst *rose*—

Sir Terence Higgins: With great respect, my hon. Friend has interrupted the debate about four times, which is quite enough for one sitting. If he will excuse me, I will continue.

As was said earlier, no formal charges are laid before the Privileges Committee. There is also no legal representation. The Attorney-General is a member, and other members—for example the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who is on the Opposition Front Bench—have legal experience, but they are not appearing as counsel for the accused; that is the case where cross-examination is concerned.

In the Maxwell case, it was possible for legal counsel to appear on behalf of witnesses. Of course, that would be possible in this case, but it would fundamentally alter the way in which the Committee operates, leaving aside the question of who would pay for counsel.

There are other arguments. Witnesses would not normally appear on oath, although there is some precedent for that. If they lied, it would be a contempt of the House, but there is virtually no limit to what anyone could say or what allegations he or she could make—whether he or she was a newspaper proprietor, editor or whatever—under the protection of parliamentary privilege. If someone made false allegations or lied, it is not clear what sanctions could be imposed on them, as it is not set out clearly in our proceedings. Witnesses could make wild allegations to the Committee.

All those reasons—the traditional reasons why the Privileges Committee sits in private—seem overwhelming. Having said that, some hon. Members have argued that it is important for justice to be seen to be done. I fear that, if the hearings were held in public, justice would be seen not to be done. People would be open to false allegations, with no effective defence.

We must take into account another fundamental change—the advent of television—which is important. If the Committee decided to sit in public, it would have no control over whether it was televised. That is a matter for a separate body. It would be inconceivable that it would not be televised if it decided to sit in public—a vastly different situation from that described by the Father of the House when he quoted Lord Callaghan. We have a very real problem.

Worse than that, the end result would be trial by television, but trial of a very distorted sort. The O. J. Simpson trial is on television in the United States, but at least there are some legal restraints on what is said, and some legal protections. Someone appearing before the Privileges Committee would not have that same protection. Allegations could be made, which would appear on television and be reported long before anyone could rebut or deal with them.

That is a very dangerous path down which to go. In particular, we know perfectly that we would not see the entire interview or session of the Committee. A quick sound bite from Mr. Al Fayed, the editor of *The Guardian* or whoever is making an accusation against a Member of this House would appear on "News at Ten" or "Newsnight" totally out of context. If that is likely to be justice, I take leave to doubt it.

I believe, for all those reasons, that there are strong arguments against the Privileges Committee sitting in public. Having said that, it is a matter for the Committee to decide. I hope that, in making a very difficult initial decision, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and others will take into account the points which I have just made. It is a very dangerous road down which to go.

Four Opposition Members so far, who appear to have expressed the view that the matters ought to be taken by the Privileges Committee in public. I hope that they will reflect carefully before they continue to go along that particular route, and that they will realise some of the dangers which that would involve.

I agree with the Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), that it is crucial that the matter is proceeded with as rapidly as possible. The law's delays—even though the Committee is not a court of law—ought not to apply in this affair, and we must reach a rapid conclusion. I believe that it is right that the Committee should examine the matter and deliberate in private, and that it should then publish very carefully the evidence that it has received and the conclusions which it has reached.

5.41 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I shall remind the House of my interests, which are declared in the Register. I am sponsored by the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, I have a subsidised office in Sheffield which is provided by the council and I receive other small donations.

I admit that I never imagined that asking the simple question whether the whole or part of the sittings and investigations of the Privileges Committee should be made in public would create such a gnawing and gnashing of teeth. I find it incredible; it is not as if the evidence that will be presented is not already in the public arena. Nor did I ever imagine standing in the House and being restricted from making relevant points because I happened to be serving behind closed doors on the Privileges Committee. I intervened earlier during the speech of the Leader of the House, and I was slapped down for being out of order.

There is a vacuum in this debate as to how the decision was reached, and whether it was creating a precedent for the Chair to have a casting vote and for the Attorney-General to be offering advice every five minutes when hon. Members were raising points. We are in a very difficult position. I do not know exactly how I should put my case, but I shall do my best.

I shall give one instance where it seems that I was creating precedent, although I did not know it. I phoned the Clerk of the Committee to ask whether I might see the minutes of the meeting on 18 October. There was silence for a time—basically because I do not think that an hon. Member had ever asked for the minutes of a meeting of that nature. I was told bluntly that minutes were taken and recorded, but that they were not for the eyes of Committee members until the final written report was published.

That means, of course, that not only can I not speak on what happened in the Committee, but I cannot even read the minutes until months later to see whether they are accurate. If that is not a good argument for opening the Committee up to the public from day one, I do not know what is. My experience of the Committee—limited though it may be—has convinced me that that should be the case.

When I decided to withdraw from the Committee, some of my hon. Friends reminded me that it was a very big step to take because some hon. Members had served on the Privileges Committee for 30 years. My answer to that was, "That is their decision. I have been on it for 30 days, and I'm off." I did that because I felt that I was under a tremendous strain.

I do not blame people outside who ask what is going on here. We are talking about the most powerful Committee of the House and it does not even have to accept the vote tonight if it is in favour of the Opposition motion. The Committee does not need to take any notice, and there are no instructions that this place can give to the Committee. I have always argued that the more one has an inner sanctum of power, the more essential it is for democracy that that sanctum be opened up to public scrutiny. I feel that very strongly.

The issues have already been in the public eye. The very hon. Members who are likely to be interviewed by the Committee have already been in public themselves and made their contributions in front of the cameras. There is nothing that has not already been in public view, and I do not understand why we should suddenly close all the doors and make sure that nothing is said or done in public.

Today, the public demand far more information than they have ever done before. There is a bad taste which I believe must be washed away, and we cannot wash it away in secret. I was not elected—my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said the same—to come down here and to sit on secret Committees of this nature. The longer I am in the House, the stronger I feel that we should open up the doors even more to clear the air. That means opening the doors of the Privileges Committee to the public.

It has been argued in the Committee and since the Committee first sat that we cannot trust the broadcast media or the press. If we think about it, the argument goes further than that—it means that we cannot trust the public, and that we must leave it to right hon. and hon. Members to do the job for us. It has also been said that we are all right hon. and hon. Members, and that surely we can trust ourselves. It is said that we trust one another across the Committee, although I am not sure whether we do to that extent. But even if we did trust each other, that is not the issue. The issue is whether the public trust us.

Following the leaks and innuendoes which have come out of this place during the past few months, if not years, the public are less inclined to trust us on issues of this nature. That is the real issue, and hon. Members cannot run away from that. It is no good the House threatening the press, or threatening hon. Members if they say anything untoward, try to break ranks from the so-called

[Mr. Bill Michie]

"traditions", create precedents, start a whole new ball rolling, and cause problems that will embarrass the House more and more. I say "threatening hon. Members", because to some extent I feel threatened by the fact that I must be careful what I say, and I cannot present my feelings about the procedures of the Committee.

I almost feel as if I were a little naughty boy who is talking out of school, out of turn and out of class. I do not mind being treated like a little boy who cannot be trusted. I would rather have that than the public thinking that I was a bent big boy. I will always do my best to make sure that the people who elected me get as much information as possible. If the Committee insists on remaining secret, its report will not have credibility among the public.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I do not think anyone would object to the public's being given information, but the anxiety is that the public could be given misinformation of a kind that damaged someone's reputation—I do not care whether that person is a Member of Parliament, a journalist or a hotelier. Someone could appear before a Committee and, under the guise of parliamentary privilege, say something that was manifestly untrue. Even if that statement was believed by a handful of people for just five minutes, it would do enormous damage.

Mr. Skinner: Ministers do it every day at Question Time.

Mr. Michie: I take the point made by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has just said, such statements are made in the House every day at Question Time and in other Committees. After all, some scandals that have been reported in the media for years finish up as a ding-dong argument between spokesmen at the Dispatch Box. There is nothing new in that. There is no difference between such behaviour and the protection offered under privilege.

The argument put by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent about the media misinterpreting information was also put to the Privileges Committee. We were told that if the media were allowed to attend the Committee we would end up with a media circus. I do not know where those hon. Members who argue that have been for the past few months, because we are in a media circus already. It exists because the media do not really know what is going on; they are putting two and two together and are sometimes getting five. When that happens, the press is accused of inaccuracies.

If the House does not allow information to be recorded verbatim and truths to be published, the result is bound to be inaccurate reporting and speculation that damages the House and hon. Members, both those who are involved and those who are not.

The conclusions that the public and the press arrive at may not always be correct, but they are the best that they can reach given the amount of information that they are allowed to glean from leaks, conversations behind closed doors and little whispers here and there. I do not blame the media and the public for getting things wrong; I blame the House, because it is hiding behind secrecy on issues that should be debated in the public arena.

I feel strongly about this matter and that is why I withdrew from the Committee. I will not attend any further sittings if they continue to be held in secret. I have no doubt in my mind about that. I therefore plead with the House to show a little bit of common sense today. It should accept the Opposition motion because times have changed. We have television in the House and more and more members of the public walk around this building in the morning because they have an interest in the place—an interest created by the press and television. If we take away the public's right to have more and more information in this modern day and age, this place will be looked on not only as quaint but as strangely out of touch with reality. Such a decision would do a disservice to the House.

Therefore, I repeat my plea to hon. Members—let us open the doors, let us have the truth and let us have no misleading statements. Let the public judge and not just peers of the House.

5.52 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): It is right to declare my interest as a member of the Committee of Privileges.

In my view, it would be quite wrong if the Committee sat in private and produced a recommendation to the House and kept its proceedings secret. That is not in accordance with precedent, however, which dictates that the Committee sits in private and publishes a full transcript of everything that is said and done.

I have in my hand the report of the Committee of Privileges for the 1989-90 Session. The table of contents includes the Committee's report; its proceedings; the list of witnesses; the list of memoranda included in the minutes of evidence; the minutes of evidence, which give hon. Members' contributions word for word; and an appendix to the minutes of evidence. That is not a secret document; it is a full and complete account of what happened in the Committee.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) is not still in his place, because he said that the Prime Minister had insisted on the Committee's proceedings being conducted in secret. That was not the Prime Minister's decision, but the decision of the majority of the Committee. Labour Members have left that Committee en bloc because they have refused to accept the democratic decision of a majority on that Committee.

There are three cogent reasons, hallowed by time, why we should sit in private but publish everything afterwards. First, I do not want a witness to come before the Committee with his account of a conversation having had the benefit of hearing someone else's account of that same conversation. I want the pure water of the evidence as to how that witness recalled events, without having been nudged or fudged by his having heard someone else's account of the same conversation. Secondly, I do not believe that we will have an objective approach through a televised, American court, Perry Mason type public hearing. I remind the House that the Press Complaints Commission does not sit in public and if it does not, why should we?

Thirdly, I fear that the Committee's proceedings will be turned into a media circus. I can just imagine the full television coverage. The editor of *The Sunday Times* might be asked to appear before the Committee and asked why he published the story. No doubt he would say that he did so because the paper is a great British institution, which holds the high moral ground in leading the campaign to improve ethics in Parliament. He would no doubt also claim that his was the only paper with the courage to expose the full horrors and that it was his determination to bring his readers the full story; and so on and so on.

We would present a marvellous media opportunity to a particular national newspaper. There is no way in which we could stop that from happening, because the editor is almost certain to be one of the witnesses called. We would offer that newspaper prime advertising time and no doubt it would follow that up with its own suitably selected report of the Committee's proceedings.

I have been in the House for 30 years and, from time to time, people ask me whether things have changed much. I reply that they have not, but that what has changed are the media, and the press in particular. Thirty years ago, one used to know that the news and the facts would appear in one part of a newspaper and the editorials and an editor's views in another. Now we have an amalgam and it is very difficult to distinguish the views of a newspaper, depending on what campaign or crusade it is running on a particular day, from the facts. They are no longer kept sacrosanctly separate.

I am interested in the Opposition's motivation in wanting to change precedent. Put simply, they want to ingratiate themselves with the media in the hope and expectation of a quid pro quo—that the press and other media will repay them with favours in the years to come. For that reason, I hope that their grubby little motion is thrown out.

5.57 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I should like to put the Ulster Unionist party's point of view, on behalf of my colleagues.

We noticed that the motion is intended to allow public access to the Committee of Privileges, in the belief that that will restore public confidence not only in Members individually but in Parliament as an institution. We came to the conclusion that the reason for a lack of public confidence in this place and its Members is the various allegations of misdemeanours and "sleaze", to use the popular term which has been bandied about in the past few weeks. Those allegations have tarnished the reputation of Members and the standing of Parliament in the public mind.

There is an old truism that hard cases make bad law. That would appear to fly in the face of the reaction of most people whenever they are confronted with a hard case. The truth of that saying remains, however, because changes in law in response to a particularly bad case normally result in bad law. Those changes are normally forced by the emotions aroused rather than because of a careful consideration of the facts relating to the general class of evils that that change in law is intended to correct.

In recent years, two examples have passed through the House. The first was the community charge legislation, which, although it appeared to have a sound base, led to all sorts of horrendous uproar. In a more recent example—the Child Support Agency legislation—a whole field full of dragon's teeth is now sprouting. No one foresaw all that would follow the passing of those two pieces of legislation.

The current procedures in Committees of the House, especially the one that we are discussing, were arrived at after considering how best to deal with allegations made to the Privileges Committee in a calmer atmosphere than has prevailed in recent days.

The motion is an effort to give a measure of direction to the Committee, and it would set a bad precedent if we followed that line. It applies pressure on the Committee to follow a certain course and if, for any reason, the Committee failed to follow that course, what a hullabaloo would then arise. A considerable number of hon. Members who have spoken in this debate have already alluded to that fact in some form.

My party believes that the Committee should be free to make up its own mind at all times, for if it followed the motion, it would make matters much worse. It is not a court of law and the normal rules do not apply. There is no way in which the Chair could prevent allegations being blasted out and broadcast on radio and television as if they were the gospel truth. We all know what has happened about the allegations that have already been made. They are presented as proven facts and some are in the process of court action.

Moreover, whenever the Committee moved into private session, even greater suspicion would be aroused, much inflamed by the media if their behaviour to date is anything to go by. I foresee endless allegations that the juiciest bits of the scandal under discussion in the Committee were being covered up. In those circumstances, we also have difficulty with the fact that if a criminal wrongdoing became evident, no prosecution could follow because the whole matter would already have gone through a kangaroo court in the press and the Committee.

May I end with some advice that originated from America: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." That is sound advice to follow in this instance.

6.1 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Although the Privileges Committee, of which I am a member, has never sat in public, that is not the major reason why it should not do so now.

Allegations made against hon. Members must be thoroughly investigated for three reasons: first, so that the House may know precisely what happened, without innuendo or suspicion; secondly, so that the public may also know; and, thirdly, in fairness to the Members concerned. The question now before the House is whether those three objectives, which are entirely equal in importance, can be better met by the Committee meeting in camera or publicly. I have no doubt about the answer.

If the proceedings are held in camera, the House will know precisely what occurred. I could not believe that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) could think that there would be no report. The whole point is that the public and, particularly, the House want to know, and the Members concerned want justice. It is nonsense to say that, at the end of all the proceedings, the full details of what was discussed, who answered what questions, put by whom, will not be made public. Nothing will be secret or withheld unless there are clear legal

[Dame Jill Knight]

reasons why certain sections of the proceedings should be withheld. The Leader of the House has already alluded to those.

Broadly, no member of the Committee would want to keep the proceedings secret once conclusions have been reached. When the Committee report is published, the public will be able to see, read or buy the whole report, and Parliament will debate it. How could Parliament debate it if no report is published?

Sir Peter Emery: The important fact that my hon. Friend has missed out is that the evidence will be published. Thus, all the evidence will be known at one time rather than in dribs and drabs, as it would be if the Committee were held in public.

Dame Jill Knight: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I was coming to that point, but I shall not reiterate it because of the lack of time. All the Committee's deliberations will be published at the right time. The public will then know what has happened and be able to judge, not in fits and starts from sound bites, headlines, Jeremy Paxman, Rupert Murdoch, screams and yells, bias and innuendo, and daily mudslinging, but the complete and balanced report will be there for everyone to see.

The Members concerned will be able to answer questions freely, speak in their defence, and have their words noted, although they are certain to have to face extremely tough questioning. There is no doubt about that, whoever attends the Committee.

If the proceedings are entirely public, with television cameras and radio microphones, the matter will undoubtedly become a media circus. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) made that point. We all know how grossly unfair the media can be. The public will have no chance of getting a balanced or accurate idea of what is going on. Somebody once said, "Why look in the crystal ball when you can read the book?" I would say, "Why read the book when you can call on your own experience?"

Most of us know perfectly well what often happens when we agree to take part in a television programme and put forward a certain point of view, or explain or justify why something has happened or why our party is not culpable in the way described. Along we go and put our point of view. Then what happens? When the programme is broadcast, it has been chopped about and altered because it does not fit the picture that the producer wants conveyed. That has happened to me countless times and I know that it has happened to hon. Friends, too. "I have made up my mind," say the producers. "Don't confuse me with the facts," and on they go. All too often, they do not produce a fair and balanced report.

Over the weekend, a national newspaper carried a letter from a member of the public saying that he had written to a different national newspaper making what he considered an important point. The editor had phoned him and said, "I will print your letter, provided that you chop out the middle of it because that is not the story that I am trying to put forward"—*[Interruption.]* Some of my hon. Friends have clearly seen the case, too. My point is that editors and producers of radio or television programmes have no conscience. They want to put a certain picture to the public, never mind the facts.

Only today on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph*, broadcaster and writer Jonathan Dimbleby said that his words in a book about Prince Charles were

"distorted and misinterpreted to the point where they became lies"

and

"reported . . . around the world as if they were true".

If they can do that to the great Jonathan Dimbleby, and the possibly even greater Prince Charles, and members of the public, is any of us safe? We live in a world of sound bites, and if the Privileges Committee proceedings are filmed and broadcast, the words on the evening television news or the front page headlines will—there is no doubt about it—convey an entirely inaccurate impression of what is going on.

Picture the scene. A Member puts a question to the accused: "You took other money from other sources, didn't you?" Next day, we will read, all over the front pages: "Fresh allegations" or "Other bribes were taken", when nothing of the kind has happened. Every hon. Member knows quite well that that will happen. Is there anyone, even on the Opposition Benches, who thinks that that would be fair to the Members concerned?

Mr. Prescott: It is happening.

Dame Jill Knight: If the deputy leader of the Labour party has any doubt that I am well aware, I am pleased that he is aware that that is happening.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have one Member having the Floor and other hon. Members, including Front Benchers, making seated interventions.

Dame Jill Knight: My argument is absolutely clear—there is no hope of any hon. Member who appears before the Privileges Committee obtaining a fair hearing and a balanced judgment if the television cameras are present.

We all care deeply that the reputation and honour of the House should not be compromised. There is no question of keeping any misbehaviour or dishonourable action hidden—none of us wants that—but the honour of the House also demands fair treatment for those who are accused. They will have no hope of fair treatment if the wolves and hyenas of the fourth estate are unleashed while the Committee is sitting.

In the past few weeks and months, we have watched the press and broadcasters lie, cheat, forge and distort to obtain a story. Make no mistake—when they do, all of us are diminished by the process. It is no news to say that the overwhelming number of Members on both sides of the House are honourable men and women, but it is true. It is not, however, headline news. What is headline news is the very few who do not match up to the House's standards. We must guard our reputation, especially our reputation for fairness to colleagues.

6.12 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): Most of the debate has involved procedure, which, I admit, I do not find especially interesting in many respects. I may be heavily criticised from both sides of the House, but I want to suggest that we look at the state of affairs that has brought the debate about.

We need to be a little more profound than to decide who is right, who is wrong, who is honourable, who is dishonourable, how a certain Committee should work and whether things should be held in public or in private. If we examine the underlying problems that have brought all this about, we will find that the underlying problems do not lie with the law, but with what the public perceive and the morality that they would like us to observe.

I am conscious of what the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), said when he spoke about our moving with the times. What was probably considered satisfactory under Lloyd George, and possibly later still under Clement Attlee, would not be acceptable today. We live in an era when the public are much more conscious of what goes on in this place and are much more conscious of the activities or inactivity of Members.

Until such time as we tackle the underlying problem, all the procedural alterations in the world will not make an iota of difference. What is required is that when people come here as Members of Parliament, that is their only source of employment and their only source of remuneration.

If it is said that Conservative Members are heavily involved with business and receive payment for advice, consultancies, or any other activity, there is almost sure to be the riposte from the Government Benches: "On the Labour side, the trade union movement has a heavy involvement and it too makes a financial contribution to the Labour party, and indeed to Labour Members". If any Conservative Member wishes to say that, I would accept that argument.

It will not make me popular with Opposition Members, but I believe that the only way that Members of the House will regain the respect of the public is to be seen not to have any vested interests, and not to be involved with paid remunerative work purely because they are Members of the House of Commons. Few hon. Members would be considered to be good consultants or advisers if they were not Members of the House. If they were simply members of the public, they would not be considered, and the various companies and organisations would not want their services, and would not be prepared to pay them.

Until that problem is tackled, and until Members of Parliament are solely paid for the job that they do here on behalf of the public, the public who put them here—with great trust, because they respect them—there will be no improvement. We might get the present problems out of the road, but they will recur. They will continue to recur until such time as there is a radical appraisal of the responsibilities and duties of a Member of Parliament.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I would point out to him that the purpose of the debate is to decide whether the Select Committee on Privileges sits in private or in public. He is now going very wide of that.

Mr. Etherington: I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I have got out what I wanted to say, but I wish to make the following argument about private versus public hearings. No one should fear evidence being taken in public, and no one who has to make a decision on that evidence should be afraid to explain why they made that decision. That is what the public send us here for—to consider things, and to make decisions. They have the right to have the evidence in the same way as we have, so that they can decide whether we are doing a good job.

I have said all that I wish to say on the subject. I hope that all Members in the House will consider a more radical appraisal of the present situation, because the present situation is a symptom of a malaise that we are not tackling.

6.17 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Many of the arguments that I wished to make have been made by other hon. Members, but some were made over and over again. There is a danger, with the time running so short, that it will prevent some hon. Member presenting a new argument.

I briefly ask the House to consider the debate in the context of the experience of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I have been its Chairman for more years than I care to remember but, during that time, we have had to consider some delicate issues concerning Members on both sides of the House. That has led, in some cases, to public inquiries; inquiries that have led to public reports, which have led to considerable controversy. We have also considered Members' complaints, not only in private and oral hearings, but by correspondence.

In referring to our experience of the Committee, it is not my wish, nor would I presume, to tell the Select Committee of Privileges how to go about its business. Its current terms of reference are much broader than those to which we, in the Select Committee on Members' Interests, are accustomed.

Whenever possible, our attitude has been that we must try to make our affairs, and the decisions that we arrive at, as transparent as possible. That is why, when we consider evidence as to what action one should take about a specific issue such as lobbying, or the effect that outside interests may have on Members' behaviour, we have brought in the public to listen to the evidence that we take. That has contributed to the public's better understanding of the manner in which we carry out our duties, but we have drawn the line and we were right to do so.

I have not heard anyone complain publicly outside the House about the manner in which hon. Members conduct their proceedings privately, although one complaint has been made in the House. We consider a complaint against an hon. Member privately. For various reasons that have been adumbrated mainly by Conservative Members, we believe that there are occasions when respect for the public deserves a balance of view—we must also respect the right of hon. Members to privacy and to natural justice.

The arguments have been fairly well rehearsed. Hon. Members all recognise the points that have been made about the advent of television and the media and the instant reporting of often difficult questions to hon. Members who come before my Committee and who have no opportunity, as they would in court, to receive legal advice about whether they should answer a question that may be incriminating. Appositely, people have talked of the risks that exist when Committee Members give an account of what they are doing that is fair to the people who come before them, let alone to themselves. They are the subject of instant reporting by the media.

That is the media's job. I used to work in the media. I know their responsibilities. There is no reason why they should be put in the difficult and impossible position of

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

being openly invited to a Committee that they wish to report and that they have been given permission to report but which they cannot report in the depth that is demanded or with considered, mature reflection. Reporting is bound to be instant and there are bound to be instant judgments. Many of my hon. Friends have advanced those arguments very well but we should not forget another point.

I was involved in a libel trial. If I had lost it, I would have been a liar and lost a lot of money. When an hon. Member comes before a Select Committee, certainly the one of which I am the Chairman, he faces serious charges. It is not pleasant to know that that experience awaits him. However nice or kind one may be, he knows that his reputation, his conduct and, in some cases, his career are on the line. It is wrong, therefore, for the press to give immediate publicity to what he says when he does not have the legal advice that he can obtain in a court, which also imposes restrictions on press reporting to ensure that justice is done and that a trial is not prejudiced. That seems obvious. I should have thought that the practical lessons that we have learnt from such cases justify the attitude that we have taken in Committee.

As I said earlier, I have presided over a number of complaints. It was not a pleasant task or something that anyone could enjoy, but I have always been much impressed that my colleagues in Committee from both sides of the House have responded with objectivity and fairness and have faced up to their responsibilities honourably, as we would expect. Our private hearings have never been regarded by Committee Members as a hole-in-the-corner exercise designed to cover up an hon. Member's misdeeds. If they were, that would have been apparent when the House considered our published reports, the evidence that goes with them and the votes in Committee.

If hon. Members do not have the confidence to express confidence in the integrity of our procedures, how on earth can we expect the public to share that confidence? One of the more unfortunate things that has happened in the past few months has been the constant nit-picking by some people, who are not at all friends of the House, about the integrity of its procedures. How small the voice has been from time to time of hon. Members standing in our defence. When it comes to matters affecting hon. Members, we have an honourable tradition of upholding fairness and justice and of being courageous in dealing with such matters as we think fit.

As I mentioned earlier, one doubt has been expressed about the way in which we conduct procedures concerning complaints. It was first made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). Some hon. Members have suggested that we should pay closer regard to the practice of the courts, that we are not always as fair as we might be because we do not have the experience of learned counsel, and that people who come before us do not have the benefit of counsel. I understand those arguments. The Committee should always be prepared to listen to arguments that could strengthen the Register of Members' Interests, its enforcement—I shall not go too wide on this, Madam Deputy Speaker—and above all the way in which we handle complaints.

If we go too far down the legal path and adopt legal practices, that would give rise to the question whether the rules governing hon. Members' interests should be embodied in the law, which would then be enforced by the courts. The matter was raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) in a debate on 7 March 1990 in column 926. He rejected that view, and I agree with him. We cannot wash our hands of such business and leave it to judges. In the end, hon. Members should shoulder the responsibility for how the Privileges Committee, the Select Committee on Members' Interests or any other Select Committee go about their business. We should not leave it to others.

6.26 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) was critical of the media. Labour Members have some experience of the media, especially at election time, when almost the whole of the national press is against us, so we know what it feels like to be the subject of harsh criticism. When she was speaking, I reminded myself of all the arguments that have been used in the long past against reporting of the House and against televising the House, a more recent debate in which hon. Members were involved prior to the last election. They stood up and said that televising the House would change its character and that it would be quite wrong. It is interesting to note that some voices I hear now say that those criticism were justified. We have not reverted back, however, and we are not likely to.

After opening our doors and allowing the public to listen to our debates—reporting of the House was once a crime—hon. Members did not decide to revert back to previous practice. Likewise, we decided that it was right to continue radio coverage and the televising of Parliament—we did not go back on that decision either. Some right hon. and hon. Members will remember that it is almost 28 years to the day that the motion that the House should be televised was lost by one vote.

When I spoke in the debate on 13 July that decided to refer the allegations to the Privileges Committee, I expressed concern that the public were already getting the feeling that all hon. Members were on the make. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should be concerned about the reputation of the House, not because we are concerned about a club for privileges and rights, but because this is the very place that sustains our democracy. If the electorate form the view that they can have no confidence in Parliament, that in itself is a grave matter that will affect parliamentary democracy.

We do not join this place because we want to be members of a club. Despite all the great differences between us, first and foremost our concern must be to sustain the parliamentary democracy that has served the British people so well. I find it almost impossible to believe, given the serious allegations at stake, that Conservative Members really think that the public will have confidence in the outcome if the Privileges Committee decides to sit in private. Here I strongly disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). It would be wrong, however, if the Committee held its final deliberations in public. Like a jury, the Committee should decide these matters in private, given that the fate of certain hon. Members is in the balance. But I see no reason otherwise—apart from a few compelling circumstances—why sittings should be held in private.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) has already pointed out that, if the Attorney-General comes to the view that certain matters are unfairly being raised, he will advise the Committee accordingly. What if the Scott inquiry had been held in private? It too dealt with a great many allegations. Could anyone seriously believe that that inquiry would have come to just conclusions if its proceedings had been held in private? The public's confidence in the inquiry is largely determined by its membership and by its proceedings, televised and reported, being held in public.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay) *rose—*

Mr. Winnick: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but there is no time left in which to give way to him.

Despite all the fears that have been expressed—no doubt genuinely—by Tory Members this afternoon, I find it difficult to believe that, if the Privileges Committee decides to sit in public this time, it will revert in future to private deliberation. Once it takes the decision to sit in public, it will keep doing so in future—and rightly so. I hope that the motion before us will be duly carried.

6.32 pm

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): I warmly welcome the establishment of the Nolan committee and the referral of recent allegations to the Committee of Privileges. It is vital that the standing of Parliament be restored to what we and our constituents expect it to be.

There can be few in this House who do not believe that, whenever possible, the deliberations of the House and of parliamentary Committees should be held in public—unless there are very good reasons to the contrary. The Father of the House rightly said that grave matters of the type that are before the Committee have always before been dealt with in a non-party-political spirit. Judging by today's debate, that will, tragically, not be possible this time. It is clear that many Opposition Members seek not justice but party political advantage.

The right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) admitted that it is unprecedented for the Privileges Committee to hold its deliberations in public, and there are good reasons for that. There can be few Opposition Members who believe in their hearts that those who stand accused before the Committee will be given a fairer hearing if its deliberations are held in public.

So I repeat that it is for party political advantage alone that the Opposition are standing on its head the precedent that they pursued when in government. Quotations from Lord Callaghan and others repeated here today have reiterated the sound reasons why previous leaders of the Labour party have felt it important that the Committee sit in private. As the High Court of Parliament, we have, above all else, a responsibility scrupulously to ensure that Members of this House or outsiders—possibly from the press—be treated as innocent until proved guilty. They must be given a fair hearing. Our constituents would expect nothing less.

The questions of probity at stake in this case go much wider. They include the press, notably that most sanctimonious of journals *The Guardian*. I trust that the curious behaviour of its editor will be considered by the Committee. Just what did Mr. Peter Preston think he was doing in allowing *The Guardian* to be used by Mr. Al Fayed as a pawn in his apparent attempt to blackmail the Prime Minister, and in his determination to destroy the careers of Ministers when the Prime Minister refused to bow to that blackmail?

The editor of *The Guardian* got so carried away with the role vouchsafed to him by Mr. Al Fayed that he stole House of Commons letterhead and committed forgery, fabricating a letter purporting to come from a Minister of the Crown. By his own admission this was done to protect the position of none other than Al Fayed himself. How fantastic that the editor of a once great journal of high repute should resort to such devices and apparently engage in a conspiracy to bring down Ministers—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I must respectfully point out to the hon. Gentleman that this is a very narrow debate and that he has gone beyond the bounds of the motion. Would he please return to it?

Mr. Churchill: In our efforts to ensure that the standing of this House is restored to what it should be in the eyes of our constituents, it is also essential that the Privileges Committee safeguard the rights of those who appear before it. I happen to believe that that cannot be done under the glare of the television cameras and without the safeguards available to defendants in a court of law.

Few people in this country regard the O.J. Simpson trial in the United States as anything other than a media circus and a travesty of justice. I trust that that is not what the Opposition are trying to bring about in the Privileges Committee. Therefore, although I think that the Committee's report must and will be debated in public, and all its evidence must be published, its hearings should be in private, except when it decides to the contrary. I shall therefore support the Prime Minister's amendment, calling for the Committee itself to be the judge of whether it deliberates in public or private.

6.37 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): This debate is held against the background of Members of Parliament being extremely well paid, and against the background of 4 million people being without a job and pensioners without two ha'pennies to rub together.

For the past few hours, I have been listening to the Tory Members who have created all this havoc indulging in special pleading just because two, or possibly more, of them are to finish up before the Privileges Committee. It is high time we got rid of all this mumbo-jumbo about that Committee. It should not be the judge and jury of Members of Parliament. The Opposition complain about the police sitting in judgment on themselves. That is why the Privileges Committee should not examine the conduct of Members. There are millions of people outside who would welcome the opportunity of having their friends sit in judgment upon them. In the debate Tory Members have been saying, "We are special, we are above anybody out there. We want special treatment. "

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey) *rose—*

Mr. Skinner: I should like to give way, but I do not have enough time.

The Committee has nine Tory Members and eight Labour Members—*[Interruption.]* Well, seven Labour Members and another hon. Member: I do not know what he calls himself nowadays. There are eight Opposition Members on the Committee. Tory Members say that it is

[Mr. Skinner]

a kangaroo court, but not only do they have a majority, they will have a casting vote by a member of the Cabinet. They have the cheek to talk about not getting justice, but all the cards are stacked in their favour.

I do not think for a minute that the House will disband the Privileges Committee. Of course we will not: we will go ahead with it. I support my hon. Friends who have called for it to meet in public. What is wrong with meeting in public? All the other Select Committees meet in public from time to time, and many people are brought before them.

In any case, in the House any hon. Member can refer to anybody, as many do from time to time, and cannot be pulled up for it. The debate is about Conservative Members protecting their own. My guess is that, if two Labour Members had to go before the Committee, Tory Members would be telling another story. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no, they would not!"] Oh yes, they would. The remarks of Tam Dalyell were apt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was apt: we really need a Register that means something. We need to make sure that people do not register late, and that they register all their outside interests.

Members of Parliament should not have any outside jobs. We are paid £32,000 a year, and anyone who cannot live on that should not put up for the job. As well as all the outside interests, all the money attached to them should be put in the register. The hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) said that he could not live on his parliamentary salary, and made £300,000 a year from outside interests. That was reported in a newspaper. It is a scandal that, when many people outside are having a job to live, we should be discussing the debacle that arises from Members of Parliament making money hand over fist. Only when that has cleared up will the debate mean anything.

I support the idea of the Committee sitting in public, but the real problem is that it is high time we had a system in which there is no conflict of interests. If Members want to represent their constituents, they should do it every day of the week, and not represent outside interests—and not make a packet of money and line their pockets.

6.42 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): The raw, corrosive view expressed by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is the one that the House must address. There is a crisis of confidence in the workings of the House, and we must address that if we are to preserve the House's authority. We make the laws, and if we are disreputable or perceived as disreputable, what authority can the law of our land carry? That is fundamental to our system of government.

The motion is reasonable, and I see nothing in the arguments against it. They gainsay public anxiety on a level that I have never before perceived. One does not lightly throw away the arguments of precedent, because they were argued and reasoned in their time. In the debate, we heard the echoes of yesteryear when they were reinforced again.

Hon. Members have spoken about natural justice, but have not the cases of my two accused hon. Friends who will come before the Privileges Committee been splashed in the most malign way, insensitive to the sensibilities of their families, their constituencies and the reputation of the House? Have they had the might to defend themselves against that? Not one of my hon. Friends has argued, "Is there not a man who wants to shout out in front of a committee,'I am innocent'? Have I not the right to ask that hearings be in public? Is there not an opportunity to dispel the more sleazy allegations that are laid against one?"

The issue is of confidence in our system, and, as I have tried to emphasise, the outcome rests on our authority. The importance of the House, why we are here, is to attest to the respectability and responsibility of our people.

I spoke earlier about the making of laws. If we are perceived as undesirable, as people on the make who are here only for what we can get, the authority of our laws will fall. What else are we, as a democratic people and as ordinary citizens, but the instrument by which we perceive ourselves—the House of Commons? It is fundamental to get that right.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shepherd: If my right hon. Friend will forgive me, I should like to continue for the few minutes left to me.

There is now a watershed in our affairs. People outside do not perceive us as benign, but they have an intuitive feeling that Parliament is somehow essential to their well-being, and they are right. But if we are perceived as corrupt, that concept will be undermined.

Why should the hearings be held in secret? It is because there is a fear that people will be traduced by headlines on each day's reporting. But who will write the report? Is not the judgment finally to be debated in the House, and will we allow ourselves to be traduced? We must speak up for ourselves.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shepherd: I hope that my right hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not. I have sat through the debate, and I should like to finish my speech.

I do not doubt that most hon. Members are absolutely honourable. I have no reason to suppose that anyone is dishonourable until that has been proven. Is that not the presumption that members of the Committee will have in their hearts when they hear the evidence, traduced as it may be by the despicable, low-life press in some parts of our society? Do we not know how to judge that? We must have confidence in ourselves and in our rights. We must go out and proclaim, "The House is decent and honest. We have nothing to fear".

6.46 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): No hon. Member has yet said that the Opposition motion will in practice require that nearly every sitting be in private. That is because the motion speaks of "natural justice" as an exception to the rule of having it open to the public. In this context, natural justice means fairness.

How can it ever be fair to allow an accusation against an hon. Member which will affect his whole future livelihood to be made through trial by television—because that is what it would be? Not the whole case, but only part of it, would be presented. There would be summaries, sound bites and excerpts at the end of the day. How can that possibly be fair? That is as absurd as it was for the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to say that there was no party political interest in the matter. The right hon. Gentleman smiled as he said it. Opposition Members should have been honest enough to say that the whole reason for the motion is to try to embarrass the Government. Instead, they made portentous speeches.

How can it possibly be fair to make an allegation in public against an hon. Member without giving him notice of the details—a prior statement to which he can apply his mind? Is there any provision for that? How can it possibly be fair to try an hon. Member in public and not allow him the opportunity to be represented by a lawyer who can remind him of his rights, obligations and duties? How can it be fair to make an allegation in front of someone who is not a qualified judge, and who does not have the power to exclude evidence that may be intensely prejudicial and unfair? How can it be fair that a public hearing making a specific allegation of wrongdoing against an individual can stop him having the right to call witnesses in his defence if he so wishes? None of that is fair. It does not matter quite so much if the hearing is not reported all over the media, but it does matter very much if it is. At the end of the day, under the present procedures the report produced by the Committee can be sensibly doctored so as not to cause unnecessary harm and distress.

What would be the guarantee that the day-by-day media reports of a public hearing would ever be fair, when the editor of *The Guardian* can flout the rules of the House, flout the laws of the land, flout natural justice and fairness and flout common decency?

It must be patently clear from the events of the past few weeks that the media are interested only in witch hunts, and that they will go on extracting every single ounce of blood from the dissatisfaction, embarrassment or personal pain of someone in public life, provided that that helps to sell newspapers.

The Press Complaints Commission is no defence—we cannot complain afterwards to that body. Of course, if we did, who would we find on the commission but the editor of *The Guardian*, whose judgment is so poor that, even in today's broadcast, he could not understand that what he had done was wrong. We cannot ask for the help of the law of libel, because these occasions will be privileged.

It is absolutely naive of hon. Members to ignore the fact that most people believe that there is no smoke without fire. People believe what they want to believe, and if that belief can be fed by tittle-tattle and critical allegation, it will be. Where, in that, is the justice and fairness for which this House must stand?

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said that we are here to serve the public, not to treat this place as a club. We serve the public by publishing the evidence and conclusions of the Committee. We serve them by ensuring that our proceedings are fair. If our proceedings to our own Members are not fair, what chance do we have of persuading those outside, whom we are here to serve, that when we deal with them we will be fair?

We serve the public by having less and less, rather than more and more, of the daily news media—whether it be television, radio or the press—dealing with sleaze allegation after sleaze allegation, most of which are too trivial for words. In this real world, feeding the media hunger for scandal, however trivial, is not the best way to serve this nation or to protect the honour of Parliament.

We are the least corrupt country in the whole of the western world. Unless we have confidence and belief in ourselves, and unless we ensure that our processes are fair to the people against whom allegations have been made and who stand accused, we have no right to be here.

I shall vote for the Government's amendment, because it makes sense. The Opposition motion does not change anything, because once they concede that, if the proceedings are to be fair they must be held in private, they are acceding to the Government's amendment.

6.53 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) rightly said that the issues we are debating today are fundamental, and that it is important for the reputation of this House that we make the right decisions.

I start by reminding the House of the motion that we are debating, and why the Opposition have tabled it. It states that the Committee of Privileges should sit in public, except in certain circumstances. In other words, there should be a presumption that the Committee meets in public, but that it is recognised that there may be compelling reasons why that cannot always be the case.

We tabled the motion to give the House the opportunity to express its opinion—not to give an instruction—to the Committee of Privileges, so that it knows the feeling of the House on how it should proceed from now on.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) rightly said that the issue is not, and should not be, one of simple party politics. I hope that, when the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster replies to the debate, he will say that the Government have decided to follow the Labour lead and allow a free vote on this important issue.

I very much regret the remarks of the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), because the Opposition have not sought to make this a party political issue—*[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members believe that we have, they do not understand the very real questions in the public mind about the workings of the House. These matters raise very real issues of confidence in Parliament itself. It is important that every hon. Member realises that that is not healthy for democracy.

I agree with many of the comments made by the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath). He said that the standing of the House has fallen and that we should all want to deal with that problem. We must establish public confidence in the House of Commons, and we must all be concerned about the recent allegations.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: No. There is no time left, because some hon. Members have taken too long.

[Mrs. Taylor]

We must all be concerned about the allegation that led to the specific reference to the Committee of Privileges—that Members of Parliament have taken cash for tabling parliamentary questions. I take issue with the Leader of the House, who said that that was not unprecedented. I most sincerely hope that it is. We have certainly not heard that sort of allegation before, which is one reason why there has been a loss of public confidence in our institution.

Mr. Streeter *rose—*

Mrs. Taylor: I am sorry, but hon. Members have spoken for too long.

The House must find a balance between trial by allegation on the one hand, and cover-up and the impression of secrecy on the other. If the Committee continues to meet only in private, public confidence will not be restored. Surely that must concern every hon. Member.

There is one point of agreement. It is clear—no one disputes this—that the Privileges Committee can meet in public. Standing Orders allow that. The real question is whether it would be wise for the Committee to do so. I believe that for the Committee to meet in public is the only way to quell public fears and to enhance the reputation of the House.

I say that for three reasons. First, we must re-establish confidence in the House and in our deliberations. Secondly, there must be clarity in our deliberations, which again requires openness. Thirdly, there must be consistency between the approach of the Privileges Committee and that of the Nolan inquiry, whose meetings the Prime Minister says should be held in public as often as possible. Indeed, the chairman of that committee, without knowing what evidence would be put before him, has already decided that the committee should meet in public whenever possible.

The public will have confidence in the findings of the Privileges Committee only if they also have confidence in its workings. We do not want trial by allegation, but public confidence will not be restored by the image of the House acting as a gentlemen's club, dealing with allegations behind closed doors. It would undermine public confidence even further if there were a feeling that we had joined forces to settle these questions between us in private. That would send the wrong signals to the public. This is their Parliament, not ours.

The question is whether there should be a balance between the Committee sitting in private and in public. Various hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) offered suggestions for arriving at that balance. The Leader of the House said that individual members of the Committee might feel inhibited about asking questions in public, but it would be open to them to suggest that certain sittings take place in private—and the Committee itself could decide such matters. We could have a parallel arrangement to that for Select Committees. That must be the way forward.

I was impressed by the speech of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and by the comments of other senior Conservatives outside the House, such as those of Lord Howe yesterday. They acknowledge that the world is changing, and that, since Select Committee procedures were adopted, the public have come to expect a new level of openness. We must make progress with that.

I remind the House of the issues that led to the matter being referred to the Committee of Privileges. One was the question of hon. Members accepting cash for tabling parliamentary questions. Another, raised by hon. Members themselves, was the actions of individuals who apparently tried to bribe individual Members of Parliament as an experiment. Both matters are before the Committee of Privileges.

I further remind Conservative Members that, when those issues were debated on 13 July, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), against whom allegations have been made, welcomed the reference to the Privileges Committee. He said on that and other occasions that he and other Conservative Members wanted to make statements about the role played by the press. Surely it is in the interests of those against whom allegations have been made for at least part of the hearings to be in public. Hon. Members facing allegations may want to have those allegations and their defence heard in public.

In the July debate, one hon. Member who had been invited to table questions for cash and refused said that he saw no reason for the Committee not meeting in public. At least two of my colleagues, the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), said that they would prefer the Committee's hearings to be in public.

I hope that the Minister for open government will not defend the idea that the Privileges Committee should meet in private. I hope that he will accept our suggestion that there should be a free vote, agree that public confidence in the House has been shaken in an unprecedented way, and accept that serious allegations have been made. If politicians want to be treated as professionals and to earn any respect from the public, we must not only get our own house in order but be seen to do so.

7.3 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. David Hunt): I first welcome the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) to her new responsibilities. The hon. Lady must understand why she received the reaction she did when she urged the House to approach the subject in a non-partisan way. My right hon. and hon. Friends have been outraged at the way in which, outside the Chamber, many Opposition Members have irresponsibly sought to use trial by allegation.

I concede that this has been a responsible debate, thanks to the opening speeches. My right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council, in a statesmanlike way, set out all the problems and obstacles that would lie in the way of accepting the Opposition's motion.

The right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) followed the theme of approaching this important subject in a non-partisan way. In one or two ways, he struck a new approach. He advised the House never to lose its temper in public, and never to engage in party political banter when discussing such issues. The new, biologically improved right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is one whose progress we will watch most carefully.

I do not have time fully to respond to all the important points raised, but I will comment on two in particular. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) urged that the Committee of Privileges should deliberate in public—and he warned that, if it did not, he would attend and report its activities. That would be most irresponsible. I do not believe that any right hon. or hon. Member who has spoken in this debate supports the right hon. Gentleman's view. His proposal is certainly not allowed under the Standing Order that we have been debating, which allows for Strangers to be admitted only during the examination of witnesses, not during the deliberative process. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will rethink his position.

I do not believe that many were persuaded by the arguments of my right hon. Friend the Father of the House that witnesses should give evidence in public, but we were persuaded that, very often, individuals coming before the Committee would have their very reputations at stake, and that matters should be dealt with as quickly as possible.

My right hon. Friends the Members for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) and for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins), and many other right hon. and hon. Friends, gave cogent reasons why natural justice is so important in all the deliberations of the Committee of Privileges. It would be risky to set aside a precedent of many years that underpins a unique parliamentary privilege, and suddenly to dictate to the Committee that it should meet partly in public and partly in private.

I took careful note of the words of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. He said:

> "The House is generally agreed that members of the Privileges Committee will make their own decisions on the matter."

So why have the motion, because the right hon. Gentleman is following the words of the amendment? I strongly urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to do the same.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 264, Noes 301

Division No. 315] **[7.08 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
[illegible]pham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil (Islwyn)
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg

Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Aliason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hanan, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard

Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil (Belfast N)
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbrown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House re-affirms the long established practice that decisions as to how a Select Committee once established should proceed are for the Committee itself.

Transport and the Environment

[*Relevant document: The Sixth Report from the Transport Committee, Transport-related Air Pollution in London (HC 506).*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): **Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.**

7.23 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House, noting the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's condemnation of current Government transport and land use policies as unsustainable, calls on the Government to make a major strategic shift away from an obsessional concern with road building and road widening in favour of an affordable, safe and reliable public transport system to reduce pollution, accidents, noise and congestion.

Last week's royal commission report is a comprehensive and authoritative repudiation of the Government's transport policies over the past 15 years. In the magisterial words of paragraph 14.51,

> "In the past, transport and land use policies have combined to promote life-styles which depend on high mobility and intensive use of cars, and which cannot therefore be regarded as sustainable."

I emphasise the words

> "which cannot . . . be regarded as sustainable."

Not one but two Government reports have now forcefully asserted what not only Labour but everyone with common sense has always known, but what the Government have always resisted: that it is impossible to build a way out of congestion. Even the Government's own standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment is thought to be telling the Government—it would help very much if the Secretary of State told us tonight when he will publish its report, which has been lying on his desk and that of his predecessor for some six months—that building more roads simply generates more traffic.

The fact is that 15 years of the Government's policies have brought our transport system to breaking point. If we want proof that unbridled individualism does not work, we need only look at our highways and inner-city roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will, although it is rather early in my speech.

Mr. Bottomley: My intervention may be helpful. Is it not true that, during the years when not a single extra mile of motorway was built, the growth in traffic seemed more related to the expansion of the economy? Is that not the dominant truth, although the report seems to exclude it?

Mr. Meacher: The Government are as guilty as anyone else in that regard. Moreover, today's circumstances are very different: there has been extensive road building on a massive scale, and no alleviation of road congestion—in fact, the reverse.

The need for a radical change of direction towards a new strategic approach is now overwhelming. The evidence is clear: the DTI's forecast that car use over the next 30 years will at least nearly double, and may even

[Mr. Meacher]

increase at a rate between doubling and trebling, cannot be handled through the building of roads to accommodate such a massive increase in the volume of cars.

Like many hon. Members, no doubt, I recently saw a newspaper picture of a large stretch of the M1 as it was in 1959. There were three vehicles on it; no doubt that was bliss. We have all seen pictures of the M1 as it is now—indeed, I am sure that we all have experience of it—with hundreds of cars crawling for miles on end, bumper to bumper, at 5 mph. That is hell.

Widening the M25 to 14 lanes is not the solution to motorway congestion; it is a demonstration of the ultimate insolubility of the problem through such means. If we reach the year 2025 and it is predicted yet again that the volume of cars will double, will we then be offered 28-lane motorways? Where will this madness end?

In addition there are the environmental effects. The royal commission puts the quantifiable cost of air pollution—climate change, noise, vibration and accidents—at between £10 billion and £18 billion a year, compared with the £16 billion a year, or thereabouts, that motorists now pay in taxes, but that still omits the cost of congestion, which the CBI recently put at a further £15 billion a year.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): The cost of congestion, in terms of pollution and delayed journeys, is enormous. The hon. Gentleman has argued that the M25 should not be expanded. May we logically conclude from that that he wishes that it had never been built? What effect would that have had on pollution and congestion in London?

Mr. Meacher: We are saying not that the M25 should not have been built but that it should have been part of an integrated transport policy including many other forms of transport that have been neglected—in particular, light rail systems, the development of British Rail and proper investment in it. Of course London needs such an outer road network, but that need simply will not be met by investment entirely in extending an already huge motorway. We have now certainly reached an absurd point.

The cost of the present policy also omits the unquantifiable but no less serious environmental costs—loss of land and access to the countryside, visual intrusion, disruption of communities and loss of wildlife habitats. As we all know from our constituencies—many Tory Members will be aware of this—the cost in urban areas has often been in terms of extensive demolition of housing, blight, as on the north circular road and the highly unpopular Hackney M11 link-up in east London, and sprawl, with growing out-of-town shopping developments.

For all those reasons, which are familiar to the House, we are remorselessly approaching a transport nightmare. To be fair, the Secretary of State for Transport—I will be fair to him, compared with his predecessors—shows some signs of beginning to recognise that. He is starting slightly to mitigate some of the more extreme excesses of his predecessors.

Our charge against the Government today is twofold: first, that there is no evidence that the Government seriously grasp the magnitude of the transport crisis facing Britain today and, secondly, that, even if they do, they are either unwilling or unable effectively to deal with it.

This is the Government who, five years ago, promoted the great car economy with a mammoth road-building programme of £18 billion, which was later increased to £23 billion. They have cut rail grants by more than £2 billion since 1983, and are cutting investment in rail by two thirds between 1991 and 1996. Despite March's roads review, they are still powering ahead with plans to widen British motorways into United States-style super-highways and will spend £6 billion over the next three years on road networks. They are still spending three times more on roads than on public transport and are pressing ahead with rail privatisation, which will increase fares, reduce services and push more people on to the roads.

Any Government who grasped the scale of Britain's transport crisis would change course on all those counts. This Government have changed course on none of them. They have shown an unswerving, visceral antipathy to the public sector since their first days of Thatcherite interventionism. *[Interruption.]* The Minister for Transport in London may laugh at the terminology. I am not worried about the terminology; it is the facts that count. I hope that the Minister will accept that we have seen a constant, persistent and destructive run-down of public transport. That is the key point.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall give way in a moment.

Even today, Ministers continue to talk about investment in roads to meet demand while at the same time talking about subsidies for railways that must be rationed because apparently the nation cannot afford them. The Government still prefer to spend £270 million on widening the M62, rather than £170 million on electrifying the trans-Pennine network, even though that would relieve congestion on the motorway much more effectively.

Tory Members may not like the suggestion, but they simply have never tried it. They have never examined what has happened with the development of public transport systems abroad. If they had, they would have pursued a different policy. They still prefer to spend millions of pounds on extending the congested M6 north of Birmingham before they start modernising the west coast main line, which would do much more to relieve congestion.

It is not too difficult to see that the real reason why the Tories are so determined to continue building roads in perpetuity, despite mounting opposition across the country, lies in the link between the Tory party and some of the major construction companies. One company, Taylor Woodrow, has given more than £1 million to central office since 1979. Trafalgar House has given £590,000, Tarmac has given £389,000 and Wimpey has given £385,000. *[Laughter.]*

If it is such a laughing matter, I wonder why Tory Members think that those companies did so. They did so because they believed that they would get a return—and, by golly, they did from this Government. As we have long known, the trouble with Tory transport policy is that he who pays the piper calls the tune. That is not the way to get the new forward-looking policy for Britain that is now needed.

Mr. Forman: The hon. Gentleman said that he was interested in the facts, rather than anything more rhetorical. Is he aware of the simple fact that, although there was no new net investment in surface public transport throughout the International Monetary Fund cuts in 1976 to 1986, many of the problems that my constituents face are the result of a policy followed by Governments of both parties, who inadequately invested in surface transport over that period?

Mr. Meacher: We are 15 years on, and the hon. Gentleman might look at his own record. The Government like to claim that they have given 40 per cent. of investment to public transport. Of course, that investment includes items such as the royal train, National Freight Corporation public pensions and the coastguard service. If we remove those items, investment in public transport has been about 26 per cent.—an extremely low rate. Three times as much is going to roads than to public transport. That is the point that the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) should be addressing to Ministers.

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I will not give way.

Even if the Government were minded to make a change of direction, our second charge is that they are not in a position to deliver it. Their obsession with rail privatisation and bus deregulation is fragmenting services to an extent that makes it much more difficult to deliver a big expansion of public transport, even if they are minded to do so.

Indeed, the Secretary of State may soon have to decide whether he favours promoting competition between rail and bus operators, or whether he wants to help rail and bus to compete with the car. If it is the former, he may have to put a stop, under competition rules, to integrated ticketing valid between different operators. If it is the latter, he may have to enforce integrated ticketing to attract people away from their cars. Perhaps he would like to tell us his choice, but the fact remains that, whatever it is, Government policy is now wholly unfitted for the agenda that lies ahead.

What should be done? What is fundamentally needed in the United Kingdom is a genuinely sustainable policy that integrates different transport networks and provides real freedom of choice for the traveller and the commuter, not the present Tory policy, which is unsustainable and fragmented and which has distorted the Department of Transport into a ministry for endless road building and road widening. That is not only our view; it is shared by the royal commission, which is an across-the-board vindication of Labour's integrated policies.

We believe that that requires a moratorium on new road building and road widening, a major switch of resources into extending and upgrading public transport, greater use of light rail systems in inner-city areas and a significant shift from road to rail freight. Having said that, I immediately make it clear what our policy is not.

First, our policy is not anti-car. It is pro-car because it is not in the motorist's interests, let alone anyone else's, to build more and more roads indefinitely that, within a few years, will result in more and more people driving on more and more crowded roads and in an inexorable rise in delays and stoppages. We favour freedom of choice for the motorist. The problem is that he or she does not have freedom of choice at present because alternative public transport systems that are affordable, reliable and convenient and that he or she might prefer to use often simply are not available.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Roger Moate: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will in a moment.

Secondly, we do not suggest, and neither does the royal commission, that people should be required to get rid of their car. We do not even suggest that people should be encouraged to do so. All that we say is that the Government should provide a balanced and integrated transport system that will persuade people that it is common sense and in their interest to use the car less for certain purposes.

Mr. David Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will not give way if the hon. Gentleman keeps jumping up.

Our intention is to persuade the motorist to use the car less for particular purposes, such as driving into city centres with no passengers. We seek a cultural change, which is what is needed in Britain. We need a cultural change rather like the one that has occurred in the attitude to smoking and drinking and driving so that more socially responsible car use, such as I have suggested, becomes the norm of social acceptability. That requires a lead from the Government, but it is not being given at present.

Thirdly, we do not suggest that the choice is between the car and the present system of public transport, run down and under-invested as it is. We say that the real choice is between the endless expansion of the car society, which is ultimately self-defeating, and a balanced system in which cars, buses, trains and other means of transport can all play their interconnected and optimal roles.

Fourthly, let me make it clear that our policy is not to stop all future road building but to undertake a major review to decide what is in the wider social interest to build. Ironically, the Government have given the highest priority to certain major, hugely unpopular road projects, such as Twyford down, the Batheaston bypass and the M25 and M62 motorway widening projects, but have neglected certain clearly needed upgrading projects such as—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) agrees with this—the construction of a dual carriageway on the A1 north of Morpeth, and upgrading of the last few miles on the A2 into Dover and the A34 spine in the south-west.

We would look afresh at priorities in the light of new criteria, which would include the likely generation of new traffic, pressure for green-belt or out-of-town development and the capacity of alternative public transport options to solve the problem.

[Mr. Meacher]

Above all, we would want to see a common cost-benefit approach to all investment in transport that took the environment much more into account. That is not a utopian policy—far from it. There are strong practical reasons for believing in its realism.

There is scope for change in Britain today. Britain is the most car-dependent country in Europe. Public transport use is among the lowest. Where public transport has been improved, car owners use it: 40 per cent. of those using the newly reopened Robin Hood line into Nottingham are ex-car users and a similar proportion who use Manchester's Metrolink are well-off car owners from wealthy districts of Cheshire.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): We know.

Mr. Meacher: If the right hon. Gentleman knows it, why has he been so slow to support the construction of light rapid rail systems in cities? Many projects have come to him and he has been sitting on them. There has not been the rapid development that was needed years ago.

Pedestrianised areas in inner cities have been found to increase retail turnover, not to diminish it. Where cycling facilities are provided, many people use them; York is just one of many examples. Where local authorities have set targets to reduce city centre traffic, many have dramatically succeeded.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): We welcome that.

Mr. Meacher: If the Minister is so pleased with the policy, why has he been so extremely lax and laid back about implementing it? If he thinks that he has made the change in direction that is really needed, I am astonished. The Government are still going substantially along exactly the same lines. Despite the sustainability policy and the car review earlier this year, very little has changed.

Sir Roger Moate: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will not give way.

Many local authorities have had remarkable success stories—for example, the City of London traffic management schemes or the Manchester and Sheffield supertrams.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the effects of the Government's transport policy is that when environmentally friendly infrastructure is available it is often not used? I have a good example in my constituency. Very narrow residential streets are being blocked by heavy lorries delivering equipment to Railtrack in the centre of Cambridge. Equipment is delivered by lorry instead of by rail. Does my hon. Friend think that that is disgraceful?

Mr. Meacher: It is certainly extremely unwise and a good example—*[Laughter.]* One notices that every time a suggestion is made of an obvious, common-sense departure from the current inanities of the Government's unintegrated transport policies, they are simply greeted by a great deal of laughter. Transport is an issue about which many people in Britain care. They think that the Government should not simply laugh about absurdities such as my hon. Friend mentions but should make some real changes. What my hon. Friend says makes a great deal of sense. I hope that the Secretary of State will deal with those issues.

Sir Roger Moate: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will not give way now. The hon. Gentleman can make a speech if he wants to.

A great deal more could be done to switch freight from road to rail and to coastal shipping. In the United Kingdom only 7 per cent. of freight goes by rail while more than 60 per cent. goes by road. By comparison, about 27 per cent. in France and a third in Germany goes by road. If rail freight in the United Kingdom was doubled exclusively to replace journeys of more than 100 miles by the biggest lorries, total road freight could be reduced by more than a fifth and mileage by the biggest lorries could be reduced by half.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will not give way to the hon. Lady.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Did the signalmen's strike help?

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Lady will not succeed in interrupting by making sedentary interventions.

None of the problems to which I have referred need involve extra spending—[*Laughter.*] That just shows the extraordinarily closed minds that Conservative Members have. It is simple. If only a proportion of the money pledged by the Government for road building were reallocated, it would certainly be enough to provide much-improved, high-quality public transport systems, improved grants for rail freight and a wide variety of measures to cut inner-city traffic.

Few issues on the political agenda today are more important than transport. The Opposition have a vision for Britain. It is not of a country sinking ever deeper into a morass of pollution, congestion and concreted countryside. It is of a country in which transport is the ally, not the enemy, of the environment and where all modes of transport play their optimal role within a balanced network. That is our vision and our agenda. We believe that it is widely shared by the people of Britain.

7.49 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

> "welcomes the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report on Transport and the Environment; recognises that its recommendations deserve thorough consideration and analysis; supports the significant measures already taken by the Government to improve the environmental impact of transport; endorses the Government's recognition stated in the United Kingdom Sustainable Development Strategy, of the need to influence the rate of traffic growth and its clear planning policy guidance which seeks to reduce the need to travel in the future; to that end applauds the Government's efforts to promote the development of public transport and its moves towards an effective partnership between public and private investment in transport; and believes that a balance must be struck between environmental concerns, economic growth and the freedom and choice provided by road transport.".

I congratulate the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on his promotion—I would call it that—and I look forward to debating with him across the Dispatch Box. I hope that he will enjoy his new responsibilities as much as I am enjoying mine.

This debate centres on last Wednesday's report by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. With my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Health, I welcomed that report—I do so again this evening—as an important contribution to the broader debate about how to balance the economic benefits and personal freedoms that transport can bring with the need for environmental protection.

The report begins by looking back to the 1970s, so I thought that I would do the same and remind right hon. and hon. Members of the nature of transport in Britain in the 1970s and the changes that have occurred since. The hon. Member for Oldham, West may then agree that we are far from the breaking point to which he referred; moreover, in doing so I will endorse the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley).

The mid-1970s were not our railways' finest hour. Only 14 per cent. of ordinary trains operating in 1977 were less than 10 years old—their average age was closer to 20 years. Today, the average age of similar rolling stock is 14 years and more than half is less than 10 years old.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I do not want to sound too churlish at this stage in the Secretary of State's career, but he should not rely too much on statistics of that sort prepared within his Department. The diesel multiple units that he described as being around 20 years old in the 1970s were deliberately built with a design life of 30 years, so they still had another decade to go at the time.

Dr. Mawhinney: And today.

In 1978, the fastest journey time between London and Newcastle was three hours and four minutes—it is now 24 minutes less. It took four hours and 52 minutes to get to Edinburgh; now it takes 47 minutes less. It took three hours and 33 minutes to get to Plymouth and today it takes 28 minutes less.

Between 1978 and 1993, 775 miles of route were electrified. More than 160 stations have been reopened in the past 10 years. I hope that the hon. Member for Oldham, West will be listening to the next sentence. More than £15 billion has been invested in the railways.

Today, many more people fly—for business or to enjoy holidays. Fewer than 53 million passengers passed through our airports in 1978. Last year, more than 112 million did so.

On our roads, travel was often slower and more difficult. Since the late 1970s, we have opened more than 460 miles of new motorway and 160 new bypasses. In that time, more than £20 billion has been invested in our motorways and trunk roads to assist our nation's economy.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What about sedan chairs?

Dr. Mawhinney: I know that it would appeal to the hon. Gentleman given his idiosyncratic views but the Department of Health is not going to provide him with a sedan chair.

During the 1980s and 1990s, travel has become a more important feature of our lives. As incomes have grown, travel has grown—a phenomenon that is quite apparent to the royal commission, if not to Opposition Members, and which clearly presents challenges.

The commission's report sets out those areas in which transport growth can threaten the environment, especially pollution, noise and effects on land. We ought not to assume, however, that environmental damage always and necessarily grows in proportion to the growth in transport. The Government have taken very seriously their commitment to environmental protection. Consider, for example, the progress that has been made in improving air quality in our cities.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I was anxious that, before he left the subject of the 1970s and stopped looking backwards, the Minister should recognise that in the 1970s and the early 1980s the public transport system in south Yorkshire was planned on an integrated basis. The system included some subsidy for the fare-paying passenger, but there was a year-on-year increase in the number of passengers travelling on public transport. Does the Minister recognise that that system—the best in Europe—was destroyed by the Government's deregulation legislation?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, because it is not true. I was trying effectively to deal with the argument of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, which I guessed at although I did not get the words right. The change, development and progress in transport, which have benefited individuals and the nation's economy, are considerable and impressive.

I shall turn to the future, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West wants me to, but we will inform our debate about the future by the facts of our recent history, which is what I have been doing.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Could my right hon. Friend also remind the House about the fact that the Government's road-building programme concentrated on bypasses? The advantage of those is that they remove congestion from towns and reduce accident rates. The Opposition seem to be against bypasses, but may I put in a plea for some more to be built fairly quickly in my constituency?

Dr. Mawhinney: As my hon. Friend rightly points out, there is widespread support for bypasses among the people whose lives will be relieved by them. Batheaston bypass may have attracted people with different views of environmental issues, but it was welcomed by the people whom it was going to aid, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West knows.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East) *rose*—

Dr. Mawhinney: I must make a little progress before I give way again. The hon. Member for Oldham, West gave way four times and I have allowed three interventions.

The acrid choking sulphur smog of the 1950s is no longer a part of London life. We have succeeded in halving sulphur emissions since the 1970s. In London, peak levels of sulphur dioxide have decreased tenfold.

[Dr. Mawhinney]

On 4 October, we lowered maximum sulphur concentrations in diesel by a third. In 1996, we will be lowering permissible sulphur levels by another three quarters, helping reduce further the levels of sulphur dioxide and also reducing particulate emissions.

With lead, too, we have seen dramatic improvements. Airborne lead concentrations have dropped by up to 70 per cent. in urban areas since the mid-1980s. Lead affects the intellectual development of children. Reducing airborne lead concentrations is a major environmental achievement of which all of us should be proud.

On that point, I welcome the royal commission's support for continued efforts to promote the use of unleaded petrol. The commission's report endorses the Government's firm advice to motorists that those whose cars can run on unleaded petrol and who are not using it should start doing so, and that those already using unleaded petrol should not switch back to using leaded petrol.

The introduction of catalytic converters was a significant development in new technology. A new car driven from the showroom today will emit 63 per cent. less carbon monoxide, 83 per cent. less hydrocarbons and 87 per cent. less nitrogen oxides than its 1978 counterpart. New trucks and buses are more than 50 per cent. cleaner than their 1978 predecessors.

Reductions in noise have also been impressive. Three modern cars make less noise than one 1978 model and 10 of today's trucks will make the same amount of noise as one 1978 equivalent.

Progress has not been limited to surface transport. A modern jet aircraft is typically four times quieter than the first generation of jets and twice as quiet as the second generation.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): This is not a part of the motion.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman says from a sedentary position that this is not a part of the motion. It is absolutely at the heart of the motion because the royal commission report talks about environmental pollution and mentions emissions and noise. Unlike his hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West that is exactly what I am addressing, so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will listen.

Since the 1970s, emissions from aircraft engines have been reduced by 70 per cent. in the case of carbon monoxide and 90 per cent. in the case of hydrocarbons.

Tremendous strides have been made in the past 15 years. We have sought to allow people the freedom to make their own choices and to create for our industry the conditions necessary for it to thrive at home and compete abroad. What we have not seen in this country is the appalling environmental neglect that characterised those eastern European states where freedom was stifled and transport decisions were the prerogative of the bureaucrat. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Oldham, West knows what is coming.

On the contrary, we have seen increasing concern for the environment at all levels of Government and society. But, in spite of all the progress we have made since 1979—in spite of the revolutionary improvements to our national transport system and in spite of the revelation that freedom of individual choice is the key to economic, social and environmental progress—Opposition Members still cling to an obsolete belief that only the state can make acceptable changes to peoples' lives.

The Government will work with the grain of the British people. We recognise that there is real concern about the damage that transport can do to the environment. But we also recognise that Government cannot put more freight on to trains or move more people on to public transport at a stroke. Unlike Opposition Members, we share with the British people a belief in choice. We will present the facts. We will provide incentives and where appropriate seek to persuade, but we do not and will not direct people off or on to roads.

Our policy is clear, but the same cannot be said of the Labour party's. On 1 July the *Evening Standard*, presumably on the basis of a private steer, reported that an incoming Labour Government would

"halt all new road schemes".

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who was then Labour's environmental protection spokesman, backed off that very quickly.

In October, the Labour party conference was told that "much" of the £20 billion that Labour claims will be spent on roads over the next eight years would be redirected by a Labour Government to public transport. Last week the hon. Member for Oldham, West promised us a "moratorium" on road building, and he has promised us one again this evening. How confusing; it is not so much a policy, more a way of life. As ever, the Opposition are torn between trying not to offend the public on the one hand and their trade union paymasters on the other.

The Labour party has not even considered the costs of imposing a moratorium—nor how much it would have to pay to the construction companies for breach of contract. *[Interruption.]* Let the House listen carefully. Our preliminary calculations suggest that the hon. Gentleman's gentle promise of a moratorium could cause a Labour Government to face claims for around £1.4 billion. Has the hon. Gentleman cleared that bill with his hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor? Of course not. What about the schemes undertaken by local authorities? Has the hon. Gentleman checked the legal basis on which he might force them to abandon their schemes? Has the hon. Gentleman cleared this with his right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Attorney-General? Of course not.

The hon. Gentleman needs to understand that the roads budget—much of which he would like to redirect—does not just pay for new roads. It pays for maintenance, lighting, bridge strengthening, safety schemes and all the other things which are part of the road structure of this country. Would the Labour party's moratorium include those areas? The hon. Gentleman did not say.

Has the hon. Gentleman told his hon. Friends—many of whom are keen for local road improvements—which schemes he would abandon? Has he told his right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to forget about the improvement schemes in his constituency which he supports? Has he told his right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes), or his hon. Friends the Members for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson), for Wigan (Mr. Stott) or any of his other hon. Friends who write to my Department supporting their local road schemes?

Has he told Labour local authorities what his plans for the roads programme will mean? Has he told councils such as that in St. Helens, where only last week my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London opened the M62 extension and was told by Labour councillors just how vital the project is to the town?

As for the Liberal Democrats, you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will know that they oppose new road developments. You hear them say so in the Chamber week in, week out. But I have to tell you that it is a different story when they leave Westminster. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) is in favour of the proposed road-building scheme in Yeovil. The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is in favour of the road proposals in Berwick—in fact, he would like us to go further.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) is in favour of roads in North Cornwall—ditto the hon. Members for Truro (Mr. Taylor), for Bath (Mr. Foster) and for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones).

Why cannot we all agree that the task of devising an acceptable roads and transport policy for the next century is complex and demanding, and that it will not be solved with slogans? The hon. Member for Oldham, West uses the phrase "integrated policy" without explaining what it means. He used it once in his speech, in saying that the Labour party did not want to expand the M25 but wanted an integrated policy of railways and light railways. But he did not tell us whether he wanted British Rail to run trains alongside the M25.

Those slogans will not help us to make progress in determining what both he and I want—I shall come back to an area of agreement with the hon. Gentleman in a moment—which is a sensible policy which takes account of economic benefit, individual choice and environmental protection.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: Instead of throwing some red herrings into the debate, as he has spent half his speech doing, will the Secretary of State address the issue as it really is? We are not doing drivers, the car industry or anyone else a favour by failing to deal with the problems, particularly in the urban areas.

When we talk about public transport in urban areas outside London, we are talking about buses. The Secretary of State answered my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) by saying that he did not believe that what she said was true. But the Government have destroyed integrated bus services in metropolitan areas up and down the country. They have allowed ever-growing congestion, and fewer and fewer people travel by bus. Will he now reverse the deregulation policy and get back to some common sense in the urban area?

Dr. Mawhinney: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that operating costs for bus services are down by one third, subsidies are down by a half and there are 20 per cent. more route miles. If there was a large element of truth in what the hon. Gentleman said, we would not be selling the London bus companies as easily as we are. All of them will be sold by the end of the year.

Bold statements about Government spending priorities will not be sufficient to achieve genuinely sustainable transport policies. Anyone who believes that the answer lies in a simple shift of Government support from road to rail is ill informed. We need to make careful judgments about our ambitions for society, and then consider what measures will be necessary to achieve them. We also need to realise that, if people are to change their attitudes and behaviour, they will need to understand and accept the reasons with a good deal more clarity than is the case at present.

I agree with the hon. Member for Oldham, West that we face some fundamental questions. We need to address the issue of how much traffic is generated by new road building and to face up to the challenges that traffic growth presents. The hon. Gentleman is right that the standing advisory commission report is at the Department. It was considered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) before I took over as Secretary of State. The hon. Gentleman would not judge it unreasonable that I, as the new Secretary of State, should ask a number of questions about that report. He will know that it is customary for the Government to publish the report and their response at the same time.

My consideration of the report is drawing to a conclusion and I give the hon. Member for Oldham, West my undertaking to publish it and the Government's response shortly. I make no apology for the fact that I have taken my time to consider a report which I deem to be important and which, from what the hon. Gentleman said, which he also deems to be important. We will publish those documents shortly and we are making progress in their consideration.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): A few moments ago the Secretary of State said that the hon. Member for Newham, South supported the construction of new roads in his constituency. He should ask for a little more accuracy from his officials, because although I supported two improvements to the dangerous A13, which improved communications in Newham—it was not a new road—I am opposed to a third flyover at Canning Town. I consider it to be unnecessary. I hope that the Secretary of State accepts that that does not constitute offering support for new roads in my constituency.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming the truth of what I just told the House.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The Secretary of State has been unduly modest about one aspect of the Government's proposals—their commitment to implement a 5 per cent. per annum increase in the motor fuel tax. Does he dispute the arithmetic, logic or politics of the royal commission's recommendation that that increase should be upped to 9 per cent?

Dr. Mawhinney: We have not yet even reached the point where we can understand the mathematics that was used by the royal commission to develop some of its recommendations, but we are studying it very carefully.

I have already noted how, in the space of just a few hours' interviewing, the hon. Member for Oldham, West went from offering a heavy endorsement of the report's commitment to double the price of petrol to offering a heavily hedged endorsement. It took him just three television and two radio interviews to shift entire Labour party policy from A to Z. The Government have taken a

[Dr. Mawhinney]

more responsible and considered view. We intend to think before we speak, unlike the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend may not wish to answer my question now, but perhaps something could be said during the winding-up speech about the interesting suggestion in paragraph 8.85 of the royal commission's report. It advocates further research on and support for hybrid vehicles and electric vehicles, especially in urban areas. I am sure that such support would be helpful from an environmental point of view. Will my right hon. Friend undertake to look carefully at that suggestion?

Dr. Mawhinney: I will certainly undertake to look at that suggestion carefully.

I have already mentioned one fundamental question that we must face together. We must also ask ourselves what level of congestion on our roads is acceptable and how we can make other forms of transport more attractive to people. We believe that rail privatisation will help enormously, but are there other things that could be done?

In 1993, some 94 per cent. of all passenger transport took place on the roads; 63 per cent. of freight traffic moved by road, with 30 per cent. moving by water or pipeline and 6 per cent. by rail. I want to see more people and more freight travelling by rail but efforts to shift traffic in that direction will only alter the balance over time.

A study published last week examined the effects on road and rail use of significant improvements to the midland main line between London and Sheffield. It was shown that investment of perhaps £125 million would possibly attract up to a 30 per cent. increase in use of the railway line. The hon. Member for Oldham, West referred to similar figures. The significant point is that the effect on road use of that investment was shown to be negligible—scarcely 1 per cent. of drivers using the M1 or A1(M) would be likely to switch from road to rail. In other words, £125 million would remove one car in every 100 from the queues that are already building on the M1.

Similar conclusions flow from analysis of the effects of new light railways introduced in Manchester and Sheffield. Both are good schemes in their own right, but £140 million spent on the Manchester metrolink has resulted in a reduction in traffic in Manchester of around 0.3 per cent. So £140 million of good investment for the benefit of people who use metrolink has removed three cars in every 1,000 from Manchester's roads.

From that and other research, it would appear that to transfer just 10 per cent. of car journeys nationally to rail would, on those figures, require an investment of some £140 billion. It is clear—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members do not like it because they have not got beyond the superficial thinking that says that, if one puts some more money into rail, people will automatically follow that money.

I wanted to make common cause with the hon. Member for Oldham, West; I hope that that will not damage him unduly so early in his career. The real issue to be addressed relates more, as the hon. Gentleman said, to the attitudes and behaviour of individuals than it does to the disposition of spending. The hon. Gentleman said that we need a "cultural change"; I have said that we need to address "attitudes and behaviour". I believe that, broadly, we are saying the same thing.

If so, the hon. Gentleman must move beyond the simplistic idea that if one takes money out of one budget and puts it into another, people will automatically follow that changed disposition of investment. The evidence does not support that. That poses a serious problem for those who would wish to see a greater shift in transport policy. One of my regrets about the royal commission report is that it did not address that issue with the degree of fundamental concern that it warrants. We will all have to address it in debate and research in the months that lie ahead.

I am pleased that much of the debate surrounding the royal commission report is not about whether we should seek a sustainable transport system but about how we should do so, and in particular, what are the costs of making changes.

The commission said clearly that it expected some stiff price increases to be necessary if its targets were to be met. It suggested a doubling of fuel prices by 2005—as the hon. Member for Oldham, West said—in combination with other measures such as reduced speed limits.

I wish the royal commission had given a little more attention to that area. Looking at the scale of some of the things it proposed—a 20 per cent. cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2020, for example—I believe that much more stringent measures are implied even than a doubling of fuel prices. No doubt we will discuss that issue further in the months ahead.

So, while a debate develops around how to persuade more people to use public transport, how to manage our road systems better, how to decide which parts of our roads programme are valuable and necessary and which are of less importance and how to advance 21st century engine technology, we will continue to pursue policies which attack the problem of air pollution, encourage the transfer of freight off the roads and on to rail or water, promote better use of land planning by local authorities, encourage local authorities to put together packages of measures to meet both environmental objectives and transport aims, promote road safety and foster increased use of cycling.

The next time the hon. Member for Oldham, West is looking for a city that has a good cycle system that he can admire, I invite to come to my constituency of Peterborough. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) will be able to testify to that, as a result of his short sojourn among us in Peterborough. Incidentally, to that end, I intend to visit Holland to seek to understand why so many Dutch people take to the bicycle.

During my first weeks in this office, I have asked a series of questions not only about existing policies but about the balance of those policies between economic well-being, enhancement of choice and environmental protection. I assure the House that, as with my announcement over regional airport liberalisation, I shall not hesitate to seek to change the balance if I consider it necessary.

This week's edition of *The Economist* makes my final point when it says:

> "Cars are accused of being accomplices in the destruction of town centres . . . public transport is back in fashion—not as something to use . . . but rather as something to recommend that other people should use. This battle between what people want to do and what they would like other people to do risks getting out of hand".

I am not interested in the sort of sloganising that that represents. I am interested and wish to see developed sensible and sustainable progress, and I am determined to work to that end.

I commend the amendment to the House.

8.20 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and my other hon. Friends for initiating this important debate. It is obvious that the Government would never have initiated such a debate.

I hope to make a common-sense contribution and, first, I declare an interest as a sponsored member of the Transport and General Workers Union. During my time in the House, I, in common with many other Members, have attended a wide variety of meetings of different transport groups covering every aspect of transport: road, rail, sea and air.

In the 1960s, the in-phrase was "to seek to create a co-ordinated, integrated transport system". Since the Beeching rail cuts, we have moved steadily further away from that still-desirable aim. *[Interruption.]* If the Secretary of State does not know what an integrated transport system is, he should not be in the job that he holds. Indeed, if past practice is anything to go by, he will not be in it for much longer anyway.

Dr. Mawhinney: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell me what he means.

Mr. Marshall: That will become obvious as I progress.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was travelling in the right direction with his 1992 policy for a national transport plan. We simply cannot have a successful nationwide transportation system based on a piecemeal approach, as is now the case. The Government have never had a proper transport policy of any kind.

Contrast that fact with what happens in other countries. From most parts of western Europe there is a high-speed rail service to Calais and the channel tunnel. Yet on this side of the channel we have far too little far too late, and a marvellous opportunity has been missed. When I went to Lille in northern France, for example, in January 1992 as the then Chairman of the Transport Select Committee, a brand new tramway system had almost been completed, together with a brand new suburban rail system, a brand new TGV high-speed rail link and a brand new bus station and road links, all connecting into a large complex with office and shopping facilities on a grand scale.

That shows co-ordination, integration and common sense, and it is the type of integrated planning system that we want and need. It is a much less environmentally harmful system than the alternatives. With such essential infrastructure in place, it is no wonder that Lille will attract thousands of new jobs as a result. Why, oh why, can it not happen here?

Why have we never had a proper on-going investment programme in our railways, replacing rolling stock annually, and more electrification on energy conservation and environmental grounds, even to the unacceptable extent—unacceptable to this Government—of building new railway lines to meet the needs of shifting populations? Such investment would have created jobs, retained and increased passenger levels and avoided the sorry position that we are in today.

The brilliant policy of changing to unmanned suburban railway stations has driven passengers away in droves. Sadly, due to the rise in crime under this Government, people are afraid to use unmanned stations, especially women, children, the frail and the elderly—the very people who depend almost totally on public transport. Let us reduce unemployment by returning to manned stations, and so increase the use of rail transport and reduce road congestion.

The Secretary of State talks about transferring freight from road to rail, but the railway system can take only a tiny amount of such freight due to the lack of infrastructure caused by lack of investment by his Government during the past 15 years. Is it not ironic that, only a few years ago, Railfreight was withdrawing from the freight business because it was not making a go of it or delivering the goods? That is no way for any Government to run a railway system.

On the problems of London, we cannot build our way out of trouble. That would be both unacceptable and far too expensive. Better public transport and traffic management will help, but some form of restraint seems inevitable. But no fair system of restraint has yet been devised. Some of my hon. Friends may be offended if I suggest that job dispersal would be a far better way to deal with the problem because, due to technological progress, there is absolutely no reason why many jobs in London could not be done in the provinces and in Scotland and Wales, which would benefit the nation as a whole. Perhaps we should start by moving Parliament to Manchester or some other place, and leaving this building to the tourists.

Everyone wants a better environment and less pollution, but the danger is that people look not at the overall position but only at the bits they like. We all want less congestion so long as someone else's car comes off the road, not ours. Most people do not like lorries, but they want to buy goods from the shops to which lorries deliver, and they want to buy them as cheaply as possible.

We must reduce congestion, improve public transport and reduce the number of unnecessary car journeys. Extreme punitive fuel taxation is not the answer. It could even worsen the problem, especially economically. It would also be unfair because business executives and many others would simply have the increased cost paid for them, eventually passing the costs on to the consumer. Yet again, the biggest losers would be the poor and those on low incomes.

Let us not forget, too, that for many people, especially those with handicapped or elderly relatives, the car is sometimes essential, as I know from personal experience. Let us also not forget that the first ambition of young people is to have access to a car. We should allow them to do it legally and affordably, rather than have more and more of them resort to joy riding, with all that that involves.

[Mr. Marshall]

On the employment aspects, we must not get things out of balance and impose substantial fuel tax increases immediately, as the Government may do in the Budget. The manufacturing, sales and servicing of cars and trucks employs many hundreds of thousands of people. Lorry drivers and car drivers whose livelihood depends on their vehicle will be at risk, as will many associated jobs. Unemployment is far more dangerous to one's health and welfare than living beside a busy road. One has only to ask the thousands of my constituents who have been unemployed for many years.

What will happen to prices, especially those of basic essential food stuffs? What about the effect on rural areas? What about tourism, not only in Britain as a whole but especially in Scotland, where it is now the largest industry? Scotland, especially the highlands and islands, could be hard hit, with disastrous economic consequences. All that shows that we must plan properly if we are to get it right. The Government will never do so because they do not believe in transport planning.

May I take just one minute to refer to the position in my constituency and neighbouring constituencies? At the moment, the main arterial routes in the east end of Glasgow—Duke street, Gallowgate, London road, Shettleston road and Tollcross road—all carry exceptionally high volumes of very noisy traffic, made much worse when the M8 is choked, as it regularly is. The east end has a high accident rate, mainly among children and elderly people. It also has many hundreds of the 5,000 acres of vacant and derelict land in the city of Glasgow, and one of the highest levels of unemployment in Scotland.

We desperately need to complete the M74 from where it comes to an end at Tollcross in my constituency, through to the Kingston bridge. I plead guilty to the Secretary of State's earlier charge about wanting new road investment where it is necessary and where it is proper, not where it is not needed and not where it is unnecessary.

The completion of the M74 would relieve pressure on Kingston bridge, which is grossly overloaded and currently under repair. If that bridge ever has to close, Glasgow will grind to a halt, because one will not be able to move. The completion of the M74 would substantially reduce through traffic in my constituency, reduce road deaths and accidents, improve the environment and open up hundreds of acres of derelict land to investment, and the possible creation of thousands of desperately needed jobs.

That project should go ahead as soon as possible. I hope that I have demonstrated that such projects are desirable and enhance the environment. To do nothing is to blight the area for decades to come, and to worsen the environment and quality of life in the area.

Finally, how does one define environmental improvements? One example, in my opinion, is bypasses, which take traffic round towns and villages and, in so doing, greatly enhance the local quality of life. We need many more such bypasses.

However, most of all we need to aim for a balanced integrated transport system; one that recognises transport as a social necessity and funds it accordingly; one that invests adequately in our railways and light rapid transit systems and provides more and better secure park and ride facilities, and, by using better traffic management schemes, encourages people to use buses. We also need a national transport policy that puts public transport back on the agenda as a first priority, not as a last resort.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his fine speech, and I agree with almost every word. However, the Secretary of State was smiling when my hon. Friend spoke about an integrated transport policy. Let me give my hon. Friend an example from my neck of the woods.

Before railway privatisation, there were connections from Wrexham to Chester and we could catch trains from Chester to London. Now that we have privatisation, Regional Railways competes with InterCity and it is no longer expedient to have connections when one travels from Wrexham to Chester, so that one may catch the InterCity service from Chester to Euston. Regional Railways wants one to sit in a Sprinter all the way to Birmingham, and take an hour longer over it.

That is an excellent example of a way in which the Government's policy has introduced disintegration. I suspect that there are similar examples throughout the country.

Mr. Marshall: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point.

I repeat my final remarks. What is needed is a national transport policy, which puts public transport back on the agenda as a first priority, not as a last resort.

8.32 pm

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall). I agree with several of his main arguments, and especially his final argument. The bypasses that he mentioned are needed in many districts throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. I deeply regret the fact that it was necessary to slim down the road-building programme, for reasons that I shall discuss later. *[Interruption.]*

I hear the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) moaning, but many of my constituents, and those of other hon. and right hon. Members on both sides of the House, wish traffic to be taken away from the centre of towns, as the hon. Member for Shettleston said. That is very important.

We shall not witness those developments if the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has his way and there is a moratorium on the road-building programme. He painted a depressing picture of Labour's roads policy. Throughout the "Roads for Prosperity" assessment of the decade between 1979 and 1989, which led to some of the road-building schemes that are taking place at present, it was obvious that many people throughout the country wished traffic to be taken away from their towns and villages. Although I would be the first to accept that many schemes are contentious and have been dropped for a variety of reasons, there are many others that I and many other people would like to be developed, not least in my constituency.

If my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will take note, I wish that the A570 Scarisbrick and Pinfold schemes, linking my constituency with the national motorway network, might be carried out sooner, but I recognise that, due to a bit of assiduous lobbying, we were able to keep that scheme in the road-building programme rather than witnessing it drop off the programme, which might have been the case.

As my right hon. Friend of Secretary of State mentioned, I do not believe that what we heard from the hon. Member for Oldham, West was a balanced view of the way that we should proceed. He mentioned the light rail systems. We have heard earlier about Nottingham, Manchester, Tyne and Wear and Sheffield. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London will draw attention to the substantial amount of money that Government, the private sector and local authorities have put into those important schemes.

There was not a word from the Opposition Front Bench about the freight facilities grant scheme. Do Opposition Members realise how many millions of lorry journeys per year have been removed from the 1995 diary as a result of the freight facilities grant scheme? It has allowed companies grants of up to 100 per cent. of the cost of the infrastructure of transferring freight off our roads on to the rails.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West does not realise yet that more than 90 per cent. of all freight journeys throughout the country at present are under 50 miles, so it is not practical for every company to invest, even if it could afford to, even with the help of the freight facilities grant scheme, to transfer more of its freight off the road on to the rails. That 50-mile limit for 90 per cent. of the freight that moves throughout the country is an important statistic, of which I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take note.

However, the hon. Member for Oldham, West made several valid points about certain aspects of our culture. I agree with what the hon. Gentleman said about the changing attitude to smoking and drink-driving. I believe that, in our national life, we need a gradual change in our culture in relation to transport over several years.

I recognise that many of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members wish to contribute to the debate, so I shall try to keep my remarks to the issues that have already been raised in the debate, and especially in relation to the remarks that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made about unleaded petrol. I shall return to that subject later.

The Transport Select Committee drew attention to many issues in its recently published report on transport-related air pollution in London. I shall mention several. I feel strongly about many matters, of which I very much hope that the Government will take note.

Although I would be the first to recognise that the use of the catalytic converter is, rightly, the cornerstone of Government policy in reducing emissions, because it is the best technical way of doing so at present, it is important that we recognise that it will do so only if the catalytic converter is working properly. It is important that, in the years ahead, as part of our Department of Transport testing procedure, we should have a section that is concerned with the maintenance and standard, at that moment, of the catalytic converter.

Friends of the Earth has drawn attention to the fact that, during the average 10 km journey, 70 or 80 per cent. of the emissions take place in the first kilometre, which brings into question the importance of ensuring technical developments in pre-heated catalytic converters. I hope that the Government will enter as soon as possible into new discussions with the motor industry to try to set a target date so that all cars will be able to have new pre-heated catalytic converters, and that those catalytic converters will be the subject of MOT testing. I recognise that the Department of Transport has, rightly, tightened MOT testing procedure, but we must reconsider in particular the way in which emissions are checked, to try to produce cleaner cold starts.

If hon. Members are concerned about catalytic converters and their use and about whether they are effective, it is important that they ensure that the industry takes on board the suggestions made by the Automobile Association, the Royal Automobile Club and the Select Committee on Transport. They said that we should encourage motor manufacturers at the point of manufacture to install in vehicles an electronic warning device that will show whether the catalytic converter is working properly, in the same way as a warning light tells a driver whether his brakes are failing. The Department of Transport should take that on board, and it should press motor manufacturers to install such a device as soon as possible.

My next point does not have a direct impact on the responsibilities of my hon. Friend the Minister, but perhaps in his discussions with Home Office Ministers he might suggest that they should start compiling statistics. In particular, we should encourage our police forces to start taking a greater interest in enforcing the legal emissions limit.

I am conscious that time is pressing on. I welcome the fact that the Department, in response to the Transport Select Committee's recent publication, has said that it will continue to review the use of super unleaded petrol. The Select Committee took evidence from some reputable individuals and companies, in particular Associated Octel, which estimated that in London premium unleaded fuels contain between 4 and 6 per cent. more aromatics than leaded four-star petrol and that super unleaded contains at least 16 per cent. more aromatics than four star. Associated Octel recommended that super unleaded be taken off the market or, at the very least, that it should lose its lower excise duty advantage over unleaded petrol. The Department of Transport must take that on board.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Banks: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I shall sit down in a moment. I hope that he will seek to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. I recognise that he has a constituency interest in the matter and I hope that he will have the opportunity to make his speech in his own time. Although I welcome the Government's response in the matter, I hope that the review will be a little more substantial than has been suggested.

I should like to comment on the policies of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. I excuse the hon. Member for Shettleston from my remarks, but in the past few weeks Opposition Members, many of whom are sponsored by transport unions, have shown a knee-jerk reaction to the report. It seems to me, particularly from what the hon. Member for Oldham, West said earlier, that Labour party policy on the environment and transport is driven by the unions rather than by the need to have a more balanced approach.

[Mr. Banks]

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State commented on Liberal Democrat policy, particularly in relation to its "Getting Britain to Work" document. The best that can be said about it is that it makes clear that it, too, would cancel all motorway improvements. That would lead to greater congestion, further pollution and damage to the economy. There is no greater example of the usual inconsistencies of Lib-Dem policies that are advocated in the House.

Liberal Democrat Members talk about the environment in this place, but when they get back to their constituencies it is a different matter. The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) talks about the importance of the north Devon link road; the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) talks about the necessity of the dualling of the A1. The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel), who one rarely sees in this place, insists on having a Newbury bypass; and the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) insists on improvements to the A46. The Government are achieving the right balance, and I shall have no hesitation in supporting them in the Division Lobby.

8.44 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) in that diversion around the country, because I want to deal with the remarks of the Secretary of State for Transport, who I regret to see has left the Chamber. I agree with the Secretary of State on one important point. We are dealing with some complex issues. All hon. Members should be grateful to the royal commission for considering those complex issues with a great deal of expertise and experience—I notice that Conservative Members are nodding. There is room for consensus across the Chamber.

Sadly, this place does not do justice to issues of this complexity, which have run through Governments for many years. Often the adversarial atmosphere does not give the best result. I hope that consensus will develop across party boundaries, and I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State appears to believe that that should be the case.

It is easy to be wise after the event. It was less easy perhaps for Ministers in the 1960s and 1970s—not all of whom represented the Conservative party; some represented the Labour party—to ignore the warnings of Colin Buchanan, with whom I have had the pleasure of working, about many of the problems that the royal commission has brought before hon. Members. This is not a just a problem of the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s. It was identified by some of the more perceptive of our advisers in the 1960s.

The Labour party may already be finding itself in some difficulty. I regret very much that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has left the Chamber, because this weekend he appeared to rule out the use of all road-pricing mechanisms to deal with congestion in our major cities and towns. I am not sure whether that represented the policy of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) but I suspect that it did not. None of us can relinquish a useful carrot. We cannot rely entirely on sticks, and it was profoundly misguided of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras to rule out all price mechanisms of that sort. With the exploding use of private vehicles, cars and lorries, it will be essential to find new mechanisms to enable and encourage people to travel by other means.

No hon. Member is suggesting that we can uninvent the internal combustion engine—that is patently absurd. However, the hon. Member for Southport touched on the point that no magic formulation for fuel in internal combustion engines will suddenly make them totally environmentally friendly. Whatever is put in their fuel, they are inherently an environmental problem.

We can, of course, work towards reducing carbon dioxide levels in line with suggestions made by the royal commission and I hope the Government will make a commitment, when they have taken stock of the evidence, to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 2000, and to 80 per cent. of 1990 levels by 2020.

The Government should also firmly commit themselves to complying with the World Health Organisation's air quality guidelines by 2005. We do not want a lot more vacuous hot air from either side of the House about those ideas. We want some commitment to improving air quality.

The environmental impact of carbon dioxide emissions is highlighted in new research that shows that the soil in our cities is becoming contaminated and is unable to absorb water. That is the scale of the problem. It is not just the environment that is suffering. How much subsidy does the national health service effectively give to the roads lobby? It must treat those people who suffer from breathing difficulties, the levels of which are increasing, asthma, which received a lot of publicity this summer, and stress-related problems. How much does industry generally pay in days lost at work from those illnesses?

We have to look at ways in which, with carrot or stick, we can encourage people to use public transport whenever possible. In some rural areas—my own constituency is a case in point—there is very little public transport left, and to imagine that it could suddenly be reintroduced overnight would be flying in the face of experience. Successive Governments—not just this one—have cut investment in public transport, leaving rural areas with no realistic alternative to the car. I know that some Conservative Members represent such areas.

Where it is a viable alternative, however, public transport must take precedence—hence the need to set the targets which the royal commission has rightly put before the Government and the House. We could increase the use of public transport by 12 per cent. on 1993 figures, to 20 per cent. in the year 2005 and on to 30 per cent. by the year 2020—if that were declared a programme objective now. It would be feasible to aim to increase by 50 per cent. the number of urban journeys taken on public transport outside London by the year 2020, and, in London, to increase them by 30 per cent. In the next few days, planning guidance that can help that process is likely to be issued.

The concentration of amenities out of town, causing people to abandon traditional urban centres, has caused enormous difficulty in this respect, and unless there is reversal of the trend, it will be difficult to ensure that people reduce their reliance on the private car.

Decision makers are, almost by definition, people who depend on cars. Planners, business leaders, councillors, civil servants, Members of Parliament and certainly Ministers all depend on their cars. They assume that everyone else does, but even in comparatively well-off rural areas of Britain, where there is little public transport, a large percentage of the population cannot have daily access to private cars. The census in Wiltshire, a relatively well-off county, showed that 60 per cent. of women did not have driving licences and thus were automatically precluded from car transport for all the usual amenities of daily life. Other parts of the country could provide us with similarly sizeable numbers. Any action in this area could also assist the regeneration of our town centres; that would be an extremely useful by-product.

I accept the Secretary of State's point that it cannot all be done over night; the shift will probably take the lifetime of a Government, given the magnitude of the U-turn, but we must start with some explicit and effective action.

The commission has proposed increases in the price of petrol; so, we understand, have the Government. For several years now, Conservative candidates all over the country have accused Liberal Democrats of wishing to increase the costs of transport for those living in rural areas. A few hours ago, a Tory Member told me that we had been brave to propose tax rises some years ago. At the last general election, a large number of those Conservative candidates gave explicit promises that fuel taxes and costs would not be increased—but they have been, by successive Conservative Chancellors. Indeed, the rate of increase has been faster than even we dared suggest.

Now, as we have heard this evening, the Government are threatening to raise fuel taxes again in the forthcoming Budget. The essential difference between what the commission proposes—we agree with it—and what the Government propose is shown by the ways in which the additional revenue is to be used. Ministers want to use it to help with their income tax cuts, preferably closer to the election. The commission and many of us would propose that the money be ring-fenced to pay for direct assistance for those who use smaller, more economical and more environmentally friendly vehicles, and for those who have limited access to feasible alternatives in the form of public transport.

We plan a scheme that would not hit the private user with a low annual mileage and, typically, a small-engined car. Predominantly we want to ensure that the male business users—long-distance, heavy-duty users who commute from city to city in high-powered vehicles—pay the real costs of that activity. There must be an incentive for them to let the train take the strain.

Surely all hon. Members accept that it would be much fairer to tax the use of the car effectively than just to tax its ownership indiscriminately. The Mini should not be taxed the same as the Jaguar. As the Secretary of State pointed out, the impact of any increase in fuel duty is far from clear, but the Department appears to suggest that a 9 per cent. increase in fuel tax would secure a petrol use reduction of only 2 or 3 per cent. That is not enough to make the sort of impact that the royal commission says will be necessary to satisfy its—and our—environmental aims. If it was a flat rate increase, without the mitigating measures that we suggest, it would hit all who need to use their cars, and those who can least afford to be without them would be hit just as badly as those with a viable alternative.

With figures provided by the motoring organisations, we have concluded that a shift in this tax burden is called for. A cut in vehicle excise duty—retaining for the smallest engines only a nominal administrative charge—could be the most effective way of ensuring that those who are environmentally friendly in their use of motor cars benefit, while those who are least helpful in that respect carry the heaviest burden. The figures show that the average private motorist with a small mileage and a small car would benefit under this system.

The commission recommends that action be taken to increase freight-carrying capacity by putting lorries on trains that will run on the rail link from Scotland to the channel tunnel, for instance. That is a high priority for all parts of Britain away from the south-east. We think that there are economies of scale on rail for journeys of more than 200 km. Is it not absurd that, in the very year our rail system links up, after hundreds of years, with the continental system, so that it becomes economic again to carry a lot of freight on it, rail privatisation threatens to disintegrate the rail network?

The royal commission also shows that lorries pay much less than they cost us—they pay about half what they cost the national Exchequer and economy. We shall seek to transfer heavy long-distance loads to the railways—transferring about 22 per cent. of current total lorry mileage to rail. I hope that the Secretary of State means what he says in this respect. The mileage of the largest lorries could be cut by 45 per cent. too.

I do not think that we have yet got to the kernel of this issue. There is widespread acceptance that we cannot build our way out of congestion in the south-east or anywhere else. One of the members of the commission, Professor John Lawton, suggested, that if the M25 is widened in line with present plans at a cost of £9 billion, it will be just eight years before the congestion results in the whole process having to start again. Incidentally, some Conservative Members who have actively campaigned in their constituencies against widening the M25 are conspicuous by their absence from this debate.

Dr. Phil Goodwin, whose transport studies unit at Oxford university has proved such a pioneer of the new realism, said last week that an enlarged motorway and trunk road construction programme is counter productive. Irony of ironies, he quoted a British Road Federation report which shows that, if the programme is increased by 50 per cent.,

> "congestion on trunk roads would actually worsen every year, not improve."

As we have heard, the Department of Transport's standing advisory committee has looked at that issue. I suspect that it will come up with the same answer.

The inevitable conclusion is that a whole basket of measures—carrots and sticks—will be necessary to achieve a shift in balance. Dr. Goodwin also believes that

> "small, widespread improvements often give better results than prestige projects."

That is why many of my colleagues and I have supported small-scale improvements to bypasses. They are cost-effective. However, none of us has supported the huge and enormously expensive expansion of the motorways programme.

Dr. Goodwin spoke about the need for an emphasis on better maintenance, but that has not been mentioned much in the debate. One illegally overloaded lorry does more damage to a mile of motorway than 3,000 or 4,000 cars on it on one day. If we could deal with that problem—and so far the Government's initiative in that respect has

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not been effective—it would make a major contribution to the removal of many of the roadworks which themselves cause congestion.

Of course there must be some investment in new roads: we cannot not wipe out the programme overnight. Talk of cancelling every contract is absurd. However, we should concentrate on bypasses to improve the environment of smaller towns and villages. The imbalance between road and rail is on the mega-schemes. I shall give an example that will be familiar to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

If the Government have their way, there will be another crossing on the River Tamar between Cornwall and England. If that happens, there will have to be a motorway connection between the present end of the M5 and the bridge, and huge expenditure on the access roads on the Cornish side. All the local authorities are dead against the proposal because of the increased cost to the motorist, quite apart from that to the taxpayer. They believe that the problem could be much more effectively dealt with through just some investment in the rail network to ensure that mainline trains continue into Cornwall and that freight can be taken out. A comparatively modest investment in the rail network would save huge sums on roads and could make possible an effective park-and-ride system and reduce commuter traffic.

I hope that, in his reply to the debate, the Minister will specifically repudiate the comments by previous incumbents in his Department. I am delighted to see that the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) is in his place. I warned him that I would be referring to one of his trenchant speeches before he was relieved of his duties as a Minister. I have in mind his stirring address to the Auto Express awards dinner at the Park Lane hotel to an audience of 200 motor manufacturers and car fanatics—a roads lobby bonanza if ever there was one. At that dinner the hon. Member for Salisbury confessed his

"love for cars of all shapes and sizes."

He said that cars were a "good thing" and went on:

> "The car is going to be with us for a very long time. We must start thinking in terms that will allow it to flourish."

I am not sure what the Government had been doing before that.

The hon. Gentleman condemned the railways. He said:

> "If ever there was an environmentally unfriendly form of transport it was the railways. They played havoc with our countryside and it was outrageous the way Parliament allowed them to carve up the countryside and destabilise it by building tunnels. They spewed out polluting gases and turned buildings black. It makes me wonder if we've got our priorities right."

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): That selective quote is proof, if proof were needed, that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing in the hands of the Liberals. Of course I was referring to debates in the House 100 or more years ago when the big issue which made Maastricht look like a picnic was the Railways Regulation Act 1883. The hon. Gentleman well knows that that was the subject of my speech. There can be no consensus as long as he seeks to deliver speeches like that.

Mr. Tyler: I never thought that I would be so grateful for an intervention. I wish that the hon. Gentleman and Ministers would concentrate on the problems of the 21st century rather than those of the 19th. It is sad that the hon. Gentleman, who was at that time a Minister, thought that it was more important to re-run the rearguard action of the landowners of the 19th century than to look at what our fellow citizens will have to face in the 21st century.

The royal commission proposals would cost money, but in true cost-benefit terms we should consider what could be achieved by reducing the £19 billion that is presently earmarked for the roads programme, and especially for the motorway improvement and expansion programme. For the benefit not of the roads lobby but of the individual citizen, we believe in giving people real choice, and in that we agree with the Secretary of State. But we want to give our future citizens the choice of cleaner air to breathe, a public transport system that is reliable and pleasant to use, and an improved environment for future generations.

9.4 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): The House should be genuinely grateful to the Labour party and to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) for tabling this motion and introducing this debate. It has been extremely revealing and instructive. Over the past few months, there has been a great deal of chatter throughout the country about the fact that the Labour party is now supposedly reformed and suddenly committed to the virtues of economic rationality, freedom of choice and the rights of the consumer and so forth, having abandoned its former attachment to promoting purely sectarian producer interests—largely trade union—and to the cause of state planning and intervention. This evening, the hon. Member for Oldham, West ripped away the veil. Behind it we saw a rather unattractive face—the face of the traditional Labour party. Already this evening we have heard one speech on behalf of a transport union.

Let us consider the issues of consumerism and free choice. There was no evidence in the hon. Gentleman's speech that he has ever asked himself why roads are crowded and why new roads rapidly become popular and therefore crowded. It seems that it has never occurred to him that the reason is that people want to use roads. They need roads and they need more roads. In what other way can the motorist demonstrate that he likes a road and that he wants more roads than by using them? What is the solution to that? Of course, the hon. Gentleman referred to the traditional Labour party remedy of state control and intervention, preventing the consumer from doing what he wants.

The Opposition motion makes great play of the need to reduce pollution, accidents, noise and congestion. Has the hon. Gentleman asked himself what causes them? It is bad and inadequate roads. The amount of pollution generated by traffic stalled in a traffic jam is a vast multiple of the pollution generated by traffic flowing freely along a new bypass or motorway. The figures show that far and away the most dangerous roads are the traditional roads and the safest roads are motorways and bypasses. If he were serious about dealing with the issues of pollution, accidents, noise and congestion, the last thing to do would be to introduce a moratorium on new road building.

One may wonder about either the rationality or the sincerity of a party that complains about air pollution, but opposes nuclear generation of power—which is environmentally the most friendly form of generation. The pollution caused by CO_2 and SO_2 emissions by burning coal for power generation is three or more times greater than the CO_2 emissions generated by traffic in this and other modern economies.

Mr. Butler: Does my hon. Friend accept that electric vehicles and dual-powered motor vehicles are not pollution-free? Indeed, they are pollution-free only at the point where we put the plug in. Under Labour policies, the production of electricity could be highly polluting.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes a good point. A large amount of the energy generated would be lost in generation and transmission.

What price the economic rationality of the reformed Labour party? None of the contributions by Labour Members reflected the slightest evidence that any of them had thought for one moment about the negative economic consequences of congestion, or about the benign economic consequences of investing in new roads.

When one improves the road system, one increases human mobility for all sorts of purposes. One increases also job mobility, because people can travel to a larger number of possible jobs. They can take up employment that is located outside the range of public transport. However elaborate that network might be, there will always be a large number of places that cannot be served by it. That will be especially true in rural areas.

An improved road system also allows goods to be delivered more cheaply and rapidly, and provides greater consumer choice and competition. More transactions will lead to more specialisation and output, which will in turn create more jobs. To conduct a discussion of the consequences or otherwise of improving the nation's road system without mentioning the enormous economic stakes that hang on that decision reflects extraordinary unreality on the part of Opposition Members, including those on Labour's Front Bench, who should know better.

I am much in favour of railways and of higher investment in them, but the hon. Member for Oldham, West and other Opposition Members did not say that they would spend more public money on railways. Labour opposes root and branch our proposal to enable more private capital to be invested in the railways, to improve the network and to make services ever more market-oriented—and therefore more consumer-friendly and likely to attract a higher volume of passengers and freight.

What is one to make of a party that argues for a better balance between road and rail, yet opposes the proposal to extract a price for the use of motorways—which alone could create the sort of level playing field on the basis of which private capital will be induced to invest in new rail projects?

It would be unreasonable flattery to term what we have heard in tonight's debate an argument, because it has been more a series of slogans and unthought-through prejudices and contributions full of the most elementary contradictions.

Another reason that I am grateful for comments by Labour Members this evening is that their line on the road programme will give me several thousand votes in the next election in Stamford and Spalding that otherwise I would not have received. The people of the beautiful, ancient town of Stamford, with which I hope hon. Members in all parts if the House are familiar, and of The Deepings, an only slightly less well-known town, are desperate for bypasses. My hon. Friend the Minister knows all about that, as did his predecessor. I am confident that, with his support, we shall have those bypasses before too long.

One thing that is clear beyond peradventure to my constituents is that, if Labour is in power after the next general election, there will be a moratorium and my constituents will not get those bypasses at all. I did not expect this evening to be given such a wonderful electoral gift, but the fact that it was given to me by the Opposition is not a good reason to be churlish, and I express my profoundest gratitude for it.

9.14 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I am pleased that the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) is trying to keep his spirits up.

I took part in the transport debate on 26 April, which may have been the last occasion on which we debated transport in the Chamber. I raised a broad range of transport issues affecting the north of England: the lack of efficient transport planning, the failure of deregulation and its effects on integration—particularly as it affected the Tyne and Wear metro system, although the Secretary of State's self-confessed ignorance of integration perhaps sheds more light on why the Government pursued that lunatic policy—the difference between opinion on roads policy in the region and the policies of the Department of Transport, which particularly affect the A1, A69, A19 and the A66, the loss of free transport for senior citizens, directly resulting from the financial squeeze on local authorities, and restrictions on capital expenditure that prevent more rapid development of Newcastle airport.

Hon. Members will be relieved to learn that I do not intend to rehearse those arguments this evening. I shall restrict myself to a local issue that affects my constituency—the severe congestion on the A1 Gateshead western bypass and the various proposals for its relief, specifically the Department of Transport's plan to bypass the bypass. Given the comments that were made about the advantages of bypasses—in some instances they do have advantages—Ministers must answer why it has become necessary to bypass the bypass. Where will it all end? Will we have a bypass to the bypass to the bypass?

Evidence showing that there is a significant problem in the area can be found in a reference in paragraph 12.21 of the royal commission's report. I understand that the commission met in Gateshead. In discussing the problem of congestion on primary routes, it said:

> "Sometimes local traffic on a primary route is the result of large-scale developments . . . The A1 on Tyneside provides an interesting example. Congestion on this road, caused by predominantly local trips to and from the Metrocentre and a large industrial estate, led DOT to promote a controversial scheme for by passing what was itself in origin a by pass."

That is a controversial proposal. Two groups of local residents in my constituency have organised a campaign. One is opposed to the Department's bypass plan on the grounds of intrusion into the green belt and property loss—the proposed route goes right through one of the designated north-east tranquil areas of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England—and the other is opposed to improvements to the existing road and is in favour of the bypass because it believes that the bypass would

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reduce the nuisance to residents living alongside the existing road, whereas improvements to the existing road would increase it.

What does a Member of Parliament do in those circumstances? I can only examine the circumstances and try to reach what I believe to be the best all-round solution for not only the short-term but the long-term future welfare of people in the area.

Having considered the problem, Gateshead metropolitan borough council has proposed a plan that deals not only with the problem of through traffic, which the bypass option does almost exclusively, but considers the overall problem of traffic movement on and around the road and in and out of the Metro centre and the Team valley trading estate.

The council suggested various options, which are reflected in the royal commission's report: closing some of the access points to the road, at once relieving congestion points and creating a third lane; creating improved access and egress points to cater for the Metro centre and Team valley at peak-hour-traffic times; and restructuring traffic movements within the Metro centre and Team valley trading estate. Other options might include improving public transport by frequent links to park-and-ride facilities, creating bus priority lanes and extending links to the Tyneside metro system.

All the available evidence, including the royal commission's report, suggests that continually building more roads and wider roads will not solve the problem—although, of course, some improvements to existing roads will be warranted, and I have mentioned some of them—and, as the report recommends, more effective use of existing roads should precede any plans to build new roads wherever possible.

The royal commission also recommends a fundamentally different approach by the Department of Transport. We have heard from the Secretary of State that he favours a different approach; just how fundamental it is remains to be seen. To date, his Department has argued for the simplest—although, by its own admission, not the cheapest—solution to the Gateshead problem.

Tomorrow I shall meet the roads Minister to discuss the problem with him. I hope that evidence of a shift in opinion may be forthcoming at that meeting. I have come to know the new roads Minister—the new Minister for roads, that is, not the Minister for new roads—through an interest that we share.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): A frequent Opposition error is to refer to any transport Minister as a roads Minister. One of the facts that I hoped the hon. Gentleman would note, it being very germane to the debate, is that there is no roads Minister. If he is referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts), he is the Minister of State responsible for rail and roads, reflecting our view that an integrated transport policy is very important.

Mr. Clelland: It seems that the "fundamentally different approach" is already showing itself in the Chamber. In any event, I have come to know the Minister responsible for roads and rail very well—or, rather, rail and roads: the Government, of course, put rail first every time—through our common interest in working men's clubs. In my experience, his work in that field has shown him to be a fair and reasonable person, and I hope that he manages—against recent trends—to retain those qualities in government. If he does, there may yet be hope of a progressive change.

I know that the Minister will not have an opportunity to answer in detail tonight on this specific proposal, but I shall put some points to him so that he can sleep on them. First, is it not true that the standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment has concluded that—contrary to the Department's thinking—new roads generate extra traffic? According to Oxford university's transport studies unit director, Phil Goodwin, who is a member of the committee:

"a new road scheme would, on average, induce an extra 10 per cent. of its base traffic in the short term and 20 per cent. in the long term."

When can we expect the report's publication? Does not Mr. Goodwin's conclusion make nonsense of the Department's traffic forecasts for the proposed bypass to the western bypass?

Is it true that the Department has let the contract for ground investigations on the site of the proposed new road? Could not that money be put to better use on the alternative proposals? What will be the cost of a public inquiry, which, it is forecast, may take as long as six months?

In short—in the light of all the information that is now available, the weight of opinion against further schemes of this sort, the fact that the Department has downgraded the priority of the scheme and the blight and suffering being caused to those now living in the path of the proposed route—is it not time that the Department cut its losses and sat around a table with local people to pursue a better, more effective and more rapid solution to the problem?

Earlier this evening, the Secretary of State said that he wanted to encourage local authorities to pursue environmentally friendly transport policies. Let him begin by supporting Gateshead council's environmentally sympathetic approach.

The answers to regional transport infrastructure problems will be properly deduced only if those who live in the regions are fully involved in the planning and decision-making process. The planned movement of Highways Agency operations from the north to Leeds is a further example of migration from the northern region, to the detriment of local involvement in decisions directly affecting the lives of people who live in that region.

Ministers cannot continually abrogate their responsibilities by hiving them off to agencies and then claiming that decisions are nothing to do with them, when those decisions have implications for the people of this country. The decisions have everything to do with them, and they must intervene to protect the regional planning structure from fragmentation. I look forward to hearing from the Minister that he plans to do just that.

9.23 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I must first remind the House of my interest as an adviser to Johnson Matthey plc, which makes catalytic converters—not that I intend to dwell on that subject specifically.

The Opposition motion accuses the Government of

"an obsessional concern with road building and road widening".

I can say only that that "obsession", if such it is, is widely shared. We do not help ourselves by failing to recognise that the public have a strong desire for good roads. A large section of industry is entirely dependent on roads.

People cherish the freedom that the motor car has brought them. Over the past 40 or 50 years, whole communities have developed on the assumption of road transport in the absence of anything else, and not one Government are responsible for that. Therefore, in some places, to talk of shifting freight from road to rail is utter nonsense.

When the emphasis is on economic recovery and job creation, this cannot be the right moment to suggest a total change of direction, as is implicit in Labour's motion, which could hugely disrupt commerce and industry and add to their costs. The obsession to which I referred is a serious matter that grips a lot of private and commercial people in the United Kingdom, and it is not hard to see why.

Let me turn to the case for improving the A130 in Essex, which is the only strategic link between south-east Essex and the rest of East Anglia as all the other roads in south-east Essex feed into London and the M25. The proposed improvement will not only improve the quality of life in the villages that it bypasses but it is predicted to save some 17 injury accidents per year and make an annual saving of £1.2 million per year. There have been 152 such accidents in the past three years—five fatal and 22 serious. I have sympathy with the case for a major improvement to the A130.

The words that I have used are not mine; they are contained in a letter from the chairman of the highways and transportation committee of Essex county council, which is a Labour and Liberal-controlled authority. The same council is pressing for the speedy construction of the A120. What advice would Labour Front-Bench spokesmen give Labour and Liberal-controlled Essex county council? Is it that, instead of making an improvement to the A130 and the A120, there should be a moratorium, or that there should be railways in place of the roads? The proposition that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) put to the House is absurd.

In its motion, Labour calls for a major strategic shift in spending. Apparently, it is not an increase in spending but a major strategic shift in spending. Instead of talking in generalities, Opposition Members would assist our understanding of their case if they spoke in specifics. Which roads would go, and which bypasses would be forfeited? The more one listens to the debate, the more one realises that everyone is in favour of some roads; it is simply roads in general that Labour is against.

If one totalled up all the schemes we favour, there would be no diminution in the roads programme at all because we would all say—as the chairman of the Essex county council highways and transportation committee said—that there is an urgent case to have a particular road. We could do without the humbug that we hear from Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. All of us know of roads that need to be built, which people want and industry needs.

How would Labour deal with the problem of old cars that cannot be retrofitted with catalytic converters, which are mainly owned by elderly and low-paid people but which will still be a major polluting factor in our environment? Would Labour implement the royal commission package as a whole, including the proposal to increase the price of a gallon of petrol to £5, or would it simply pick parts of it? Labour Members have not assisted us at all; they have made a general swipe against Government policy without saying what they would do.

We are entitled to know what Labour's priorities are for public transport schemes. Let us cost such schemes to see whether its claim is right that road schemes can be replaced by public transport schemes. Calling for a new strategic approach, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West did, is simply not enough. Labour should be reminded that new public transport schemes do not come cheap, that they are not always acceptable to people in whose areas they are to introduced, and that they are not always successful in drawing people from the roads, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in his example of the imperceptible shift that has taken place in the Bury-Altrincham corridor as a result of the light railway in Manchester.

Undoubtedly, there are serious issues to be faced, including those raised in the reports of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution and the Select Committee on Transport, but Labour's facile motion comes nowhere near addressing those issues. It will be an extremely difficult and sensitive exercise in an open, democratic society to persuade people away from vehicular transport.

If we are honest, we cannot be absolutely sure that we know the whole story on environmental pollution and exactly what causes what particular illness, but we cannot ignore the main thrust of the evidence before us. We need the careful and considered approach that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recommends. A great deal of public education will be necessary before measures can be put before the House that will command respect and support. It may require a combination of the carrot and the stick, to which the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) referred, if we are to protect our environment, decongest our cities and safeguard our health.

Labour would earn more respect if it spelt out in detail what it expected the electorate to accept: parroting slogans is not enough.

9.30 pm

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): This has been an important debate. The Secretary of State and some of his colleagues responded in a manner that suggested that we lived in a monoculture of car owners and users. I remind the House that the percentage of our adult population who have a driving licence, let alone a car, is not 100 but 66 per cent. Almost half the women of Britain do not hold a licence. Among pensioners, women make up a mere 6 per cent. of those who hold a driving licence.

The Secretary of State referred to London smogs as if they were a thing of the past. I remind the House that, in December 1952, 4,000 people died in London as a result of smog—a thick, swirling, stinking blanket of choking air produced by coal fires and heavy industry. Today, the smog is invisible. It is a cocktail of toxic chemicals produced by private and commercial motor vehicles.

The warnings are all too clear. They include the report of the Royal Commission on Transport and the Environment, the Transport Select Committee report on

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transport-related air pollution in London, and the excellent briefings provided by Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Cyclists Public Affairs Group.

Mr. Butler: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Ruddock: It is very soon, but I will.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. Perhaps she can help me. The motion to which she is speaking says that this House notes

"the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's condemnation of current Government transport and land use policies as unsustainable".

I have searched in vain for that condemnation. What I did find was paragraph 1.17, which says:

"We endorse the general framework for a sustainable transport policy which the Government has put forward."

Can the hon. Lady help me with that?

Ms Ruddock: Page 242.

Let me continue with my speech. Some 160 deaths in London have already been attributed to the photochemical smog in December 1991, and millions are suffering ill health nationwide. Nothing in the royal commission report comes as any surprise to those of us who have followed transport policies in recent years. Labour repeatedly warned the Government of the dangers inherent in their obsession with road building and road widening. Yes, we proposed a moratorium—a halt on new road schemes, while, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, we considered the most appropriate way to meet mobility needs.

We never said that there would be a cancellation of all roads for all time. Nor did we ever suggest that contracts already let would be reneged upon. We warned of the adverse impact of road building on our countryside, of growing demand for and depletion of non-renewable materials and of traffic disruption to our communities. We warned of noise and air pollution, the threat to our health, particularly of the most vulnerable—children and the elderly—and the growing contribution that road traffic makes to greenhouse gases.

We warned that no amount of road building could provide for the doubling of traffic predicted by the Department of Transport. In short, we warned—and we reiterate—as the royal commission warned, that the Government transport policy was unsustainable. On every occasion in the past five years, Ministers rejected and even ridiculed our claims.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) proved true to form tonight by entirely missing the central point of the royal commission's report. Even if the Government spent all their £20 billion on new road capacity, it could not cope with their predictions for the increase in traffic on those same roads.

The Government behave as if they have played no part in what has happened, yet today's ecological crisis is being driven by their policy. Let us look at the record. We acknowledge that increasing car ownership—desirable in many ways—and road haulage is a Europewide phenomenon. Yet—as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) said—as other European Governments began to take steps to alleviate congestion by a large expansion in public transport, this Government embarked on an orgy of reducing investment and of privatisation, fragmentation and deregulation?

While other European Governments, who recognised the environmental effects of increasing car use, agreed measures to reduce exhaust emissions, this Government fought to resist or delay them. While the decline in public transport produced further road congestion, the Government simply built more roads, and thus increased by one third the amount of land covered in tarmac. Yet congestion continued—total vehicle kilometres rose by nearly 50 per cent. in the past decade, while rail passenger journeys and rail freight decreased.

The environmental consequences have been dire. Our towns and cities are noisy, dangerous and dirty. Despite its known benefits, cycling has declined by almost one third in the past decade, walking is hazardous, and while child pedestrian road casualties remain among the highest in Europe, parents are forced to drive their children to school.

Our countryside has been despoiled. The latest affront is Twyford Down, and more than 300 sites of special scientific interest have been damaged in the past year, with the habitats of precious wildlife threatened.

Ministers cannot evade their responsibilities any longer. They cannot hold that they are simply responding to public demand for greater car use when the public have no other choice. They cannot sit back in the knowledge that we are poisoning ourselves with petrol emissions and pretend that it is our fault alone. The nation's health is the Government's responsibility.

Let us look at the record again. Since 1979, emissions of black smoke from motor vehicles have increased by 78 per cent. Black smoke causes respiratory problems and may cause cancer. Emissions of nitrogen oxides have increased by 74 per cent.—they cause lung irritation and bronchitis and can cause pneumonia, contribute to acid rain and, when mixed with volatile organic compounds, cause ground level ozone, which causes eye, nose and throat infections and headaches. Carbon monoxide is up by 48 per cent. Fatal at high doses, that pollutant produces drowsiness, and is especially dangerous to people with heart disease. All that has happened despite the Secretary of State's claims about improving air quality.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Ruddock: I am sorry, but I have not got time.

Surely the Government must now accept that, in the light of those two reports, ways must be found to limit the increase in car use and accelerate programmes to cut vehicle emissions.

Has the Minister who is going to reply to the debate—I am sorry that he is not an Environment Minister—noted the report's finding that about 3 million people now have asthma? That is twice as many as were diagnosed in 1979. Does he know that hospital admissions for that disease have also doubled? One of his hon. Friends mentioned costs—the cost of that disease alone is £400 million a year.

Does he accept, as the royal commission did, that 50,000 tonnes of benzene are expelled from motor vehicles each year? Benzene is a potent carcinogen, for which there are no known safe levels.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): Not true.

Ms Ruddock: I tell the hon. Member that that is evidence presented to the royal commission, which it accepted.

Mr. Atkins: It is not true.

Ms Ruddock: I will debate this with the hon. Gentleman in another place and on some other occasion, but he is saying that the royal commission has taken inaccurate evidence.

The Government's complacency is literally breathtaking. They deny all the experts—

Mr. Butler: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is the first point of order that I have ever sought to raise, so I hope that you will forgive me if I do not get it quite right. The hon. Lady said when she gave way to me that I would find the royal commission's condemnation on page 242. I have found no such condemnation, and the hon. Lady may be unwittingly misleading the House. I wish to give her the opportunity to correct that.

Madam Speaker: That is barely a point of order for me. It is a point of argument for the debate. If the hon. Gentleman catches the hon. Lady's attention later in the debate, he may do something about that, but it is certainly not a point of order for me.

Ms Ruddock: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the uppermost paragraph on page 242, he will see that the very policies which the Government have pursued are described there, and that the royal commission says that these

"cannot therefore be regarded as sustainable".

I do not believe—

Mr. Matthew Banks: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I feel now that I am getting points of frustration, rather than points of order. If it is a point of order for me, of course I shall hear it.

Mr. Banks: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Surely it is particularly important that during debates the House listens to accurate information. If we had time, I could draw umpteen examples from the last few minutes—

Madam Speaker: Order. It is important that the House listens to information, but it is not for me to determine whether that information is accurate or otherwise. It is for hon. Members who are using the information to determine for themselves whether or not it is accurate.

Ms Ruddock: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the policies described which the royal commission regard as unsustainable are indeed the policies which have been pursued by the Government, and we have heard nothing tonight to suggest that the Government will change those policies. I hope that they will, and I shall be asking the Minister to give us more information when he winds up. *[Interruption.]* If Government Members are not quiet, they will find that the Minister's time will be taken up by my speech.

Do the Government accept, as we do—the Secretary of State failed to say—the royal commission's eight objectives and the accompanying targets for a sustainable transport policy? Will the Government match Labour's promises on the environment which were so ably developed by my predecessor, the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)? *[Interruption.]* I can assure the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) that that was not a strategy that my hon. Friend proposed.

The Secretary of State implied that he would try to find some common cause with my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). If the Government are prepared to make some small shift in resources, will the Minister tell us whether any money that is earmarked now—but which subsequently is not spent on roads—will be invested in public transport and not grasped back by a greedy Treasury? Will he create new financial incentives for private motorists to retro-fit catalytic convertors, and for bus operators to clean up their buses?

Will he make air quality monitoring a statutory requirement of local authorities? Will he ensure that when there are episodes when we are being poisoned that people are given the information speedily so that they can take some action? Will the Government, as the Secretary of State claimed, get rid of belching monsters once and for all; not by a few pathetic spot checks but by making more stringent MOT tests, as the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) proposed, and by helping local authorities to acquire and operate pollution cameras for long-term monitoring?

Will he help to make the fundamental shift that my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West proposed, or is he beholden, like so many of his hon. Friends, to sectional interests? If the Government will not respond to my hon. Friend's challenge, will they respond to the royal commission's challenge to

"realise the benefits of a new transport strategy"

or will he only respond to the vested interests of the British Road Federation, whose spokesperson said:

"These costs"—

the costs of making the shift—

"cannot be justified."

I suggest that it is the costs of inaction that cannot be justified.

The reports of the royal commission and the Select Committee have offered every proof of the urgency of the tasks before us. Real freedom, real choice in mobility and economic well-being and quality of life demand Government action in line with our motion tonight. There must be action to shift from increasing road use to reliable, safe, clean and affordable public transport. Action must be taken on behalf of our shared community and our shared environment and it must be taken now.

9.45 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): This has been an important debate. We have had some excellent contributions, particularly from my hon.

[Mr. Steve Norris]

Friends the Members for Southport (Mr. Banks), for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), who represents a delightful part of the country, and for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), who put his argument extraordinarily well. Just as Churchill once remarked that we are all in favour of reductions in general and in public expenditure in particular, so we are in favour of curtailing the road programme, except in our own constituencies.

It is a shame that this evening's debate is so short, but that, of course, is a reflection on the Opposition's priorities. Their great claim of initiating this debate is in truth a sham. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) could not even finish the previous debate at 7 o'clock, so heaven help us if she were ever in charge of a timetable.

The reality is that there is a huge amount on which we can and have to agree, as the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) said. He is right that we all have to address the serious issues that are raised by the prospect of limitless traffic growth. It is reasonable to consider that the ever-burgeoning volume of private motoring poses a real question over the sustainability of our lives as we move to the next century.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we must address the consequences of greater general prosperity. I do not refer to that in terms of the immediate party political sense, but, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already demonstrated, as we have become a richer community, so our demand for transport, and particularly the attractions of motoring, have become greater. Many more people enjoy both the attractions and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden has said, the freedoms, that the car brings.

I believe that we need to face an uncomfortable truth and it was one which my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) drew to the attention of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) in an intervention. My hon. Friend has probably forgotten it by now, but he emphasised the absolute linear relationship between economic growth and traffic growth. That is self-evident to anyone who is prepared to look at the issue seriously.

I agree with the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) that we must look at the issue of traffic generation and the induction of traffic. That was raised in SACTRA—the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment—report which my right hon. Friend is currently studying.

Dr. Bray: The Minister's argument about a so-called "direct relationship" between economic growth and transport used to be argued about electricity demand—until the oil price increase. Does he not anticipate the same thing happening in respect of roads?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly good point, which is not that the demand for services in a developed economy powered by electricity or other forms of power generation has decreased but, rather, that we have concentrated our attention on addressing the finite nature of those resources, developing alternatives, and developing the kind of economies of scale and model about which we should be concerned.

Incidentally, in addition to an analysis of the underlying problem on which we can all agree, in reality we all know, in broad and general terms, what the solutions to those problems must be. Although we heard remarkably little of it from Opposition Members, we all appreciate the fact that we need to create infinitely more sustainable communities.

Recently, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for the Environment together produced policy planning guidance note 13 on sustainable development. Essentially, it said that one of the most useful things that Governments can do is plan the need to travel. But for a few people, travel is not an end in itself but a process that takes us from our home to our work, shops, leisure activities and so on. If we can build sustainable communities in which we combine housing, jobs, leisure, recreation and other amenities, we shall have a chance to break through the inevitable link between economic growth and travel.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Norris: No, I have very little time, and I want to move on.

In addition to the policy of sustainable development, we clearly also need to ameliorate the effects of road transport. The Department of Transport is currently doing that in a number of ways. First, it is improving the standards of new vehicles, about which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made an important announcement in recent weeks. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) referred to the spot checks initiated by my right hon. Friend as "pathetic", but I suspect that that verdict will not be shared by those motorists who encounter them; on the contrary, my right hon. Friend is rightly responding to the proper concern about emission levels and, in dealing with standards of existing vehicles, is initiating an important improvement.

Mr. Miller: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Norris: I am sorry, but I cannot. I have only eight minutes left, which is not enough for the notes that I have written.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southport was right to refer to the need to continue to refine the technology relating to emissions. He made a perfectly sensible point. My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) was also right to suggest that, in future, we shall need to look more closely at hybrid vehicles, electric power and so on.

We need to encourage a modal shift. We must persuade people out of private cars and on to the railways, and freight out of trucks and on to the railways. In that regard, how sad it was that the Opposition supported the recent damaging industrial dispute in the rail industry, which has probably done more than any other single action to discourage potential investors in rail from taking freight on to that mode. It will take years to put right, and the Opposition stand condemned for their support.

We must also encourage other modes, such as cycling and walking. Most sensible academics understand, however, that it is not good enough simply to spend huge sums on public transport because, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said—I do not know whether the point has embedded itself sufficiently in Opposition minds—spending large sums of money on public transport projects sadly initiates only a very small transfer from traffic using the roads to those modes of public transport. Public transport is well used in those circumstances, as the SPOTT research, such as that undertaken by Westminster university, shows, but, sadly, once that use occurs it is not accompanied by a corresponding reduction in car use.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Norris: No; I will not give way.

It is obvious that it is not enough simply to apply the carrot; one must also apply the stick, whether that be physical restraint on vehicles—park and ride, and local parking control, which is obviously important—or pricing, which is a vital component.

We should investigate road pricing, as the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) said. I am sad that, although the Government have said that that is too important an issue to ignore, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has already set the face of the Opposition against it, in spite of the fact that it is a hugely important tool in the control of congestion.

Yes, we have also accepted the need to price fuel. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already stated the Government's policy of adding 5 per cent. in real terms to fuel prices, deliberately to achieve the reductions in road traffic and emissions that we seek. He has made that brave statement in order to achieve our Rio targets by the end of the century. The Royal Commission, on the other hand, has said that we should do more, and that is where the attitude between the parties clearly divides.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has said that we shall examine that proposition, because, difficult as it might be politically, we understand the severity of the problem. From the Opposition, however, as we all know, the hon. Member for Oldham, West has done nothing but to obfuscate and to retract from his original enthusiasm for the proposal as he realised the electoral unpopularity associated with it.

The speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West was a classic of its kind. I noted, among other things, that he said that he is not saying that the M25 should not be built. I presume that he is saying that it should have been built, perhaps with three lanes but not four, perhaps four lanes but not five. Perhaps five lanes are right but not six; perhaps four, five or six lanes are right, but no collector-distributor road. The hon. Gentleman must know that he cannot square that circle. It is no policy simply to try to nod in the direction of each lobby group.

I notice that we heard about integrated ticketing as the key to public transport—no doubt sitting alongside post-neo-classical endogenous growth theory as another of the meaningless slogans that we shall be offered. We also heard about an integrated transport policy, defined in Labour's terms as any policy other than that practised by the Government of the day.

To add insult to injury, at the end of a disappointing speech, the hon. Member for Oldham, West capped it all by saying that the link between the construction industry and the Conservative party was at the root of the great issue of congestion. It takes someone like the hon. Gentleman, with that extraordinary, twisted grasp on reality—that extraordinary, witchfinder-general mentality—to make such an assertion and to expect us to take it seriously.

The reality is, ironically, that it is the Government who are bearing down on public expenditure and taking the flak for it, while the Labour party sprays promises in the way that Damon Hill sprays champagne.

The reality is obvious; there are some serious issues. There is no free lunch. Yes, there will be some tough decisions on pricing: perhaps the £5 gallon—who knows, perhaps more. There will need to be other restraints on road use, in towns and possibly in open countryside, and no doubt they will inconvenience many people who would otherwise wish to make those journeys. Yes, there still will be a need for a road-building programme, for bypasses that can transform the quality of life for tens of thousands of people in the affected area, and for roads such as the M62 in St. Helens which can regenerate the whole town.

In that context, the reality is clear. The difference between the Opposition motion and the Government amendment is the difference between fantasy and hard reality. I have no hesitation in commending the Government amendment to the motion tonight.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 259, Noes 299.

Division No. 316] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill

Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Mofn)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil (Islwyn)
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. Jim Cunningham

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn

Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbrown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman

Question accordingly negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* and the Drug Trafficking Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Willetts.]*

Question agreed to.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that you might consider accepting a brief intervention from me. This happens to be the last time that Sir Clifford Boulton will be sitting in the seat that he now occupies. There was a time earlier when plaudits were poured over his head, with every justification. However, one item was left out—the incomparable help that he gave to the appeal by your predecessor, Madam Speaker, for the rejuvenation and refurbishment of St. Margaret's. It would be a great mistake if he left that chair without that being put on the record.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's point of order falls into the category of the most bogus points of order that have ever been raised with me. But as it is the last night on which Sir Clifford will be sitting at the Table and because I am really a big softie at heart, that point of order is most welcome in this House.

Orders of the Day

Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, and Prince of Wales's consent, on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall, signified.]

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I want to give credit to the Law Commission, their lordships in the other place and the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) for fast-tracking the Bill to the statute book.

10.15 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The Opposition hope that this will be the first of many fast tracks for worthy Law Commission measures.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with an amendment.

Drug Trafficking Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

10.16 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is a pure consolidation measure.

10.17 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I am aware that the motion that I tabled was not in order, but I hope that it drew the attention of the House to something that I believe could have been incorporated in this consolidation measure. I am referring to allowing funds that are confiscated to be used and applied to the Government's efforts to tackle the horrible problems of drug misuse.

The issue has been raised before. The last time that I did so was during the passage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, but unfortunately the Government missed that opportunity for incorporation. Even though I realise that the Bill that we are discussing is a consolidation measure, I am sorry that, again, the opportunity for incorporation has not been taken.

Moneys that are seized by other Governments with the help of our marvellous officers, especially drugs liaison officers, are applied to the Government's efforts to tackle the problems of drugs misuse. Indeed, sometimes the moneys will not be paid to this country unless they are so applied. The tragedy is that they are relatively small sums—£3 million or £4 million a year—while the sums that are confiscated are 10 times or more that amount. If those sums were applied not instead of, but in addition to, the moneys spent and the efforts made by the Government to control drug trafficking, drug misuse and, in particular, reducing demand, everyone would gain. The drug takers, the families and the communities in which they live would gain.

I hope that the Government will apply themselves to that point and incorporate my proposal. If it is not possible to do so in this consolidation measure, it should be done in other legislation as soon as possible.

10.18 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): This is a consolidation measure, and a necessary and welcome one. We too feel some regret that the Government have not taken this opportunity to strengthen and, indeed, consolidate a national strategy against drug trafficking. [*Interruption.*] It is a pity that, when the House is addressing an issue this important, albeit relatively late at night, one particular Conservative Member should feel it necessary to interject from a sedentary position, saying, "Churlish." It is not churlish to ask the House to spend a little time considering an issue of real concern to our constituents, which threatens the health of the nation, is breaking up communities and families throughout the country, and requires a national strategy.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I did not say "Churlish." I do not know what the hon. Gentleman heard, but it was not that from me. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right—that, unfortunately, this is just a consolidation measure, and it does not allow us to take up the whole issue. I wish that it did, but there will be other opportunities and the hon. Gentleman will find that the House will give him its support.

Mr. Boateng: I welcome that comment, but we have an opportunity to consider what we are consolidating. The Opposition will take every opportunity to raise on the Floor of the House the evil of drug trafficking, because we do not believe that parliamentary time applied solely to the issue of consolidating a drug trafficking measure, which this is, should pass without taking the opportunity to emphasise that much more needs to be done—particularly locally—if this consolidation is to have the impact on the drug trade that it is designed to have.

That is why we feel it necessary to draw attention to the fact that when the House considered the Criminal Justice Bill and the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill, matters consolidated in this legislation were raised on the Floor of the House. We gave the Government an opportunity to give local authorities—in co-operation with the police, probation service and other appropriate agencies—a statutory responsibility to combat drug abuse and to educate young people as part and parcel of a national drug prevention strategy.

Such a strategy, in conjunction with the measures in this consolidation Bill, would effectively bring into play the powers of the House and the responsibilities of the Home Office, the Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor's Department, together with the police and local authorities on the ground, to end this evil trade.

We give the measure a welcome, but feel able to raise only two cheers for the Government, because there remains much more to be done.

10.22 pm

The Solicitor-General: The only issue before the House is whether the existing law should be consolidated in the

Bill or left as it is, in a number of different statutes. I did not hear the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) suggest that, but if he were to have his way and not approve the consolidation, we would be left with the Criminal Justice Act 1988, Criminal Justice Act 1993, Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 and Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill that is shortly to reach the statute book—all of which cover different provisions that are brought together in the Drug Trafficking Bill.

I am always grateful for any suggestions from my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), especially on this subject. However, if my hon. Friend were to get his way, we would not have the opportunity to make this consolidation and my hon. Friend would have been deprived of his opportunity to make the comments that he did.

The hon. Member for Brent, South has not been paying attention to the national drug strategy that the Government have pursued for a considerable time, which was recently extended and to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred in a speech only a fortnight ago.

Mr. Boateng: We have been paying particular attention tothe national drug prevention strategy. Our concern is its inadequacy. Let me give the Solicitor-General an example, if I may, since he chooses—

Madam Speaker: Order. This is, I believe, an intervention, not another speech.

Mr. Boateng: I wonder whether I could draw to the attention of the hon. and learned Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* Well, I am asked to put my comments in the form of a question. I will do so. Is the Minister aware of the concerns of local authorities, throughout the country, including police authorities, about the failure of the Government to put their money where their mouths are in terms of the national drug prevention strategy? Without such money, such a strategy is worthless.

The Solicitor-General: I am aware of the contrary position in my constituency of Brighton, Pavilion, where there is a very active drug prevention unit. In other parts of the country, where they are necessary, there are similar units.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported without amendment; considered; read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

EMPLOYMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Oliver Heald be discharged from the Employment Committee and Mr. Tim Yeo be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ordered,

That Mr. Patrick McLoughlin be added to the National Heritage Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

Ordered,

That Mr. John Watts be discharged from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and Mr. Matthew Carrington be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Cockle Gathering (West Wales)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Bates.]*

10.28 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The object of this short Adjournment debate is to impress on the Secretary of State for Wales—I am glad to see the Under-Secretary of State in his place—and the Government the need to give serious consideration to bringing an order before the House, which can be done under the sea fisheries legislation, to designate an area that encompasses the estuaries of the Gwendraeth, Towy and the Taff rivers, and the Under-Secretary will know the area well, as a regulated and licensed cockle fishery. The estuary of the Gwendraeth river, which comprises the Gwendraeth Fawr and the Gwendraeth Fach, runs into the sea at Kidwelly in my constituency.

The estuary of the Towy river runs into the sea between Ferryside and Llansteffan, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams); the estuary of the Taff runs into the sea around Laugharne, which is also in my hon. Friend's constituency. To the east of the three rivers lies the Burry estuary, which extends west of the Gower peninsula and almost towards Kidwelly and the estuary of the Gwendraeth. Most of that area is covered by my constituency.

The Burry estuary is a licensed and regulated cockle fishery. That means that the south Wales sea fisheries committee is empowered by legislation to grant licences to individuals to gather cockles in the area. The committee can ensure that such licences are granted to those who have a substantial interest in the industry, and that the number of licences granted to gatherers can be controlled according to the stocks that are deemed to be available. The quantity of cockles gathered by licensees can also be controlled for purposes of stock preservation.

Unfortunately—this is where the problem arises—there is no licensing in respect of the estuaries of the three rivers west of the Burry estuary, extending right around Carmarthen bay and down to Laugharne. The South Wales sea fisheries committee tries to control that area by making byelaws; the trouble with byelaws is that, at least in this regard, they are a very blunt and cumbersome method of control. They do not apply to the individual: all that they can really do is close a fishery for a period, should the sea fisheries committee deem it wise. Then the fishery is opened again, and when it is opened large numbers of what have been described as vagrant gatherers descend on the area—not only local people, but people from other parts of Wales—to extract as many cockles as they can before the committee closes the cockle bed again for a few weeks or months.

There were real problems in the summer of 1993, especially at Ferryside. There was considerable violence as local groups fought with groups from outside to extract the cockles; the police had great difficulty in controlling and ending the violence, and there was a danger that deaths would occur.

We are not talking about small sums. The cockles find markets not only locally or in the United Kingdom, but abroad. Many are sent to Spain, presumably to be put into Spanish dishes such as paella; I understand that the Dutch—who are well-known pirates and predators—are now moving around the coast and may well be acting as middlemen, taking the cockles all the way to Spain.

Without licensing and control, there is a danger of violence and intimidation. A good deal of intimidation is occurring locally between different groups wishing to gain the greatest possible advantage. Moreover, experts in the industry tell me that, unless something is done, few cockles will be left, and the community may lose a small but important economic asset for ever.

I have written a number of letters to the south Wales sea fisheries committee. It is a splendid committee. It produces marvellous reports which are extremely interesting to read, and it is diligent in its work. However, when it comes to the question of agreeing to licence or to draft an order for the purposes of licensing the area, the committee seems to have a blind spot. It has failed to come up with any constructive reaction whatever to the letters which I have written.

It may be that the committee does not have the resources to operate a licensing system. It may be that it is concerned about the way to make a licensing system fair in the new environment. Indeed, there are instances on the east coast of England where licensing systems for fisheries have been announced by order. I do not think that the problem is an insoluble one. Whatever the reason, it seems that the South Wales sea fisheries committee does not want to do anything.

Letters to the Welsh Office on the subject usually elicit the Pontius Pilate reaction that it is nothing to do with that office; it is all to do with the south Wales sea fisheries committee. However, that is not the case. As I understand it, the Welsh Office—if it is not the Welsh Office, it is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—has the power under sea fisheries legislation to bring forward, after consultation with the sea fisheries committee, an order to establish a licensed and regulated fishery in that area. That is what I want.

In conclusion, I simply ask that the area west of the Gower peninsula encompassing the Burry estuary, which is already licensed, and extending round the Gwendraeth from the Towy and Taff estuaries, be a proper licensed and regulated cockle fishery, so that, first, we can ensure as far as possible that public order is not breached in the free-for-all for the cockles; secondly, an economic asset is maintained and is not lost in a few years; and, thirdly, the balance between economic exploitation and the need to conserve stocks is maintained. I suggest that that can be done only by having a proper licensing system.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will not read out one of those tired briefs that has been written for him by the South Wales sea fisheries committee.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Rod Richards) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: I am pleased about that. The Under-Secretary knows the area well. I hope that we will get a positive response from him, and that he will tell me that before long we will have an order properly to regulate the fishery.

10.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Rod Richards): I welcome the opportunity to debate the cockle-gathering industry in west Wales. Cockle gathering holds a unique position in the life and history of west Wales. As the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said, I have first-hand experience of that part of the world. I was born and brought up there. I swam and walked in the Burry estuary. It is a dangerous place to be when the tidy is out, but I survived that part of the world.

My recollection of that part of the world is as a youngster and, indeed, as a student. Some of my happiest days were spent in that part of the world. I can remember as a young man spending the afternoon in Stradey park watching the Scarlets play and then having a pint of the local brew a little later. Sometimes it was Buckleys, sometimes it was Felinfoel. Inevitably, I would also have a jar of cockles. I understand the feeling locally for having a pint of beer and a jar of cockles, as the right hon. Gentleman well knows.

Many hon. Members will be familiar with the evocative images of weather-beaten men and women with their horses and carts returning from a day's cockle gathering on the west Wales sands, sometimes from the southern part of the Loughor estuary and sometimes from the northern part of the Loughor estuary. Perhaps Penclawdd has received more notice than the northern side—I do not know.

Few, however, will be aware of the vibrant industry which lies behind the imagery, an industry which for many generations has offered important employment opportunities in the area and one which has contributed greatly to the economy of the local communities on which the fisheries are based.

Responsibility for managing the west Wales cockle fisheries, including the licensing of cockle pickers, rests not with the Government but, as the right hon. Gentleman said, with the South Wales sea fisheries committee. Sea fisheries committees, of which there are two in Wales, are responsible for the management and conservation of coastal fisheries, including shell fisheries, in England and Wales out to six nautical miles. They are statutory bodies of local government set up under the Sea Fisheries Regulation Act 1966.

They manage the coastal fisheries by means of local byelaws which they are empowered to make—subject, of course, to ministerial confirmation. Their powers include regulating the method of fishing, restricting the taking of fish from specific areas or at specific times of the year, and setting minimum landing sizes and protecting breeding shellfish. Sea fisheries committees are responsible for enforcing their own byelaws.

The South Wales sea fisheries committee has 20 members: 10 councillors appointed by the constituent county councils of South, West and Mid Glamorgan and Dyfed, one appointed by the National Rivers Authority and nine appointed by the Secretary of State. Ministerial appointees are chosen from a list of nominees provided by industry representative groups. The Act requires that ministerial appointees shall be

> "acquainted with the needs and opinions of the fishing interests of that district."

My Department liaises closely with both Welsh sea fisheries committees, and the committees regularly seek advice from the Department on a range of fisheries issues, including the management of cockle fisheries. However, the Department has no role in the management decision-making process or the Committees' operational activities. The liaison process includes the exchange of information. In the middle of last year, the South Wales sea fisheries committee kept the Department fully appraised of the circumstances surrounding what became known as the cockle wars at Ferryside.

There are several cockle fisheries in the west Wales area. By far the biggest is the Burry inlet fishery. Entry to the fishery is restricted to licence holders. Licences are free and anyone may apply, but the number of licences is restricted to ensure that the stock is not overfished.

The Burry inlet cockle fishery is steeped in history, as I have already outlined. In its heyday in the early 1900s, there were an estimated 250 gatherers in the Burry inlet. They were mainly women. Each gathered some 200 to 300 cwt a day, while the menfolk were at work in heavy industry locally. The women placed the loads in sacks across the backs of donkeys and sold them to the local community.

Cockles were sold either shell-on or, more usually, as boiled meats produced in local cooking plants close to the gatherers' houses. The markets at Llanelli, Swansea and Neath were famous for their produce. As I call back there fairly regularly, I can confirm that they still sell cockles at markets in Llanelli, Swansea and Neath.

In the 1920s, development took place with the introduction of the horse-drawn cart, which enabled an individual to gather as much as 10 cwt per day—a considerable growth in productivity—and to return the catch to shore. Men were now drawn into the industry to gather those enhanced loads, and production took place on more of a commercial basis.

In 1921, a minimum landing size was introduced by the South Wales sea fisheries committee to protect the breeding stock. In 1952, so many cockles were being taken that the committee was forced to set a limit to control the amount taken in any one day.

The Burry Inlet Cockle Order 1965 was established to license the fishery and limit the quantity of cockles removed according to number of licences issued and daily quota. Since then, the number of licences issued has ranged from 43 to a maximum of 67.

Cockle landings have stabilised at around 2,000 to 2,500 tonnes a year, but obviously are still subject to much natural variation. The licensing regime appointed by the committee has been aimed at ensuring maximum stability in the local industry. That has led to the most consistent cockle fishery in the United Kingdom, despite some wastage of cockles because of collection levels below theoretical maximum sustainable yield. That stability has placed the Burry inlet at a consistent third position in terms of cockle production, on a United Kingdom basis—behind the more intensive, but more variable, industries in the Wash and Thames estuaries.

The Dee and Morecambe bay fisheries have occasionally crept in at third place. In those fisheries, vessel suction dredging and mechanical harvesting using tractors have been allowed, whereas in the Burry inlet, hand gathering, using rake and sieve only, has been the order of the day. The industry today is precisely as it was

[Mr. Rod Richards]

in the 1700s, except that donkeys were replaced by horse and cart, which were in turn replaced by motor vehicles and trailers in 1987.

In recent years, the pace of change has increased. Since 1983, European Community legislation—or European legislation, as we now describe it—and markets have naturally become more important. The Europeans are great shellfish eaters, as the right hon. Member said. Vast quantities are consumed, especially in France, Spain and Portugal. Consequently, markets have increased and extra demand has fuelled higher prices.

At the same time, new EC directives on bathing waters, municipal waste waters, molluscan hygiene and fish hygiene have meant huge changes to waste regulatory practice, pollution control and—for gatherers and merchants—new standards governing quality control and health requirements. Those changes have lead to recent requirements for investment to meet new standards.

The benefits, however, have been top prices for quality produce and increased markets. No longer is the industry purely local in terms of gathering or selling. The licensing system has so far meant that the Burry inlet licence holders are still very much the same people and families who prosecuted the fishery tens of years ago.

I congratulate the sea fisheries committee on its good management of the Burry inlet cockle fishery over the years.

Mr. Denzil Davies *indicated assent.*

Mr. Richards: I am delighted to see that the right hon. Member agrees with that remark.

The three rivers cockle fishery comprises a number of fisheries along the estuaries of the Rivers Tywi, Taff and Gwendraeth near Carmarthen in south-west Wales. It is an opportunist fishery, which occurs on average once every ten years. Consequently, the South Wales sea fisheries committee, which manages the fisheries, has not considered it necessary to introduce a licensing scheme to restrict the number of individuals who may take cockles.

Because of the opportunist nature of the fishery, local fishermen do not prosecute it regularly, and very few of them rely on it for a living. The fishery may therefore be prosecuted by any member of the public, subject to their observing the SFC byelaws, which restrict the times when cockles may be gathered, and set a minimum landing size.

Last year, however, there were signs during the winter months that a very good spat fall—that is, entry of young cockles into the fishery—had occurred during 1992. In anticipation of a good harvest, a number of local fishermen linked up with a Dutch-owned, Merseyside-based processing company which was eager to supply the Dutch market.

Once news of the extent of the fishery became common knowledge, a large number of cockle fishermen from other local cockle fisheries moved into the area. This influx of outsiders, or "offcomers", angered the Ferrysiders, who saw the fishery as "their" fishery, and a number of scuffles took place. The violence increased with the arrival of cockle gatherers from as far away as the Dee estuary in north Wales, and the police, who had been closely monitoring the situation, were called upon to deal with several serious breaches of public order. The situation improved, however, when an officer was assigned to patrol the fishery on a regular basis.

The SFC continued to enforce its byelaws and to monitor catch uptake, but it concluded that, as there was no threat to stock levels, it had no grounds for restricting access to the fishery. SFC byelaws can only be made on conservation grounds, and any breach of the peace was and is the responsibility of the local police. At the time of these disturbances, it was also reported that the Department of Social Security and the Inland Revenue had been alerted to the possibility that some of the outsiders might be in receipt of unemployment benefits.

As the Ferryside fishery thinned out, the gatherers moved to the neighbouring fisheries at Laugharne and Llanstephan, as the right hon. Gentleman mentioned. But with the onset of winter, activity decreased markedly, although some individuals continued to gather through to the spring. By this time, the South Wales committee were becoming concerned that juvenile cockles were not being allowed to mature, and the fishery was closed in April. It was partially reopened in August this year, with gathering being allowed on only two or three days a week, depending on the circumstances within each fishery.

The SFC, with its mix of local authority representatives and fishing industry nominees with their knowledge of the local industry, is, I believe, well placed to manage the fisheries within its district. It has, over many years, responded positively to changing circumstances to maintain cockle stocks at suitable levels to the benefit of the local industry.

I am confident that the committee will continue to meet its responsibilities effectively. Cockle stocks are monitored constantly and, if the committee identifies a need for any new management byelaws, I can assure the House that the Welsh Office will give them careful consideration. I shall ensure that this evening's debate is conveyed to the committee.

I listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman, and he seemed to suggest that central Government should interfere with a local authority in the prosecution of its statutory duties. I am rather surprised by that, because I know that the right hon. Gentleman is an advocate of devolution.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The SFC is not a local authority. An order has been made to regulate the fishery in the Wash and, in 1965, the Welsh Office introduced an order to regulate the Burry inlet. All I am asking is that the Welsh Office should make another order to regulate the fishery. That has nothing to do with imposing on local authorities.

Mr. Richards: I most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for clarifying his position. As he knows, and as I have already said, the Welsh Office is more than ready to listen to what the SFC wants. It would be for it to decide whether it felt that new byelaws were needed.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): In common with the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), I have had the benefit of tasting those cockles. I was born in Swansea, and I regularly went to Swansea market to buy cockles, so I can speak for their high quality. Surely my hon. Friend is absolutely right. If, at any stage, the SFC felt that either the quantity or the quality of the cockles available to the local, or even the export market were being damaged, it would recommend the Welsh Office to step in immediately to regulate the industry.

Mr. Richards: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. All three of us have expert knowledge of the local cockle industry, and we all have its interests at heart. I would not wish anything to happen that threatened employment opportunities in that industry or impaired the taste of cockles that are enjoyed by thousands of people.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 1 November 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HUMBER BRIDGE BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Humber Bridge Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later then the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph (b) of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered a Second time on Tuesday 8 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Nursery Education

1. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement about nursery education.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I am implementing the Prime Minister's commitment to provide, over time, good quality pre-school places for all four-year-olds whose parents wish to take them up.

Sir Thomas Arnold: What specific steps have been taken to implement that excellent new initiative?

Mrs. Shephard: I have appointed a task force to take the work forward and to consult widely. I shall welcome ideas and information from all sectors, and already the Council of Local Education Authorities and the Pre-School Playgroups Association have provided information. My ministerial colleagues have also met with a number of groups.

Mr. Spearing: In view of the statement that the Secretary of State has just made, why do the Government continue to block the Nursery Education (Assessment of Needs) Bill, which I introduced in February but which has been blocked on at least 12 occasions since? It would place a duty on local education authorities to assess the need for nursery education, as introduced by an all-party Government in 1944 under R.A. Butler. Is not that needed now, and will the right hon. Lady please reconsider her decision?

Mrs. Shephard: I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that we are looking at a range of options for expansion, and a sound basis for that expansion will be provided by what already exists on the ground. A great deal of thought and work has gone into nursery provision, and we shall take account of the work that has been done by the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues.

Sir Malcolm Thornton: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this initiative and draw her attention to one of the recommendations that the Education Select Committee makes in its excellent report on provision for under-fives concerning the need to ensure an appropriate curriculum for nursery education, as a mere extension downwards of the primary curriculum is far from sufficient?

Mrs. Shephard: The objective will be to provide education for the early years, and not child minding. The Office for Standards in Education will be asked to draw up educational criteria.

Mr. Blunkett: I congratulate the Secretary of State for Education on her appointment at the end of July, and I look forward to crossing ideological swords with her. How much will the initiative cost, and where will the money come from?

Mrs. Shephard: May I, in turn, congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment? I can reassure him that we are looking at a range of options for expansion, but we have not made a decision yet. The need for additional funding will be determined as part of the development of the policy, but it is new provision and there will be new money.

Books and Equipment

2. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the change in spending on books and equipment for schools since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Robin Squire): Spending on books and equipment in local education authority maintained schools in England increased by 28 per cent. in real terms between 1979-80 and 1992-93, the latest year for which figures are available. On a per-pupil basis, spending has increased by 56 per cent. in real terms over the same period. Equivalent information is not available for grant-maintained or independent schools.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. Will he compare the spending of Gloucestershire with that of the remainder of the country? Might any special additional funding be made available for the provision of books and equipment?

Mr. Squire: I can confirm that, broadly speaking, Gloucestershire's spending on books and equipment is in line with the average for England. On a cash basis, the figures for Gloucestershire LEA are £63 per pupil in 1991-92 and £76 per pupil in 1992-93; the all-England figures are £70 per pupil in 1991-92, increasing to £75 per pupil in 1992-93.

On my hon. Friend's second question, there is in addition a fairly substantial grant for education, support and training worth approximately £79 million in the current year.

Ms Estelle Morris: Is the real question not what equipment schools have compared with 15 years ago but whether they are properly equipped to teach children to succeed and survive in the next century? Is the Minister aware that many schools still have to rely on parental contributions for essential items of education? Is he happy that how well a school is equipped should in part depend on the wealth of the parents whose children it serves?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Lady overlooks the fact that under the revolution inspired by local management of schools, let alone by grant-maintained schools, governing bodies can, and do, take such decisions themselves on the basis of the priorities as they see them for their school. As for her comment about voluntary activity, long may the well-established tradition continue in Britain whereby parents and friends of a school who wish to do so can contribute further to assist its development.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Bearing in mind that local management of schools is acknowledged in my constituency and elsewhere as a total success, can my hon. Friend recall what Opposition Members said about it when it was introduced by the Government?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. As most of us will remember, most of the initiatives introduced by the Government in the past 10 years have been opposed by the Opposition, only in most cases for Opposition Members shamefacedly to admit eventually that, yes, they worked and that they will support them.

Nursery Education

3. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education which countries of the European Union have a higher percentage of under-fives in nursery education than Britain.

The Minister of State, Department of Education (Mr. Eric Forth): The United Kingdom is one of only three countries in the European Union where universal state education starts at the age of five; elsewhere, it is at the age of six or even seven. Although data exist for participation rates in most of the countries of the European Union, they do not compare like with like because they do not, for example, clearly distinguish between education and child care, or take account of whether parents are required to contribute towards the cost.

Mr. Banks: I was asking the Minister about under-fives, not over-fives. I congratulate him on his selective use of statistics—Disraeli would have been greatly impressed. If the French can manage to have 100 per cent. of three to four-year-olds in education and the Belgians can manage 94 per cent., should not we be able to achieve somewhat more than 50 per cent. of under-fives in education? Can the Minister bring himself to congratulate the London borough of Newham, which has the highest percentage of under-fives in nursery classes in the country? The most deprived local authority has achieved that. Will the Minister say something nice about Newham?

Hon. Members: Ah.

Mr. Forth: I suppose it is difficult to praise a constituency that returns the hon. Gentleman, but I might try on one of my better days. On this occasion, the hon. Gentleman is being uncharacteristically simplistic. It is surely not good enough to look at a percentage provision. We should look at the quality and effectiveness of the provision. There is no point in trading futile statistics. The fact that the hon. Gentleman claims that there is a certain provision in France says nothing about its nature, its quality or how much of it is paid for by the parents or the taxpayer.

We shall examine such matters, which will inform the review that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has initiated. When we make our proposals, they will take fully into account best practice in other countries and, indeed, in local education authorities. That will inform the review and the policies that we shall eventually place before the House.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my hon. Friend agree that the form of nursery education that may work in Lisbon or Athens need not necessarily be the right form of education in Newham or even Warwickshire? What role does my hon. Friend envisage that the Pre-School Playgroups Association will play in the provision of nursery education in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We want, and already encourage, all those involved in pre-five provision to come to us with their thoughts and ideas. We want to take them fully into account and ensure that, whatever regime is eventually proposed, it will take full account of diversity of provision and the maximum parental choice, with a guarantee of quality so that we can ensure that pre-five education is of the best throughout the country. That will be our objective.

Mr. Steinberg: I am bewildered by the Minister's change in attitude to nursery provision. Why has he suddenly become an advocate of nursery provision when previously, time after time, he refused to acknowledge its benefits? Has he now seen the educational grounds for such provision, or has he seen that its introduction is a political necessity?

Mr. Forth: There is no contradiction or difficulty whatever here. The Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have made it clear that we want to develop quality pre-school provision for under-fives. That is our objective and we want to ensure that what we do is carefully considered, properly based and properly delivered. Among other things, my objection has always been to some of the more half-baked and superficial ideas that have come from the Opposition, not least from the hon. Gentleman.

Grant-maintained Schools

4. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils are now being educated in self-governing grant-maintained schools; and what was the same figure one year ago.

6. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have opted for grant-maintained status in the last year; and what was the figure in the previous year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: About 620,000 pupils are now being educated in grant-maintained schools, compared with about 480,000 this time last year. The present total includes almost a fifth of all secondary pupils.

During the same period, the number of grant-maintained schools has increased by 310, compared with 420 in the previous year.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I welcome my right hon. Friend's answer. Is she aware that the vast bulk of the parents, teachers and governors to whom I speak in Gloucestershire warmly welcome the Government's improvements, which enable them to run their schools independently under grant-maintained status? Is it not typical of the Opposition that they would seek to reverse our excellent reforms, which have so benefited the education of our children?

Mrs. Shephard: Grant-maintained schools are both popular and successful, and millions of parents are now keenly interested in them. The Opposition will no doubt now wish to sort out their stance on the matter, as that number includes at least one Labour Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Is the Secretary of State aware of the unsolicited distribution of 1,000 copies of the Department for Education video, "Our Children: Our Choice", to parents whose children attend West Monmouth school in Pontypool—parents who have already voted against grant-maintained status? In the interests of balanced and informed debate, will the right hon. Lady make available, in this instance and others, the equivalent case against the nationalisation of schools?

Mrs. Shephard: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment. I am not aware of the unsolicited distribution of videos. The Government intend to ensure that parents and governors who are considering opting out will continue to have adequate and full information about the benefits.

Mr. Wilkinson: May I remind my right hon. Friend that all the secondary schools in my constituency of Ruislip-Northwood, except a Church of England secondary school, Bishop Ramsay, have been opted-out schools for a number of years? So successful are they that pupils are sent to them by their parents from other boroughs, making it impossible for local parents in my constituency to send their children to their local opted-out secondary schools. Will she therefore change the Greenwich judgment and make borough boundaries less permeable?

Mrs. Shephard: It is very important that sensible admission policies be achieved by close co-operation between local education authorities and the Funding Agency for Schools. I am happy to look at the detail of my hon. Friend's case.

Mr. Don Foster: I, too, congratulate the Secretary of State and the shadow Secretary of State on their recent appointments. I hope that we may now see some consensus in education in the next couple of years.

Is the Secretary of State aware of the importance, in the calculation of an individual school's grant, of the number of school meals that are consumed on census day each January? Will she condemn any school—such as one in Hampshire—that last year urged parents to persuade children to eat a school meal on census day to boost its grant? Will she instigate an inquiry into the reasons why this year, on census day, 25 per cent. more meals were eaten in each grant-maintained school than in each local education authority school? Was it another attempt by GM schools to take money from LEAs?

Mrs. Shephard: I am aware of the case, and it is being investigated by the FAS.

Statistics

5. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest figures she has for the number of 16-year-olds participating in part-time or full-time education; and what were the comparable figures for five years ago.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): In the 1988-89 academic year, 473,000 16-year-olds participated in full-time or part-time education, representing a participation rate of nearly 70 per cent. For the 1993-94 academic year, the latest available figures show that the equivalent figures are 429,000 and 80 per cent.

Mr. Viggers: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures are very satisfactory, and that they perhaps reflect the introduction of national vocational qualifications and general national vocational qualifications courses, which are thought by pupils to be very relevant to their aspirations? Indeed, a report on GNVQs, published today, described students' responses as "overwhelmingly positive". Does my hon. Friend agree that schools that do not offer GNVQ courses should be encouraged to do so, perhaps taking a leaf out of the book of St. Vincent college in my constituency, which he was good enough to visit recently?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I very much enjoyed my visit to the college, with which I know he is very involved. It has excellent provision, reflecting a strong interest in, and a strong take-up of, vocational qualifications, both GNVQs and NVQs. We now find that the targets that we set for GNVQ involvement for 1996 have already been hit, and we are determined that those courses should deliver high-quality vocational education.

Mr. Hardy: I welcome the increase in the number of young people extending their education, but will the Minister recognise and acknowledge that it is not all good—that many young people who are staying on at school are doing so because there are no prospects of employment for them in many parts of the country?

Mr. Boswell: It is interesting that the figures for participation in further education began to increase before the recent recession, and have continued to increase during it. I would say to students at school or college during this period that the best possible guarantee for their future employment is high-grade education, whether academic or vocational.

Mr. Congdon: Given the recent reports on GNVQs, which expressed some worries, what steps does my hon. Friend intend to take to ensure that standards, which are most important, are rigorously maintained?

Mr. Boswell: I very much agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of maintaining standards in vocational qualifications. In a sense, we anticipated those reports by setting out a six-point plan as early as this March. We are now pressing ahead, with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, on implementing that plan, and any other points, including the incorporation of core skills, that have arisen from recent reports.

Research Funding

7. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to ensure equality of research funding throughout further and higher education establishments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The Government are committed to ensuring value for money and accountability for public funds. We have asked the funding councils to allocate research funding selectively.

Mrs. Ewing: The Minister will agree that research plays an integral and critical role at our universities and higher education establishments, but will he advise the House of the criteria that will be used in assessing the efficiency of existing research and how decisions will be reached about future central funding, as not all funding comes from the private sector? Will he ensure that there is an equitable geographical basis for the funding of all research?

Mr. Boswell: I very much agree with the hon. Lady about the importance of research in higher education. I am somewhat surprised that she did not acknowledge the fact that the bulk of research funding continues to be derived from the Education Departments. Under our arrangements, there is a separate Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, which accounts for about one seventh of the English total of higher education funding. In both funding councils, my understanding is that research moneys are properly allocated selectively with regard to quality, and that quality is determined not by Ministers but by academic peer review.

Mr. Forman: Our further and higher education centres are tremendously dynamic and diverse, thanks to Conservative policies. Will my hon. Friend cling to the principles that have always informed that policy of supporting research, which is to back quality and centres of excellence?

Mr. Boswell: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his part in bringing about that high quality in higher education and the emphasis on diversity. I strongly emphasise the importance of quality and diversity of admission, which we are determined to secure at all times.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Does the Minister agree that, if lecturers are to maintain high standards in teaching, they will need to be actively involved in research? If he cannot guarantee equality in research funding, how can he guarantee equality of standards in teaching throughout higher education?

Mr. Boswell: It is for the funding councils to balance their funds between research and teaching. The hon. Lady will be aware that the bulk of those funds are spent on the teaching function. That is important, and we hope that as the system develops the balance of funding will reflect the quality of teaching.

Nursery Education

9. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions she has had with private providers of nursery schooling in preparation for the introduction of the Government scheme.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has not yet had any discussions with private providers of nursery education. However, she has made arrangements to visit a private day nursery and an independent school nursery class shortly. She will also be meeting delegates from the Early Childhood Education Forum which represents, among others, private providers, during the course of the consultation exercise. We expect private nursery classes and schools to play a full part in the expansion and to add to the rich diversity of current provision.

Mr. Rathbone: The House will be grateful to the Minister for that answer and for his commitment to quality in nursery education, which he gave in answer to an earlier question. May I have his further reassurance that there will be consultations with some well-known international organisers of nursery education, such as

Montessori, which set such a high standard for nursery education? I hope that the new Government nursery schools will emulate that standard.

Mr. Forth: Yes, I am able to give my hon. Friend that reassurance. I hope to visit a Montessori school in the near future. Beyond that, it is very much in our interests to get from all the providers as much input, information and advice as we can. We want to ensure that our proposals are firmly based on the best of existing practice, so that we can build on that and incorporate a quality guarantee. Only by extensive and continuing consultation over the next few months are we likely to be able to do so.

Mr. Burden: As the Prime Minister's recent statements on nursery education are different from those of the previous Secretary of State, surely there are three possibilities: first, that there has been a change of policy; secondly, that the previous Secretary of State did not mean what he said; or, thirdly, that the Prime Minister does not mean what he says. Which is it?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman overlooks the simple process of policy evolution. If he cares to consider carefully what has gone on in the past few months he will see that policy is evolving before his very eyes. In the capable hands of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that process of evolution will speed up gradually but steadily, and in the new year we shall unveil our new policies. At that time, the hon. Gentleman will see how superficial his comments are.

Schools, Bedfordshire

10. **Sir David Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received from Bedfordshire county council for increases in capital expenditure on maintained schools for the period after 1994-95; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Bedfordshire LEA has recently submitted its bid for capital support for schools in 1995-96. The degree to which that bid reflects the national priority criteria for the distribution of capital will determine the authority's annual capital guideline for 1995-96, which I expect to announce in December.

Sir David Madel: Will my hon. Friend be able to respond positively to the specific request by Bedfordshire county council that just over £4 million be spent on Cedars upper school, which is popular, successful and becoming over-subscribed and in urgent need of that money to enable it to expand?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend, who is very knowledgeable on education matters, makes a persuasive case. However, I hope that he will understand if I stand by my answer to his first question. We shall assess all basic need bids, such as the one for Cedars upper school to which he referred, in line with our published criteria. We shall, of course, take into account both projected demand in the area and local surplus places.

Drug Abuse

11. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action she is taking to combat drug abuse in schools.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department is playing a full part in the Government's strategy for drug prevention.

Mr. Whittingdale: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we are to eliminate drug abuse, it must be tackled at the earliest opportunity—through education in the classroom? Does she further agree that the worst possible message that we could send to our young people would be to legalise soft drugs, as the Liberal Democrat party would do?

Mrs. Shephard: I agree with my hon. Friend. Education on drugs is part of the national curriculum from five to 16. Indeed, references to drugs have been maintained in the new slimmed-down curriculum. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) began his question this afternoon by asking for consensus. I assure him that there will be never be consensus from the Conservative party on legalising drugs of any kind.

Mr. Miller: Does the Secretary of State share my concern at the advice given by a spokesperson for the Liberal and Conservative-controlled Cheshire county council, who told one of my staff this week that there is no drugs problem in our local schools? Does she agree that it is a problem which affects all schools throughout the United Kingdom and that our education representatives locally and nationally should be taking an active interest in it?

Mrs. Shephard: Of course I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The recently announced Government initiative in the Green Paper made education a matter of key concern in the battle against drugs. Drugs are an educational issue as well as a social evil. It is important to remove the stigma from those schools that make a stand against drugs. Drugs are an issue for all schools and for all of us.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the most effective instruments for improving supervision in schools would be to welcome volunteers into schools to assist teachers in a wide variety of different functions? Apart from anything else, there would be two pairs of eyes in the classroom rather than just one.

Mrs. Shephard: Next week, I shall be launching a draft circular as a basis for consultation on teaching about drugs and the handling of drugs-related incidents. We expect the consultation to result in many excellent ideas for good practice from across the country, some of which may include those put forward by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I applaud the Government's attempts to control drugs in schools and urge them to do more, but why are the Government at the same time cutting by 25 per cent. the number of customs officers dealing with drug enforcement? Is it inconsistency or hypocrisy?

Mrs. Shephard: I think that what it could be is a question for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, the total Government programme on drugs prevention amounts to £500 million. Her

Majesty's Customs and Excise is involved in the recent initiative, as are the Education and Health Departments, the Department of Social Security and other Government Departments.

Mr. Brazier: As a former schools inspector, does my right hon. Friend agree that much of the initiative must be taken at county level? Does she further agree that it is outrageous that, nine months after a call in February from Conservative county councillors for a tougher policy on discipline in schools in Kent, the Lib-Lab ruling coalition has still not agreed to take action?

Mrs. Shephard: I always believe the comments of my hon. Friend and what he describes is lamentable.

Primary School Inspections

12. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of primary school inspections planned by the Office for Standards in Education for this term will not take place during this term.

Mr. Forth: While this is mainly a matter for Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, who heads the independent Office for Standards in Education, I am advised that contracts have been let for 76 per cent. of the primary schools inspection originally planned for this term.

Mr. Byers: Is the Minister not concerned that 24 per cent. of those planned inspections will fail to take place this term? Does he agree with the comments made by the former chief inspector of schools that the main problem was the requirement that every contract for inspection has to go out to competitive tender? Does he agree that it is yet another example of his Government putting political dogma before the interests of the nation's children?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is being a little previous in this matter. This is the first term of primary inspections and we are planning for and approaching them systematically and methodically. Although the figures show that we have fallen somewhat short of the plans prepared by Ofsted, we are well on the way in making a good start.

Bearing in mind the difficulties that have arisen, of which we have made no secret, Ofsted is taking a number of measures to alter the contracting arrangements and certain other matters in an attempt to ensure that the cycle of primary inspections will develop in pace over the next few terms. At this stage, like Ofsted, I am confident that that will be achieved.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does my hon. Friend agree that he should not listen too much to the carping from Opposition Members, who opposed inspections in schools but are now complaining that they are not happening fast enough? Does he understand the concern felt by some grant-maintained schools that they will be inspected by the local authorities from whose control they have escaped? Will he consider that point carefully?

Mr. Forth: I know that there has been widespread concern on the latter point, but I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that as the Ofsted inspections proceed and the level of expertise and impartiality becomes more and more obvious, schools will be reassured that the new independent professional inspection process is of great value both to education and to schools themselves. More and more schools are beginning to learn that that is to their benefit. As for the attitude of Opposition Members, this is yet another area in which they cannot quite make up their minds whether what we are doing is so much better that they want to agree with us, or whether they want to stick with their traditional opposition and become lost as a result.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware that many local authority chief education officers are complaining that there is inadequate funding for inspections? Is he further aware that that has resulted in the educational requirements of schools being denied in order to meet the costs of inspections? Will the Minister consider providing additional funding?

Mr. Forth: Opposition Members complaining about a lack of money is something that happens all too frequently. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should establish from his Front-Bench colleagues whether they are now prepared to commit more money to education, for this or any other purpose.

Discipline in Schools

13. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to improve the levels of discipline in schools.

Mr. Forth: In May, guidance on pupil behaviour and discipline was sent to all schools as part of the "Pupils with Problems" pack. The guidance aims to help schools to maintain and improve discipline. In September, the Department published an anti-bullying pack to help schools combat bullying.

Mr. Evennett: I congratulate my hon. Friend and the Department on their work on discipline in schools. We are all aware of the few well-publicised schools which have discipline problems, but can my hon. Friend confirm that the last Ofsted report showed that most schools did not have a discipline problem and that most pupils in the state sector were well behaved?

Mr. Forth: It is important to get this matter in context and to understand that throughout the country teachers are doing an excellent job in maintaining classroom discipline. In most classrooms, in most schools, for most of the time, there is an orderly atmosphere and pupils are learning. However, undoubtedly there is a very small number of difficult pupils. We want to work with teachers to ensure that they have available to them all reasonable means of dealing with disciplinary problems. Very often the key to that is parents. My appeal is for parents to support teachers, governors and heads of schools in maintaining proper discipline. Without parental support, the job is much more difficult.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Will the Minister today recognise something that every teacher in this country recognises—that there is a link between the unacceptable rise in the numbers in school classes, in both primary and secondary schools, and both the quality of education and the discipline maintained? Does he agree that there needs to be a limit on class sizes, especially in primary schools, to enable quality and discipline to be maintained?

Mr. Forth: No, I know of no such link. If the hon. Lady thinks that, simply by repeating it often enough she will make it come true, she is sadly mistaken. If she can produce any evidence of a causal connection between classroom sizes and discipline problems, I shall be happy to consider it, but no such evidence has yet come to my attention.

Mr. Hawkins: On the subject of discipline in classrooms, did my hon. Friend have the opportunity at the weekend to see the excellent article by *The Sunday Telegraph* education correspondent, Mr. Jonathan Petre, reporting on a visit that he and some secondary school heads had made to Japanese schools which had high numbers in the classroom but high standards of discipline? Does he not feel that it was a counsel of despair for some of the heads on that visit to say that they did not feel that it was possible to emulate the high standards of discipline in Japanese classrooms in their own schools? If my hon. Friend has not seen that article, will he consider it carefully, as there are lessons to be learned there for British schools?

Mr. Forth: Of course we should always be conscious of experience in other countries, but quite how far Japanese experience is directly transferable to Britain is an interesting matter on which I would wish to ponder. However, I agree that it is depressing if people in the responsible position that head teachers undoubtedly have, when given the opportunity to see some sort of international comparison of this kind, are reluctant to accept the lessons that may be there to be learnt. I hope that they will think again, just as I am prepared to consider the example that my hon. Friend has given.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the Minister agree that discipline is crucial to an acceptable learning environment, but that pastoral care in schools and special support, including with the family, are much more important than the Group 4 approach to school discipline, which has resulted in 8,000 pupils being excluded from our schools, many of them grant-maintained schools, during the past year?

Mr. Forth: I join my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in welcoming the hon. Gentleman to his new responsibilities on the Opposition Front Bench. When he has had a little more time, he may like to study the figures somewhat more carefully, when he will see that they are not as they first appear. A lot of nonsense is being talked at the moment about the nature of exclusions. We must distinguish between permanent and temporary—or limited—exclusions. We must also be careful not to extrapolate a small sample to a national level. However, I share the hon. Gentleman's concern in this area. We want to consider carefully the whole matter of exclusions, who is carrying them out and why and the general background to them. I hope that we shall be able to find the right answers to support our heads and teachers in the difficult job that they are doing.

Statistics

14. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of young people are now entering higher education; and what was the comparable figure 10 years ago.

Mr. Boswell: The Government's policies have led to record student numbers in higher education. More than 30 per cent. of young people entered higher education in 1993, compared with around one in eight 10 years ago.

Mr. Clappison: Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that Britain now has a higher graduation rate than many of our European Union competitors and that 50 per cent. more students now gain a first degree than in 1979? Does my hon. Friend agree that, instead of carping, Opposition Members and their Commission on Social Justice would have done better to study the successful Conservative policies which have enabled that to take place?

Mr. Boswell: My hon. Friend is entirely right in pointing to our achievements in that direction and, in particular, the fact that we now have the highest graduation rate in Europe. That does not entirely transmit itself to the Opposition Benches. Every time an Opposition Member comes up with a sensible proposition, someone tends to end up being sacked.

Mr. Bryan Davies: After that orgy of self-congratulation, and after Prime Minister's Question Time, will the Minister take his fellow ministerial team to No. 10 Downing street to discuss a petition received by the Prime Minister this morning, presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and myself, on behalf of the higher education sector—students, staff, administrators and vice-chancellors—protesting at the under-funding of higher education by the present Government?

Mr. Boswell: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the retention of his somewhat dangerous portfolio. He has never told the House what proposals he would make for the resourcing of higher education. I can tell the House that, in the last public expenditure survey, we were able to produce a real terms increase, to a record level, in the proportion and amount of higher education funding in this country. We have nothing to be ashamed of. We have the highest student numbers and the best resourced higher education in our history.

Mr. Batiste: Are the Government committed to the principle of uniformity of standards across each class of degree across all universities in the country? If so, how does the Minister intend to ensure that that principle is observed in practice?

Mr. Boswell: We are absolutely committed to the maintenance of high standards. It is, of course, primarily for the academic community, through its higher education quality council, to ensure that degrees mean what they say and are uniform throughout the various institutions, and that is a matter to which it is giving the closest attention.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Stevenson: Will the Prime Minister confirm the complete absence of any mention of privatisation of the Post Office in the last Tory party manifesto? Is he aware of the complete absence of any public support for that latest piece of Government dogma? Will he now take this opportunity to do the country a service and rescue the President of the Board of Trade by withdrawing that absurd proposal?

The Prime Minister: As the whole House knows, we are considering the results of the consultation exercise that was launched in the summer. *[Interruption.]* I am surprised to hear Opposition Members scoffing. I thought that in the new politics the Labour party favoured consultation.

Mr. Brooke: If Mr. Al Fayed requires a forgery from *The Guardian* to resolve his conscience, what, in my right hon. Friend's mind, does that tell us about Mr. Al Fayed or *The Guardian*, or both?

The Prime Minister: I think that many conclusions may be drawn from that, some of which may well be drawn from the investigation that the Serjeant at Arms himself is carrying out into the affair. Certainly, whatever is uncovered, I doubt whether it will be to the credit of the principal people concerned.

Mr. Blair: To return to the Prime Minister's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson), on Post Office privatisation, there is more than a whiff of retreat in the air. If the Prime Minister does retreat—*[Interruption.]* Is he aware that, if he does retreat on that, he will be acting wisely, because if he is going to consult the British people, the vast majority of them—and, I believe, a majority in this House—want a modern Post Office with greater commercial freedom, delivering a cheap and reliable service, and that the best way of achieving that is to retain it in public ownership, run it as a public service and serve the public interest?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly share with the right hon. Gentleman the wish to make the Post Office business strong, competitive and able to deliver the services that people need. Of course, a large number of improvements have been made over the past few years, most of them opposed at the time by Opposition Members. In 1981, we separated out Telecom and introduced the £1 monopoly limit, introducing competition and allowing a thriving courier industry to develop. In 1990, we sold Girobank. All those changes were opposed by the Opposition, who now take credit for the success of the Post Office as a result of our policies.

Sir Archibald Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend share my concern about the actions of Mr. Preston of *The Guardian*? Not only has he been using House of Commons writing paper to forge letters; he has been forging other people's signatures—and this from a man who is on the Press Complaints Commission. Should he not resign from that body at once?

The Prime Minister: Over many years, *The Guardian* and its present editor have from time to time thundered against general standards in public life. It is, of course, the right of the press to do that; I simply invite its members to observe their own standards.

Mr. Ashdown: But is the Prime Minister satisfied with the promptness, accuracy and frankness with which his Chief Secretary to the Treasury has responded to questions over past weeks and months? Are those the standards by which he would wish his Government and their Ministers to be recognised?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman, and some other hon. Members, may be wholly satisfied with their own blameless pasts in every respect. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has made the position entirely clear, and I accept his word.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Does my right hon. Friend agree that so-called investigative journalism has sunk to a new all-time low? Does he also agree that, if a newspaper is found to have used the name of the House to give false authority to its activities, that newspaper deserves to lose the respect and confidence of the House?

The Prime Minister: I believe that a diverse and wholly independent press is a very important protector of our system of democracy. I hope that there is no dispute about that.

What is particularly sad is the casual abuse of what were once high and expected standards. If it is now commonly accepted in journalism that the end justifies any means, I believe that journalism will regret stooping to that standard. I hope that that is not the case; I believe that honest, factual journalism remains important to our democratic system. Systematic deception, fraud and collusion are certainly not what we expect from a free press.

Q2. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hall: This morning, my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and I delivered a petition to No.10 Downing street on behalf of thousands of pensioners in Warrington, calling on the Government to abandon their proposal to increase VAT on fuel to 17.5 per cent. from next April. Is the Prime Minister aware that half the 36,000 claimants of income support in Halton and Warrington are entitled to claim only cold weather payments and that many other families in fuel poverty receive no help whatever? Will the Prime Minister give an assurance that he recognises that to be a true problem, that he will abandon the VAT increase, and that he will ensure that all low-income families receive fuel credits weekly when there are cold spells during the winter?

The Prime Minister: So that no one who may be listening to these exchanges can be in any doubt, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that, while he says that he opposes VAT on fuel, he is in favour of a carbon tax, which would have exactly the same effect on people? Will he also acknowledge that measures worth around £2.5 billion over three years have been put in place—*[Interruption.]* It is no good Opposition Members pointing and shouting. They cannot on the one hand oppose VAT on fuel, and on the other hand support a carbon tax which would have precisely the same effect on the people whom they claim to be defending.

Q3. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my right hon. Friend agree with that great editor of *The Manchester Guardian*, C.P. Scott, who said:

> "Comment is free but the facts are sacred"?

Does he agree that certain standards of journalism have sunk below the level that one would expect in a free and fair democracy?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about that. The press rightly demands the highest standards from Parliament and we have a right to expect the highest standards from the press.

Dr. Marek: If the Prime Minister reads in *Hansard* what he said at Question Time last Thursday, he will realise that he answered one of the questions in a rather silly way. I hope that he will now give me a considered reply to that question. Why is he prepared to countenance devolution for the Province of Northern Ireland but not for the countries of Wales and Scotland?

The Prime Minister: I must tell the hon. Gentleman two things. First, if he does not understand the difference in the history of Northern Ireland, he certainly should do so before sitting in the House. Secondly, there is a well established system of local democracy and government in Wales and Scotland which does not apply in Northern Ireland.

Q4. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Michael Neubert: Reverting to the subject of earlier exchanges, what would be my right hon. Friend's reaction if the Lord Chancellor were to include a known criminal among his appointments to the magistrates bench? Is it not equally unacceptable that the editor of *The Guardian* should sit in judgment on his fellow editors as a member of the Press Complaints Commission when, on his own evidence, he has been party to a forgery?

The Prime Minister: That is a matter for the Press Complaints Commission and for the conscience of the editor of *The Guardian*.

Q5. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hoon: Why are the Government threatening to cut housing benefit for hundreds of thousands of pensioners simply because they have spare rooms? Why is the Chief Secretary frightening pensioners with the prospect of having to move house just because they have raised their children and want to live out their retirement in their family home? Does the Prime Minister have any confidence in the Chief Secretary, particularly on matters of accommodation?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the system of housing benefit that we have in place is more generous than he will find anywhere on the continent. It is necessary to ensure that a proper balance is kept between that and the taxpayer.

Q6. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in stark contrast to that lot opposite, we are united behind our leader? To put the issue of *The Guardian* into perspective, is my right hon. Friend aware that Janice had a shock this morning, as I think did my right hon. Friend, because it said that David Evans was sponsoring Bambi. That is how ridiculous *The Guardian* is. If my right hon. Friend raised £79,000 to become leader of our party, would he put it in the Register of Members' Interests? This shows that that lot opposite are a bunch of fiddlers, because their leader has not done so.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has been accused of many things over the years, but I do not think that anybody would credibly accuse him of being a sponsor of the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair).

Q7. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his o[illegible] engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cunningham: Will the Prime Minister list the Tories who are members of quangos since last week he listed the Labour members? Will he also give the costs?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman would prefer a much longer list of those Labour members of quangos that I did not yet mention. If he is so against quangos, will he perhaps explain why he wants to create a very long list of them, which I will happily read to the House if the hon. Gentleman presses me? Those are the new quangos that the Opposition thus far are committed to establishing. The hon. Gentleman would be better off looking at his own policy than trying to misrepresent ours.

Q8. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Home Secretary's announcement yesterday that the regime in our prisons is to be toughened up and that privileges are to be earned is widely welcomed, especially by the victims of crime? With that in mind, will he ensure that all victims are consulted before prisoners are granted any home leave?

The Prime Minister: I very much agree with my hon. Friend and with the announcement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary yesterday. He intends to ensure that privileges are earned and are not available as a matter of right, and that home leave and temporary release will be granted only after rigorous assessment of risk to the public. As he has said on a number of occasions, conditions in prisons should be decent but austere. I believe that that is the view of the overwhelming majority of people in this country.

"The Guardian"

Madam Speaker: I have a statement to make arising from a submission that I received yesterday from the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) regarding the conduct of *The Guardian* newspaper. I told the House yesterday that I had commissioned a report from the Serjeant at Arms on certain aspects of this matter. I have to tell the House that, having now had the opportunity to reflect on all the aspects of the matter which have been brought to my notice, I have decided that it merits further attention. I am accordingly prepared for a motion to be given precedence at the commencement of business at 3.30 pm tomorrow. For the avoidance of doubt, the essential issue to be covered is the alleged action of *The Guardian* in representing that a letter sent by it to the Ritz hotel, Paris was sent in the name of an hon. Member of this House.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that during the debate yesterday the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made it clear that, no matter what decisions were taken, either in the House or in the Privileges Committee, he would follow his own course of action. He said that he intended, as he inevitably will, to take a tape recorder into the meeting, to take notes of that meeting and to issue a press release, whether or not that was authorised by the Committee or by the House. In those circumstances, may we look for some advice from you, Madam Speaker, on what action should be taken by the Chairman of that Committee, its members and, indeed, by the House? The very least that should happen is that the Serjeant at Arms should be warned to be outside the door of that meeting room possibly in order to remove the right hon. Gentleman if he persists in that act.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member appears to be answering his own point of order. I do not rule on hypothetical matters. We must wait and see the action taken by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: There can be no further point of order once I have ruled on it and I have done so.

Sir Peter Emery: It is a separate point of order. Is it not the case that it is clear from Standing Order No. 118 that the only time that the publication of Committee proceedings is not a breach of privilege is when the Committee has decided to take evidence in public?

Madam Speaker: I do not give advice on such matters. With respect to the right hon. Member, I have already answered the point of order that has been raised on this matter. Much is hypothetical at the moment. I shall rule when it may be necessary to do so.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I will take no further points of order on that matter.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your advice on the statement that you have just made. Would it be in order for the House to decide tomorrow to sit in private to discuss *The Guardian*?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that if I suggested that it were, the hon. Member would be the first to oppose me.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Further to your statement, Madam Speaker, will you please confirm that our discussions tomorrow will not in any way be inhibited by sub judice rules should the editor of *The Guardian* face criminal charges, as he ought to?

Madam Speaker: Again, I am faced with hypothetical questions. This is a very practical House and I hope that I am a very practical Speaker. I deal with matters as they arise—I do not bring out my crystal ball in advance.

Sir Peter Emery: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I was not asking a hypothetical question. I was asking you to rule on whether Standing Order No. 118 makes it absolutely clear that the only time publication of matters being dealt with by a Committee is not a breach of privilege is if the evidence is taken in public. Is that not what Standing Order No. 118 states?

Madam Speaker: Standing Order No. 118 is there for every hon. Member to see. I should have thought that the right hon. Member, as Chairman of the Procedure Committee, would know the answer to that one.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Might not a threat of a breach of privilege affect other hon. Members in that they might believe that what they say may be taken down and used outside the Committee?

Madam Speaker: Order. I have heard enough of these points of order. We are going to get on with business.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I hope that it is a quite different point of order.

Mr. Hall: You will recall, Madam Speaker, that I secured Question 2 during Prime Minister's Question Time. I asked about VAT on fuel, but the Prime Minister's response was to ask me a question. What redress do I have to enable me to respond to the Prime Minister? Is it Prime Minister's Question Time or is it not?

Madam Speaker: We are about to enter a new Session. I suggest that the hon. Member tables many questions to the Prime Minister and I shall try to call him.

BILL PRESENTED

FIREWORK SAFETY

Mr. Nigel Griffiths, supported by Mrs. Irene Adams, Mr. David Jamieson, Mr. Gordon McMaster, Mr. Dennis Turner and Mr. Jon Owen Jones, presented a Bill to restrict the sale to the general public of those fireworks which do not comply with Categories 1-3 of BS1174; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Thursday 3 November, and to be printed. [Bill 171.]

Pensions (Divorce)

3.36 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the law so as to provide for the equitable division of pensions in the event of divorce.

I do not expect this to be a popular Bill here, as the House is full of powerful, rich men, and a few women, who have benefited enormously from their long-term relationships with their spouses but, if anything goes wrong, they might want the matrimonial assets, such as pension rights, to be theirs alone rather than being divided equally. In place of that selfish and potentially nasty attitude, my Bill would insert fairness, justice and common sense into the distribution of assets—especially pension assets—in the event of divorce.

At the moment, the system is unfair. After the matrimonial home, pension rights are the single most valuable asset in a marriage. Indeed, the pension rights are often more valuable than the matrimonial home. On divorce, it is usually the wife who loses all right to a claim on those assets. That is manifestly unfair. There is equal input in a marriage but, after divorce, there is inequality. One party goes on to a prosperous future, with the help of the pension assets, while the other—usually the wife—lives in hardship. There is a rising divorce rate—171,000 divorces in 1991—so a growing number of women find themselves in that position. They become reliant on the state for financial support. That is wholly unnecessary and could be avoided by a fairer division of assets, including pension rights. It is a waste of public money to have to support the woman while the man walks away with all the assets.

In Scotland, under the Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985, pension assets are considered part of the matrimonial property. Their value is determined and they can be divided, but in England and Wales it is left to the discretion of the courts, which usually ignore pension rights because they say that they cannot overrule the pension fund trustees or the trust fund rules. That is not right, and the law should be changed in England and Wales.

In Germany and other countries, there are different laws. German law explicitly incorporates the idea of community of property within marriage. Assets acquired by either partner during a marriage are regarded as assets of the partnership, and are split down the middle on divorce, when the pension rights accumulated during the marriage by both partners are summed and compared. Half the difference is transferred from the account of the spouse with the greater record to the account of the other spouse. Apportionment of pensions, as that splitting is sometimes called, is also in operation in the state of California, in Canada and some other places. We should introduce it in this country.

Certain court cases, such as Brooks *v.* Brooks, offered hope that the situation would be changed, but that was a false hope, because they were specific cases with highly specific circumstances, and the principles could not be applied across the board. The law needs to be changed, and that must be done by Parliament.

The Government's initial attitude was to await the important reports being produced on pensions, such as that of the Pensions Management Institute, and the Goode report. But those reports have now appeared. The PMI reported in May 1993 and the Goode committee in September the same year. Now the Government's attitude has changed. They now seem to regard the matter as too difficult to legislate on, and are quietly dropping any prospect of legislative change.

The White Paper published in June said:

> "There is at present no clear evidence of the extent of the problem. A detailed research programme will be undertaken to ascertain the extent of the problem before the issue is considered further".

But there have already been two major reports on the problem, and they have made it absolutely clear that the law must be changed. The inequality is manifest. Indeed, I have been told of surveys revealing that nine out of 10 women in this country die in poverty. Pension inequality must be at least a small factor behind that, and it should be altered.

My Bill would include a number of measures, and would allow all pensions to be regarded as the assets of a marriage, which should be divided equitably in the event of divorce. It works on the principle that a settlement between the two parties should take place in the first instance, but that, if that cannot be agreed, the court should have the flexibility to settle the distribution of the matrimonial assets on a equitable basis. That could still provide for a trade-off of such assets. For example, the pension rights could go to one party and the other could have the matrimonial home in exchange.

My Bill also provides for the pension assets and rights to be divided, if the court deems it appropriate. After a long period of marriage, each partner would have an automatic claim to the equivalent of half of all the pension assets and rights built up over the period of their relationship. The court would have the power to reallocate occupational and personal pension rights between divorcing parties, and it could decide to take into account all matrimonial assets, including pension fund assets and rights, and apportion them on the basis of a clean-break, once-and-for-all settlement.

The court would also have the power to require the trustees of pension schemes to reduce the value of a member's pension rights by a specified amount, and to provide the same amount as a transfer payment for the benefit of the divorced spouse. Any reasonable expenses incurred in doing so would be recoverable, and that is also provided for in the Bill.

If a pension were already in payment, the court would have the power to balance non-pension assets against pension rights, or to earmark a stated part of a member's pension for the benefit of a divorced spouse. The court could also order the pension scheme authorities to give full consideration to a divorced spouse as the possible recipient of a dependant's pension, if that would lie within their discretion.

The court could also order a scheme member to take out appropriate term or whole-life insurance in favour of a divorced spouse. If that individual did not keep up the payments, the spouse would have the right to be notified, and to bring the case back to the court.

If the court decides to divide pension rights, it should be calculated on a cash-equivalent basis unless otherwise agreed by the parties or ordered by the court. The court, under my provision, can direct the transfer of payments to another pension arrangement entered into by the spouse. In respect of a deferred lump sum due to be received in the future, the allocation of the proportion to the ex-spouse can also be ordered by the court to be paid at that future date. Under my proposals, a minimum of 20 years' marriage would have to be guaranteed before the rights were automatic. By doing that, I was looking to protect older women who find themselves divorced and in unfair hardship.

Those are the main provisions of my Bill. I do not say that it is perfect, because it is a complex subject. But I think that a lot of the imperfections in it could be ironed out by the Government if they brought forward their own legislation, or in Committee if the Bill got there.

I have received representations that 20 years is too long. Ian Aitken, the Pensions Management Institute president, said that 20 years

> "is a very long time in the current climate. Under UK pension legislation, pension rights must be preserved if a member remains in a pension scheme for 2 or more years. In the circumstances, there is much to commend pension splitting after 2 years of marriage . . . this would be in line with the current divorce legislation that says a divorce can take place after 2 years if both parties consent. If you feel that 2 years is too short a period, then may I suggest that you insert a period of 5 years for pension splitting—this would be in line with the period of separation if the parties do not consent to the divorce."

The case for a shorter period could also be put.

The Bill is not a panacea, and neither is it an excuse for not substantially increasing the basic state pension. That needs to be done, but the Bill is a small righting of a current injustice. It is supported in principle by the organisation Fairshares, and its name is what the Bill is all about—fair shares.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Ms Jean Corston, Mr. Neil Gerrard, Ms Mildred Gordon, Mrs. Helen Jackson, Ms Joyce Quin and Mrs. Audrey Wise.

PENSIONS (DIVORCE)

Mr. Harry Cohen accordingly presented a Bill to amend the law so as to provide for the equitable division of pensions in the event of divorce: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 November, and to be printed. [Bill 172.]

Opposition Day

[12TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Energy Conservation Bill

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.47 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I beg to move,

> That this House deplores the Government's action in blocking the Energy Conservation Bill which was introduced by the Right honourable Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed with support from all parties; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to introduce the Bill itself in the coming session.

After the large number of debates on the private Member's Bill, some hon. Members may wonder why the Liberal Democrats feel that the Energy Conservation Bill, which was introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), is important enough to warrant a further debate today.

I shall start by addressing what the Bill calls for. It places a duty on local authorities to promote energy conservation and a requirement on them to carry out energy audits. That collection of information would show how resources could best be used to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions.

The Bill is simple, practical and effective, yet the Government amendment today argues—if argues is a suitable word—that the proposals are deplorable, unnecessary and an example of what is apparently

> "the muddled thinking of the Liberal Democrats".

That is an extraordinary accusation from a Government who have certainly used deplorable tactics to block a Bill that has such widespread support across the parties—including Conservative Members.

For example, the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) said in a letter to the director of the Association of Conservation of Energy:

> "I most certainly endorse the Bill . . . I will certainly encourage my colleagues to put their names to the EDM."

That comes from the deputy chairman of the Conservative party.

The Government amendment is all the more extraordinary, given their own muddled approach to the Bill. A majority of the House—almost 400 Members—have declared their support for it, including the Minister with responsibility for energy efficiency, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones). He chaired the Environment Select Committee when, in its fourth report, it concluded from its investigation into energy efficiency in buildings that

> "present Government assistance—on energy conservation—through the home energy efficiency scheme, the green house programme, the housing investment programme and the establishment of the energy saving trust—welcome and worth while initiatives although they are—does not constitute a sufficiently comprehensive nor an adequately funded programme of action."

Yet apparently the Minister will speak later tonight in support of his Government's amendment.

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

Nor is support for the Bill apparent only in the House. It is backed at every level by every major environmental organisation, every major society that represents the elderly, people with disabilities and those on low incomes, and many others. More than 500 parish, town and community councils have declared support for the Bill. More than 160 local authorities have called for it. As they will be directed to act under the Bill, their support is both particularly welcome and particularly instructive. That support proves how important they feel the issue is. I might add that it would be interesting to hear from the Minister how many hundreds of letters the Department has received from parish, community and town councils across the country supporting the Bill.

In response to the Bill, the Government have argued that it is not necessary to place a statutory requirement on local authorities regarding energy conservation. Yet without that, the Bill would not ensure that local authorities acted. If we took out the statutory requirements, the Bill would simply give councils the power to do that which they already have the power to do. That would certainly be an example of ministerial muddled thinking.

The best local authorities may act anyway already, but action from only the best will not provide the national impact that the Bill is designed to achieve. In that context, it is certainly deplorable that, despite the huge support that the proposals for energy conservation received—almost 400 Members of Parliament supported it—the Government blocked it on Report and Third Reading. The introduction of 216 amendments and seven new clauses at that late stage meant that the time allocated to the Bill inevitably expired, and it was successfully talked out.

The Government's amendment today says that the Bill is unaffordable and that it

> "would impose unnecessary burdens on public expenditure as well as on central and local government".

That is ludicrous, as the Minister responsible for energy efficiency, who will sum up tonight for the Government, should know full well, given his previous unconditional support for the Bill. Ministers have said that to draw up energy conservation plans will be a costly process; that it will be money wasted on bureaucracy, not energy efficiency. That was the reason given by Ministers in the debate on Report when it was apparent that they had blocked the Bill. Yet that argument assumes that local authorities would be required to carry out a full energy audit for all dwellings. The Bill does not require that. It simply demands an audit of the best method of achieving energy savings.

The Government's accusation that the Bill would cost too much, and that between £11 million and £23 million would be required before energy savings were made is simply incorrect. That calculation is based on a costing carried out by two local authorities of the task of a full energy audit of every property. The Bill does not require that. It requires every local authority to identify the best and most cost-effective way of saving energy.

The Association for the Conservation of Energy asked the two local authorities to cost the full audit to show what the cost would be if that was the way in which a local authority chose to proceed. But the Bill does not say that an audit is the best way. Each local authority will decide the best methods to use in its area. That may differ between local authorities from Cornwall to Durham to Thanet.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Can the hon. Gentleman explain how a local authority could introduce energy-saving measures for individual properties that have particular problems and require attention without investigating those properties?

Mr. Taylor: Many local authorities will know of building structures, such as blocks of flats erected during the 1960s, which are particularly energy-inefficient, and they may want to identify the level of that inefficiency and programmes to deal with it. The Bill asks them to look at the most cost-effective way to cut the energy bill. It does not require them to identify every property in one year, as that may not be an efficient way to go about this business. The aim of the Bill is that the best, most cost-effective and energy-efficient method is found and acted on to deliver energy savings of up to 30 per cent. I simply do not believe that every authority would engage in the process of looking at every individual dwelling.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new position within the Liberal Democrat party.

Many of us read "Costing the Earth", the Liberal Democrats' 1991 policy document, which they now disown and say was not their policy. Some of us believed that there was a consensus in the House to introduce VAT on fuel—it was Liberal Democrat policy and the candidate who opposed me in the general election campaigned for it—so we were somewhat surprised at the Liberal Democrats' reversal in policy. Will the hon. Gentleman now give a commitment on behalf of his party that, if councils go ahead with that energy audit, even though they may not be obliged to do so under a Bill, the Liberal Democrats will then support councillors who decide to put up council house rents to pay for the energy-efficient measures being put into council houses?

Mr. Taylor: Under the Government's current rules on the ring fencing of councils' housing budgets, that investment would probably be required to be recouped from rents. However we expect people to benefit from energy-saving measures because they would cut their bills, including those increased by VAT on fuel. At this stage, I do not want to go too far into the Liberal Democrats' previous policy. Suffice it to say that we looked at the possibility of VAT on fuel, and the manifesto on which we fought the previous general election specifically ruled it out. To have looked at something and then decide that it was not a good idea strikes me as more honourable than to fight an election saying that one would not do something and then do it afterwards.

Ministers have defended their destruction of the Bill also on the ground that the proposals would force people to have energy conservation measures in their homes. They have obviously not read the Bill because not a word of it requires that. The Government seem intent on destroying the Bill for reasons of their own, not for the given reasons. At least their amendment today is unambiguous on the subject, in contrast to their previously stated partial support and practical opposition.

Ministers' action in blocking the Bill on Report goes to the heart of our process of government. We have heard much recently of the sleaze that seems to have become commonplace within the Conservative party. The Government constantly tell us that the scandals within their ranks are being exaggerated by the media and Opposition and that our system of government is in safe hands. In my view, the sleaziest actions of the Government can be found not in the occasional financial scandal but in the systematic abuse of the House's procedures. Nothing is as sleazy as the Government's technique for blocking private Members' Bills. This parliamentary year, Ministers managed to block not only the Energy Conservation Bill but the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which both had majority support on both sides of the House and throughout the country.

So whom do the Government represent? Is it the people or the Treasury and self-interest? It left a sour taste to see the Government table more than 200 amendments after the Bill had passed through its Committee stage, in the sure knowledge that that would mean that the Bill could not proceed, despite the fact that it had the support of more than half the Members of the House. It leaves an even more sour taste to see former supporters of the Bill become loyal Government opponents of it as soon as they gain ministerial office.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): As someone who has not gained ministerial office, I ask the hon. Gentleman to allow me to reply to one point. He makes a good point when he says that the Government were wrong to block the Bill on the ground that it would cost too much to insulate a lot of houses. I do not recall that from the debate at which I was present on 22 April. The hon. Gentleman was not present at that debate, but may have read the proceedings in *Hansard*. If that was why they blocked it, it would be a ridiculous basis on which to do so. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, despite its enormous cost, the Bill's passage would not result in a single dwelling being insulated?

Mr. Taylor: I believe that it would result in that, but the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the Bill is about considering the problem and identifying ways to overcome it, not requiring people to insulate their houses directly. It is a process of setting out the identification of the problem and the ways to tackle it. It would be more appropriate if the hon. Gentleman asked the Ministers that question; they have repeatedly referred to the cost of the Bill as a reason for opposing it.

The Government believe that the tactics used to defeat the Energy Conservation Bill were acceptable—but they believe that they have taken adequate action to encourage energy efficiency. In fact, in spite of the Government's Helping The Earth Begins At Home campaign, energy use by the domestic sector is increasing. In 1993, total domestic energy use increased by 3 per cent. That trend continued in the first half of 1994, when domestic energy use increased by a further 6.2 per cent. on the first half of last year.

Furthermore, it is significant that, after several years of decline in the UK's energy ratio—the amount of primary energy needed to produce a unit of gross domestic product—it has begun to increase again. Since 1990, the actual energy intensity of the UK economy has steadily increased. Therefore, the increase in energy use cannot simply be attributed to economic growth. It is obvious from that that the Government's measures to improve energy efficiency are simply not delivering the goods. Not only has the energy ratio increased, but sales of energy-efficient goods continue to be below the 1989 figures.

The Energy Conservation Bill is simple, and will place a duty on local authorities to improve energy conservation. The Environment Select Committee emphasised the importance of real action to improve energy efficiency when it said:

> "The UK is bound by international obligations concerning the global environment. It also has domestic responsibilities which require it to address both fuel poverty and ill health. We believe an integrated package of measures therefore needs to be co-ordinated between several Government Departments in order to turn convictions and commitments into action."

Let me sum up why Liberal Democrats believe that the Bill is so important—socially, environmentally and economically. First, the social benefits of the Bill are obvious. Throughout the country, many homes are cold, damp and costly to heat. More than 7 million households cannot afford to heat their homes—homes occupied by elderly people, people with disabilities and people with low incomes. It is estimated that there are more than 40,000 deaths each winter as a result of inadequate heating. With the second-stage increase in VAT on fuel still to be introduced, action to tackle that could not be more immediately necessary.

The Energy Conservation Bill would help alleviate that misery among low-income groups. By insulating houses and improving heating systems, energy savings of as much as 30 per cent. can be made, and the Bill would help to identify the ways of doing so. However, the Minister responsible for energy efficiency, who will reply for the Government, knows that—he backed the Bill.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I am simply trying to understand what the Liberal party policy is on energy efficiency. Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House unequivocally: does it or does it not support VAT on fuel? Also, as the hon. Gentleman is going into the Bill in such detail, will he tell us whether he has done any detailed costing as to what it would cost the country to implement?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is probably aware by now that we have opposed VAT on fuel, and continue to do so. I hope that he will join us in opposing the second-stage increase in VAT that will come through—contrary to the platform on which he fought the previous general election.

I have already discussed costings. The Government have put forward figures at the highest possible end of the scale, in which every single property is identified. On the Government's figures, that would cost between £11 million and £23 million, on the basis of surveys. We have argued that that is not what the Bill requires. It will cost very little to implement the Bill. Some local authorities will be able to do it at almost no cost, using their existing personnel.

However, the key point is that, without the Bill, we cannot be serious about the concerted action that is needed, and we agree with the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West in his previous incarnation off the Government Benches, and with the Select Committee, that it is the most sensible use of

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resources if we are to reach the Government's own targets, which patently, on the figures that I have given, we are failing to reach.

Secondly, the environmental benefits of the Bill should be obvious. The Bill is designed to help people conserve natural resources and reduce emissions of greenhouse and other gases. The domestic sector in the UK is responsible for nearly a quarter of all carbon dioxide emissions. At a time when air pollution and its adverse effects on health are causing increasing concern, the Government should support a measure that will cut emissions.

Recent evidence suggests that the generation of electricity and the resulting emissions have contributed to the rise in asthma attacks in recent years. The number of people suffering from asthma has doubled—it now affects one child in seven, and 2,000 people die from it each year. The Bill would help to cut the emissions that are exacerbating such illnesses.

The Government have recognised those arguments and have pledged to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the air to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The Bill would reduce the amount of energy that people need to heat their homes and would help achieve the important goal that the Government are signally failing to achieve. The Government have identified improving energy efficiency as

> "likely to be the most cost-effective means of limiting the environmental impact of UK energy consumption".

That quotation is from the consultation paper "UK Strategy for Sustainable Development".

On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed summed up the Bill's social and environmental benefits when he said:

> "Energy conservation makes sense, whether one views it from the perspective of global warming or from that of pensioners struggling to keep warm."—[*Official Report*, 4 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 1142.]

The Minister with responsibility for energy efficiency who will be summing up for the Government knows that: he lobbied for the Bill.

In the economic context, at a time when so many people are unemployed, the Bill would help to promote economic regeneration by providing jobs and work for local businesses. The technology, equipment and materials already exist to make homes easier to heat at less cost. The companies exist to carry out the work and the unemployed are waiting for that work. The Minister knows that, too, and should not need telling. He was one of the original supporters of the Bill.

On 2 December last year, he said at the formal promotional launch of the Bill:

> "I am very glad to support the Energy Conservation Bill. It is a measure that is long overdue. I shall urge my colleagues who have been successful in the ballot to adopt it and I shall urge the Government to support it."

However, he need not feel too embarrassed, because the Government amendment does not reflect the recent position of some Ministers. As recently as Second Reading earlier this year, the then Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), expressed concern about some parts of the Bill, but said:

> "The Bill of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has raised the very important issue of energy conservation. It also provides a useful opportunity for advancing energy efficiency in our housing."—[*Official Report*, 4 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 1183.]

He did not suggest that it was deplorable.

The question should be not whether the Bill is necessary, because clearly the overwhelming majority of hon. Members believe that it is: it has all-party support. The real question is how on earth the Government can table an amendment that not only contradicts the position that Ministers took earlier this year but flies in the face of the view that was advanced so strongly by the Minister who will reply to the debate. At no stage during my speech has the Minister sought to intervene to correct me, so I assume that he agrees that everything that I have said is correct. Perhaps more relevantly, he does not want to put his current position on the record and allow other hon. Members who speak in the debate to comment on it. That is a shame, and I look forward to his explanation—if he has one—for backing such an extraordinary amendment.

4.8 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> "commends the Government's commitment to the efficient use of energy and congratulates the Government on the action taken to encourage energy efficiency; welcomes the work being undertaken by the Department of the Environment and in particular the imaginative way in which it uses available resources in close partnership with local authorities, businesses and other organisations and individuals; deplores the proposals in the Energy Conservation Bill which would impose unnecessary burdens on public expenditure as well as on central and local government; and further considers these proposals typical of the muddled thinking of the Liberal Democrats, who supported VAT on fuel in 1990, but then changed their minds as soon as the Government introduced it."

I am delighted that the subject of energy conservation has been raised. It provides an opportunity for a useful discussion on an important subject. Liberal Democrat Members obviously do not agree, because most of them are now leaving the Chamber. As this is the Liberal Democrat Supply day, one would have hoped that they would turn out in all the massive force that they can offer.

The debate gives me a chance to explain to the House the importance that the Government attach to energy efficiency, and the steps that we are taking to encourage it. We attach enormous importance to the efficient use of energy to run our homes and businesses. We aim to spread the message that energy efficiency makes sense when it saves money which can be used to develop businesses, improve homes and living standards and boost the economy.

There has already been significant progress. The United Kingdom economy has grown by about 25 per cent. since 1979, but it still uses roughly the same amount of energy. There is, however, always scope for cost-effective improvements, saving as much as 20 per cent. of current energy demand.

Cost-effectiveness is not the only reason why we continue to beat the energy efficiency drum. Energy efficiency helps to protect the environment by reducing the threat of climate change, and the framework convention on climate change, which was negotiated at the Earth summit in Rio, commits us to return our emissions of carbon dioxide to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The convention was ratified in December 1993 and came into force in March.

We are determined to meet our commitments. Energy efficiency can help us to move towards sustainable development. It is our first priority for limiting carbon dioxide emissions, as it can also bring economic and social benefits.

Nearly half the savings we are seeking in the climate change programme are expected to come from reducing energy consumption in the home. Recent research shows that the average household may be wasting more than £100 a year on fuel bills—money which could be saved by implementing few cost-effective measures. The business and transport sectors are both expected to contribute a quarter of savings, and a tenth are expected to come from the public sector.

We have substantially increased our expenditure on energy efficiency. In 1994-95, that expenditure will increase to more than £100 million—17 times the level of expenditure in 1979-80.

We are also providing a framework to encourage energy efficiency. The Energy Efficiency Office in my Department carries energy efficiency policy forward by promoting cost-effective energy efficiency in the workplace and the home, and strengthening environmental protection by reducing energy use.

There are four main planks to our efforts. We use publicity to ensure that everyone is aware of the importance of energy efficiency; we provide encouragement and technical advice to enable people to take informed decisions about whether and how to invest in energy efficiency programmes; where necessary, we provide financial incentives to encourage the installation of energy efficiency measures, and, where appropriate, we promote regulation.

We have a wide range of programmes to encourage improved energy efficiency, each one aimed at a specific audience. For example, we provide publicity through our new campaign, "Wasting energy costs the earth", which encourages energy efficiency in the home. Television adverts—with the dinosaurs Ron, Brenda and Billy—feature the Energy Saving Trust's energy-saving light bulb initiative. Funded by the regional electricity companies of England and Wales and lighting manufacturers, the initiative is expected to win sales of 1 million.

A nationwide tour by the Dino Dome road show, which is being sponsored by a number of leading manufacturers, will give further publicity to energy efficiency measures. It was launched in Oxford last week, and opens in Birmingham on Thursday 3 November. Manufacturers and retailers are synchronising their activities with our campaign, and I can announce today that we shall be holding another energy advice week next year as part of that campaign.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I hope that the Minister will take on board the fact that the Energy Saving Trust, whose initiatives he has just commended and for which he has expressed support, has declared itself firmly in support of the Bill, and that its chairman has made a particular point of doing so.

Mr. Atkins: We also have a comprehensive package of measures to provide encouragement, information and advice to help people take informed decisions about whether and how to invest in energy efficiency.

We help building professionals and housing manufacturers in four main ways. Our best practice programme provides authoritative advice and information for professionals and managers on improving energy efficiency. It produces energy consumption guides to show energy users how their consumption compares with others, good practice guides and case studies describing good practice, and new practice case studies promoting novel measures.

Secondly, the "making a corporate commitment" campaign invites the chairmen and chief executives of companies and organisations to make a declaration of commitment to responsible energy management. It asks them to formulate, adopt and publish a corporate policy on energy efficiency, to increase awareness of energy efficiency among their staff and to set targets for improving their performance.

More than 1,750 organisations have signed up. The campaign has increased the willingness of two thirds of them to invest in energy efficiency. As that helps the bottom line of most companies in real terms, it is something that they willingly recognise and adopt.

Thirdly, the "green house" demonstration programme made £60 million available over three years to encourage local authorities to develop and apply energy efficiency strategies to their housing. To follow up on that, the Government have advised authorities to make energy efficiency a more explicit and integral part of their annual housing investment programme submissions.

Fourthly, a network of 11 regional energy efficiency officers promotes good environmental management and energy efficiency measures across the United Kingdom. They provide an independent source of advice that enables energy consumers to take action. They are able to signpost the Department's programmes and provide information on energy-efficient techniques and technologies.

Not content with all that, we are providing help for individuals—for example, by promoting home energy rating—

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Does the Minister accept that any fair energy tax would have to include a full tax on nuclear power to take account of the cost of decommissioning and waste disposal? Does he agree that that cost should fall on the present generation, and that future generations should not have to pick up the tab for our wastefulness?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman takes me down byways that are not appropriate in this debate. Perhaps he would like to table yet more questions on this matter, which I shall endeavour to answer.

The home energy rating provides valuable information for owners and buyers on the energy efficiency of a property. We have established a uniform standard

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assessment procedure, and we are working with the mortgage lenders to incorporate home energy rating into their survey reports.

We are encouraging mortgage lenders to offer green loans to help people to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. We are encouraging voluntary appliance labels to give consumers a guide to the energy efficiency of the appliances they buy.

Where necessary, we provide financial incentives to encourage the installation of energy efficiency measures. The home energy efficiency scheme provides grants for basic insulation measures and advice for low-income households. Since the scheme began in 1991, more than 800,000 homes have been treated. From 1 April, provision for the home energy efficiency scheme was almost doubled, and the scheme extended to those over 60 and disabled people.

The additional £35 million per year for the United Kingdom will provide grants for more than 200,000 extra households per year, bringing the total number of households receiving grants to almost half a million a year. It will reduce the fuel bills of recipients, save energy and help to fight the threat of global warming. It will also create about 1,500 jobs, boost a specialist sector of the construction industry and materials producers, and improve the housing stock. That is not a bad summary of the assistance being given by the Government. Some £69 million of my Department's estate action funds were spent on energy-related works in 1992-3.

Even in a deregulatory age, we encourage regulation where it is appropriate. For example, the regulations governing energy efficiency standards in new buildings in the United Kingdom have been tightened several times over the past 20 years. Revised regulations will come into force in July 1995. The new regulations include the provision of double glazing, improved insulation, better heating controls for the first time and the need to have a home energy rating. They should lead to an improvement in energy efficiency of 25 to 35 per cent. compared with the previous regulations.

We also practise what we preach. The Government are committed to a 15 per cent. improvement in energy efficiency for the Government estate over the five years to March 1996. The new headquarters for my Department will be one of the most energy-efficient buildings in London. It has been designed to make the most efficient use of energy, and it will have an economical and environmentally friendly combined heat and power system.

But we know that the task of achieving energy efficiency savings is not one which the Government can or should be expected to achieve on their own. We can set the framework, but others have the crucial part to play of encouraging energy efficiency in the home.

That is why we have worked with the gas and electricity industries to set up the Energy Saving Trust to develop and manage new programmes to promote the efficient use of energy in the domestic and small business sectors. The trust has a major role in carrying forward the Government's climate change programme. Hon. Members will know from discussions within the House and elsewhere that arrangements for funding the trust are being reconsidered.

Mr. Llew Smith: Does the Minister understand that a full tax on nuclear power, in order to take into consideration decommissioning and waste disposal, would be a remarkable act of energy conservation, because we know that nuclear energy is the most ineffective and inefficient energy form known to man today?

Mr. Atkins: I know that the hon. Gentleman represents a party which is obsessed with putting yet more tax on everyone, but it is interesting that he is advocating such a tax at the same time as being opposed to VAT on fuel. He must make up his mind which side of the argument he is on.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's plan to educate people to insulate their own homes, if necessary by a contribution from their gas and electricity bills, is a much better way of approaching the subject than asking local authorities, which are not experts in energy efficiency, with all the bureaucracy and costs that that would involve, under the proposed Energy Conservation Bill?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend speaks with great authority as a member of the Select Committee. He has taken a great deal of interest in these matters, and, as usual, as is often the case with Conservative Members, he has put his finger on the exact problems to which I shall refer later. He is of course quite right.

The Energy Saving Trust has made an excellent start and recruited a core of high-quality staff. Its successes so far include a scheme to encourage the sale of low-energy light bulbs to domestic customers, run in conjunction with industry, which has resulted in the sale of three quarters of a million low-energy light bulbs in eight weeks—about the same number as sold in the whole of 1992.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): The Minister referred a moment ago to the funding arrangements for the Energy Saving Trust having been worked out successfully. Will he elaborate on that, because the director of Ofgas has refused to levy the E factor on the bills, effectively undermining the trust's funding basis? Will that problem be solved?

Mr. Atkins: I did not say that we had resolved those difficulties; I said that they were being reconsidered. It is in the knowledge of the House and probably the hon. Gentleman that the electricity industry has already continued the funding to which it is committed. The matters relating to Ofgas in those discussions are still under consideration. The ball is firmly in Ms Spottiswoode's court at the moment. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, when he replies, will doubtless tell the House more about that, and in future, when the matters are resolved.

Another example of what the trust has achieved is an incentive scheme for gas condensing boilers, which has resulted in 3,000 rebates of £200 being claimed by owner-occupiers by the end of 1993. As a result—this is good for industry—new manufacturers and products have entered the marketplace.

In addition, a residential combined heat and power scheme has been heavily over-subscribed in the first tranche, and a pilot of local energy advice centres for the domestic and small business sectors, partly funded by the Government, is proving successful.

The Government are also working closely with the European Union to improve domestic energy efficiency. A directive setting energy efficiency standards for central heating boilers came into effect on 1 January 1994. A directive on appliance labelling will introduce labelling for refrigerators, freezers and fridge-freezers by the end of 1994. We are pressing the Commission for action setting minimum energy efficiency standards for other appliances.

Local authorities also have a vital role to play. The energy bill for local authority housing comes to nearly £3 billion a year, so their efforts are crucial if we are to complete our energy efficiency programme.

Central and local government are already working very closely together through the Central and Local Government Forum to carry forward the energy efficiency campaign in local government. The local authority associations have endorsed and encouraged their members to adopt a target of reducing energy consumption in their non-housing buildings by 15 per cent. over a five-year period.

However, as well as energy efficiency on their own estates, local authorities can fulfil a valuable role in pulling together energy thinking in their areas. Industry, schools, further education institutions, commerce and, of course, householders, can all make contributions to energy efficiency, and can produce genuine savings towards our carbon targets.

Local authorities are in a good position to pull together and co-ordinate thinking in their areas, possibly through establishing targets whose achievements can be monitored. We do not believe that that needs to be a resource-intensive exercise; rather, it is one aspect of the functions that authorities should already be carrying out when ensuring that people are thinking ahead and looking for a sustainable future.

We are not complacent in any way about the programme of work, and we are continuing to adapt it to meet changing circumstances. In the future, we hope to use our efforts to emphasise the importance and the value of energy efficiency to all those with an interest. We will continue to work with the Energy Saving Trust to develop our dialogue with industry, and to work with the European Union.

Despite that substantial record and our enthusiasm for energy conservation, we have been concerned about proposals for legislation, which have been in the House this Session, and about a proposed Energy Conservation Bill, which has been widely circulated. We do not believe, for reasons which I think the House has dealt with over a long period, that legislation is the best way forward. We do not think that it will give us the best possible value for money.

First, we know that we must keep public expenditure under control if we are to sustain our hard-won economic recovery. The tight financial settlement for this and future years leaves no spare resources to fund new initiatives; nor is there scope to "absorb" new initiatives by doing other things at less cost. Any additional cost arising from new functions for local government would have to be found by offsetting savings elsewhere.

In addition, as hon. Members know, we will not add to the burdens of local authorities unless it is unavoidable. We are concerned that the proposed new legislation on energy conservation will impose a further burden, which we believe to be unnecessary. Many local authorities are already doing a great deal to improve energy efficiency.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Any party will understand the concern about expenditure, but given the Government's commitments to cut energy use and emissions in this country, and given the failure at present of policies to deliver that—energy use and energy inefficiency are rising rapidly at the present time—what new initiatives does the Minister believe will deliver this ground? If not the Bill, what about the very substantial list of proposals and recommendations that were made by the Select Committee?

Mr. Atkins: I have to say that I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's premise. I happen to think that we are beginning to achieve success with energy efficiency, as I demonstrated with the figures with which I opened my speech, and the continuing programme, which, in many areas, has been doubled or even multiplied by a greater factor.

It is certainly the case with industry that, if we can make it understand—it is not proving to be as difficult as the hon. Gentleman would have us believe—that it is in its own financial and commercial interest, let alone the environmental interest of its own operation, to adapt and to adopt energy efficiency programmes, I am sure that we will continue to achieve success in that area, as we have in the past.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, although most local authorities are making a very strong effort on environmental measures, one of the authorities that is not is Tower Hamlets, which was recently criticised in *The Guardian* for failing to use recycled paper?

Mr. Atkins: Tower Hamlets, of course, is an authority which I seem to remember was controlled by the Liberals at one stage. They certainly had an active role in it. I should be interested to have more information about what Tower Hamlets has failed to achieve.

Mr. Heald *rose—*

Mr. Atkins: Perhaps my hon. Friend can help me.

Mr. Heald: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend, because *The Guardian* was not just criticising Tower Hamlets for not using recycled paper. Indeed, it said:

> "it even ignores obvious cost-free gestures such as the use of lead-free petrol, CFC-free aerosols and recycled paper . . . it does not offer pooper-scoopers in parks."

Mr. Atkins: That strikes me as a record about which we ought to know more. Perhaps my hon. Friend could do some research and let us know the results; I am sure that we should be fascinated.

Some 250 local authorities have agreed to sign up to my Department's "making a corporate commitment" campaign. Many authorities—with the exception of Tower Hamlets—are also taking steps to improve

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domestic energy efficiency, and my Department encourages it. Local authorities already spend around a quarter of their council house repair and improvement budgets on energy-related work such as new heating systems. Better output can be obtained through the application of the lessons of my Department's green house programme.

The green house programme was launched in 1990 to establish a network of energy efficiency demonstration projects to show local authorities in England how the energy efficiency of council housing could be improved. Over three years, some 180 schemes in 130 local authorities have been undertaken; the results are very encouraging, with schemes achieving fuel cost reductions of up to 40 per cent. and carbon dioxide reductions of up to 50 per cent.

Last year, drawing on experiences gained from the green house programme, we asked local authorities to include energy efficiency as an integral part of their housing strategies and investment programmes. In June, we issued a guide called "Energy Efficiency in Council Housing" to help local authorities to obtain the best value from their resources: it provides useful guidance on how best to develop sound and fully integrated energy policies and programmes.

Similarly, we are keen to avoid unnecessary burdens on central Government, and, above all, unnecessary regulation. As we all know, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is having a bonfire of unnecessary controls; we are determined not to introduce new controls as fast as the old ones are turned to ashes.

The Government are keen to encourage energy efficiency, and to do so efficiently. We must make the best possible use of limited resources, and we must not impose unnecessary regulation or burdens on others. In our view, the best way forward is for the Government to work in close partnership with local authorities, businesses, other organisations and individuals. That does not require new legislation, which would be time-consuming and costly to prepare and implement. We prefer to devote our efforts to getting on with the job.

Mr. Beith: The Minister said that it would be costly to prepare new legislation. Has he estimated the cost of preparing more than 200 amendments—a task carried out, quite unnecessarily, by parliamentary counsel in respect of the existing Bill?

Mr. Atkins: I beg to differ. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I was associated with the Bill during its Committee stage; I made it clear then that I did not approve of the essence of what the Bill was trying to do in terms of costs and burdens, and that I would have to seek further advice on whether I should consider tabling amendments—which is, indeed, what happened. I make no apology for that. During the assessment of Government business, one uses officials to produce amendments so that they can be tabled; that is a perfectly legitimate stance, and one from which I do not in any sense resile.

Mr. Butler: My hon. Friend may recall that, in Committee, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said:

> "The Minister mentioned several matters that might need to be tackled on Report or in another place. I am willing for that to happen".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C,* 16 February 1994; c. 10.]

Does my hon. Friend recollect that, when the matter came before the House, the only accusation made was that we had tabled amendments in an attempt to wreck the legislation? There was no acceptance that those amendments were necessary.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend makes an entirely fair point. Hon. Members will not want to confuse the issue with the facts, but that is exactly what happened at the time, and exactly what resulted.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister said that he believed that the cost of the numerous amendments was appropriate. Can he explain—in the context of private Members' Bills, which are given limited time on the Floor of the House but can deal with detailed amendments in Committee—why he did not seek the amendments from his officials so that they could be tabled in Committee, but tabled them on the Floor of the House, where they would inevitably wreck the Bill? Will he also explain why hon. Members were seen to vote against their own amendments?

Mr. Atkins: I cannot speak for other hon. Members; I am speaking for the Government. It was clear at the time that we wanted to examine the Bill properly. We allowed it to go into Committee—that was a perfectly legitimate stance—and discussed the matter during what I recall was a particularly amenable Committee morning. I promised the Bill's promoter, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), that I would consider the effects of what he was saying, and said that I would have to table amendments and clauses accordingly; and that is precisely what I did.

Mr. Dafis: I find it extraordinary that the Minister should say that the Government had not had sufficient time to consider their attitude to the Bill months before it went into Committee. He knows very well that the Bill was the subject of discussion around the House; he also knows that I had a meeting with his predecessor to discuss it well before its Committee stage. The Government had plenty of time, but they failed—perhaps deliberately—to table amendments in time for the debate.

Of course it is clear that, during the Friday Report stage, there was a deliberate wrecking process. Everybody must understand that there were far more amendments than could possibly be debated. I remind the Minister that the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed offered to accept some of the amendments, but the Government would not divide on them.

Mr. Atkins: I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I reiterate that the position is clear. The Bill was considered in Committee; I said that there were concerns, and that I would table amendments. That is what I did. It is a perfectly legitimate stance. The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has experience in these matters, and he knows that, if there are concerns about a Bill, there is a process for ensuring that it does not come to fruition. That is a legitimate stance that the Government have adopted and will doubtless adopt again, whichever party is in power.

It perturbs me and many of my colleagues that the Liberal Democrats appear to be all things to all people on all issues at all times. *[Interruption.]* My comment comes not from a central office brief but from experience as a Minister and as a constituency Member of Parliament. Whichever doorstep they are on, they say what people want to hear. They say one thing in their documents, another in their election addresses, another thing here and another in the country. It is time that the canard was nailed.

I am led to believe that the Liberal Democrats have always been in favour of carbon taxes and taxes on energy. I believe that, in a document published some years ago, the Liberal Democrats said that, if it proved

> "impossible to persuade our international partners to adopt energy taxes . . . we will nevertheless press forward . . . by ending the anomalous zero rate on VAT on fuel."

I thought that I heard the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) say that they were opposed to VAT on fuel. They cannot make up their minds whether or not they are in favour of carbon taxes and energy taxes.

It is time that we nailed this once and for all. We can no longer allow the Liberal Democrats to go around the country pretending to be against things because they discover that one or two people are against them, when they have said originally that they are in favour of them. This is a classic example, and I know that it will be referred to during the debate by my hon. Friends and by my hon. Friend the Minister when he is winding up.

Our position is clear. The Government have a superb record on energy efficiency. We are continuing to devote resources and support to it, and we shall continue to take our case around the country to ensure that industry, local government and ordinary domestic users recognise the importance of this great issue. I urge the House to support our amendment.

4.37 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I congratulate the Liberal Democrats on taking the opportunity for a further debate on this important Bill, about which, I am sure the House will understand, I feel a little proprietorial.

This debate needs to be seen in conjunction with last night's debate on transport. The issues spring from the imperative for radical action to protect the natural environment and, at the same time, to shift the emphasis of economic policy.

This is a radical issue because we are talking about shifting the emphasis of economic policy so as to give priority to social welfare, employment creation and the quality of life and not to the spurious and dated addiction to undifferentiated growth, measured by gross domestic product, which it has been assumed for many years is the way to consider things.

It is worth bearing in mind that Sir John Houghton, chairman of the royal commission whose report on road traffic appeared last week—he is a Welshman from Meirionnyddshire—is also chairman of one of the most important committees of the intergovernmental panel on climate change. In the next few months, the IPCC will announce that the problem of global warming is every bit as serious—and probably more so—than earlier studies led us to believe. I am told that, when the report appears in about three months, it will confirm that stabilisation of carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by 2000 is an inadequate target. Whatever the Minister says, the United Kingdom is unlikely to meet even that hopelessly inadequate target. Without a significant change in policy, we shall fail, primarily because of an increase in road traffic and the inadequacy and disarray of the Government's programme on energy efficiency in homes.

The Energy Saving Trust has been mentioned. It is astonishing that a tussle is continuing between the Government and the director of Ofgas over the trust's funding. I have some sympathy with the principle that the director of Ofgas is advancing—that the E factor, just like the K factor in relation to water, is a regressive tax and that the trust should be funded more progressively. It is astonishing that the trust cannot carry forward its programmes because of the deficient way in which the privatisation of gas was conducted and because the director of Ofgas is particularly unco-operative.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Would not one source of funding at least help—the windfall returns that companies receive from advance payment on bills, by which their customers avoided paying VAT? Companies attempted to argue that they had not made a profit out of that, but two companies have now broken ranks and acknowledged that they did make a profit and put money towards the trust. Is it not it time that the rest were a little more honest with the public and a little less worried about a windfall profit for their shareholders?

Mr. Dafis: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The way in which companies have been able to make use of advance warning of the imposition of VAT to make considerable savings from advance payments is almost an embarrassment. Of course, they should be ploughing a lot of those resources back into energy efficiency programmes to benefit people who need them in their homes.

We cannot begin to tackle the environmental crisis without the development of a radical policy for transport and domestic energy conservation. I have heard nothing in the debate tonight, and I heard little in the debate last night, as much as I heard of it, to suggest that the Government are considering radical development in those two policy areas.

For the reasons that I have already mentioned, this is a serious matter. It is serious, too, because thousands of people are suffering from fuel poverty, which will be intensified by the imposition of VAT. The compensation programme is welcome, but all hon. Members know that compensation is, inevitably, a blunt instrument.

We may assume that in many cases compensation will cancel out the effect of the increase to 17.5 per cent., but before it was introduced many people suffered from fuel poverty—a serious deprivation. Widespread sickness results from fuel poverty. It is caused by cold and damp in homes and by emissions of pollutants from the energy-generating process.

This is a serious matter because hundreds of thousands of unemployed people should, could and would love to be engaged in the sort of labour-intensive employment that is a part of energy efficiency schemes. We are talking of

[Mr. Dafis]

no less than a redirection of the productive resources of society to satisfy a crying social need. That should be fundamental to economic policy as well as to environmental and social policy.

It is clear, therefore, that we need a major programme. Perhaps in the course of debates on this subject we have emphasised the not too radical nature of the Bill to gain the Government's acceptance of it. It is now time for us to talk seriously about the matter. We need a major, United Kingdom-wide programme and a co-ordinated and concerted effort. It is not good enough to have a lot of disjointed and separate schemes.

The Bill's provisions are essential to make progress because, first, we must have meaningful targets. The target set for carbon dioxide emissions by 2000 is inadequate and does not deal with what will happen after 2000. We need targets for the reduction of energy use in homes.

Secondly, the Bill is essential because such an ambitious programme cannot be implemented without the active involvement of local authorities, whose housing and environmental health departments are uniquely placed to carry out the work. Conservative Members have suggested that local authorities do not need to be involved but there is no other organisation through which this matter can be properly and expeditiously dealt with.

Local authority housing and environmental health departments have the expertise, the knowledge, the staff and the ability to organise and to commission work. They provide the essential mechanisms without which the work will not be done. Unless they are statutorily required to carry out the programmes, many of them—more than likely, the majority of them—will not do it. The statutory requirement is essential.

There is no conflict between that proposal and the suggestion by the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) that the energy efficiency programme can be paid for by placing a levy of 2 or 3 per cent. on electricity and gas bills after a programme has been put in place. That is an acceptable method of funding. No contradiction exists between that proposal and those in the Bill, which provides the framework within which such a measure would operate.

Thirdly, the provisions of the Bill are essential because the gathering of information and the drawing up of plans are needed to ensure cost-efficiency.

Mr. Heald: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the cost of the scheme that he proposes would be about 3 per cent. of the annual energy bill? If so, is he saying 3 per cent. of £50 billion?

Mr. Dafis: I am not getting into that sort of issue. A Conservative Member suggested that the imposition of a levy on electricity or gas bills after the implementation of an energy efficiency programme in a home would be a sensible way of funding the scheme. Whether the levy is 2 per cent. or more, that is a reasonable way of funding it. Savings in bills would amount to 10, 20, or 30 per cent., although some people have suggested that they would amount to even more. An additional levy, therefore, would be more than compensated for by savings in bills.

The gathering of information and the drawing up of plans are essential to ensure the cost-efficiency of the programme. Without that basic requirement, such activity could be wasteful, inefficient and hit or miss. The Government and Conservative Members are taking their suspicion of local authorities, bureaucracy and planning to ridiculous lengths. There is nothing wrong with bureaucracy in itself. Of course, we need bureaucrats and people to plan and to ensure that schemes are carried out in an organised way with foresight and understanding. The Government's objections to the Bill are nonsense and always have been. *[Interruption.]* Yes, they are. This is not a side issue but one of major importance. The Bill is simply common sense.

I shall cite Lord Moore, chairman of the Energy Saving Trust, which the Government claim is one of the main instruments necessary to deliver energy efficiency programmes. He said:

> "The Trust strongly supports the primary aim of the Bill which is to place an obligation on all district and borough councils to create an energy use profile of the dwellings within their area . . . This information will be invaluable for all organisations attempting to target energy efficiency programmes . . . The Trust also support the second objective of the Bill which is to place an obligation on the relevant local authorities to draw up an Energy Conservation Plan for their locality, setting out what works would be required in order to achieve a minimum amount of energy savings."

They are the words of one of the people who is supposed really to understand energy conservation.

Mr. Butler: The problem is that the hon. Gentleman wishes to set targets and draw up plans, but that costs a great deal of money, which will then not be available for insulation or other energy efficiency work. Does he recall that in Committee, in answer to a question about whether people would be required to install double glazing, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said:

> "The Bill does not contain a requirement but it calls on local authorities to set out what could be achieved by certain levels of energy conservation. No one is required to achieve those levels."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 16 February 1994; c. 25.]

In other words, the Bill would not require anyone to do anything to aid energy saving. That is not nonsense but a fundamental objection.

Mr. Dafis: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that individual householders should be compelled to carry out energy efficiency work. That was one of the spurious objections raised by Conservative Members in previous debates. The most recent version of the Bill makes it clear that there will be no compulsion to participate. It is clear that there would be no need for it. Of course, some eccentrics might say that they do not want their homes improved even though energy efficiency schemes would save money and provide extra warmth and comfort. There is no element of compulsion in the Bill, and neither should there be. The hon. Gentleman should understand the need for organisation and planning and for local authorities to be able to see the whole picture to make the most efficient use of resources and prioritise the types of property that need energy efficiency programmes first.

Mr. Butler: The hon. Gentleman refers to the Bill in its latest form, but the motion that we are debating refers to the previous form. If we are dealing with the revised Bill, I would greatly appreciate a copy before I make a speech—or are we dealing with the original Bill? I apologise for asking, but the motion refers to the previous Bill.

Mr. Dafis: The hon. Gentleman should know that the Bill has been revised several times and the part to which I was referring states:

> "for the avoidance of doubt . . . nothing in this Act shall be taken as . . . conferring any power of entry"—

Conservatives spoke of authorities having power of entry into individual properties but we have clarified that point—

> "on any energy conservation authority to compel any other person to carry out any works or repairs on any property."

I stress that there is no compulsion in the Bill although the hon. Gentleman seems to suggest that there should be.

I have already quoted Lord Moore, chairman of the Energy Saving Trust. This is a common-sense Bill, which is why he supported it and why it has been supported by so many Conservative Members. It was endorsed for the same reason by the then Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment—the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones)—which produced an excellent report. His words have already been cited so I shall not repeat them, but I was there when he uttered his historic words. He climbed on a chair in the Jubilee Room, where I was hosting a reception, and declaimed with great enthusiasm his support for the Bill and said that he would be urging the Government to proceed with it.

An extraordinarily impressive array of organisations that work for energy efficiency, which know about fuel poverty and which understand the social and economic agendas, have studied the Bill and support it. Sir Crispin Tickell, the special adviser to the Government on sustainable development, is on record as supporting it. Some hon. Members may recall that, on Third Reading, I asked the then Minister to tell us whether he had been informed of Sir Crispin Tickell's position, and his reply was ambiguous.

Now, however, Sir Crispin Tickell's letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment is available to us. He wrote:

> "As a veteran non-signer of manifestos or round robins, I am reluctant to bother you on a specific cause. I only do so because I believe that the nature of the Energy Conservation Bill is critical to the success of the work which you and the Government generally have been doing to bring the environment into decision making, and make energy efficiency and conservation a central element in energy policy."

What remains to be said about the importance of the group that he chairs and which offers advice to the Government on how to create a sustainable development strategy? If energy efficiency in the domestic sector is not one of the first steps in moving towards sustainable development, I do not know what is. Sir Crispin Tickell understands the significance of that.

I should be surprised if Sir Crispin Tickell did not understand that he was, in fact, writing to the wrong Minister. He assumed that he needed to persuade the Department of the Environment, but we all know that the objections to the Bill come from elsewhere. The crux of the matter is that the objections come not from the Department of the Environment but from the Treasury, which has probably not even heard of sustainable development. The Treasury's interest is in deregulation and, especially these days, in the selling off of PowerGen and National Power. That is what lies behind the present agenda. Is it not shameful that we allow such considerations to drive policy?

On Second Reading, I read out a list of Tory Members who were on record as supporting the Bill. Their names are listed in *Hansard*. The disgraceful blocking tactics—the Minister has now admitted that they were blocking tactics—adopted on Second Reading, led by the people whom I called the abominable seven, meant that those Tory Members did not have to vote or take sides. What are they going to do tonight? Will they support the Government? Will they support the amendment to the motion that deplores a Bill that they endorsed and that they promised their constituents they would support? Will they vote against the motion? If so, what of their undertakings to their constituents and their political integrity? If they betray the trust that their constituents have placed in them, they will have to pay a heavy price, and we know how it will be paid.

The Government must support the Bill in some shape or form or—we would be satisfied with this—they must make their own equally effective proposals. Perhaps that is what the Government have in mind, and perhaps the Minister will tell us about them when he replies. If the Government have their own proposals, they must encompass the provisions of this Bill to be effective. However, if the Government are not prepared to accept the Bill or offer their own equally effective proposals, they will be seen not only as perfidious—I believe that "perfidy" is a better word than "sleaze"—but as irresponsible, as having only short-term considerations, and as rapidly going crackers.

4.58 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I do not often disagree with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, and I hesitate to do so in my first contribution to such a debate as the newly elected Chairman of the Environment Select Committee. However, I distinctly heard my hon. Friend say in his closing remarks that the Liberal Democrats had to make up their minds on the issue. He indulges them by crediting them with an intellectual eminence that an objective observer would find quite unjustified. Clearly, to make up one's mind one has to have a mind in the first place.

In 1991, domestic, public and commercial buildings accounted for 43 per cent. of final energy demand in the United Kingdom, contributing half the nation's emissions of carbon dioxide. Noting that fact led the Select Committee to produce, in 1993, a focused report on energy efficiency in buildings. That report has already been mentioned. When it was published, the then Chairman of the Select Committee—now the Under-Secretary of State responsible for energy efficiency—expressed concern that so little progress had been made in implementing energy efficiency since the Energy Select Committee's report on the same subject in 1991.

The Committee's inquiry was undertaken between May and July 1993; 20 groups of witnesses appeared before it, and more than 100 pieces of written evidence were received. In the course of the inquiry, the Committee visited Newcastle and Glasgow to see the work of the agencies involved in improving energy efficiency in

[Mr. Barry Field]

housing occupied by low-income groups. We also visited the United States, to learn about the American experience of least-cost planning and demand-side management.

Our report was well received, and the Government's response was positive in tone, even if not all the Committee's recommendations were accepted in full. Since the inquiry proper, the Committee has continued to pursue the subject of the attitude of the Director General of Gas Supply to the funding of energy-saving measures. I shall say more about that later.

I especially commend the Department for its advertising campaign based on the slogan, "Wasting Energy Costs the Earth". More than 25 per cent. of carbon dioxide emissions come from energy used in the home.

Energy conservation and energy efficiency are not the same thing. It is possible to conserve energy and yet continue to use it inefficiently. It is also possible to improve the efficiency with which energy is used, but also to use more of it. The Committee saw a classic example of the latter phenomenon in the United States, where consumers were encouraged by Government-sponsored money-off offers to buy super energy-efficient refrigerators. The problem was that the Americans bought the fridges but kept their old fridges, too, to store their beer. The net result was an increase in energy consumption.

We discovered that even when there was an attempt to collect up the old fridges as part of the bonus scheme that went with the purchase of more energy-efficient fridges, the old fridges were sold on to low-income groups, usually Hispanic, who could least afford their high energy consumption and running costs. We were told of another similar system—an attempt to take gas-guzzling cars off the road—and those, too, were sold on to low-income groups.

In taking evidence in America—in California, in fact—the Minister himself, when he was Chairman of the Select Committee, observed that there was not a clothesline to be found. Apparently every American housewife uses a tumbledrier—although it is true that much work has been done on producing more energy-efficient tumbledriers. When my hon. Friend inquired why there were no clotheslines in that beautiful sunny climate—incidentally, the peak energy demand there is in summer, because of air conditioning, not in winter as in our climate—he was told that any alteration would interfere with the American way of life, and people's right to decide how to live their own lives. Tumbledriers were apparently part of the American experience; clearly, clotheslines were out. After my hon. Friend made that point, we all carefully looked out of the bus windows wherever we went, but I do not believe that we spotted a clothesline the whole time that we were there.

Having sounded that note of caution, I must add that the Committee found that most measures to encourage energy efficiency lead to reductions in energy consumption, and its recommendations were formulated accordingly.

Some of the least energy-efficient buildings are the houses lived in by those least able to pay high fuel and power bills. In Glasgow the Committee saw how improvements to 1960s tenement blocks could achieve dramatic savings in fuel bills. We therefore called for the Government's excellent home energy efficiency scheme—or HEES—to be extended, and for investment in such measures to be increased. The Government duly obliged, doubling the provision for HEES in the Budget.

We noted that the imposition of VAT on fuel was welcomed by Friends of the Earth. I cannot lay my hands on the precise part of the evidence, but I recollect that the witness from Friends of the Earth said that he thought that the VAT would be a kick in the pants for energy efficiency.

As for new housing, the Committee supported the greater use of home energy labels, and suggested that mortgage lenders could take the energy efficiency rating of a house into account in their calculations, because lower fuel bills should enable buyers to make higher mortgage repayments, and would also enhance resale value. In their response, the Government said that officials were in discussion with mortgage lenders on that and related subjects; so perhaps when the Minister winds up the debate he will tell the House about the outcome of those discussions.

On keeping the Government's own house in order, the news is not at all good. Although some Departments have succeeded in reducing energy consumption and bills, others have had less success. The Department's response said that the Energy Efficiency Office was

"pressing strongly for greater energy efficiency on the Government estate".

The Minister has told us that the new Department of the Environment building will be energy-efficient, and will incorporate a combined heat and power unit. The Select Committee welcomes that news. However, what the Government say about the EEO makes it sound as though it may be meeting some resistance. Wasting energy makes no sense from an environmental point of view, and in terms of public expenditure too, it is nonsense.

The Department of the Environment needs to get tough with other Departments, especially the Ministry of Defence, which did not even know how much energy it was using, let alone how much it was wasting. The new Minister responsible for energy efficiency is just the man to get tough, and to tell Sir Humphrey to switch that light out. Indeed, we read in the papers this week that Sir Robin Butler's replacement may come from the Ministry of Defence. Perhaps my hon. Friend will suggest to the Cabinet a beauty contest for that post, on the basis of energy efficiency, so that the senior civil servant who has reduced the Government's energy costs most will be appointed as the new Cabinet Secretary. Who knows?

The Government must look ahead and develop a strategy for reducing carbon dioxide emissions beyond the year 2000. The Committee was somewhat astonished that, despite all the commitments that they had rightly entered into, the Government had failed to map out how they intended to achieve the necessary further reductions in carbon dioxide emissions in the next century. The Committee found the Government's attitude somewhat complacent. I am sure that the new Minister has brought some fresh ideas with him to the Dispatch Box, and that he will share them with us later.

Setting up the Energy Saving Trust was supposed to be a key part of the Government's strategy for energy efficiency, and for meeting the national target for reducing carbon dioxide emissions. However, as the Select Committee has said before, that work has been stymied by the actions of the gas and electricity regulators.

Unfortunately, the trust has been unable to raise the £1.5 billion that it is generally agreed that it needs to achieve the targets that the Government have set for it.

That is not completely a problem of the trust's own making. It was always envisaged that the money would come from the producers, suppliers and consumers of the energy that needed to be saved. Unfortunately, the electricity regulator has agreed to raise less than one tenth of the sum required, and the new Director General of Gas Supply has so far adopted an unhelpful and even hostile approach towards the trust.

The Committee, under the chairmanship of the Minister, twice summoned Ms Spottiswoode to justify her failure to allow the trust's schemes to go ahead, and twice she failed to convince the Committee that she was right. She came with a remarkable set of preconceived ideas and I likened her to Boadicea in the way in which she gave evidence and, at times, contradicted herself. Has she convinced the Government? How do Ministers intend to resolve the question of the funding of the Energy Saving Trust, and whether the gas regulator will henceforth be playing a full and positive role in that process?

It is estimated that it will cost at least £1. 5 billion to meet the target of reducing carbon dioxide production by 2.5 million tonnes by the year 2000. In July 1993 the Office of Electricity Regulation agreed to £100 million over four years under the supply price control, but Professor Littlechild rejected doing anything similar under the distribution price control which he announced in August.

The EST submitted proposals to Ofgas in July for a £25 million a year package. Ms Spottiswoode has not yet responded, but she looks unlikely to agree to most of the package. Ofgas promised to publish a paper setting out its approach to energy efficiency and the E factor. This was originally scheduled for July, but it has yet to be published, although I understand that the Departments have seen a draft.

Since April, John Hobson—director general of the Energy Efficiency Office—has been chairing an interdepartmental group of officials which is supposed to be working on alternative funding options for the EST. So far, the group has met infrequently and seems to have made little progress.With a gas Bill now looking increasingly likely in the Queen's Speech, there would be an opportunity to introduce some form of levy on gas suppliers to fund energy efficiency, although that would not address electricity. However, another suggestion has been that the Government could change the non-fossil fuel obligation—a 10 per cent. levy on all electricity customers, which goes mainly to support nuclear power, with some money for renewables—to enable some of the money raised to fund energy efficiency. Which—if any—of those options are the Government seriously exploring to secure the trust's future?

As for the environmental duties of the regulators, the Select Committee recommended that the Government place stronger duties on Ofgas and Offer to protect the environment and ensure that the energy sector makes the fullest possible contribution to meeting the UK's commitment to reduced greenhouse gas emissions. The Government told the Committee that they could review the duties and powers of Ofgas and Offer if necessary, and the Government should be giving further consideration to that for several reasons.

First, the EST looks unlikely to make a contribution to the year 2000 target. Secondly, opening up the gas and electricity markets to full competition will have far-reaching effects on energy supply and use, which could have an environmental implication. Thirdly, the Government will soon have to consider targets beyond the year 2000.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) commenced the debate by praying in aid the support of parish and town councils. I wonder where the hon. Gentleman has been. He has certainly not been visiting the grass roots of the parish and town councils in his own constituency, because they are among the worst offenders with regard to energy conservation. The councils either meet in a village hall which has all of the warm welcome of a deep freeze and more draughts than a log cabin, or they sit in their shirtsleeves in a sort of civic sauna.

We heard strictures from the hon. Gentleman about emissions and pollution in the atmosphere. The Liberal Democrat party accepted from the British School of Motoring one of the largest contributions to a political party ever made. That organisation has probably put more people on to the roads of Britain than any other, which shows up that party's hypocrisy in the debate.

5.13 pm

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): In following the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), I must say that I rarely find myself having any sympathy with anything said by Conservative Members. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] Yes, it is a shame. However, I think that the hon. Gentleman made some useful points today, and the Minister will have to rise to the challenge when he tries to respond to the pertinent points made by his hon. Friend.

I come to this debate in support of the motion standing in the name of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and his colleagues, and to deplore the amendment tabled by the Government. The latter is yet another attempt by cynical Ministers to claim exaggerated green credentials for minimalist programmes.

The efficient use of energy requires a degree of strategic thinking and planning that is entirely at odds with the Government's philosophy. While today's debate is quite properly concerned with the domestic sector, we must remind ourselves that considerations of energy conservation and efficiency begin a lot earlier than the electric switch or the gas tap in the home.

The Government have no strategic view beyond market forces. They have squandered the resource of North sea oil, abandoned our coal reserves and failed to set targets for individual energy sectors. They have no strategy for heat conservation at the source of generation, and they have signally failed to demonstrate any real commitment to renewable energy sources.

Combined heat and power is a case in point. Most power stations are only around 34 per cent. efficient, while combined heat and power systems are at least 80 per cent. efficient. The Government have—on environmental grounds, they tell us—set a target to more than double the use of CHP, but they have not spelled out how that will be achieved. The Combined Heat and Power Association states in a briefing produced for today's debate:

> "CHP can work either in a regulated market—or a free market—but not one in which the energy regulators and the DTI are all pulling in different directions."

[Ms Joan Ruddock]

Privatisation of the utilities has made energy efficiency much more difficult. The maximisation of profits by maximising sales clearly undermines any energy efficiency objective. The framework of regulation militates against strategic planning and, as we have seen recently, the regulators on their own account may decide not to accept responsibility for energy efficiency.

In the Labour party, we believe that energy efficiency is one of the most important goals of public policy. We propose a national programme of energy efficiency works, with the linked objectives of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and generating substantial amounts of long-term employment. In line with that policy, my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), and a great many Opposition Back Benchers, supported the private Member's Bill of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) at all stages in this House. We join the hon. Members for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) in thoroughly deploring the way in which Ministers destroyed that Bill. It was a modest, but important, measure providing a mechanism for producing an audit of energy needs area by area around the country, and developing a schedule of work which could be carried out to meet those needs. The Government's tawdry tactics in defeating that Bill fly in the face of common sense.

Let me say why the Labour party supports energy efficiency measures. First, there is the scale of the problem. Some £10 billion-worth of energy is wasted every year. There is also the impact on the environment, to which a number of hon. Members have referred. Power stations are major contributors to the production of greenhouse gases, and without a much more comprehensive energy efficiency programme Britain is unlikely to make her proper contribution to the Rio objectives.

In that context, it is salutary to note that the United Kingdom accounts for 3 per cent. of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, but only 1 per cent. of the world's population. Furthermore, our production of carbon dioxide actually increased in 1991 and 1992 and, although I acknowledge that it did decrease in 1993, we are not fully confident that the Government will meet their targets. Energy efficiency offers one of the best options, not just for stabilising but for reducing carbon dioxide production. Yet I am told—my figures are entirely at odds with the Minister's, so I hope that the Minister who replies to the debate will give me some further advice on the subject—that investment in energy efficiency declined in the United Kingdom by 28 per cent. between 1989 and 1992.

As significant as the environmental case for energy efficiency are the compelling social reasons for it. Simply, people ought to be able to afford to keep their homes warm, dry and comfortable. As others have said in previous debates, an estimated 7 million British households live in circumstances in which they cannot heat even one room to the minimum standard recommended by the World Health Organisation.

It is well known and accepted that those who spend the longest periods at home, particularly when sedentary, require the most heat. Yet pensioners, people with disabilities and mothers with young children, who are all more at home than most, include most of the poorest households. Fuel poverty is a national disgrace. Yet rather than seek a thorough programme of assistance to poorer households, the Government impose the burden of value added tax on fuel. Then they have the audacity to call it a necessary measure to meet the target reductions agreed at Rio. Allowing elderly people to freeze to death is hardly a strategy that commends itself to environmentalists.

The provisions of the Energy Conservation Bill provide the basis of a proper audit of needs, a proper system of planning and proper assessment of priorities. Few Members of Parliament can have undertaken winter surgeries without having constituents, particularly the elderly, complain that they cannot heat their homes. Cost is always a major concern, but so, too, are structural deficiencies, gaps in windows and doors, the leaking roof, the cold corner flat in the concrete block and the frustration of using inadequate heating that then leads to condensation and mould growth. It is estimated that 3 million homes suffer from the latter.

It is surely obvious how many worthwhile jobs could be created by attending to the vital need to improve people's ability to keep warm. In an earlier debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to several studies of the job creation potential of energy efficiency work in Britain. A broad average showed that, for each £20 million of expenditure per year, about 1,000 new jobs could be created. Then the Government tell us that it is too expensive.

In brief, we could help to conserve our environment, keep people warm, reduce heating costs and create worthwhile jobs. The Government claim to share the same objectives, but their schemes are piecemeal—soon started and soon ended. Schemes come and go. The Minister has already mentioned some of them, including the green house programme. Funding was £45 million last year, £5 million this year and is then to end. There has been an increase in funding for the home energy efficiency scheme, to which the Minister also referred. Of course it is welcome, but there are limitations on the types of insulation that can be undertaken under the scheme. Perhaps the Minister will tell us whether the funding is to be maintained, or even increased. Even with the current level of funding, it will take two decades to insulate only the low-income households in Britain.

Then there is the Energy Saving Trust. I am surprised that the Minister was able to bring this to mention, given the chaos that exists. The trust was trumpeted as the Government's energy conservation flagship, central to their strategy to achieve their international climate change commitments, but already the trust has said that it doubts its ability to meet the targets set for it.

Clearly, as the hon. Member for Isle of Wight said, the trust does not have anything like the resources required to do the job for which it was set up. I believe that it needs £300 million to £400 million a year. It has only £25 million. We are not impressed by the actuality of Government programmes. They give plenty of advice but far too little investment.

Local authorities, by contrast, have done very significant things on very limited resources. In earlier debates my hon. Friends have paid tribute—and I do so again today—to the excellent work of Leicester city council, which has filled cavity walls in almost 13,000 council homes and achieved cost savings of 50 per cent. That council is conducting an energy survey of all its council housing stock.

Newcastle has carried out a project, with the European Commission, British Gas, Northern Electric and British Coal, aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions and energy consumption in the city by the year 2000. Nottinghamshire county council has had a programme of energy conservation work in its buildings for 14 years.

I want to add to those examples my borough of Lewisham. It is a poor borough that has often had great needs to meet in many areas of its work. Yet it has shown considerable imagination in trying to bring better services to its residents. Lewisham has carried out energy surveys of most of its local authority buildings to identify the scope for investment in energy saving techniques. Before the introduction of local management of schools, all schools were surveyed.

Lewisham has recently installed new boilers in schools and other buildings, creating new savings. Energy management systems and boiler controls have led to further reductions. Improvement of the insulation within council housing stock is also an aim, and Lewisham has used money allocated through the housing investment programme to undertake insulation measures on council stock. In addition, the council has undertaken an energy audit of all its housing stock to set a benchmark for improving the energy efficiency of the stock in the future.

Mr. Butler: Does not the fact that those councils have undertaken energy efficiency work demonstrate—more effectively than any Conservative Member could do by merely declaiming it—the fact that the Bill proposed by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is unnecessary? Councils can do it now if, as we are told, they want to do it.

Ms Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that councils can do it now, and some of them do, but they do so with great difficulty. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, most councils in Britain have programmes that are desirable and wished for by their residents, but which they cannot undertake for lack of resources due to Government cuts and restraints on local authority spending.

Mr. Butler: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Ruddock: Let me continue.

We fear that only a minority of local authorities have undertaken energy audits. Most of the councils whose records the Government have applauded and mentioned in debates are Labour local authorities. We applaud those which do the work voluntarily, but if we are to have a nationwide scheme, which is what we need, a nationwide audit and a basis on which to bring homes up to standard nationwide, every local authority must undertake that work—and that will require legislation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): I must correct the hon. Lady. It is not a minority of local authorities that act in this way. It is a huge majority. Even those which are not quite that far down the road have plans to take action in the near future. It is not simply a question of Labour, Conservative, Liberal or hung authorities. It is authorities of all political persuasions. I am sure that the hon. Lady will join me in paying tribute to the efforts that they have made.

Ms Ruddock: The Minister is aware that I have just paid fulsome tribute to the efforts that have been made. We may have a debate about this, though probably not in this House. But we should be interested to see the list of those who have been carrying out audits that are in line with the proposals in the Bill that the Government defeated. It seems odd that the Government should have defeated a Bill when it is so easy and desirable to carry out the Bill's proposals and when the Government support those proposals. Why, then, did they choose to defeat the Bill? What the Minister said simply does not add up, and this debate will be pursued.

Mr. Butler: If something can be done and is increasingly being done, why set up an enormously expensive bureaucracy, with further public moneys going towards it, to achieve nothing extra?

Ms Ruddock: There is no evidence whatever that it will be an enormous and costly bureaucracy. I repeat that, if those measures are so desirable and efficacious, it makes sense that all authorities should have a duty placed on them to undertake that work. We all know that, when the work is undertaken, the savings are considerable. In this year alone, the small programme that my local authority of Lewisham has been able to institute against all the odds is reckoned to save £600,000 in that area alone.

We are certain that much more could be done and that, if the Government were really committed to energy efficiency, they would have supported the Energy Conservation Bill. Labour has a comprehensive programme of energy conservation and efficiency, but today I simply emphasise our support for a proper national programme of energy conservation work in people's homes. The work could be carried out free at the point of installation, but funded over a period by a small premium on the unit price of gas and electricity. People would still be better off, because they would save substantially on their energy bills. In short, people would be warmer, the housing stock would be improved, and jobs would be created—not a bad package, as the Minister would say.

I shall support the motion today and I have no doubt that, if the Government do not change their attitude and should the opportunity arise through success in private Members' ballots, someone on the Opposition side of the House will be back to press the Government again and again on this vital issue of energy conservation in people's homes.

5.31 pm

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): The closing remarks of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) remind me of the comments of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) on an earlier occasion, when he said that this debate would not go away, and that, if the Government were still in power in November—he seemed to doubt it—the Bill would be put back before the House. Although the hon. Gentleman is not in the Chamber now, I hope that he will accept that we will still be in power in November and that, if the Bill returns, it will again fail to meet approval.

[Mr. Peter Butler]

I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I have been practising the pronunciation of "Ceredigion" since the last occasion, when I took advantage of the Official Reporters' skill and referred to him as "the Member for Wales" throughout the debate, which they then corrected in the *Official Report*. Even in his absence, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do the same again today.

May I start with agreement, especially as we are unlikely to end the debate with it? We all agree that action is needed to secure better use of less energy, not just in homes or offices, be they Government or private, but throughout all the sectors in our society where energy is consumed. I agree with the need for action but not with the need for the Bill, which forms the motion put forward by the Liberal Democrats.

Subsequent to the last debate on this matter, I met the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North to try to seek common ground. We found quite a lot of common ground, but not enough. When this Bill was last debated, I also took the opportunity to come out in public as having for some time been a member of an organisation known as Friends of the Earth, and to compliment it on some of the excellent publications that it has produced over the years, and the stalwart, ground-breaking work that it has done in looking at problems, including energy conservation. I said that I regretted, however, that, when it strays into party politics, for some inexplicable reason it seems to come down on the wrong side.

Having agreed the need for energy efficiency, we must be clear what we mean by it. We do not mean being able to turn up thermostats and heat houses at an unnecessarily higher level for the same cost. It is certainly not meant in the sense in which one often hears it: "My heating system is efficient," implying that it heats the house to a high temperature. We mean using less energy to achieve the necessary levels of heat. We should be clear about that. In my experience—for instance, in the Palace of Westminster—many rooms are heated to a ridiculous temperature. That is not energy efficiency but simply waste.

Wasting less energy is the other part of energy efficiency. We must use less and waste less. Many of us live in houses where the best we can hope to do is heat the wind as it passes through. Clearly, in such homes, draught-proofing or, in the more extreme cases that we often find in north Buckinghamshire, wind-proofing is the most effective form of energy saving, and is far better than merely adding more heat.

We should therefore be clear that often in this debate we are discussing relatively low technology. We are talking about draft excluders, bits of plastic and rubber nailed to doors, and straightforward secondary double glazing, not exclusively about high technology boilers or the replacement of complete systems.

As you well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—as you are, I hope, familiar with it—my constituency is in Milton Keynes, which, proudly and incontrovertibly, can boast that it is Britain's greenest city. After the last debate on this Bill, the Minister for the Environment and Countryside opened a materials recycling facility that has so far cost some £6 million. He opened it extremely effectively, and I invite those who have not yet visited the facility to do so, especially the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North.

The waste stream comes into that facility, directly collected from individual houses. I am involved in the audit with some companies to see whether we can involve them as well. The waste is collected from houses in the borough and is then sorted, partly by hand, partly by magnetism and partly by some astonishing system that rejects certain types of plastic and separates them from others.

Next week, the Minister will address a conference in London about what comes out at the end of the waste stream. Opposition Members in particular may feel that it is entirely appropriate that a Minister of the Crown should address a conference about what happens at the end of the waste stream. At that conference, a paper will be delivered by an officer of Milton Keynes borough council. I hope that the Minister will be able to stay to hear that. He will talk about the excellent recovery of energy carried out at that materials recycling facility.

What happens at the end of that waste stream is that chits of molten plastic of a uniform size and type are selected and separated by means of some extremely high-technology equipment, which is basically a large tank of water. The stuff to be collected floats, and the stuff to be rejected sinks. That which floats is collected and returned to a company called Plysu, whose international base is in my constituency, and it recycles it. The cost of so doing is less than the cost of using new materials.

That is an example not of hot air and theory but of practical application, good energy efficiency and recycling practice. Because it takes place in Milton Keynes, I invite any hon. Members with a genuine interest in the subject to visit the facility. I should be happy to arrange such a visit. I formally congratulate the Government on enabling the borough council to raise the necessary funds to do that.

I have in recent months welcomed the challenge issued to the packaging industry last July to deal with waste packaging, to try to allocate by means of the producer responsibility group the responsibility for the cost of that packaging between those who produce it, those who fill it, those who sell it and, to an extent, those who subsequently recover it.

There are difficulties with the present proposals, because they seem to impose an inordinate proportion of the cost on those who produce. The allocation of the cost seems to be in inverse proportion to the representation of that part of the industry on the producer responsibility group. Obviously, someone must correct that. None the less, the initiative is more than welcome, and, in due course, it will put into effect the proper dictum that the polluter pays.

All that will lead to another packaging revolution, accelerating the progress that we have made towards minimal packaging, and therefore minimal waste and minimal use of energy.

In debating the motion, we are debating the Energy Conservation Bill introduced by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), which contained fundamental defects. The first, to which I referred in an intervention, is that the right hon. Gentleman said in Committee that no one is required to achieve those levels.

To translate that, he means that no one is required to do anything to any single dwelling. It would achieve no insulation—not a single door draught-proofed, not a single window double-glazed, not a single draught diverted or stopped. It follows that it would achieve no energy saving or increase in energy efficiency.

The Bill would merely enable one to look at a map and say that there was a house there that, if it did not already have insulation, would need insulation. I put it in those terms because—I think that I follow the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed correctly—there would not be, as he interprets his Bill, individual audits of houses. It would simply be said that a specific type of house should have a certain amount of insulation of a general description, but one would have no idea whether it already had it. I repeat, as the right hon. Gentleman conceded in Committee: not a single piece of insulation would take place, and no energy saving would be achieved by the Bill.

The second, and almost alternative, pleading is that the Bill is unnecessary. I know that the right hon. Member for Deptford disagrees with that, but to say that local authorities have already done what the Bill requires must undermine the argument that it is necessary to force them to do it. If they have the power to do it, and if, as the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North and others have assured us, they all want to do it and there is a groundswell of enthusiasm for it, the Bill must be unnecessary.

The Bill would create bureaucracy. It contains a clause to allow the Secretary of State to make orders and regulations. There is a clause allowing money to be handed out for that purpose—not for the purpose of insulating or saving energy, but for the purpose of drawing up the audit. Drawing up the audit is relatively simple, to the extent that one can look at a house and say that it should have insulation. If we are going to go further than that, either it can already be done or it is unnecessary to do it. What is necessary is to put money into insulation in specific houses.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North referred to two local authorities on a previous occasion; the right hon. Lady for Deptford—the hon. Lady: forgive me, I was premature—has now referred to many other local authorities. I would argue that, if two have done it, more, or all, could do it.

I believe that any local authority could undertake such an audit today. It could start first thing in the morning, at 9.30 or whatever time it starts work. The Bill is concerned with mandating and forcing that that should be done. That is the crux of the matter, and it was the matter, I believe, on which hon. Members supporting it and the Government opposing it fell out last time—that the Bill mandates rather than permits.

Surely the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North and I have learnt, if nothing else, in the past couple of years, that, if one is going to mandate the ends, one must also mandate the means.

That brings us back to the central issue of the proposed Bill, to which the motion refers—does it mandate the means? In other words, does the clause—clause 3(4), according to the version of the Bill that I have—which relates to the Secretary of State making regulations to secure the putting into effect of a plan, mean anything or not? If it means nothing, no funds will flow. Authorities will be in no better financial position than they are now, and could be left to get on with it voluntarily—as many, we are told, are now doing.

If the clause means something, we return to the problem that we would then spend money on the bureaucracy to which I referred. I accept that "bureaucracy" is a terribly generalised and devalued word, much like "community" or "endogenous zone" or any of those clichés, but none the less I think that the House understands what I mean by it. The money will be spent on that rather than on insulation.

Therefore, either we mandate the means—in which case my submission is that it is a waste of money to use it in that way—or we are simply mandating the end without mandating the means, which is a useless and spurious exercise. I therefore reject—

Mr. Heald: I understood that the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) was arguing that we should impose a levy of approximately 2p in the £1 on energy bills, and that the effect would be that approximately £1 billion extra would be available for energy efficiency measures. In other words, she was making a spending pledge and she was providing the means, because she was saying that there would be a 2 per cent. levy on the total energy bill of £50 billion, and that that money would be available. What is my hon. Friend's opinion about that?

Mr. Butler: I think I am right in saying that it was not the hon. Member for Deptford who suggested that, but the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North.

Mr. Taylor: I am sure he said that.

Mr. Heald: She meant it.

Mr. Butler: I note the apology that is being offered across the Floor by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) to the hon. Member for Deptford, and I note that she accepts it. Perhaps, therefore, I may pass on.

I wish emphatically to reject what I believe is a simplistic, and indeed insulting, contention—that it is necessary not only to support the idea of energy conservation in principle, but to support the wording of the Bill, in order to prove that Members care about the environment and energy efficiency. I reject that. It is nonsense.

I welcome enormously enthusiastically the title of the Bill. I congratulate the people who drafted the title of the Bill: Energy Conservation Bill, very effective. I regret that thereafter they handed over to others the responsibility for drafting the wording of the Bill, and it was not done nearly as effectively.

I think it is sufficient to mention one more defect in the Bill. If it means anything, it places a statutory duty on a local authority to do audits. It follows that, if I wish to find out how to save myself from heating the wind as it goes through my house and to stop those draughts, I would be entitled to go to the court and seek judicial review to force the local authority to do an individual audit on my house, at public expense, to discover how I might save on my fuel bills.

[Mr. Butler]

I cannot believe, in spite of his known generosity with public money, that the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed seriously intended that to be the case, for my house or for his.

Mr. Beith: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is hoping to obtain legal aid to obtain that injunction, because his lawyers will have great difficulty in basing such an injunction on the content of the Bill.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. It would not be an injunction—it would be certiorari mandamus, but that is perhaps a legalistic point. I can also assure him that, if he examines the Register of Members' Interests, he will see that I am probably eligible for legal aid in any event.

I return to the main defect of the Bill—it does not insulate a single house. I repeat my welcome for the idea behind the Bill. The title is good; the contents are not. After the debate, let us continue the discussion that I and the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North and many other hon. Members on both sides of the House have had in seeking a solution to one of the most serious problems that confront us—the apparently rampant and uncontrolled use of finite energy resources.

The problem must be tackled. My hope, which I believe will be shared by all Conservative Members—and, I suspect, Opposition Members—is that we may be able to find a common way forward on that, and before too long, because I think that we can also agree that we do not have very long.

5.48 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Thank you for allowing me to catch your eye at this time of the night, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This has been an energy-efficient debate, because we have had a little heat from the Opposition Benches but very little light on what the Opposition's policies are. We have learnt that the Liberal Democrats' policy is not now to impose VAT on fuel, although they were in favour of it until the Government introduced it.

Mr. Beith: No, we were not.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: In the paper that they produced in 1993—

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I will certainly give way.

Mr. Taylor: I have not denied that we canvassed the idea in a policy document in the early 1990s. But we rejected it for good reasons, and our manifesto specifically opposed the idea. The Conservative manifesto was rather more energy-efficient than ours, because it did not mention the idea at al—but the Government then introduced the tax.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The Liberal paper entitled "Taxing Pollution, Not People", which was produced in September 1993, showed that the party supported a tax on energy sources, and claimed that the measure would raise more than £5 billion by the year 2000. The hon. Gentleman still denies that there would be a tax on energy, even if it is not specifically VAT.

Mr. Taylor: I have no intention of misleading anyone on this issue. We have supported a carbon tax, but that is not the same as VAT on fuel, which falls directly on the consumer and does nothing to discourage inefficiency among generators. We argued for a carbon tax on that principle, and for those who were worried about its effect on the competitiveness of British industry, we said that the tax should be Europewide. That idea is still being canvassed.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: We have not learnt from that exchange whether the Liberal Democrats are still in favour of a carbon tax. I gather from Liberal Democrat nods that the party is in favour of a carbon tax on top of the VAT on fuel that we have introduced.

Mr. Taylor: I am happy to make the matter clear. I think that I have made it clear that we are against VAT on fuel. We have argued for a common European carbon tax and have said that VAT should be cut to the European minimum. I appreciate that we cannot get rid of it altogether, but we should cut it to 5 per cent. We do not suggest a carbon tax on top of existing and planned VAT.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My understanding is that the 1976 sixth directive on VAT would not allow us to reduce VAT to the level that the hon. Gentleman suggests. We would have to maintain it at 8 per cent. I am still not clear whether the hon. Gentleman would seek dispensation from Brussels to that effect, or whether he would wish to introduce carbon tax on top of the proposed rise in VAT to 17.5 per cent. The hon. Gentleman nods, but I am still not sure of his position.

Mr. Taylor: I was not nodding, I was shaking my head. I think that it would be possible for Britain to reduce the rate to 5 per cent., and that is what we plan to do.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful for that clarification.

We got a little more light from the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis)—or as my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) called him, the hon. Member for Wales—who said that he favoured a 2 per cent. levy on our total energy bill of £50 billion. That would realise £1 billion a year.

Mr. Butler: Perhaps I can assist my hon. Friend on Liberal Democrat policy.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I doubt it.

Mr. Butler: I accept that no one could do that satisfactorily, but I shall try.

It is a red herring to speak about 5, 8 or 15 per cent. VAT plus a carbon tax. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said at the Liberal Democrat conference, we must not deviate from paying the real cost for our energy, although at times it might be comfortable to do so. The hon. Gentleman said more than that: I am not seeking to give selective quotes.

It matters not to the consumer whether he pays VAT or a carbon tax. What is important to him is the cost. The Liberal Democrats were in favour of upping the cost, but we have done that, so they are no longer in favour of it. I hope that, in those few seconds, I have elucidated the Liberal Democrats' "jelly-may-stick-to-the wall" policy.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: There we have it. The Liberal Democrats should retain my hon. Friend and use his legal skills to write their next election manifesto. Perhaps they would then have a clearer policy, which we would be able to understand.

Mr. Heald: If my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes North-East (Mr. Butler) wrote the Liberal party manifesto, people would know what it stood for, and Liberal Democrat Members would not be able to jink and jive from one election to the next. Far from the Liberals being committed to a carbon tax, if they can persuade their European partners to have it, they have made it clear that, if Europe will not do it, they will

> "nevertheless press forward, for example, by ending the anomalous zero rate of VAT on fuel."

That shows that, if they cannot do what they want with the consent of Europe, they will do what we did.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful for that clarification.

A little light was thrown on Labour's policy, because we heard that the Opposition will impose a consumer tax on electricity and gas bills. However, it was not clear from what the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) said whether they were in favour of VAT on fuel and a carbon tax as well.

Ms Ruddock: That can only be because the hon. Gentleman was not listening to the debate. Our total condemnation of VAT on fuel has been made clear time and again in the House. There can be no doubt about that and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that clarification. We await an explanation from the Opposition's Treasury spokesman about where they will find the £3 billion shortfall when they abolish VAT on fuel—if the European Union allows them to do it.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to the Front Bench. He is the former Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment. I look forward to his contribution, because he is extremely knowledgeable on these matters and made an important contribution to the Select Committee of which I had the privilege to be a member. I am privileged to speak following the thoughtful speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), whom I congratulate on becoming Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment.

As I have said, we spend £50 billion a year on energy, a figure that was quoted in evidence to the Select Committee during its inquiry into energy efficiency in buildings by officials from the Department of the Environment. They estimated that we could save 20 per cent. of that amount, which is about £10 billion. That is a massive sum, and, in economic, environmental and social terms, we should make every effort to achieve maximum energy efficiency. The Government have an excellent record on encouraging industry, governmental and non-governmental agencies and individuals to achieve efficiency targets.

As the Minister has made clear, in December 1993 the Government ratified the climate change convention that emerged from the Rio conference. That convention committed this country to stabilising CO_2 output to 1990 levels by the year 2000, thus helping to reduce global warming and the greenhouse effect.

There are also the social consequences of energy efficiency. Most of our housing stock is occupied by the poorest in society. During the Select Committee visit to Glasgow housing department, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight, we saw examples of houses that had been excellently refurbished at £4,000 each. The energy bills of those tenants were cut dramatically.

During that same visit, we saw tower blocks of flats where, during the worst winter days, the temperature inside was lower than that outside, even though the tenants spent £20 a week on energy. That is why I welcome the Chancellor's announcement in his November Budget that the Government would double the resources available to the home energy efficiency scheme, from £35 million to £70 million, thus enabling help to be provided to about 500,000 homes this year. A further 4 million homes are eligible for the scheme. That is a worthwhile scheme to help the poorest in society.

The Government have a positive programme to encourage energy efficiency, especially via the Energy Efficiency Office. As we have heard, much of its work has been delegated to the energy savings trust. In answer to a parliamentary question, the Minister said that the

> "Energy Efficiency Office budget has been increased to more than £100 million for 1994-95".—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. *302*.]

That is a large figure; it is 17 times the level of expenditure when the Opposition were last in power in 1979, so no one should lecture us that the Government are anything but highly committed to energy efficiency measures.

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): Is not the argument that much stronger, therefore: that, if such a huge amount of money is to be spent, we should know where it should best be spent? That is exactly the point of the original Energy Conservation Bill.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Although I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman, I do not agree with the way in which his party would achieve it; I shall come to that later. I totally agree that we need to know how that huge sum of money should be spent, and that it should be spent effectively.

The Select Committee inquiry into energy efficiency in buildings received evidence from the Energy Saving Trust, for which the Government have set a target of 2.5 million tonnes of carbon saving by the year 2000. It stated that, to achieve that target, which is a vital part of the climate change convention to which Government committed us, it required a budget of some £1.5 billion over the next six years or so.

The evidence continued:

> "if this investment is spread across all consumers, the maximum average impact on bills is at most only 1.5 per cent. decreasing rapidly thereafter as the savings take effect."

It also stated that other benefits include

> "the creation of about 40,000 more jobs in the energy efficiency field and an improvement in the balance of trade of about £300 million a year by the year 2000. ".

It is of great importance that we get the funding correct for the Energy Saving Trust. As has been mentioned this evening, funding is to come largely from the electricity and gas industries. Funding will be raised from the

[Mr. Clifton-Brown]

electricity industry via the K factor recently revised by the director general of Offer and from the gas industry via the E factor.

We took evidence from Clare Spottiswoode, the director general of Ofgas, who took a fairly narrow legal interpretation of the Gas Act 1986 and reached different conclusion from her predecessor, Sir James McKinnon, that she was not allowed to spend via the E factor anything more than a minimum amount on energy efficiency measures. So the Government have a problem as to how the shortfall to the Energy Saving Trust is to be achieved.

I am sure that the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) will have something to say about that, and I look forward to his speech. However, if the director general of Ofgas is not prepared to alter her stance—it seems that there is an overwhelming case for her doing so, because it is in the interest of all gas consumers and everyone else that she should—my hon. Friend should have discussions with the gas industry to encourage it to raise a sum similar to the one being raised by the electricity industry, so that there is complete fairness in competition between the two energy industries.

The Government have a positive energy efficiency programme in their own estate. As we have heard this evening, they have set themselves a target of a 15 per cent. reduction in energy use over the next five years, so that consumption should be 80 per cent. of the 1990 levels by the year 2000.

Some Government Departments have made great strides in that direction. I welcome my hon. Friend's announcement that the new Department of the Environment office has been designed primarily with energy efficiency in mind, but other Departments, such as the Ministry of Defence, have not made such progress. I hope that my hon. Friend will have something to say about that this evening, and will use his influence to ensure that the Government set the highest possible example to industry and private consumers.

In the corporate sector, great efforts are being made to encourage reductions in energy consumption. The Government's corporate commitment campaign involved 1,500 major firms making a corporate commitment to improve energy efficiency. When it gets going, that campaign will have a massive effect.

The energy management assistance scheme gives small firms free advice on how to promote energy efficiency schemes and grants towards implementing them are available. In the corporate sector—one of the largest sectors of energy consumption—real progress is about to be made, and we look forward to seeing demonstrable results.

On the domestic side, the Government are putting even more effort into energy efficiency. I have already mentioned the home energy efficiency scheme—a worthwhile scheme for the worst-insulated houses in Britain.

I was invited by the Neighbourhood Energy Action Trust to witness the implementation of such a scheme by a unemployed person in my constituency. The difference produced for a very small expenditure was phenomenal. Just a little draught-proofing around the windows and doors, proper insulation in the roof and a proper timer switch and thermostat on the hot water cylinder, reduced fuel bills by about a quarter. That is very worth while for anyone on a low income, and I thoroughly recommend the scheme.

The Energy Saving Trust is tasked with producing other energy-saving measures promoted by the utilities, which have suggested some excellent schemes already, although their progress is being hampered by lack of funding. One issue that they are pushing is contract energy saving management—a worthwhile and cost-efficient way for the utilities to promote energy efficiency, as they can employ specialists to carry out their entire energy efficiency promotional programme.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight said, great progress is being made in the United States. By offering the carrot of reduced electricity bills, electricity utilities were able to send out detailed questionnaires to each consumer in their area. They had a response of well over 70 per cent. They were then able to feed those responses into a computer, which produced a programme of the best energy efficiency measures that each consumer could take. That is just one shining example of the progress that we learned in the United States of the steps being taken to promote energy efficiency. The United States is a long way ahead of Britain in energy efficiency.

I said that there were possible savings of up to £10 billion on energy-saving measures. We saw measures in the United States that have already saved millions of dollars, so there are lessons to be learned from the United States. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to point to further positive steps that we are about to take.

We believe that energy efficiency is best carried out by individual education promoted by self-interest—the very point that my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East was making. We believe that it should be achieved through voluntary effort rather than by costly and bureaucratic methods prescribed to local authorities. That is not the way forward; it would be very costly and intrusive into people's private affairs. I much prefer the idea that people should produce energy efficiency measures for themselves.

As I have already demonstrated with evidence from the Energy Saving Trust, the payback can be extremely short—sometimes as little as a year. Most energy-saving methods have a payback of only three years, so it is in everybody's self-interest that they should devote resources to producing energy-saving measures.

For that reason, I oppose the Energy Conservation Bill promoted by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. I am sorry that I have to do so, because I approve of the aims of energy conservation. I have shown that I applaud any aim to improve energy conservation, but not by prescription.

This is an important subject. We still have a long way to go, and I am sure that, under the Government's stewardship, we will be able to meet our Rio target. I look forward to positive steps being taken in that direction.

6.10 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am grateful to my right hon. and hon. Friends for setting aside one of the relatively few half-days at our disposal to discuss this subject, which has clearly aroused interest among a number of knowledgeable hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. I am glad to have the opportunity to return to a subject to which we have devoted a number of Fridays, but without the success in getting it on the statute book that the Bill deserved. Give or take a phrase here and there, we have had a good and constructive debate, in which a great deal of knowledge about, and interest in, energy conservation matters has been shown.

The Minister has been involved in the Bill's progress—he has not assisted it very much but I could not say that he has blocked it very much either. He described the Government's policies at some length but failed to explain how they could deliver the reduction in carbon emissions to which we are committed. He made a fair statement of what the Government have done so far and quoted a number of commendable efforts, but the gap remains.

I thank the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) for his strong support for my Bill. Indeed, it is based on one that he introduced in a previous Session, although it is not the same in all respects.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) decided to attack the intellectual high ground. That amused us at first, but then he did himself more than justice because he made a good speech and gave a useful review of the Environment Select Committee. Indeed, he underlined a point that I have just made, because the Committee was not satisfied with the Government's proposals for achieving the target. The whole burden of the report shows that there is not enough in place to achieve it.

Energy use has continued to rise—by 6.2 per cent. in the first half of 1993—and the energy ratio is rising. The cause is not just the recovery from recession, but the underlying problem. Even the worthy measures in the Government's programme are not sufficient to deal with that.

I welcome the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) to her post on the Labour Front Bench. As I am sure she does, I wish it were a shadow Cabinet post—both for her own sake and for the sake of the importance that should be attached to energy conservation. She followed the example set by her predecessor, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who was also a committed supporter of my Bill. He encouraged Labour Members to turn up and support it on the days that it was before the House.

I would have welcomed a Labour Back-Bench endorsement as well. However, I do not think that the Labour party is yet facing up to the energy pricing carbon tax issue, which eventually it will have to do. I hope that, during the hon. Lady's tenure of office, she will bring her party face-to-face with some of the difficult issues.

The hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) reminded us that he had come out—he told us that he was a member of Friends of the Earth. He made a constructive speech about energy conservation matters, although I disagreed with his conclusion about my Bill.

The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) was confused initially about VAT and carbon energy tax. However, through a series of interventions, my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) was able to help him. Indeed, it became a seminar on policy. There is nothing to be said for inaccurately representing the policies of other parties. I have to deal with enough things that are wrong with Government policy without inventing things that they have not yet got wrong. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman could find measures that we are in favour of with which to disagree rather than those that we do not favour.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Despite the previous exchanges, I am still not entirely clear what the Liberal Democrat policy is. Does the right hon. Gentleman want to stick to the present level of 8 per cent. VAT plus a carbon energy tax or does he want a dispensation from Europe to get rid of VAT on fuel?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman goes straight to the special needs class. I will have to repeat the lesson given by my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall. The system in Europe to which the nation is committed does not allow us to reduce the VAT on fuel below 5 per cent., but we are committed to reducing it to that figure. The carbon energy tax would be on top of that. However, if the Government agree to a European carbon energy tax, it would be on top of 17.5 per cent. VAT. That would be unacceptable, but we think that they will be landed with something like that.

Mr. Butler: I want to clarify this issue. The Liberal Democrats would maintain—because they would have to, not because they wished to—5 per cent. VAT with carbon energy tax on top of that. How much would that additional tax be?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman is a member of the party that has the power to negotiate that. There is no known rate for carbon energy tax. That has still to be negotiated between the member countries of the European Union, but it would have to be at a rate that would achieve the effect that we have been discussing. A 17.5 per cent. VAT rate with the carbon energy tax on top of that would be unacceptable. We have made it clear that that would not be a sensible way to approach the matter.

Even the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury, despite his partisan opening remarks, made a number of constructive points and described practical measures that would help people on low incomes. The assessment of appropriate energy saving measures called for in the Bill would identify where they would be most effective. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that in many types of housing much could be achieved through measures that are less expensive than, for example, elaborate double glazing—such as simple draught-proofing, alterations in the pattern of energy use that would not leave people cold but would be a more efficient use of energy, and simple—not hi-tech—changes in the equipment used.

The Bill's purpose was to put an end to the amazing lack of information on energy efficiency in the housing stock by requiring local authorities to evaluate the energy efficiency of housing in their areas, both in the public and the private sectors. That information would enable the drawing up of local energy conservation plans in consultation with local interests. It is a feature of Government policy that all sorts of local groups—environmental, consumer, trade organisations and residents—should be involved in developing energy conservation. On the basis of the information provided, they could make real progress in developing energy conservation plans.

Mr. Barry Field: How will the right hon. Gentleman achieve that? Will there be a phalanx of thermal thought

[Mr. Barry Field]

police from the local authority knocking on doors? Most of my constituents already think that the local authority is a bit of a busybody—a big brother—without having a great army of thermal thought police banging on their doors.

Mr. Beith: Only the hon. Gentleman could even envisage, let alone appoint, thermal thought police. There will be no such thing. Local authorities already have to carry out housing condition surveys, and therefore have the mechanisms to do that. We want to incorporate into that process a specific commitment to evaluating the energy efficiency improvements that could be achieved. That requires nothing like the draconian measure envisaged by the hon. Gentleman.

Such an evaluation would fit well with the existing duties of local authorities, which the Department of the Environment requires them to fulfil. In the private sector, section 605 of the Housing Act 1985 specifies that at least once in each year local authorities should consider the housing conditions in their districts. Those surveys are usually carried out by environmental health officers and they could easily embrace the energy efficient element. That view is shared by the Institute of Environmental Health Officers, which has campaigned in support of my Bill. It would not require a physical survey of each home because much of the information is already known and the gaps could be filled using, in some cases, a sample of the properties. No household would be forced to take part against its wishes.

That was such a reasonable set of proposals that it achieved all-party backing. Only five amendments were tabled in Committee. At the end of the day, we had the same tactics as were employed in the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, except that the Secretary of State did at least in this case table 50 of the amendments in his own name. Only the remaining 150 had to be farmed out to hon. Members who began the day a little unsure of the purpose and significance of the amendments. Every single amendment drafted to the Bill was tabled by parliamentary draftsmen instructed by the Government—every single one.

How strangely the Government's attitude to the Bill has changed during its passage through the House. On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who has gone off to foreign pastures, said:

> "It is a constructive Bill, on which there is clearly considerable consensus, demonstrated by the fact that the supporters are drawn from both sides of the House. That consensus has been echoed in the excellent speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) and for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason)."—[*Official Report*, 4 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 1183.]

He went on to explain the Government's specific concerns about the Bill, but the burden of what he said was that those concerns could and should be met in Committee.

Mr. Rendel: Is my right hon. Friend also aware that the Bill met with considerable support not only from both sides of the House but from a number of local authorities—including, I am proud to say, my own in Newbury, which, with my full support, passed a motion in favour of the Bill and asked me to promote it in the House? Of course, it is not only Liberal Democrat-controlled authorities that supported the Bill; a number of Conservative and Labour-controlled authorities and some with no overall control also did so. That should be mentioned.

Mr. Beith: My hon. Friend is right. A large number of local authorities supported the Bill and were totally unimpressed by the Government's new role as the saviour of local authorities from unnecessary burdens and requirements. Any claim to such a role is totally unconvincing. Local authorities were strong in their support for the Bill.

Mr. Butler: I return to a point made earlier in the debate and not yet answered. If local authorities are so much in support of doing this and they can do it already, why do they not simply do it?

Mr. Beith: I am making my speech slightly out of order, but the hon. Gentleman must know that, within the constraints under which local authorities now operate, permissive responsibilities take second place to statutory requirements. They are influenced by the way in which the standard spending assessment system works and by a number of other aspects of central control.

In addition, local authorities are increasingly compared unfavourably with each other by the Government if they go beyond what the Government consider to be the minimum range of duties. They are open to criticism from Ministers if they do so. Therefore, to invite local authorities to go out on a limb is to do almost the opposite of what Ministers are doing. I shall return to that point, so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will contain himself. It will feature again later in my speech.

I simply wanted to develop the history of the Government's attitude to the Bill. It was around the time of Second Reading that I had a discussion with the Secretary of State for the Environment, who made it pretty clear that the Government merely wanted the Bill to be a permissive one. It could go on the statute book as long as it did not impose a requirement on local authorities.

My view was, and remains, that there would be little point in that, because local authorities have the power to carry out those functions at the moment. The problem is that it is merely a permissive power, but not one which a lot of local authorities are reluctant to carry out, although some are. Many cannot put it as high on their list of priorities as their compulsory statutory duties. That is why I regarded that as important.

Nevertheless, one could envisage the Government tabling an amendment to achieve that particular change and perhaps carrying it so that the Bill became acceptable. Therefore, we were talking about a Bill with which the Government were in broad sympathy but with which they had a specific disagreement. The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), now the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology, said that the Bill would have had his support if it had been permissive. A number of hon. Members who are now Ministers made similar or more fulsome statements at the time.

In Committee we had the privilege of the assistance of the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). He said:

> "We have considerable sympathy for what the right hon. Gentleman proposes. However, we have reservations about the practicalities and the right hon. Gentleman knows that the Government inevitably have the problem of persuading the Treasury about what does or does not need to be done in certain areas. That is why the amendments were put down late and why you, Mr. Hughes"—

the Chairman—

> "were unable to accept them, which is correct according to procedure."

Obviously, the Minister had been fighting valiantly for the Bill in the corridors of power and had been done down by Treasury Ministers, but his sympathy was clearly there.

A little later, the Minister said:

> "My response, in part, is that because local authorities are already doing many of these things, and the Government propose that there should be permissive legislation to encourage them—we are at one in recognising that something needs to be done—we do not believe that it should be incumbent on local authorities to spend money in that way if they, as elected authorities, choose not to do so."

The only argument between us was whether local authorities should be put under the obligation. Therefore, this can hardly be a Bill that the Government deplore.

On Report, the hon. Member for Banbury had become a little more warlike in his approach to these matters, and his interventions, although rarely addressed to the principle of the Bill but rather to some of his 200 amendments, did not show the same sympathy. For us then to find, as we did on the Order Paper today, a motion deploring the Bill in terms so strident that the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) felt it necessary to go hotfoot into the Table Office and table an amendment to remove the word "deplores" and replace it with the word "notes", showed a significant change [illegible] the Government's position.

The Government have got themselves worked up. Because the Bill keeps coming back and the issue keeps being forced back on to the agenda, they have become more and more strident in their denunciation of it, even though, from the beginning they recognised that the work should be done. That is the common ground. The work of carrying out an assessment of the way in which energy efficiency can be improved in housing should be done, the Government say, by local authorities, but they should not be obliged to do it. That is a narrow division indeed.

Some Conservative Members who assisted me in support of the Bill were fulsome in what they felt could be achieved by the Bill's approach. The hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) said:

> "We should not simply dismiss the Bill by saying that we must not burden councils with the measure."

The hon. Member for Eltham said that he was not sure that the Minister's proposal for modification of the Bill in future was convincing. He went on to say:

> "The results of the Bill . . . will go way beyond people's expectations. The Bill will promote well-being. There will be an increase in welfare and in disposable income which can be spent on other goods such as fuel.
>
> The Bill could have the plain English title, the Money Saving and Comfort Increasing Bill."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C,* 16 February 1994; c. 7-28.]

That is the Bill that is deplored.

The Minister responsible for energy efficiency has long been a supporter of the Bill's principles. The hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) declared support for the Bill. The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People introduced a Bill on those lines himself some time ago. The Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) who has been scurrying about the Chamber today handing out sheets of paper to assist Conservative Members in their speeches is, I suspect, himself a supporter of the Bill.

Mr. Butler: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Harlow, but not to anyone else.

The views of the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) were quoted earlier, and she was a persuasive advocate. She made it clear that the Bill deserves support. Other hon. Members who have become Ministers were among those who supported the Bill which is now deplored.

Mr. Butler: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: This is the hon. Gentleman's last chance.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving me yet another last chance. I just want to put on the record the fact that none of the notes passed out by the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary was the slightest bit useful.

Mr. Beith: I am a charitable man, so I prefer to attribute that to the known sympathy of the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the objects of the Bill rather than to any incompetence on his part.

Much has been said this afternoon about the cost of the Bill's proposals. We have often referred to the Government's own estimates, which we regard as very much on the high side because they use the fullest technique of assessment, which was tested in two authorities. That has produced figures from £11 million to £23 million. I remind the Government that those are relatively small figures compared with the amounts of waste that can easily be found. For example, it was no less a person than the hon. Member for Banbury who told my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) that office accommodation left vacant by the Government is costing us £51.9 million a year, plus a further £4.9 million in SW1 alone. Those sums fall well within the Government's known waste margin in other sectors.

Perhaps the most important point about cost, which I want to remind hon. Members about before we vote on the matter, is that money can easily be wasted or misdirected in energy efficiency. Gullibility in relation to advertising, the promotion of the wrong products, or just getting the wrong idea about how to save energy, can do a considerable amount of harm. Our resources as a nation are not infinite. We want to use them as wisely as we can, to enable people to keep warm and to reduce the pollution associated with energy misuse. We can best do that if we have information about how the resources can be well directed. We can enable people to keep warm at less cost with less pollution if we know where the funds can best be used.

One of the weaknesses of the Government's position is that they concentrate their efforts entirely on the local authority sector. That does not mean all of the measures that they referred to earlier, but the largest amount of effort that they can quote in their defence is made within the local authority sector. It is their policy that that sector should be reduced as a total of the whole, and it has been throughout my time in the House of Commons, through people purchasing their own council houses and through building in other sectors.

[Mr. Beith]

Some 57 per cent. of householders over pension age are owner-occupiers. Many of them, although they possess a house, perhaps still mortgaged, do not possess substantial resources with which to make it more energy-efficient. The house may be their only asset, and their income may be very low indeed. Within the private sector are important areas for energy efficiency work, which we need to identify. It is no use simply using the local authority sector, as the Government can, using existing local authority procedures. They must recognise the value of the Bill in looking at the whole of our housing stock.

I am bound to ask where the real objections to the Bill lie. I cannot take seriously the Government's pretended role as the saviour of local authority independence, because it sits so ill with almost anything else that they have done throughout their term of office. I find it difficult to take seriously their arguments about the cost of the measure itself—the cost of carrying out the assessments—because, as I have argued, it is so relatively small.

I can think of only two other explanations. One is that they are frightened of the need for energy efficiency work, which the assessments will demonstrate; the other is that they are panicked by the possibility of discovering that considerable capital expenditure might be desirable and might yield marvellous results. The mere fact that it could demonstrate a need for that expenditure might well be what is frightening the Treasury to death.

The only other explanation that I can think of was the one adduced by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North—that the Government are frightened by the possibility that pressure for energy efficiency will damage the prospects for the flotation of PowerGen and National Power. I believe that the Government once denied that, but it would be quite nice to hear them do so firmly and categorically once more. Indeed, the most effective way to do that would be to make it much clearer that energy efficiency and energy conservation should be an objective of electricity generating and distribution companies. That has never been clear enough in statute. It should be a great deal clearer.

I think that the Government never resorted to out-and-out opposition to the Bill because their objections were so misdirected and inadequate. One of the only hon. Members whom I have ever heard produce the words, "I oppose the Bill" was the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury, who did so earlier. He is a very lonely figure, because most hon. Members, on both sides of the House, either support it or say that they support it in general terms but think that it should not be mandatory. The Government as such have never deployed outright opposition to the Bill. They chose instead to use the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill tactics, and to deluge the amendment paper with amendments that were not tabled in Committee.

The ultimate absurdity of the Government's tactics was demonstrated when the Bill returned before the House for a second bite, on Report. I said that I had been so persuaded by the long speech of the Minister some months previously that I was disposed to accept the amendment that he had moved at that time. So what happened then? The Government opposed the amendment that they themselves had moved, putting Tellers both for and against the motion to agree the amendment. The absurdity of their tactics was plain for all to see.

Mr. Barry Field: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: No, I am concluding my remarks.

The Bill is clearly widely supported both inside and outside the House. It was clearly a modest and sensible way of pointing the way to the efficient use of resources to help people to keep warm and to cut pollution. The objections to it were so flimsy that the Government had to resort to those tactics. I welcome the Minister to his new responsibilities and sincerely hope that his record of support for the measure in the past will lead him, even if he does not concede to us tonight, to set about his Department and move it in the direction of the proposals contained in the Bill.

6.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): Listening to the speech of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) in opening the debate for the Liberal Democrats, and to the numerous references to what I might say in response, I must say that mine must be the most trailed winding-up speech ever heard in the House. I may not be the Lion King, but at least my speech was trailed as much as it was.

There is no doubt that we have had a very useful debate. I want to pick up on the last remarks that were made by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). Even if there was disagreement about the Bill, there was a need to drive forward some of the principles in it. It seemed to me that there was a lot of common ground between hon. Members on both sides of the House about what was desirable, even if there was some controversy about the provisions of the Bill.

As someone who has tried to introduce a private Member's Bill, the Hedgerows Bill, which was blocked on that occasion by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), I understand how possessive one gets about one's own private Member's Bill. My sense of possessiveness about the Bill of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, slightly diminished by the fact that I was not its chief sponsor, has not in any way undermined my commitment to energy conservation, because it is extremely important.

If we are agreed on the ends, we must debate properly in the House—not just across the Floor of the Chamber, but in the important arena of the Select Committees and so on—how we are to will the means to those ends. It seems self-evident that energy efficiency is desirable: for the environment, because of global warming, and none of us wants to see people waste money on energy when they could be spending it on other things; and for the competitiveness of industry, because if we are using less energy, we can compete more ably in world markets. It is highly desirable from the point of view of the fuel poor, which was rightly referred to by many of my hon. Friends and by Opposition Members.

So if this is not a dispute about the desirability of the Bill, for some hon. Members, it certainly is a dispute about methodology. I shall return to the aims of the Bill in a moment. Oscar Wilde was right when he said:

> "The truth is rarely pure, and never simple."

That applies to the contents of the Bill and its aims.

There can, of course, be considerable debate about the level of resources devoted to energy conservation. I have no doubt that Opposition Members will have different views on that from Conservative Members. That is perfectly proper, but it does not seem to be at all relevant to whether one considers the Bill desirable.

I shall remind the House of what the Bill said, and of the key point in it, which was to provide for a duty on a local authority to carry out an investigation of residential accommodation

> "with a view to deciding what measures are, in its opinion, desirable and practicable, to achieve greater energy conservation".

It would also have a duty to prepare and update plans setting out arrangements to achieve that. That recognises the importance of energy conservation in buildings and the effect of the use of energy on the environment, because 50 per cent. of global warming gases come from the use of buildings, directly or indirectly. The efficiency with which energy is used in those buildings—or used to provide the fuels that operate equipment in them—is therefore critical.

Let me deal next with housing. Energy conservation is extremely important to council housing, for instance. Hon. Members have referred to the level of income of those living in council houses, which form a large percentage of our stock, although not the majority. The Government have taken steps to ensure that we deliver, because delivery is what this is about: it is about not intent but achievement—achieving improvements in council housing stock. Our principal tool is the housing improvement policy strategy. Let me explain what we expect local authorities to do.

We are looking for evidence of a properly formulated energy efficiency policy. Key ingredients are clear objectives for aspects such as affordable warmth, management and maintenance costs and carbon dioxide reductions. We should also consider longer-term targets to measure achievements and energy rating for council stock as the basis for establishing the policy. Guidance on energy efficiency in council housing provides practical advice on how to develop a sound and fully integrated energy efficiency policy.

We have found that the vast majority of local authorities are responding. I do not say that they are all doing so, but far more are responding than the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) suggested when she rightly praised her local authority in Lewisham, or other hon. Members suggested when praising their own authorities. We know from their housing investment programme submissions, and from the national home energy rating—NHER—that huge numbers of authorities are currently surveying their stock or have completed their surveys.

Let me cite some of those authorities. I do not suppose that the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will be surprised if I start with my own authority, as I have the privilege of representing part of Dacorum. Its plans include ensuring that all housing stock has an average NHER rating greater than 6 by 1998, reducing average carbon dioxide emissions for its stock by at least 1 tonne per year per dwelling by 1998, reducing condensation complaints by 25 per cent. per year and training all front-line housing staff to offer advice on the efficient use of heating systems by mid-1995. That is very commendable.

Naturally, I asked for the targets of authorities in the Northumberland area, because I knew that the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed would be interested. Alnwick has conducted an energy survey of all its rented stock; Berwick-upon-Tweed planned to rate all its housing stock by August 1994—perhaps the right hon. Gentleman can tell me whether it completed the process on time. Energy conservation, including the use of renewables, is one of the main aims of Blyth Valley's urban plan. Tynedale has undertaken a stock profile for each home in council ownership, and aims to bring all housing stock up to an NHER of 7 in six years. Wansbeck has, to date, rated 35 per cent. of its stock, using the Government's standard assessment programme; and even the least active authority, Castle Morpeth, has commissioned an energy audit of its stock.

Mr. Beith: The point that the Minister is making demonstrates that local authorities are carrying out the work that he commends without being bureaucratic or wasting money. It also underlines the fact that the proportion of total housing stock that their stock represents is smaller than it used to be: I am sure that that is true in Dacorum, and in many other authorities.

Mr. Jones: I think my point demonstrates that all this is happening without legislation. I shall, however, deal with the private sector, because it is important.

The housing association sector also contains a high concentration of people with limited means. The Housing Corporation has laid down a minimum standard assessment procedure rating for all new developments, which will mean that housing association developments will be extremely energy-efficient. I know of few housing associations with old properties—for instance, the big charities such as Peabody, Sutton and Guinness—that are not taking a good look at their older stock with a view to taking appropriate steps.

Some local authorities are using their involvement with housing associations through the HIP process to ensure that they secure the maximum energy efficiency out of new developments by running competitions. I praise, for example, the London borough of Richmond—controlled by the party of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed—which has sponsored a competition to achieve the maximum energy efficiency in developing a new site. The authority kindly invited me to launch the competition, and I happily said that I would, because I feel that all local authorities should emulate that approach.

In case the right hon. Gentleman thinks that I am being too generous to the Liberal party, let me also single out Stafford borough council, which is controlled by my party—thanks to two councillors who left the Liberal party because they were so disgusted with its policies. It has done exactly the same with a large new site. I am pleased to say that a very energy-efficient development will be carried out on that site by the William Sutton trust—as it now is—whose headquarters are in my constituency. A great deal is happening on

[Mr. Jones]

the housing association front; that, I think, is due to the initiative of not just individual associations but the Housing Corporation—at, I might add, the Government's suggestion.

I believe that the private sector is the most difficult. As my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) pointed out, we cannot simply send in the thermal thought police; but there are some things that can be done. For instance, the home energy efficiency scheme has been very valuable to those on low incomes; increasing the number of building regulations has been useful to new building of private houses. Educating residents, whether they are council tenants or private owners, is also useful—hence the rationale for the Wasting Energy Costs the Earth campaign, which has received a substantial amount of taxpayers' money. There is also the renewal strategy pursued by local authorities for individual areas. It seems to make sense to combine energy-efficiency measures with other measures when stock is being improved.

The real point at which all that bites, however, is the point of sale. That is what the Select Committee said, and my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight referred to it earlier. If lenders adopted a different attitude, encouraging purchasers to think more about the energy efficiency of the properties that they were choosing between, a great deal would be achieved. I am pleased to tell the House that the Nationwide building society already incorporates SAP ratings in its surveys, and the Halifax is doing so on a pilot basis. We are holding discussions with lenders in an attempt to build on that: it is critically important for them to take a positive view.

That also makes sense from the lenders' point of view. It is crazy to be prepared to lend two and a half times someone's income on the basis of valuation of a house without taking into account the purchaser's ability to afford repayments on the mortgage. If the purchaser's energy costs are low, however, his ability to meet those repayments will be greater.

Ms Ruddock: The Minister has just given us an impressive list of housing sectors and the programmes by which they might be brought up to a proper standard of energy efficiency. Will he give us the global view? What percentage of Britain's housing stock meets appropriate standards now, and what is his prediction for the next five or 10 years? When will our housing meet appropriate modern energy-efficiency standards?

Mr. Jones: The answer to the first question is that I do not know. The answer to the second is "more"—but the rate will depend on what happens in terms of individual decisions. That is why the role of education campaigns is so important.

Mr. Dafis *rose—*

Mr. Jones: I shall return to the hon. Member for Truro first: if I give way to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) at this point, I shall not be able to deal with his points later, which I think he would want me to do.

The hon. Member for Truro said that the best authorities would do what they were doing in any event—but only the best. I must tell him that such is the mechanism of the HIP allocations that local authorities have a powerful incentive to present proper strategies, in order to be rewarded with additional resources to develop housing in their areas. That is different from the position in 1993, when I sponsored the Bill of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. It is one of the key ingredients that has led me to the conclusion that we can do better than the Bill. That is the argument that we support.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I am glad that the Minister is addressing a change of mind and that he acknowledges that. I do not want to prevent him from saying more about that. However, surely his point about the HIP allocation process shows that it is a form of compulsion, which he said is his reason for objecting to the statutory requirement.

Mr. Jones: I did not say that. If the hon. Gentleman was not listening, let me remind him that I said that it was unnecessary because local authorities were well down the road suggested by the Bill and I want to get them further down that road. I regard it not as compulsion but as a powerful incentive, and incentivising is what Conservatives are all about.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Truro for quoting the Select Committee at such length. I am not so far away from my membership of that Committee that I do not appreciate the work that it did and all the reports that it has produced on this and other subjects. It is close to my mind and I am constantly cross-referring to what was said. There is a great deal of sense in its recommendations, and the report on energy conservation pulled together a great deal of information and made many recommendations for which we are grateful. That is why the Government used a positive tone in responding to the report.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North and my hon. Friends the Members for Isle of Wight and for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) referred to the key issue of the financing of the Energy Saving Trust. That issue is more key to the debate than is the Bill. We are awaiting a response from the Director General of Gas Supply to the various proposals from the Energy Saving Trust.

You may feel, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Ofgas should be quick about it. There is a need for a fairly early response so that the trust knows where it stands. I have had conversations with the Gas Consumers Council and Clare Spottiswoode, and I have stressed the importance of dealing with that so that we can think about the medium and long term in the light of justified knowledge about her position. As we understand it, she is currently considering the schemes on their merits and we do not know what answers she will come up with.

To paraphrase my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury, he said that British Gas should come up with the money irrespective of what is said by the Director General of Gas Supply. I am afraid that that is not possible. The guidance and what is allowed is much more fundamental than whether the response is positive or negative.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North referred to targets and the need to have targets beyond the year 2000. The climate change convention provides for the commitments to be reviewed in spring next year and before 1998. That will be built in automatically, and I agree that it is important to think about that in the medium and long term.

I was interested in what the hon. Gentleman had to say about a levy of 2 to 3 per cent. on electricity bills. I should welcome it if he were to put that to the Director General of Offer to see what his reaction is. The hon. Gentleman said also that it is up to the Government to introduce their own proposals or to accept the Bill. I hope that what I have said so far demonstrates that, in addition to what has already been announced or what was referred to by my hon. Friend the Minister in his opening speech, there is clear evidence that our strategy through the HIP process is working.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall) *rose—*

Mr. Jones: I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman has not been present for much of the debate and my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) deserves a response to his thoughtful and interesting speech.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight on his appointment. I have a high opinion of him and I wish him well. He referred to the labelling of domestic appliances. From January 1995, fridges and freezers will bear energy labels. The Commission is developing directives to cover washing machines, tumble driers, washer-driers and dishwashers. That is important because they use 60 per cent. of the electricity used in homes and produce 6 per cent. of carbon dioxide emissions. All new models are about 15 to 25 per cent. more efficient than the old models.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight said, it is important that the Government demonstrate their commitment through their own estate. He was kind enough to refer to my Department's plans for our new headquarters. He mentioned the combined heat and power ingredient and so on. The Government have set a demanding target of a 15 per cent. reduction in the years leading to March 1996. My hon. Friend said that I should be tough with other Departments. We apply as much pressure as we can to other Departments, but it is also up to the Chairmen and Chairwomen of Select Committees to scrutinise their own Departments. We would welcome some assistance.

The hon. Member for Deptford made a number of points, one of which was about combined heat and power. In 1990, the target was set of 4,000 MW capacity by the year 2000 and it was revised in 1993 up to 5,000 MW. The Labour party never set a target for CHP. We are extremely pro-CHP and there are now over 1,000 sites in operation with 2,900 MW of capacity, which is 5 per cent. of all United Kingdom generation.

The hon. Lady referred also to the VAT issue and she could not understand that environmentalists might have a different view from her. In its Budget briefing on that subject, Friends of the Earth said:

> "Increasing the price of domestic fuel is an important signal to householders that energy use should be cut. Cutting energy use is vital to reduce Britain's production of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide and other energy related pollutants. Friends of the Earth therefore welcomes the Chancellor's commitment to increasing domestic fuel and power prices over the next two years through the gradual imposition of VAT."

The hon. Lady said that energy efficiency investment has fallen by 28 per cent. I was baffled. I do not know where she found that statistic. I am not aware of any reliable measures of such investment, partly because that is difficult to collect and partly because it is difficult to define. It is estimated that, thanks to the new building regulations, homes will be over 25 per cent. more efficient, but the extra cost is negligible. Is that ineffective simply because there is a lack of investment? I think not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) made an excellent speech in which he referred to the need to use less and waste less. That is an important message for the general public and it needs to be shouted from the rooftops. As my hon. Friend said, the Palace of Westminster is notoriously hot on occasions, but I can reassure him that it is on target for its 15 per cent. reduction by 1996.

We should not be deluded into thinking that energy efficiency is entirely the preserve of housing and buildings. We need greater energy efficiency in industry and that will come about as a result of all the schemes that the Government have promoted such as EMAS, ecoaudit, BS7750, best practice programmes or whatever. All that is important, as are alternative vehicle fuels. I have tried the gas-powered vehicle and was extremely impressed with its quietness and energy efficiency.

Let me reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury that, like him, we think that the HEES scheme is extremely important. It has received double the amount of the previous year and very soon we shall have the millionth beneficiary.

My conclusion from all those arguments is that, if one judges the Government by their achievements in housing and in everything else, they have an excellent record, so I commend the Government's amendment to the House.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 225, Noes 292.

Division No. 317] **[18.59 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Corbett, Robin

Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Mofn)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Neill, Martin
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan

Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James

Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Don Foster.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)

Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sidney Chapman and
Mr. Tim Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 287, Noes 174.

Division No. 318] **[19.14 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter

Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Bowen Wells.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert

Loyden, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Don Foster.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House commends the Government's commitment to the efficient use of energy and congratulates the Government on the action taken to encourage energy efficiency; welcomes the work being undertaken by the Department of the Environment and in particular the imaginative way in which it uses available resources in close partnership with local authorities, businesses and other organisations and individuals; deplores the proposals in the Energy Conservation Bill which would impose unnecessary burdens on public expenditure as well as on central and local government; and further considers these proposals typical of the muddled thinking of the Liberal Democrats, who supported VAT on fuel in 1990, but then changed their minds as soon as the Government introduced it.

Orders of the Day

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

CLAUSE 4

CONVENER AND DEPUTE CONVENER

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 3, line 26, at end insert—

("Provided that no such other council may, without the consent of the Secretary of State, decide that their convener shall be known by the title of "Lord Provost".")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—[*Mr. Stewart.*]

7.26 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): You will have noticed, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in the amendment their Lordships provided that no council other those of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen may call its convener "lord provost", without the consent of the Secretary of State.

We certainly acknowledge the historic titles used in each of those important Scottish cities, but what sticks in the craw is the fact that, despite the Bill starting out with more than 150 provisions giving power to the Secretary of State, the Lords amendment would give him even more power to determine the affairs of local communities.

It is undisputed that the four cities that I mentioned have the traditional right of calling their senior civic person the lord provost—I am not sure whether there has ever been a lady provost. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Yes, there has. *[Interruption.]* Apparently Glasgow and Edinburgh have been sufficiently enlightened to have had a lady provost. *[Interruption.]* There seems to be a debate on the subject. Whether there were a lord provost or a lady provost, that would not detract from the dignity of the office.

Some historical analysis is necessary. I believe that Perth has had a lord provost, who in the order of precedence in Scotland ranked after the lord provost of Edinburgh. Perth may no longer exist as a single unitary local authority, but Perth and Kinross may wish to revive that tradition. If that were to be the view of the citizens in the area of the new council, why should they not be allowed so to decide?

If the citizens decide that, but it is thought that they should not be able to make the change at their own will, it should not be a politician such as the Secretary of State for Scotland who determines whether they should be allowed to do so.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I am no expert on precedence, but I seem to remember that the lord provost ranked higher than the Secretary of State. Might that not be the reason why the Secretary of State is trying to limit the number of lord provosts in Scotland?

Mr. Wallace: I do not want to get into a debate when I am not entirely sure of the facts. I should have thought that, within his or her own domain, the lord provost

[Mr. Wallace]

ranked higher than the Secretary of State—and higher than most other people, too. The Secretary of State is perhaps worried that there could be more places in Scotland where he is not the highest-ranked person.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The hon. Gentleman suggests that the Secretary of State should not make the decision because it should not be made by a politician. Politicians emerge into such positions through the democratic process. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the democratic process should not determine whether an area should have a lord provost?

Mr. Wallace: The democratic process that Liberal Democrats would like to see is one that involves people within local communities, not one that is handed up to someone who has the most doubtful democratic legitimacy within Scotland.

If it is not to be the Secretary of State, perhaps Her Majesty might be a better person to make the decision. I understand—the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) can tell me whether I am right—that Elgin laid claim to a lord provost because, on a royal visit some time during the 19th century, Queen Victoria referred to the first citizen of Elgin as lord provost. Since then, the people of Elgin have rightly thought that the title had been conferred upon them.

The Bill emasculates and virtually abolishes local government in Scotland. Many people will ask who is keeping alive the strong traditions of local government and local democracy in Scotland. The amendment shows what the rest of the Bill does. The only person who will have any real power is the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that, a few hours ago in the House, the Prime Minister, no less, said that the difference between having a referendum in Northern Ireland and having one in either Wales or Scotland was that the latter had a

> "well-established system of local democracy and local government"?

That being so, why are the Government destroying it in this Bill?

Mr. Wallace: I understand that the Prime Minister said something similar to my local newspaper, the *Press and Journal*, last week, although that was a useless and inappropriate comparison in the first place.

Our local government is being emasculated. In many respects, this Lords amendment encapsulates the worst features of the Bill—the centralising, overweening power of the Secretary of State, who wants his claws on everything that would smack of local democracy—and because of that we shall divide the House.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I am a little taken aback that the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) wishes to divide the House on this topic.

As this is my first speech this evening, it is appropriate for me to congratulate the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) on his appointment to the Opposition Front Bench. I read in the newspapers that the Opposition Whips are appointing yuppies to their office; that term does not immediately come to mind in relation to the hon. Gentleman. *[Laughter.]* It is fair to say, however, that he is respected on both sides of the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland made a somewhat unexpected assault on Lords amendment No. 1, which was debated at some length in the other place. Hon. Members who served on the Committee will recall the debate on a Government amendment on the use of "chairman" or "convenor" *[Interruption.]* I am sorry. That was on an Opposition amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), which the Government accepted. Hon. Members may recall that the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) said during that debate that the term "chair" was not so much feminism as "furniturism".

The debate in the House of Lords was conducted on a serious topic, and we considered the topic for a considerable time over the summer recess. I reject the argument of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that somehow the amendment is an attack on local government: it is not. We believe that the Bill should not provide a complete veto for councils that might wish to use the title of lord provost.

The amendment was tabled on an all-party basis, and it would be useful to the House if I spelt out in some detail precisely what it means. In effect, it places a requirement on any council—apart from the councils of the four cities to which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred—to obtain the Secretary of State's consent before calling its convenor "lord provost".

On reflection, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland may think that that is a reasonable compromise. Concerns were expressed in another place, and it was argued that other places in Scotland—the hon. Gentleman rightly referred to Perth, which is a good example, and Paisley perhaps is another—might wish their first citizen to have the title of lord provost. It is clear, however, that it is unreasonable to expect that the title of lord provost should be held by communities at will throughout the whole of Scotland. *[Interruption.]* I do not believe that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe), who apparently dissents from what I am saying, believes that every borough in Cunninghame, South should be entitled to have their first citizen made a lord provost. I do not think that that is a reasonable proposition. We propose a reasonable compromise.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Does the Minister recall that, in 1974, the so-called four cities expanded their areas and became district councils? If those areas are to retain the right to have a lord provost, surely it would be better to have a certain size requirement for councils to have a lord provost. If the four cities expand into areas that, more traditionally, are cities and a nearby council is a reasonable size, why should not the latter have the opportunity to call its convenor "lord provost"?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly reasonable point. It is generally agreed that the four historic cities should be able to call their first citizen lord provost. He asks about outlying areas, and whether there should be a requirement for a population size of 100,000, 90,000 or whatever. I have no doubt that he had Rutherglen in mind when he made that point, but the point of Lords amendment No. 1 is that it would not rule that out. Under it, any request on behalf of a community to have its first citizen named lord provost would be considered by my right hon. Friend on its merits. That is a perfectly reasonable proposition; it is not a particularly partisan matter.

Mr. Andrew Welsh *(Angus, East): Why should the* Secretary of State have that power? He has gathered every other power to himself under the Bill. Why should he say that one city shall have a lord provost but another shall not? Again, the Government are taking power away from the people. Why in all logic, history or justice should the Secretary of State take to himself, and himself alone, the right to choose who should have a lord provost?

Mr. Stewart: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not propose that every community in Scotland should have the right to have its first citizen entitled "lord provost". That does not make any sense and it would not be supported by the residents of the four cities that are already entitled to give that title to their first citizen.

The title of lord provost applies irrespective of sex. If a woman becomes lord provost, she will be so entitled. I hope that the House will accept that the amendment is a perfectly reasonable compromise. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. There is too much chatter on the Benches.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 24.

Division No. 319] **[19.41 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Andrew F.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)

Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Bates and
Dr. Liam Fox.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Davidson, Ian
Donohoe, Brian H.
Foster, Don (Bath)
Harvey, Nick
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kirkwood, Archy
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maclennan, Robert
McAvoy, Thomas
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Ray Michie and
Mrs. Margaret Ewing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 8

TRANSFER OF EMPLOYEES

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 4, line 39, after ("authorities") insert

(", or of the new water and sewerage authority or authorities (within the meaning of Part II of this Act).")

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 3 to 5.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments all relate to clauses which deal with transitional staffing and property issues, and are all purely technical.

As Liberal Democrat Members will know, amendment No. 3 was put forward by their colleagues in the House of Lords to implement a recommendation of the delegated powers Scrutiny Committee.

Amendments Nos. 4, 4(a) and 5 are technical drafting amendments designed to clarify the powers of the Secretary of State in relation to the appointment and removal from office of the chairman and members of the staff commission and property commission. This is a straightforward legal drafting matter. I am advised that, as they stand, clauses 12(3) and 19(2) and the scope of any order made under them may not be entirely clear.

I reassure the House that there is no question of those powers being taken as a precursor to dismissing either the chairman or any of the members of the staff commission. Indeed, may I place on record our support for the members of the shadow staff commission, whom we intend, under the terms of clause 12 as amended, to appoint as members of the statutory staff commission.

I commend these amendments in the knowledge that they are purely technical and result from advice from our lawyers.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): As one of my colleagues just said, this is the "sack the board" amendment. All the Minister's platitudes suggesting that it is purely a straightforward, technical, drafting amendment are unlikely to fall on fertile ground on this side of the House. The reality behind the whole Bill is that the Government, and especially the Secretary of State for Scotland, are taking more and more powers unto themselves.

The amendment is one of the most sinister that we have seen, with implications which go way beyond anything suggested by the Minister. It will empower the Secretary of State to dismiss the chairman and members of the staff commission without reason, notice or justification. Yet the staff commission was to be independent, with the power to look objectively at the problems facing local government after a major and unnecessary reorganisation. It was to smooth the transition effortlessly from one system to another.

The question that anybody would want to pose at this time is why it was necessary for the matter to be raised in the House of Lords. We have debated this Bill on and off for some 200 hours in this parliamentary Session. The *Official Report* amounts to the equivalent of three volumes of "War and Peace". We sat through those debates painfully and we learned so much, but we were able to impart so little to Tory Members. During the whole debate, nothing was said about the powers that it was necessary to take in relation to the staff commission.

In July, the Lord Advocate told the House of Lords:

> "There is no intention on the part of the Secretary of State to interfere with the independence of the staff commission."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 July 1994; Vol. 556, c. 1908.]

An amendment has now been tabled to give the Secretary of State powers to clarify and make explicit his power to dismiss without reason the whole or part of the staff commission. The Lord Advocate is an honourable individual in the Government, which may distinguish him from many other Government members. He gave his word to the House of Lords in July; yet the Government felt obliged to table an amendment to clarify and reinforce the power to get rid of people who have been asked to take on a substantial job of work—allegedly independently and without pressure—on behalf of the people of Scotland.

Why have the Government chosen to squeeze through this amendment after the House of Lords stage, right under the wire at the end of the whole process? This enormously serious issue goes to the heart of the Government's handling of the reorganisation. Some 300,000 people employed in local government in Scotland, delivering valuable and crucial services to the Scottish people, are worried about their future. What are they expected to read into the fact that the Government have taken upon themselves, at the very end of the process, the right to dismiss without reason the members of the staff commission in whose hands their future is placed?

One does not have to be Bill Fyfe, ex-chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board, to know that, when the Government take powers unto themselves, they use them. He was asked to resign when the Secretary of State did not have the power to demand or command his resignation. Yet here the Government are taking that power upon themselves. There is no hon. Member on either side of this House who does not believe that, if it suited the Government to use those powers, they would use them quickly and without question.

By no stretch of the imagination, therefore, is this simply a technical drafting amendment, and we are unlikely to accept it in that light. If it were a technical drafting amendment, why is the power to dismiss so sweeping? Why is it not qualified in the Lords amendment? Why are Scottish Office Ministers taking greater powers in Scotland in that connection than they have in Wales, where commissioners on the staff commission can be removed for predetermined reasons only? That is a substantial question for the Minister for responsible for industry and local government at the Scottish Office. Why is there that big difference between Wales and Scotland in relation to the staff commission? And why is that power being taken in relation to the current reorganisation of local government when there was no similar power in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, which reorganised local government on the previous occasion in Scotland? The Minister is obliged to answer those two questions if he is to be taken seriously as someone who is not here to intimidate people in the staff commission.

Opposition Members try not to be suspicious of the Government, but if we were suspicious, we would consider the remarks that Mr. Robert Peggie made on 21 September 1994 at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities conference. Do we perhaps find there an explanation of why the Government are so keen at this stage to introduce powers to dismiss all or part of the staff commission without reason?

Mr. Peggie's appointment was welcomed on both sides of the House and my hon. Friends were explicit in recognising him as a man of impeccable qualifications and impeccable background, who took on an unpopular job for the Government but has done it assiduously. On 20 September, reported in the newspapers on 21 September, Mr. Peggie made his view known on the subject of the staff transfer from the old system of local authorities to the one that the Government propose. I quote from *The Scotsman:*

> "Robert Peggie told a conference at Dunblane yesterday that councils were ill-prepared for local government reorganisation and the timetable was dangerously tight."

"Dangerously tight"—those were Mr. Peggie's words.

Mr. Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman also concede that Mr. Peggie is on record in public and in the press as agreeing that the amendments are purely technical?

8 pm

Mr. Robertson: Mr. Peggie may feel that Mr. Peggie is safe. We may perhaps have more grounds for doubting Mr. Peggie's security of tenure than Mr. Peggie has at this stage. I am simply saying, as one of those who have some experience of the Government's legislative intentions, that perhaps Mr. Peggie is being unduly sanguine at this time, in his condition, and that he should perhaps be more wary of the Government. He only has to stand up at a conference and announce that the Government's timetable is dangerously tight, and suddenly an amendment is produced in the House of Lords to give the Secretary of State the power to dismiss him and other members of the staff commission in circumstances which do not apply to the staff commission in Wales. Perhaps Mr. Peggie should look carefully at the number of spoons in his cabinet before he leaves the room.

The Dundee *Courier and Advertiser* reported the same speech by Mr. Peggie. Mr. Andrew Nicol, Scottish political editor of the *Courier and Advertiser*, said, quoting Mr. Peggie:

> "There is grave concern about the short time-scale for the implementation of the reorganisation scheme and local government generally is ill-prepared for this reorganisation, in comparison to 1974."

Mr. Peggie is absolutely right to give that warning. It is a serious warning, which should be listened to by anyone in Scotland who depends on local government services—and precious few people do not.

Vulnerable people employed by local government are worried sick about their prospects and the future of their jobs. Countless thousands of vulnerable people in Scottish society depend on local government services delivered by the 300,000 local government officers, and have reason to be worried about the time scale and the timetable that the Government are embarking on for the reorganisation.

It might be unduly suspicious of us to say that the Government are firing a shot across the bows of the staff commission with the amendment, but we know what the Government can do, and have done. Few people in Scotland would dismiss our suspicion, and few will not be worried by the fact that the amendment has appeared—and appeared so late in the day.

With the amendment, the Government are sending a clear message to the staff commission that it had better not be as independent as its members thought, when they were appointed, that it would be. That is a clear move to intimidate the staff commission from making the type of frank, honest and reasonable statements that Mr. Peggie and his colleagues have felt obliged to make public since they were appointed.

Apart from the timetable and quality of services in local government, Mr. Peggie and his colleagues are worried about the impact that it will have on the people who are currently employed in local government as a whole. That is why they have started to tackle the issue that Her Majesty's Government should have been tackling—where the reorganisation fits into European law.

It has become increasingly obvious that statements made by Ministers in Standing Committee—that the acquired rights directive and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 may have no implication for the local government reorganisation—are wrong. Counsel's opinion, which has been commissioned by UNISON—the largest union in local government—makes it clear beyond doubt that both TUPE and the acquired rights directive will apply to all people employed by local authorities at the present time, and in relation to the transfer that will occur if the unitary

[Mr. Robertson]

authorities are up and running. That has implications for the people concerned, for the Government and for the staff commission, and it has serious implications for the financial projections that the Government have tried to sell during the entire period.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the trade unions and the importance of protecting their rights. Would he be prepared to declare whether he is supported in any way by trade unions?

Mr. Robertson: I tell the hon. Gentleman, who should be very cautious when he starts talking about who is sponsored by whom—I wonder how he drove to the debate this evening, for instance—that I am sponsored by the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union. I am an officer of the GMB union on leave of absence. I have been for the past 16 years, and I do not expect that it is a right that I will have to take up to become re-employed by the union.

However, my anxiety now is not for the unions. I am quoting counsel's opinion supplied to UNISON, one of the unions in local government, but my concern, and their concern, is for the human beings, the employees of local government—300,000 of them at present—who are important in themselves, and who deliver services that are crucial to the people of Scotland and to the hon. Gentleman's constituents, insofar as they are constituents of his until the next election.

Counsel's opinion is explicit and important. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity of announcing frankly, on behalf of the Government, that he agrees with that adjudication, in order that the work of the staff commission may go ahead, and that Mr. Peggie and his colleagues may declare to the employees of local government where they stand.

I quote the final conclusion of Mr. Aiden O'Neill's—counsel's—opinion of 18 September 1994:

> "Dismissal of local authority employees, whether before or after the transfer, will only be found to be justifiable if shown to be for economic, technical or organisational reasons unconnected with the fact of the transfer itself."

That has dramatic implications for the costings of the Government, and also for the individuals involved.

The only people who have not pronounced on TUPE and the acquired rights directive and their implications for local government are the Government. Today's debate is a real opportunity for the Minister to make it clear that the Government accept, without legal challenge and without any doubt, that TUPE and the acquired rights directive apply to all employees of local government at present, and that employees in local government can therefore look forward at least to having the protection offered by European law.

Ministers already have considerable powers over the staff commission. There is no need for the House, or Parliament, to give Ministers any more powers. If the Secretary of State wishes to reserve the power to dismiss members of the commission for specific contingencies, let him spell them out, and spell them out now, in advance, so that they, we and everyone else at least know what the situation should be.

The Government should not have this power. It is one more arm-twisting weapon for a Government who already have an armoury of bully-boy powers, and the Bill will confer more. The people of Scotland are sick of the Government and of legislation such as this. They reject the concept of the amendment, and I hope that the House will reject it.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I should first declare an interest, not least because it is fashionable and also because I am a parliamentary consultant to UNISON, which is the largest trade union in local government.

I have some past involvement with the staff commission. I am old enough to have been involved in the last reorganisation of local government. At that time, I was a NALGO district officer and had to appear before the staff commission, which was chaired by a distinguished Privy Councillor. The value of the staff commission to local government officers cannot be overstated. They place great stock in its existence and in the fact that it will still be there after this reorganisation.

I like to think that I helped to persuade the Government to introduce the commission, as they showed some initial reluctance to do so. But it was the right course, and the amendment is wrong. I hope that the Government will change their mind.

Local government officers value the staff commission's independence and the dispassionate advice that it gives to local authorities on behalf of employees, while taking account of the employers' point of view. The amendment endangers that independence and will result in a loss of authority because the staff commission will be undermined. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, the amendment will mean that, if the staff commission does not toe the line, its members will be fired. The chairman of the commission will be told that, if he gives advice that is not liked by the Government, who are apparently all-knowing as to what is good for people, he will be fired.

Why commission members who are appointed by the Government in the usual way should be threatened with dismissal is not immediately apparent to me. The Minister made an awful speech about lord provosts; one hopes that his speech on the amendment will be an improvement on that. I hope that in his winding-up speech he will explain what it is all about.

The amendment is a mean-minded approach to an important matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton made a longish speech, but that is not a criticism, merely a statement. He told me before he started to speak that he would lead by example and that I should not make a long speech. He said that he would show me how to do it. I am trying to pad out the debate—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to resume his speech.

Mr. Hogg: I shall return to my main theme. The Government are in danger of being small-minded to the point at which they will destroy an important aspect of local government. As I have said, they were right to set up the staff commission, but they are spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar. It would be simpler to leave the matter as it is, and local government employees throughout

Scotland would appreciate that. I hope that the Government will take account of the views of someone who has at least some experience of staff commission operations. It was well worth while in the 1970s, and we want to see it function in the way that it did then. That aim is not helped by the Government's proposals.

8.15 pm

Mr. Welsh: The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) has drawn on his experience to outline what happened in the 1970s during the previous local government reform. I was there, and I share his views.

I hope that the Government are listening to the voice of experience, because they are taking us into territory that we have been through before. I hope that the mistakes that were made then will not be repeated, but I fear they will, because of the way that the Government are hassling the measure through. The people who will suffer as a result will be not only local government staff but the people of Scotland who rely on the services that they provide.

The Minister tried to dismiss the amendment as a purely drafting or technical measure. That may be so, but the problem arises because of the political powers that the amendment gives the Secretary of State. The commissions are important mechanisms to ensure fairness, justice and efficiency in the transfer of powers to the new authorities. They will play a crucial role during the transitional phase, but the amendments would place them totally in the Secretary of State's hands.

We are told that the amendments simply clarify the Secretary of State's powers. But because of draconian powers taken arbitrarily by the Secretary of State to suit himself and his political purposes, local government is now simply the creature of central Government. Now he is even dominating the transitional arrangements and apparently allowing no freedom of action to anyone but himself. He can appoint and dismiss at will the commissions that he will set up. If he does not like the actions of the commissions, he will have the power to get rid of them. That is hardly freedom or independence of action. Local government staff and people in Scotland have to rely on the commissions to find a fair solution to problems.

The amendments give the Government yet another power. The Secretary of State appoints the staff in property commissions, and now seeks powers to get rid of them. Seeking complete power over his own creatures seems a wee bit paranoid—or does the Secretary of State envisage that these temporary bodies will in some way be independent in their pronouncements and have to be brought to heel for political reasons?

I hope that the commissions will defend the public's interest, and will seek fair solutions to complex and over-hasty procedures. It is not the fault of the commissions that the Government are hustling the Bill through as fast as they can, but the commissions will have to cope with the practical problems that the Government have created.

The Government have given the staff commission and the property commission little time to complete their work, and the amendments betray a hint of panic in conferring powers of instant dismissal. Presumably, if either commission shows any independence of thought or points to any shortcomings in the Government's botched local government schemes, it can be dismissed. That is too much power, and it is being taken arbitrarily by the Government.

The Minister must explain the import of the amendments, and not just say that they are technical. Why are they necessary? Are they simply an insurance policy that gives legal powers to the Secretary of State? Can he tell us in clear terms so that Parliament and commission staff know under what circumstances the power can be invoked? Clearly, the Government must have some situation or situations in mind; otherwise, the power would not be sought. The Minister should take the time to state clearly why the provision is required and how it will be used. We have no reason to trust the Government.

Mr. McAvoy: Like my hon. Friends, I was astonished by the Minister's statement that the amendments are technical. I should like to speak to amendments Nos. 4 and 5, which are plainly not technical. They are authoritarian, striking a dagger straight to the heart of the independent operation of the staff commission.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) described how the problems of transition from one system to another were tackled just over 20 years ago. It was more than 20 years ago, and contrasts with what is happening now.

All the problems that involve the staff commission, such as deciding where employees go and how they are treated, should be dealt with by a completely independent body. At the end of the day, if the amendment is accepted, if the staff commission has an idea or takes a course of action which the Secretary of State for Scotland does not like purely on political grounds, never mind anything else, the Secretary of State can remove either the chairman or the members of that commission.

How can the members of the staff commission reasonably be expected to work in an independent atmosphere and without the threat of intimidation? If they say yea or nay in any way that differs from their master's intentions, they can be removed from the commission. It amounts to a sword of Damocles hanging over the commission, so that it can never have freedom of action or independence.

It is disgraceful that the future of 300,000 local government employees in Scotland should be treated in such a cavalier fashion. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) mentioned the Welsh comparison. Surely what is good enough for Wales is good enough for any part of the United Kingdom. I remind the Government that they are a Conservative and Unionist Government. How can they justify treating one part of the United Kingdom differently from another specifically on the issue over the staff commission?

The TUPE regulations have been mentioned. Many of us are concerned that, as soon as the commission recommends or endorses them, in will step the Government and remove people from that commission. The staff commission should be totally free to reach any recommendation on the TUPE recommendations.

[Mr. McAvoy]

Turning to the wider remit of that staff commission, with which the amendment deals directly, and its independence, if the staff commission knows—I am sure that a message can be got through one way or another—that any of its recommendations on appropriate arrangements for staff deciding to accept redundancy or early retirement approach what the Secretary of State would like to see, it will know full well that employers would meet those recommendations, which therefore would not affect its deliberations. It is disgraceful that there should be such an amendment.

Amendment No. 5 makes the same so-called technical amendment to the property commission. All the reasons for opposing amendment No. 4 apply to amendment No. 5.

The work of the property commission is of immense importance, although the Minister did not spend too much time on it. I shall use an example from my constituency. The main part of my constituency is being detached from a larger authority. Like the staff commission, the property commission needs to be totally independent, and needs to take certain attitudes in dealing with property disputes, particularly in my constituency.

I give one example of an issue that could face the property commission. In the royal burgh of Rutherglen, a statue of St. Eloi was found in the ruins of old St. Mary's church, which was destroyed after the reformation; a parish church was built on that site. The statue was found in the late 19th century. It dates from the middle ages, and always took pride of place in the Rutherglen burgh museum, until—lo and behold—Glasgow district council transferred it from its museum, and put it into an exhibition in the Glasgow cathedral.

People in Rutherglen were proud that part of their heritage was being displayed, but the magazine advertising that exhibition had the statue of St. Eloi on its cover, with a statement along the lines that, although the statue was found in the ruins of the old parish church in Rutherglen, there was no doubt that it belonged in Glasgow, because it came from the ruins of Glasgow cathedral during the reformation.

It may seem a small matter to some colleagues, but I remind hon. Members on both sides of the House that, if they are not here to represent people and their fears and understandings, they should not be here at all.

Mr. Gallie: I sympathise totally with the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. He makes a very good point indeed. Perhaps the Government should give the Secretary of State powers to oversee such situations and make sure that great boroughs like Glasgow do not rob the smaller ones.

Mr. McAvoy: I do not accept that at all. My hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) described the atmosphere of what happened 20 years ago. I am prepared to trust a staff commission and property commission to deal fairly with problems. We should bear in mind the fact that a big council such as Glasgow or Edinburgh may be able persuade the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), to take a certain line in property disputes.

The property commission should be as independent as the staff commission. There are bound to be numerous property disputes. It is essential that members of the property commission are able to tackle their work in a calm and rational manner without fearing that, if they step out of line, the Secretary of State or one of his Ministers will sack them. I am totally opposed to both amendments.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I am pleased that we have at last reached an important debate, after being trapped in the debate we had earlier. Using the same metaphor as my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg), the ship of state does not just need some tar; it is so seriously structurally flawed in everything in the Bill that the sea is lapping at the captain's door at this very minute.

The debate in Committee was rather fraught. There were expressions of concern about an unknown commission which might or might not damage the reorganisation of local government by making the wrong staffing decisions. The Secretary of State pulled out Mr. Robert Peggie's name, like a rabbit out of the hat, saying not that he was cuddly but that he would be honest and fair, and that he would have some support for his professionalism and competence.

Now, however, we are debating a Lords amendment which means that, at the whim of the Secretary of State, that person held up by the Secretary of State as a example in staffing matters can be removed from office, and the commission with him. We must express concern about amendments Nos. 4 and 5.

I am reminded of a planning inquiry I once sat on, where the planning consultant applied for an architect-designed bungalows. He put a very good case to the planning authority, but as soon as the permission was granted—I am told that it happens often in Scotland—the developer had gone and a sign was up saying, "Vacant plot available with planning permission for development". That is rather like the staff commission, but the sign says, "Vacant committee with permission not for development but for demolition of local government. Only known Tory supporters need apply". That could be the scenario we face.

The Minister is pulling a face, but it is rather strange that health boards are another group of quangos to which the Government can appoint and from which they can remove people at any time. For example, the well respected chairman of Forth Valley health board was removed, and Mrs. Iris Isbister, a former Tory councillor and the wife of a consultant, was appointed. The havoc wreaked by that health board since that person was appointed shows that we have real cause for concern when the Secretary of State has powers to remove or appoint members or chairs of commissions.

I am particularly concerned about the present Secretary of State—and with reason. Never has a Secretary of State for Scotland been so out of touch; he is a Secretary of State whose party has the support of only 14 per cent. of the people in Scotland, and he was deaf to the response to the water referendum in Strathclyde.

As the clause mentions the Secretary of State, we have to examine his credentials. More recently, he was deaf to the demand for a children Act in Scotland, which is now the only country in Europe which does not have the United Nations declaration on the rights of the child in law to protect its children.

The Secretary of State is a barrier to progress, and in no way an arbiter of competence or someone in whom we can have confidence.

I am also worried about the local impact of flawed or prejudiced political decisions being taken because of the pressures that could be applied to both staff and property commissions.

8.30 pm

Much has been said about the importance of decentralisation. The Opposition made the point in Committee that no staff resources have been allocated to that. Theoretically, the staff commission would ensure that people of the appropriate quality, with decent pay and conditions of service, could deliver decentralisation. I am now seriously concerned that if they tried to do so and it cost more than Government liked, they would be removed from their positions.

Property needs have been debated at great length. At last, Falkirk is to become a unitary authority, but it will have a massive property deficit. It needs property, but members of a property commission that allocated resources to such councils could be removed by the Secretary of State if that allocation did not fit in with his other spending plans and with the shadow budgets that had been set.

The break-up of education would be disastrous for many children. It is important to get the right calibre of officer with proper pay and conditions. The staff commission is one of the safeguards that would achieve that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has said, we are concerned not only about human beings but about the effect that bad staff commission decisions would have on services. We must consider both those who deliver the services and those who receive them.

To use American terminology, it is time for the Secretary of State to butt out. He has done enough damage already with this ill-considered Bill and he should leave the staff and property commissions with an independent role.

Mr. Wallace: I, too, oppose Lords amendments Nos. 4 and 5. However, before dealing with them I want to register the fact that Lords amendment No. 3 was one of the very few amendments tabled by an Opposition Member—my noble Friend Lord Thomson of Monifieth—that was accepted. Indeed, so shattering was that event that Lord Ewing of Kirkford said that it felt as though Cowdenbeath were in the European Cup. Only Lord Ewing would know how that would feel.

I endorse the concern expressed about the wording of Lords amendments Nos. 4 and 5, which provide for the removal from office of those who have been appointed to the staff commission. As the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, the staff commission has among its functions the keeping under review of certain issues, including the transfer of staff under the Bill. That is important, given the operation of the TUPE regulations.

The hon. Gentleman asked the Minister to confirm that all staff transfers between local authorities, old and new, under the Bill would be covered by TUPE. The Minister should be aware that, in the other place, the Lord Advocate suggested that some transfers would not be covered. I am not allowed to quote him directly, but he said that the TUPE regulations were open to various opinions. There have certainly been enough legal cases to confirm that view. He accepted that they would undoubtedly apply in some circumstances, but said that they would not necessarily apply in others.

We are talking about people's livelihoods. What the Bill has done more than anything else is to reduce morale among those who work for local authorities. Uncertainty will still hang over them while the senior Law Officer in Scotland says that the TUPE regulations will apply in some cases, but not in others. The Minister owes us an explanation tonight of the precise application of the regulations.

We have also been told that the words "and removal from office" are essential, but that the provision is purely technical and that there is no intention to use it. If so, why was it included in the first place? If there was concern whether the original Bill gave the Secretary of State the power to make the appointments, the Government could have simply stuck to words such as "the appointment by the Secretary of State of the chairman and members of the commission."

The Lord Advocate also said that the additional words "and removal from office" were necessary because there might be circumstances in which someone would have to be removed. What are those circumstances? There is a great contrast between appointments to the staff commission—where the Secretary of State wants absolute power to remove people from office—and appointments that he can make under schedule 7 to the new water and sewage authorities.

Paragraph 7 states that the Secretary of State can remove a member of the authority, but only in specified circumstances such as sequestration of an estate, incapacity by physical or mental illness, absence from meetings or being unable or unfit to discharge his functions or unsuitable to continue as a member.

It is not unreasonable to point to the proposed provision covering removal from office, bearing in mind that the Lord Advocate said that there might be circumstances in which that will be necessary. What are those circumstances? They are not spelt out in the Bill. The Minister must give an explanation this evening.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Hon. Members spent 177 hours in Committee on the Bill, but during all that time there was no suggestion that an amendment along these lines would be tabled. Governments do not introduce amendments just for the hell of it or for fun. There is always a reason, but we have not been told what it is.

Forgive our curiosity, but neither have we been told who initiated the amendment. Was it Ministers or was it Government lawyers? I have a high respect for Government lawyers and parliamentary draftsmen. I find it difficult to believe that the draftsmen were so incompetent or the lawyers so ill informed that they did not think of such a meaningful amendment during all those hours that the Committee sat, or at least when they were preparing the Bill.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

I want to put a direct question to the Minister: was it political Ministers who initiated the amendment, or was it Government lawyers or parliamentary draftsmen? Which?

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I can answer the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—the amendment is the result of the Government's political decision. There is do doubt in my mind that they decided that a mere "Peggie" would not go into a round hole. When the Minister speaks about a technical amendment, he means getting the power to allow the Secretary of State to press a button to wipe out the likes of Mr. Peggie, who may not carry out his duties in the way that the Tories want.

I warn the House that the Government have proved what they are prepared to do. They wiped out the Greater London council because it did not agree with the Government's aspirations. They pressed the button and wiped out unionism at GCHQ in Cheltenham. The amendment would give them further powers to take more decisions like that, so we must be extremely careful.

The amendment should be opposed by all those who are concerned about democracy. The commissions should be left with a neutral hand, just like any sheriff or judge. I want to know why the Government want another button to press. They have already pressed every damaging button in their power. Tonight we are debating an aspect of local government reorganisation in Scotland that none of the people of Scotland want.

Mr. Stewart: I congratulate the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) on having the best line of the debate so far— *[Interruption.]* I said "so far".

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) raised property issues that I shall consider carefully. I point out to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) that, in my opening speech, I said that Lords amendment No. 3 was tabled by the Liberal Democrats in the other place. I am glad that it has his support.

Two essential points have been made about the substance of the debate. First, a comparison has been made with Wales. I confirm that, in the Welsh legislation, all the provisions relating to the staff commission, including powers of dismissal, are in a schedule. Therefore, there is no difference of substance between the two Bills.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) asked whether this was not all the most terrible conspiracy. That was encapsulated in the remarks of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who fairly asked whether the amendments had been initiated by Ministers or by draftsmen. I can tell him without equivocation that they were initiated by draftsmen. There was no ministerial instruction.

Clause 12(3) already empowers the Secretary of State to provide for the constitution and membership of the staff commission. As hon. Members will know, Bills are constantly scrutinised throughout their parliamentary passage. There is nothing new in that.

There was doubt as to whether that general power in clause 12(3) was sufficient to enable my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to appoint the chairman and members of the commission. When it was put to him, that doubt was shared by my noble Friend the Lord Advocate, to whom the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) referred, and that doubt is resolved by the amendment.

These are technical amendments.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister has explained half the story, which is that the Secretary of State needed the power to appoint, but he has not explained why he needed the power to remove.

Mr. Stewart: The two go together, do they not? Clearly the Secretary of State must have the power to appoint and to remove members. That is exactly the position in Wales. That is exactly the position in relation to all our public appointments.

Mr. Wallace: I note with interest that the Minister says: that that is exactly the position in relation to all public appointments. The power given to the Secretary of State in the BIll with regard to the new water and sewerage authorities specifies the circumstances in which he can remove. There is no such specification of circumstances with regard to the staff commission. Moreover, I can see no provision in the Bill for removing members of the customers council for the new water and sewerage authorities.

Mr. Stewart: Let me spell it out, in the hope that I will satisfy the hon. Gentleman, who is a lawyer.

The legal advice we received was that clauses 12 and 19, as originally drafted, gave rise to some doubt about whether regulations appointing or removing members would have been ultra vires. Clearly that had to be sorted out. The amendments were not initiated by Ministers, and were not a matter of policy. *[Interruption.]* Of course Ministers take responsibility for them. They were initiated by the lawyers and the draftsmen. There is nothing unusual in that, and on those grounds I reject the conspiracy theory of the hon. Member for Hamilton.

Mr. George Robertson: We have had a good and useful debate, with my hon. Friends making brief, pertinent and relevant points. Far from being reassured by what the Minister has said in a brief intervention at the end, our suspicions might have been seen even to grow.

We have gained no reassurance that members of this important commission would not be removed without due cause. We have been given no assurance by the Minister that some system would be established to assure local government employees or Members of the House that, in circumstances where individuals had to be removed, the grounds would be made known.

We have simply been told that, in the case here of what the draftsmen deem to be an illegal defect, the Secretary of State will take upon himself not only the power to appoint but the power to remove, and to remove without any reasons being given to the members of the staff commmission.

8.45 pm

It is a function of Ministers of the Crown to take the advice of draftsmen and to say to those draftsmen that Members of Parliament will rightly ask why Ministers are now taking what appear to be new powers in relation to an independent staff commission, and that Ministers will not be able to give any reassurance.

Why is the Minister coming along and hiding behind technical and legal advice, when he has created a political dilemma for the staff commission and its chairman? Surely it is up to Ministers to reassure Members of the House and 300,000 people in local government that the powers he is taking upon himself and the Secretary of State will not be used arbitrarily, willy-nilly or without any justification being offered.

Mr. Salmond: I am sure that the Minister will have the leave of the House to speak again if he wishes to do so. But there is a suspicion, which I think is generally shared, that he curtails his speeches when he does not know the answer to the question he is being asked.

I specifically heard the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), not once but several times, ask the simple question: why were not the grounds for dismissal specified in the Bill? That is an entirely reasonable question. If the Minister has the leave of the House to speak again, I am sure that he will address that point, as opposed to brushing it aside with some bluster.

For example, we would like to know whether the Minister telephoned the Prime Minister's office for expert guidance on the grounds for dismissing people from office. It is reasonable to ask why the grounds are not specified on the face of the Bill. If the Minister has the leave of the House to speak again, will he answer that simple question?

Mr. Stewart *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take it that the hon. Gentleman has the leave of the House to speak again.

Mr. Stewart: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am genuinely trying to reassure Opposition Members. I may not have succeeded, but I hope that what I am saying is clear. Of course Ministers accept responsibility for the amendments. I was asked whether they were the result of some policy initiative by Ministers, or whether they were simply put to Ministers by the draftsmen. Of course we accept responsibility. Or course I accept that they are legally necessary.

If it is any reassurance to Opposition Members, we entirely accept the independence of the staff commission and of any property commission. There is no threat to that. Secondly, if there should be a need on occasion to change the membership of the staff commission, we shall not do so without consultation beforehand with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and representatives of the other two Scottish political parties.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 12

STAFF COMMISSION

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 8, line 33, leave out ("and may include provision as to") and insert

(", the appointment and removal from office by the Secretary of State of the chairman and members of the commission,")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 247.

Division No. 320] **[20.51 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing-N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith

Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Willetts and
Mr. Sydney Chapman

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet
(Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen
North)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David

Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Olner, William

Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Jim Dowd

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 19

PROPERTY COMMISSION

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 16, line 8, leave out ("and may include provision as to") and insert

(", the appointment and removal from office by the Secretary of State of the chairman and members of the commission,")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 192.

Division No. 321] **[21.05 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David

Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith

Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Willetts and
Mr. Simon Burns

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Grocott, Bruce
Gummer, Rt Hon John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes Robert (Aberdeen North)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun

Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Foster and
Mr. Andrew Welsh

Question accordingly agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 36

FIRE SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 32, leave out lines 34 to 41.

9.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendment No. 50.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is a technical amendment but I shall be happy to explain it to anyone who so wishes.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 12, after clause 44, to insert the following new clause—*Chief social work officer*—

". For section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (director of social work), there shall be substituted the following section—

"*Chief social work officer.*

3.—(1) For the purposes of their functions under this Act and the enactments mentioned in section 5(1B) of this Act, a local authority shall appoint an officer to be known as the chief social work officer.

(2) The qualifications of the chief social work officer shall be such as may be prescribed by the Secretary of State."."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 4, leave out

"'Chief social work officer.'

and insert

"'Director of social work.'

(b) in line 7, leave out 'chief social work officer' and insert 'director of social work'.

(c) in line 8, leave out 'chief social work officer' and insert 'director of social work'.

(d) in line 10, at end add—

'(3) The director of social work shall hold his office during the pleasure of the local authority, but he shall not be removed therefrom, or be required to resign as an alternative thereto, except by a resolution of that authority passed by not less than two-thirds of the members present at a meeting of the authority, notice of which specifies as an item of business the consideration of the removal from office of the director of social work or his being required to resign.

(4) The director of social work of a local authority shall not, except with the consent of the Secretary of State, be employed by that authority in any other capacity.

(5) A local authority shall secure the provision of adequate staff for assisting the director of social work in the performance of his functions.'.

It will also be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 13, 30 to 32, 58 to 64, 70 to 72, 87 to 89, 105 to 107, 110, 112, 118 and 122 to 124.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): We welcome the amendments passed in another place, which require each of the new unitary authorities to appoint a chief social work officer. The amendments were carried in response to Opposition concern and we welcome the fact that the Government now recognise the importance of having in each of the new unitary authority areas a professionally qualified officer who will be responsible for the management of social work and accountable to elected members for the delivery of social work services.

We especially welcome the fact that the Government have undergone a conversion on this issue because, as my hon. Friends—who, like me, debated the Bill for many long hours in Standing Committee—will testify, the Government at that time steadfastly refused to place any such requirement on the new authorities, despite our proposals. Indeed, Conservatives argued against the type of amendments that they have since supported in another place and voted against the amendment that they are now supporting. We can only applaud their conversion, albeit a late one, to a sensible position.

Some people—people less charitable than myself, perhaps—may wonder why the Government have changed their mind on the issue. It may have happened because the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) is no longer the Minister responsible for local government, and has been replaced by his fellow Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). That change of personnel can hardly be described as signalling a Government move towards a more conciliatory moderate position.

[Mr. John McAllion]

The real reason for the Government's change of mind is that in this Administration, the Minister responsible for local government is not the Minister responsible for social work. Indeed, the Minister responsible for social work is not to be found anywhere on the Government Benches here tonight, because he sits in another place. He is, of course, Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, a Tory of a different hue from that of any of the Tories now occupying the Front Bench in the House of Commons. Anyone who incurs the wrath of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) as Lord Fraser does cannot be all bad.

If we read what Lord Fraser said in Committee in another place, we can begin to get some inkling of why the Government changed their position. He said that he had no criticism of

> "social work committees . . . or of past or present directors of social work in Scotland."

Indeed, he recognised the contribution that they had all made, and said that they had been central in introducing care in the community and central, too, to the Government's policies on child care and criminal justice.

Lord Fraser singled out in particular directors of social work, who he said had

> "provided very sound professional oversight and should take credit for some very innovative thinking".

He said that he had no doubt that many, if not all, the unitary authorities would not only establish social work committees and appoint directors of social work, but would do so

> "along the lines of . . . the present statutory requirement."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 July 1994; Vol. 556, c. 2014.]

Indeed, the noble Lord gave as clear an indication as can be expected from a Tory Minister that, if he had had a free vote and could have cast it for what he in all conscience thought was the best course of action, he would have voted for the Opposition amendments. Of course, he is not allowed to do that in the adversarial atmosphere of the mother of Parliaments, so he did the next best thing and introduced in the House of Lords an amendment that went as far towards the Opposition position as he was allowed to go. That is why the Government amendments use the phrase "chief social work officer" rather than "director of social work" as our amendments suggest.

We welcome the move in our direction, but it does not go far enough. We are still worried that the change of title may mean a weakening or undermining of the existing role of directors of social work. "What's in a name?" some might ask. If there is to be a statutory requirement that local authorities appoint chief social work officers, why can they not be required to appoint directors of social work?

Is there any significance behind the difference between the forms of words? Does the change of name reflect any loss of status or power? Is a chief social work officer guaranteed to continue to be the reporting accountable manager to the elected council for the management and delivery of social work services, as a director of social work is now? We want to hear from the Minister whether that is guaranteed to continue. The House deserves an answer to that specific question.

Will the Minister give a categorical assurance that he will issue directions to the new authorities that chief social work officers are to continue as the reporting accountable managers to elected councils? Will he put on the record, in *Hansard*, the fact that the Government expect the new chief social work officers to be afforded the same rights, protection and support enjoyed by the current directors of social work, and will he say whether the chief social work officers will continue as direct advisers to the elected councils? Or will the Government allow them to be submerged in more generalist corporate management structures? Finally, will chief social work officers have responsibility for the management of all of the resources allocated to the social work services, including management responsibility for staffing and financial resources within, of course, the policy framework set by elected councillors?

We need positive answers to all those questions and, if answers are not forthcoming, I ask the House to support the amendments tabled in the names of my hon. Friends. Ministers will try to tell us that the maximum freedom and flexibility will be available if the new authorities are left to manage their own affairs. They will tell us that the status, power and place of the chief social work officers within authorities' management structures are matters for those authorities, and that Parliament or statute should not require authorities to meet certain criteria.

Many of us would find that line of argument easier to take from the Government if they were not, at the same time, taking control of water and sewerage services away from elected local authorities in Scotland, if they were not abolishing every elected regional and district council in Scotland, and if they were not imposing upon Scottish local government a new structure which virtually no one in the country wants or desires. In short, if the Government were not murdering democratic local government in Scotland, we might believe that they were serious about granting to Scottish local government the maximum freedom and flexibility.

This is no small matter. It is not just a disagreement over the wording, because there are differences which divide the House tonight. For example, in my own area of Tayside, the social work department has developed a comprehensive and integrated structure of social work services. Like everywhere else in Scotland, that department has developed services under the umbrella and leadership of the regional councils. Now the Government propose that the regional councils, and with them the existing social work departments, are to be swept away, and replaced with a network of new and much smaller unitary authorities.

In Tayside's case the successor authorities are likely to be controlled by different political parties. I do not think that anyone would disagree with me if I suggested that the new Dundee unitary authority is likely to be controlled by the Labour party, or that the new Angus authority is likely to be under the control of the Scottish National party. At one time, we could have said that the Perth and Kinross authority would be an obvious one for Tory control, but these days, that kind of remark cannot be made of anywhere in Scotland.

Nevertheless, Ministers say that those different councils—which may be controlled by three political groups—will be able to come together to ensure the continuity of policy and provision in the field of social work. They say that the chief social work officers from each authority will simply have to liaise with each other to avoid any disruption of the services which were previously available under Tayside. That depends on the status, power and place given to each of those social work officers by the respective authorities.

One council may well give to the social work officer a role equivalent to the director of social work today. Another council might not, and the social work officer might be seen as a relatively minor official within a more corporate management structure. Under those circumstances, how can effective liaison take place between different chief social work officers? For liaison to be effective, social work officers in every authority must have the same status, power and place.

There is also the question whether the chief social work officers will be sufficiently senior to withstand politically inspired pressure from councillors. I shall again take a recent example from my area. A proposal was made by Dundee health care trust to place a small number of patients in a community home in Carnoustie. The proposal caused something of a furore, and led to a public meeting in Carnoustie attended by more than 200 people who were alarmed at the prospect of patients suffering from mental illness being placed in their midst.

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) was there, but certainly the local SNP councillor, a Mr. Lamont—I do not know if he is a relation to the former Chancellor—was there. Following the meeting, he wrote to the local newspaper in the Dundee and Tayside area criticising the trust for proposing to put mentally ill patients into the community.

He warned everyone at the meeting about the murders that have been committed by psychiatric patients who have been released into the community. He also pointed out that, because of the continuing depopulation of Dundee, there were about 6,000 vacant council housing units available, 60 of which are detached. For the £105,000 which was to be paid for the Carnoustie project, Councillor Lamont said that the trust could have bought three council houses in Dundee for each of the four patients, providing much-needed revenue for the local authority in Dundee. The attitude of the SNP councillor in that area is best summed up by the term NIMBY—not in my back yard.

Mr. Welsh: The hon. Gentleman has a problem when he intervenes in Angus affairs. He betrays a total ignorance of the position. The events also illustrate the trust's lack of consultation of the local population. If the trust had made known its plans locally, it would have been a different story. The meeting was set up simply because the people felt that the proposals were being thrust upon them without consultation. There should be consultation to ensure that such projects fit in with the wishes of the local population and are not forced on them without their consent.

9.30 pm

Mr. McAllion: I know that the local Member of Parliament backs the SNP councillor against the trust and opposes the proposal to put the patients into the community. The case sums up the problems that chief social work officers will face. The argument made by the SNP councillor was repeated in the columns of *The Evening Telegraph*. Anyone can vouch for that. I am not making it up, but am using what he said. His argument was that people did not want the patients in their area. They wanted to dump them in the area of another local authority.

Dundee has 6,000 empty houses, but it also has a council house waiting list because the houses are empty because no one wants them. They are in what are euphemistically called areas of low demand. Such areas are characterised by problems of crime and vandalism. I suggest that that is the last place that a home for people suffering from mental illness should be located.

Mr. Gallie: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that he is making a great case for building into the local government structure a director of social work and housing? Is that not the current position, given the choice that councils will have? I believe that social work and housing go together.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman got it half right. I am making a great case for creating a director of social work. If the hon. Gentleman reads our amendments, he will see that that is what they say.

The case in Angus sums up the problems that will face professional officers in the new unitary authorities. Political pressure from politicians who are in turn subjected to pressure from people in their wards and constituencies sometimes has to be resisted in the interests of good social work care. That is why the chief social work officers in the new authorities must have sufficient seniority and clout within the authority and their department to resist the pressures put on them by councillors. That is why it is essential for the Minister to clarify the role and the standing of the new chief social work officers that he proposes. It is also why, if he is unable to do that satisfactorily, the House should support the Labour amendments, which will ensure the standing and status of the professional officers responsible for social work in the new authority areas.

We are not making a party political point. The point has wide support across the political spectrum. Indeed, when the matter was debated in the other place, Baroness Faithfull, who takes the Conservative Whip—*[Interruption.]* Not Marianne Faithfull, Baroness Faithfull.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): She also takes the whip.

Mr. McAllion: I cannot speak for Marianne Faithfull, but Baroness Faithfull has wide experience of social work services in England. Among other things, she was a council member of the National Institute for Social Work, she was vice-president of Barnardo's and an honourary member of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. She said in a debate in the other place:

> "If we do not have social work committees or directors of social services, I suggest that the service will deteriorate."—*[Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 July 1994; Vol.556, c. 2011.]

She warned of vague accountability, lack of direction, neglect of standards and fragmentation of the service. She spoke from a lifetime of experience and from the position of taking the Tory Whip in the House of Lords.

Such a voice of experience should be listened to. It is certainly listened to by Opposition Members and it should be listened to by Conservative Members. I look forward to the Government explaining their position.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): This tawdry Bill, which has all the elegance and appeal of a piece of jewellery bought from one of Mr. Ratner's shops, will harm many disadvantaged people throughout Scotland, particularly with regard to floated plans for social work. So I have a number of questions to ask the Minister.

Traditionally, prescribed social work qualifications meant QSWs, or qualifications in social work—that is the basic qualification—and we then talked about CQSWs, or certificates in social work. There are also diplomas and degrees in social work. When he responds, will the Minister spell out what is meant by prescribed social work qualifications? Do they include those to which I have just referred? I know of one local authority chief executive who expressed the view that an administrative officer could carry out the work of a social work manager. That was before the amendment was tabled in the other place, but such a response shows how some local authorities may respond to the Bill.

I have a little experience of social work, and believe that the new authorities will need to establish social work departments and committees, and directors of social work. The nondescript outfit opposite may wish to talk about chief social work officers with prescribed social work qualifications, but I genuinely believe that many of the new authorities will recruit, select and appoint directors of social work. It is important for the many disadvantaged people whose interests and needs are cared for by social workers, area teams and hospital social work departments that we have social work directors.

One element of a social work director's role is that of advocacy in relation to the needs and interests of many disadvantaged people. Those may include disabled people, people with learning disabilities and elderly people placed in residential homes, some of which are not fit to be used as Army barracks for young soldiers. I would close down some residential homes tomorrow, including one in my constituency. But that is another matter. Most sensible councillors will opt for the appointment of directors of social work.

May I ask the Minister some questions about social work? First, will he assure the House that the chief social work officer will perform the same role and duties as are performed at present by social work directors? I refer specifically to section 6 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. My questions have been prompted by a deeply disturbing statement made by the Minister in another place, where he said:

> "Perhaps I may say to the noble Lady, Lady Saltoun, that in moving the amendment I said that the chief social work officer will be responsible for the oversight of all the social work services provided or purchased by the local authority."

We are in dangerous waters when we talk about the "purchase" of social work facilities and resources. He went on to say:

> "Undoubtedly there will be a staff for which he is responsible but I do not wish to suggest that every single service would necessarily be provided by that staff. Services may be purchased in, as is frequently done at present."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 October 1994; Vol. 558, c. 259.]

I am not so sure that purchasing social work resources is good practice.

I remind hon. Members that the theme of the 1968 Act was, and is, the promotion of social welfare and health. I am worried about the attitude of the Government. For example, I ask the Minister, in relation to the role and functions of a chief social work officer, how stands the principle contained in the statement in section 3(7) of the 1968 Act, that

> "A local authority shall secure the provision of adequate staff for assisting the director of social work in the performance of his functions"?

Is he satisfied that his legislation is equal, or superior, to that stated in section 3(7) of the 1968 Act?

With regard to section 3(3) of the 1968 Act, what role will the Secretary of State play in the approval of the appointment of chief social work officers? I seem to have lost the attention of the Minister, so I shall repeat the question. In terms of section 3(3) of the 1968 Act, where stands the Secretary of State for Scotland in terms of the appointment of a chief social work officer? Will the Secretary of State continue to have the power of sanction that is contained in section 3(3)?

Section 3(5) states:

> "The director of social work shall hold his office during the pleasure of the local authority, but he shall not be removed therefrom, or be required to resign as an alternative thereto, except by a resolution of that authority passed by not less than two-thirds of the members present at a meeting of the authority."

Will the Minister confirm that that will hold in regard to the so-called chief social work officer?

In relation to subsection (4), about the functions of a local authority, will the Minister confirm that what he proposes in the legislation is equal, or superior, to what is contained in that subsection? I ask him to give the House an assurance that a chief social work officer will have the same role, the same duties and the same autonomy, in relation to that important role of advocacy of the needs and interests of disadvantaged people.

Let me give a couple of examples. I say to the Minister that I am worried about the role of the welfare rights officers. They play an important role in the lives of many hundreds, even thousands, of people in Strathclyde region. I cannot speak for other regions, but I know that the three welfare rights officers employed in the Inverclyde division of Strathclyde regional council's social work department play an important role in the lives of ordinary people—people whose lives are heavily scarred by poverty.

One example of the work of welfare rights officers is that of advocacy, representing people at social security appeals tribunals, at medical appeals tribunals, and similar functions. Many constituents have told me that they would not have the nerve—the confidence—to appear before an appeals tribunal without the comforting, highly professional presence of a welfare rights officer.

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I very much want to endorse the arguments that my hon. Friend is making, and to provide the House with the information that, in Fife, the rights office in Dunfermline—the equivalent of the welfare rights officers in Strathclyde—has experienced a 42 per cent. increase in its work load in just the past 12 months. Therefore, I very much endorse what my hon. Friend has said.

9.45 pm

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention because, quite apart from its value, it gave me a breather.

About 50 welfare rights officers are employed in Strathclyde and they have brought a measure of comfort to many poor people. At a recent surgery, a man told me that, with the help of a welfare rights officer, he had won £9,000 from the Department of Social Security. "Won" is the right word because it was a hell of a struggle. For that man, it was like a small win on the pools because it gave him some comfort in a sparse existence.

A woman constituent told me that, with the help of welfare rights officers, she was paid money that she should have received over a period of 11 years. Conservative administrations are a vanishing phenomenon, but some of those that remain may see welfare rights officers and members of area social work teams as agitators or troublemakers, but those people fulfil an important role.

Too many Conservative Members see social workers as the lady almoners of yesteryear. The legislation is taking Scotland down the poll tax road because we are to be used as an experimental laboratory. If we must have the new authorities, the social work departments must be adequately staffed and resourced. We shall need social work committees, and to protect the interests of the many poor and disadvantaged people, there must be a director of social work with prescribed social work qualifications. The Government have made a concession, but it does not go far enough for many of our constituents.

Mr. Dalyell: What response has the Minister given to the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations in relation to its concerns about special needs groups?

Mr. Welsh: The Government appear to have bowed to pressure to reinstate social work to its statutory and deserved place in local government services, but it is still to be downgraded in status because statutory directors of social work are to become chief social work officers and the previous statutory social work committees are to be consigned to history.

The Government's attitude to education and social work is wrong because their proposals sweep aside historical reality and the contribution of the statutory directors and their committees, and they also ignore the social and educational reality that led to their creation.

Social work departments have to deal with the daily reality of poverty and unemployment and all the other inbuilt problems of Scottish society. The Lords amendment chooses to ignore the long-standing status and priority given to education and social work in our society. I support the amendments to the amendment because they at least try to restore some of that recognition, but the Government will again summon their absent battalions to force through their views in the face of opposition and advice from Scotland, because that is how the system here works.

In another place, Lord Fraser of Carmyllie said:

> "We have always recognised the vital contribution which social work services make in our community. Vulnerable groups depend on community care, and child care services can be reassured about the continuity of the service."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 October 1994; Vol. 558, c. 254.]

That is what the noble Lord said, but people in those services cannot be assured about the status of that service and the statutory provision for it. In many ways, we are up against double standards. I agree with what Lord Fraser says, but not with what the Government have done about it. There was no reason why they should not have ensured the continuing high standing and status within the new system of social work and education by ensuring statutory directors and the continuation of statutory committees.

I should like to ask the Minister a few specific questions to which I hope he will respond. In the amendment, the Government have gone some way towards meeting concerns about chief social work officers, so why have they not taken it to its logical conclusion and retained in the legislation the term "director of social work"? Why did they not take that extra step, which would have ensured the standing, status and continuity of the post of director of social work?

What assurances can the Minister give to many voluntary organisations which lobbied so extensively throughout the Committee stage of the Bill, to meet the real concern that the change of title may signal a reduction or diminution in the status and authority of the chief social work officer? Will the Minister give a straightforward guarantee that that will not be the case and that the new title will bring with it all that the old title had? We are entitled to ask why there was a change in title. Can the Minister give an absolute guarantee that there will be no diminution in status with the Government proposal?

If it is not the Government's intention to retain the title of director of social work, will the Minister make it absolutely clear that the Government expect the new unitary authorities to bestow upon the new chief social work officers the same rights and responsibilities as the existing directors of social work? I suspect not, and that is at the heart of the concerns expressed about the Government's proposal.

Will the Minister clarify that the chief social work officer will continue to be the person who acts as the direct adviser to the council in the context of the council's wider strategic role and responsibilities, along similar lines to existing directors of social work?

Given that there cannot be responsibility for standards without an equal control of resources, will the Minister make it clear that the chief social work officer will have responsibility for the management of all resources that are directly delivered or purchased? Does he accept that that management responsibility must cover all staffing resources if councils are to discharge the social work duties and responsibilities envisaged for them?

Scotland's social work system does not need a watered-down version of the present provision; it needs a very much strengthened, well resourced and supported continuation of the present system if it is to work properly and meet the needs of local populations. That is what we need, but it does not seem to be what the Government are delivering. Will the Minister address the specific questions that I have asked regarding the standard, status and powers that he envisages for the new term and the new officer?

Mr. Wallace: The fact that the Government felt obliged to introduce the clause in the House of Lords showed that they had got it wrong when they first published the Bill and argued it through the House. I regret that they have not gone further and made provision for a director of education as chief education officer, but I might be out of order if I proceeded too far down that line; suffice it to keep to social work.

As the Minister of State, Lord Fraser, said in another place, the Government had set out compelling reasons why a director of social work or a chief social work

[Mr. Wallace]

officer was necessary. It is recognised by hon. Members on both sides of the House that we are dealing not simply with administrative arrangements for the delivery of social work services but with issues ranging from children to frail elderly people. Social workers deal with human beings and issues affecting civil liberties. I know only too well from my constituency work load how directly social workers can interfere in the lives of citizens. It is important, therefore, that those who discharge the functions, and the person in charge of them, are properly professionally qualified.

I cannot understand why the Government do not go the whole way and call them directors of social work—the only possible reason for their not doing so is loss of face—and Lord Fraser said that many authorities would choose to do just that. He also said that other authorities may have a different structure, but would still be required to appoint a professionally qualified chief social work officer who would have overall responsibility for the services provided or purchased by the local authority.

It would be interesting to hear from the Minister whether he sees any difference between what a director of social work and what a chief social work officer would deliver. If there is no real difference, the Government should be prepared to swallow their pride, accept the Opposition amendment and call them directors of social work. In many people's eyes, that is precisely what they are.

Mr. McAvoy: I shall be extremely brief. As one of several hon. Members who are former members of Strathclyde regional council's social work committee, I could not let the amendment pass without referring to the effect of the Bill and the amendment on the council's operations.

Strathclyde's social work department has a record that is second to none, both in the existing statutory services that it provides and in the innovations that it introduces. Reference has been made to welfare rights officers. Strathclyde, under a director of social work, pursued that policy within the region and helped many people. There have also been initiatives for disabled people, such as the disabled olympics—a great innovative gesture by Strathclyde under the direction of a director of social work working in league with councillors. The range of policies, initiatives and services implemented by a director of social work shows that the system works and that the Government are making a mess of the changes.

Mention was made earlier of the pressures on directors of social work. Who knows what the pressures would be on someone called a chief social worker. I remember the pressure on Dr. Fred Edwards, the director of social work at Strathclyde when the region courageously made payments to striking miners who were suffering great hardship. The director did so in conjunction with councillors. It was a perfect example of a caring council looking after its own people.

If the Government's new system is to work, it is essential that there is someone with the seniority, status and experience to ensure that it runs properly. The people of Strathclyde will regret the passing of the Strathclyde regional council and the Government will pay the price in future for their efforts to destroy it.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on his maiden speech from the Front Bench. He moved an extremely important amendment. It is not simply a question of the words used to describe the new official but of the status of an official who will be responsible for providing for the needs of the most vulnerable people in our society in different localities in Scotland.

Are we to have, as it states in the Lords amendment, a chief social work officer, which I understand to mean an executive officer who will have to do as he is told under all circumstances, or are we to have, as it states in our amendment, a director of social work—an official who will have a duty to initiate action to protect those who require social work care? That is a crucial point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) gave examples of important areas of social work responsibility. Ministers have heard me repeatedly refer to the need to promote mobility for elderly and disabled people in Scotland and the great value of the present integrated concessionary travel schemes, which enable elderly and disabled people to move around within the regions of Scotland. With all the new boundaries that will be established under the Bill, it will be extremely difficult to maintain the schemes for the benefit of elderly and disabled people.

I fear that if we are simply to have what the Lords amendment calls a chief social work officer, he will have to live within the physical and management structure boundaries laid down under the scheme. That means that there is no future for cross-boundary concessionary travel schemes for elderly and disabled people. At Question Time last week, the Minister confirmed to me that under this and new legislation the new local authorities will be able to provide concessionary travel schemes only for people living within their boundaries—their own electors. There will be no scope for cross-subsidisation across boundaries.

We are talking about social work, which will obviously be crucial for people in the districts around cities. If they cannot take advantage of concessionary travel across boundaries into Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen or Dundee, the existing scheme will be greatly and seriously undermined.

It being Ten o'clock, consideration of the Lords amendments stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments to the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill and the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Willetts.]*

Question agreed to.

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

Lords amendments again considered.

Question again proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Home Robertson: We have crossed the 10 o'clock boundary, but it will be a lot more difficult for elderly and disabled people to cross the boundaries in future. It is important that there should be social work directors, who will have the power to initiate policy and to make firm recommendations to their councils, and to Government where necessary, that those important areas of responsibility should be co-ordinated.

I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that we have a serious problem here, that there is a need for the co-ordination of policy in this vital area, particularly on the point of mobility for elderly and disabled people, and that we need directors of social work who will have the authority to cross those boundaries in every sense of the word. There must be serious concern that, under the Bill, even with the Lords amendments, that will not happen. I hope that the Minister will seriously address that point.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): Many excellent contributions have already been made on the merits of existing social work departments, and I do not want to go over that ground again. I want to seek clarification from the Minister on the distinction between social work and education. I do not want to argue the case for education, because that would be out of order; rather, I want clarification on why the Government appear to treat education and social work differently, when debates in the House and in Committee have always taken place on the basis that the Opposition argued overwhelmingly for chief officers for education and social work, while the Government argued consistently against both.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Statutory duties are not specifically assigned to the directors of education but to the education authority; however, duties are directly imposed on social workers by statute.

Mr. Davidson: Notwithstanding that, when we argued earlier in the House and in Committee for chief officers, the Government used exactly the same arguments against chief officers for education and social work. They argued that the matter should be left entirely to the discretion of individual local authorities. Now they have changed their argument completely on only one.

That presumably means a downgrading of education vis-a-vis social work, because it is not felt sufficiently important to command a chief officer in the way that the social work departments do. Will the Minister clarify exactly why he believes that an education department does not deserve a chief officer, whereas a social work department does?

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I have been sitting here this evening in the growing disbelief that Parliament today, and no doubt the Queen tomorrow, will pass the Bill with or without this amendment in relation to the chief social work officer, and reorganise at great expense and great trouble local government in Scotland, when I understand that all the recommendations of the Banham committee in England are being thrown out completely. There will be no local government reorganisation in England. I understand that Ministers are saying that they do not want it in areas such as Suffolk—

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Utter rubbish.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman always talks rubbish. He spoke rubbish when he represented a Scottish constituency, and he speaks rubbish now that he represents a Southend seat.

But I have read in the paper that, in Suffolk, the Secretary of State for the Environment is opposed to the scheme that is going through. The Dorset schemes are opposed. No doubt, in the West Bromwich area, local government will not be organised—Madam Speaker acknowledges that.

I must say that I find it unbelievable, disgraceful and astonishing that the Government are pressing ahead with this expensive, unwanted reorganisation in Scotland, while things south of the border will continue as they are.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am sorry to intervene in a Scottish debate, but I really must say that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is talking absolute rubbish, and I think that the House should know that.

In England, the situation, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, is that, in some areas, the Government take the view that there is a case for change. In other areas, there is no case for change. The Government, very sensibly, are taking local circumstances into account. I am sorry—as my hon. Friends will know, although I was a Member for a Scottish seat for a long time, and I tried hard not to interfere—but when I find that things are going in the wrong direction, I feel it right just to put forward one point of view.

I say to the Government that it is rather sad that their Lordships were forced to table the amendment. I am sure that the great majority of Scottish new local authorities will want to have a director of social work, because they will feel that that is appropriate. But if local councillors are talented, able and wish to serve the public, surely Ministers should accept that some local authorities might decide, with good reason, for example, that there is a case for saying that responsibility for social work and housing should be brought together, or, perhaps, that social work and education be brought together.

Some Members might say, "We would not want that," but, quite honestly, if we are to run our local councillors by telling them all they should do and how much they should spend—taking away all their freedom—we are making a great mistake. I must say to the Ministers who are promoting the Bill that it is unfortunate—probably because of the pressure from some of the Lords who should know better—that the amendments propose restrictions.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I know that he follows Scottish matters assiduously, albeit from Southend, but does he accept that the Bill does contain more than 150 provisions that give the Secretary of State power to tell local authorities what to do? Does he approve of that?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I have tried very hard, because of the shortage of time, not to interfere and take up time in a Scottish debate. Of course Governments interfere far too

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

much with local councils. I would like to see far more freedom. That, sadly—whether under a Conservative Government or a Labour Government—is something that never happens, although, in fairness, our splendid Secretary of State for Scotland has been trying very hard indeed.

Politics apart—the Minister knows that I have said this on several occasions—he is one of the most courageous, talented and independent Secretaries of State for Scotland that we have ever had. But, sadly, he is constantly under pressure from colleagues in the Government, and, more importantly, from reactionaries in the House of Lords. It is very sad that the reactionaries in the House of Lords, who want to run everything through law, are forcing him to do what he does not want to do.

If the councillors and the voters wish it, what on earth is wrong with having one or two councils who take the view that the responsibilities for social work and housing be brought together? In England, where there are many Conservative councils, and where the House of Lords does not seem to have the same influence, we do have some flexibility—for example, in local government. They do not want changes in some areas, but Essex will allow change, and Southend, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, will shortly become an independent borough running its own affairs—unfortunately, not outside the EEC, but at least it will be independent.

It is very sad that the Government have been forced by the House of Lords to table their limited amendment. How much better it would be if we left it to local authorities to decide what is right for their areas, and not force them all to go on one particular track.

Mr. Galloway: The speech of the right hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) was breathtaking in its audacity. He asked us to compare the situation in England, where, in some instances, a case had been made for change, or in some instances for no change. He asked us to give credit to the Government for taking cognisance of the local views in those circumstances. The point being made by the massed ranks of the Opposition in Scotland is that there is no case for local government reorganisation in Scotland, by any test of opinion—local government elections, by-elections, parliamentary elections or opinion polls.

According to all those tests, the people of Scotland have spoken in overwhelming numbers against the change that the Government are ramming down their throats. The Government are saying that Northern Ireland can have devolution and an assembly, but that Scotland cannot have those things. The implication is that those who bomb and shoot their way towards devolution can have it, but that those who pursue democratic means and gather the support of 74 per cent. of the electorate are simply and cynically denied.

The amendment seeks to rescue something for the Government from this mess, and to do justice at least to the most vital area of local government work—social work, which takes place among the weakest and most vulnerable people, who depend most on us and the country's political structures. I ask the House to accept the amendment, for decency's sake.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) made some perceptive points. As I intend to show, we are doing much that he has asked of us.

I repudiate the suggestion of the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that the chief social work officer will be a minor official. He or she will be nothing of the sort: the person concerned will have to make decisions affecting life and liberty, such as the decision to remove children to places of safety. He or she may have to make recommendations for the assumption of parental rights in respect of children in care, recommendations for adoption and fostering and supervision arrangements for people who are a danger to others. He or she may be involved in services in the criminal justice system and recommendations for sentencing.

I can confirm to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that the new clause inserted by Lords amendment No. 12 will require every authority to appoint a chief social work officer who is professionally qualified. The qualifications of directors were updated by statutory instrument in March 1993: they include a diploma in social work, a certificate of qualification in social work, the certificate of social services and other qualifications. Those will be the qualifications prescribed for chief social work officers. The statutory duties of such officers will be the same as those for directors of social work.

The hon. Gentleman asked about welfare rights officers. Local authorities can continue to employ them, but not all are employed by social work departments. The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Scottish Office would be involved in appointments of chief social work officers; the answer is no.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked about the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations. We have made clear the contribution of the voluntary sector to social work, and we recognise its concerns about the transitional period. We therefore intend to require existing councils to pass on to the new councils information about the funds they provide for the voluntary sector, and we are continuing discussions with the SCVO about continued support.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give an assurance that the Secretary of State will not in any way involve himself, or herself, in the appointment of a chief social work officer? That would directly contravene section 3(3) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, which gives the Secretary of State the power to refuse to accept the appointment of a social work director. Will the Minister assure us that the Scottish Office will not interfere in the selection and appointment of officers?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that the local authority will make the appointment. If it is discovered that, for instance, someone has committed the offence of child abuse and been to prison, of course that person will not be suitable. I shall examine the detailed point mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, but my understanding is that the discretion will be that of the local authority concerned, and that the Scottish Office will not interfere unless a substantial issue of public interest is involved.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the passing on of information from one council to another in any way guarantee that the level of funding for special needs groups about which the voluntary organisations are concerned will be sustained?

10.15 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The duties all remain intact under statute as they have in the past. I believe that councils will be responsible. There may be changing priorities and that is the position now. However, it is vital that the necessary information is passed on and that will happen.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asked about guidance. Chief social work officers will have oversight over all social work services provided or purchased by the local authority. We will consult the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Association of Directors of Social Work in considering what further guidance is required.

The effect of the Opposition amendments to Lords amendment No.12 and the associated group of amendments would be to remove from local authorities the flexibility which they seek and which we wish them to have. We reached the decision on social workers for the simple reason that I gave earlier, which is that social work decisions can affect personal lives and liberties to an extent that other local authority services generally do not.

Mr. Wallace *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Let me develop this line of argument.

The main amendment is a new clause that will require every authority to appoint a professionally qualified chief social work officer. We do not wish to confine the managerial arrangements of local authorities by saying that that person must necessarily be a director.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East pointed out, a chief social work officer need not necessarily be the director of a department. If, for example, an authority had a single department for housing and social work or for education and social work, the director of that department would not necessarily be the chief social work officer.

No doubt most authorities will have social work departments led by professionally qualified directors. Other authorities may decide on a different structure. They will be required to appoint the professionally qualified social work officer at an appropriate level in their organisation, and he or she will be responsible, as I have said, for oversight of all services concerned.

A series of consequential amendments makes clear the specific decisions and tasks for which the chief social work officer will be responsible. I believe that this amendment meets the concerns that have been expressed, while giving the new authorities as much flexibility as possible in determining their own internal structures and management arrangements.

Mr. Welsh: The Minister said that this would give local authorities the flexibility that they seek. Can he name the local authorities that wish to abolish the statutory director of social work?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, I can. There are a considerable number of authorities. A total of 15 were in favour of a statutory director and 37 authorities were against—three of them were regions, two were islands and 32 were districts. Many other bodies were also against a statutory director. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that the president of the Association of Directors of Social Work welcomes this amendment, and that the British Association of Social Workers welcomes it as a sensible compromise. I strongly commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 4, leave out

"'Chief social work officer.'

and insert

"'Director of social work.'

—[Mr. McAllion.]

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 248, Noes 286.

Division No. 322] **[22.19 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill

Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Dennis Turner

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry

Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Dr. Liam Fox

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment No. 12 agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 64

GENERAL DUTIES OF SECRETARY OF STATE AND OF NEW AUTHORITIES

Lords amendment: No. 16, in page 56, line 33, leave out ("sewerage services") and insert

("facilities for the disposal of sewage")

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 17 to 24, 29, 56, 57, 92 to 104 and 121.

Mr. McAllion: I shall speak to Lords amendment No. 29, which seeks to introduce after clause 179 a new clause which would let the present regional and island councils use the new provisions in the Bill to facilitate the use in respect of their water and sewerage functions of what is called the Government's private finance initiative. *[Interruption.]*

The private finance initiative involves what are known as BOO schemes. BOO stands for " build, own, operate". That means that private companies are introduced to— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is quite enough chatting in the House. I am finding great difficulty in hearing what the hon. Gentleman is saying. The House will now settle down.

Mr. McAllion: Some people have no respect for the Standing Orders of the House.

BOO schemes are where private companies are allowed to build, own and operate facilities which are essentially public facilities, and they are of course a matter of some controversy. There is the specific dispute over whether BOO schemes will lead to higher or lower prices for water consumers in Scotland. Last Wednesday, the Minister responsible for local government attacked Strathclyde regional council for making "alarmist claims" about the impact of BOO schemes on the price of water in Scotland.

The Minister argued that BOO schemes would be better for the consumer and denied the claims by the regional council that they would result in higher charges for Scottish consumers. At the weekend, on the television programme "Scottish Lobby", the Minister said that his Department had undertaken research into the impact of BOO schemes which invalidated the claims made by Strathclyde regional council in its original press release about the BOO schemes.

[Mr. McAllion]

Strathclyde regional councillors, as might have been expected, have reacted to the Minister's attacks, and they have provided me and other hon. Members—and, I suspect, Ministers as well—with an information note which responds to the Minister's attacks. The councillors have given a detailed breakdown of their assessment of what the impact of the schemes will be on the price of water in Scotland. Their assessment is that the impact will be wholly damaging to the consumers of Scottish water, and they suggest that BOO schemes will be twice as expensive as schemes where ownership remains in the control of regional councils, as they are at present, or public water authorities, as could happen in the future.

Strathclyde's case is open to scrutiny by all hon. Members, who can look at the detailed costings provided and make up their minds. Hon. Members cannot make up their minds about the claims made by the Government, because the Government have not made available to anyone outside the Scottish Office the detailed research which they claim to have carried out into the impact of the schemes on the price of water in Scotland.

It is time for the Minister to put up or shut up. He should respond to Strathclyde's case, which has been presented to him in detail, with an equivalent case of his own which goes into detail and challenges the figures given by Strathclyde. If he cannot provide that kind of detailed response, he should stop attacking the council and accept that its case is valid.

This is not just an argument about detailed financial costings and figures, because central to the Government's case is their belief that BOO schemes will, by involving the private sector, introduce competition which, in turn, will drive down the operating costs of providing water to consumers in Scotland. That case does not stand up to any scrutiny, because in England and Wales—where the Government have already introduced private ownership and competition into the supply of water and sewerage—costs have been driven up to the extent that water costs in England and Wales are now twice as much, and in some cases more than that, as in Scotland, where water remains in the public sector.

More worrying than the costs are the implications for safety and for safe standards in the supply of water and sewerage services in Scotland. How are the savings supposed to be achieved by the new private companies which come in to operate the schemes? I suggest to the Minister that the new private companies will be able to achieve those savings only by cutting corners and reducing safety standards in the delivery of vital services to Scottish consumers. That must be of concern to all hon. Members on both sides of the House, and the Minister should respond to that.

Another concern that the Opposition have is about what might happen if the private operators who come in to operate schemes then go bust. Who will be left to pick up the tab—

Mr. Gallie: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We seem to be going back over the old arguments that we had in Committee, when in fact we should be addressing new clause 29—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can safely leave that in the hands of the Chair.

Mr. McAllion: We are dealing with new clause 29, which deals with the private finance initiative introduced by the hon. Gentleman's own Government. If he does not understand that, we have to ask why he is sitting on the Back Benches in support of the Conservative Government.

Mr. George Robertson: He should be on the Front Bench.

Mr. McAllion: I notice that the Secretary of State for Scotland pales at the very thought.

The problem with the BOO schemes is that they link together in private control three vital strands of water and sewerage services in Scotland—building, ownership and operation of the schemes. They will tie the hands of the new public authorities. The authorities will be tied into privately run schemes over which they will have little or no control. If things go badly wrong with the privately run schemes, there will be nothing much that the new public water authorities will be able to do about them, other than to intervene to bail them out and find extra public money with which to supply the services.

The debate gives us the opportunity to clarify several issues. Strathclyde regional council has made the case that the introduction of the Government's private finance initiative into the supply of water and sewerage services in Scotland is likely to lead to higher costs for the consumers of those services. The council's case remains convincing and open to examination by anyone who cares to look at it. It is certainly detailed enough to persuade me and many other hon. Members with open minds that what the council says is correct.

The Government's case remains shrouded in bluster and obfuscation, in both of which the Minister with responsibility for local government is expert. I suggest that even the lackeys on the Benches behind the Minister remain unconvinced by his bluster and obfuscation in this respect. There is now a clear opportunity for the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box to set the record straight and tell us the detailed research findings of his Department which justify his case. If he cannot do that, he should shut up and stop attacking Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Salmond: As one of the more open-minded Members of the House, I want to make some observations about this group which, with respect to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), involves not just new clause 29 but a wide range of amendments on the subject of water.

I am particularly worried about amendments Nos. 17 to 23, all of which are similar in composition and all of which insert the word "former" into phrase which otherwise say:

"customers or potential customers of the new water and sewerage authorities."

I want to know why the Government want to insert the word "former".

There may be an entirely innocent explanation for that insertion, but I shall make a few suggestions of the real reasons behind the amendments. If, for example, people were priced out of water services in Scotland by the sharp rises in prices that will inevitably take place following the creation of the water quangos, they would become former customers of the water quangos in Scotland.

I, too, saw what I can only describe as an unsatisfactory, indeed shifty, interview given by the Minister on that excellent programme, "Scottish Lobby", the other day. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] The producers and interviewers on "Scottish Lobby" will note the general assent to that description of the programme—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) wish to intervene? Of course, he is a Whip, so he is not allowed to say anything.

Even on the Opposition Front Bench there is general assent for the description of "Scottish Lobby" as an excellent programme. Only this weekend it exposed the charade behind the Minister's bluster that there will not be sharp rises in water prices. The Minister looks somewhat surprised. He often looks surprised during debates. I cannot quote exactly from the programme, but as I remember it, the interview ran roughly as follows. The interviewer asked the Minister whether he had made any forecasts of the rises in water charges in Scotland. The Minister said yes, he had. The interviewer asked what they were. The Minister then said, "You surely don't expect me to tell you that."

Mr. Stewart *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Salmond: The Minister shakes his head. Will he now say what those sharp rises in cost will be? He expressed confidence that his departmental officials had researched the matter carefully, until he was asked what the rises would be. He then refused to forecast them, looked accusingly at his interviewer and said, "You surely don't expect me to tell you that." The Scottish people do expect to be told what the forecasts are.

There can be little confidence in the Government's position on this. We need think back only a couple of years to the poll tax fiasco, when the Government confidently forecast the expected price rises, and their forecasts were wrong in almost every case that came to light. On this further lunatic measure, the Government are not even prepared to make forecasts in the first place. No one who watched that interview can feel confident that the Minister has any idea of the price rises that he is letting the Scottish people in for. We are therefore entitled to be extremely suspicious about the insertion of the word "former" into the relevant clauses and I have a mind to divide the House on amendment No. 17.

10.45 pm

Another sinister reason why the word "former" might be introduced is that someone could become a former customer of the water quangos if those quangos cease to exist. The Minister again looks surprised, but he must know that many Opposition Members see something familiar in the progression of water out of local government control into quangos and then, as happened south of the border, into the private sector. The Scottish people suspect that water quangos are merely a staging post for the Government's eventual aim of taking water into the private sector in Scotland, just as he did south of the border. If that were the Government's aim, the Bill would provide for it by describing people as "former" customers of quangos, which would then no longer exist.

I am also naturally suspicious of allowing amendments to go uncommented on when I doubt whether any hon. Member, least of all the Minister, understands them. I am interested in amendment No. 16. There seems to be a significant difference between "sewerage services", the phrase currently in the Bill, and

"facilities for the disposal of sewage",

which the Government intend to put in the Bill. I hope that the Minister will explain exactly what the difference is.

I am also concerned about amendment No. 24, which I have now read several times with the relevant clause and find absolutely and utterly incomprehensible. The amendment and clause say:

"in a case where the proposed sewer will connect with their sewers or sewage treatment works, determine (and by written notice advise the person) that all, or a part which they shall specify in the notice, of the sewer constructed shall not vest in them through the operation of section 16(1)(c) of this Act;"—

the amendment then inserts:

"and shall instead vest in him"—

and the clause goes on:

"but notwithstanding the determination the sewerage authority may, on such terms and conditions as they think fit, then or at some later time enter into an agreement under which the sewer, or as the case may be the part, shall vest in them."

Even in terms of complex legislation, that amendment makes an already incomprehensible clause even more incomprehensible. It might be seen as a case of them and him, but I expect the Minister to offer the House some explanation of what amendment No. 24 means.

This is a critical part of the legislative process in this House. We are a couple of days away from the end of the Session. I know that Lords amendments are not subject to a guillotine and that the Government want to progress other important legislation before the evening has ended. They also have a privilege resolution tomorrow in which some Members have expressed an interest. Nevertheless, that is no reason for allowing the ambiguous, inconsistent, and perhaps even sinister, amendments before us to be passed without opposition.

This would be the perfect opportunity for the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) to show the drive and enthusiasm that he showed as recently as last December in forecasting that the Bill would be bogged down, defeated and sent into oblivion. If we had more of that guts and gumption in discussing the Lords amendments today, the Government might have an impression of the strength of feeling that undoubtedly exists in Scotland about the course of the legislation. If the Government are vulnerable at any point in the legislative process, it is now. I suggest that Opposition Members take advantage of that opportunity.

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

Mr. Brian H. Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall discuss Lords amendment No. 16, especially as it affects the House.

I have been asking the Minister about the appointment of the chairmen and chief executives of the new water boards. About three weeks ago, I received a telephone call from a person who asked me to lobby on his behalf, because he had been selected for the short list for one of the posts of chief executive. He told me that a company known as Andrew Rait Ltd., which is engineering the appointments of chairmen and the chief executives, had suggested that the posts would not be advertised.

I have checked that fact since then with some of the regions. They tell me that they are of the opinion that those posts should be advertised, but I am reliably informed by that person that they have now reached the stage at which the appointments will be made this week. How is it possible for a Government at this stage in any procedure to go down that road, and as far down that road as is, fairly obviously, the case in that instance?

I also understand that that occasion merited the presence of a person from the Scottish Office, which demonstrates how far the Scottish Office is going as far as the appointment of those chief executives is concerned. It is a major anxiety to myself and, I should imagine, to all Opposition Members, that the Tories are now doing as they are doing in terms of the appointments to those quangos.

Mr. Welsh: The Minister owes the House an explanation, and I hope that we shall hear one from him, because it is obvious that the Government's policy will force greater price increases in Scotland than would otherwise take place, purely because of the unwanted policy that he is forcing on the Scottish people.

The Minister knows the figures. In the "Scottish Lobby" programme, he said:

> "Yes, of course we've done research. We have a very committed team which is researching all the figures. But you can't expect me to give a specific forecast".

I think that we can expect the Minister to give a specific forecast, and we can expect him to do so tonight in the House of Commons, because we deserve an explanation of the basis of his assertion that the private finance initiative will not be more expensive. I have seen figures that show clearly that it will be, and that those costs will be borne by water consumers in Scotland.

The Government are entirely wrong in their water and sewerage proposals, and on the issue of disposal of assets and costs. Those are simply not wanted by the Scottish people. They are bad economics, and will produce a complete lack of accountability to the general public, for whom those services are meant to exist.

Those transitional arrangements, to my mind, are only nails in the coffin of an unwanted and unwarranted Tory proposal—and there is no doubt that it is a Tory proposal in its conception, its implementation and its philosophy. It is purely a Tory party political manoeuvre, and is opposed by every other political party in Scotland, and by the majority of the Scottish people. Yet it is being imposed on us.

For that reason, the proposals will not last. If the Government are intent on forcing them through against the wishes of the people, and against common sense, we have a right to expect an explanation from them about the costings—now, before those price increases hit the Scottish people.

The Minister should have nothing to hide. If he has researched those figures, he has nothing to lose by making them clear and plain to everyone, so that we can all know the truth.

On the issue of disposal of assets and costs, will the Minister make clear the basis of his assertion that private investment in public water will be cheaper than the traditional method of financing water service projects? It will not be, but the Minister must have figures to back his assertion. Why not make them public, so that we can test the truth of his statement?

The Minister tried to rubbish the Strathclyde report, but he cannot ignore the fact that other local authorities have commissioned independent reports on financing. Their figures will be available to compare with information that the Government have produced and will act on. The independent studies that I have seen clearly show that the existing finance methods are a far better bargain for Scottish water consumers.

Leaving aside the obvious point that private finance expects to make a profit from its investment, independent figures show that traditional funding is cheaper, and that the Government's proposals will mean higher prices for consumers for an essential and unavoidable daily service. Those higher prices will be imposed on the Scottish people purely because of the Government's party political dogma, and that imposition will be against the wishes of all the other political parties and the people of Scotland.

I am told that a comparison between private and traditional local government financing methods shows that local government is simply better value for money. Independent figures show that price rises over 15 years under the public sector amounted to 83 per cent. But the price rises under private financing ranged from 112 to 153 per cent. That shows substantially higher borrowing costs, and that means higher price increases for consumers.

Over a 15-year period, the public sector options that I have seen produced lower water and sewerage price increases than the private sector, even assuming efficiency savings and debt write-off. The Government are keen to write off debt when it suits private pockets, but not at all keen to write off debt if that would be in the public interest—at least not in Scotland. They are happy to write off debt in London and for English purposes.

Over a 30-year period, the public sector becomes more favourable on every comparison. The Government should make their figures public, so that we can get to the truth of the matter. The studies that I have mentioned are independent, although the Strathclyde one is not. I agree with the Strathclyde report, but we cannot ignore independent surveys that have been produced by other Scottish councils.

The Minister says that he has done his homework and knows the costs involved. Will he produce his figures for public consumption so that we can get to the truth of the matter? We are supposed to live in a democracy, and the Minister is supposed to believe in open government. He can prove that. Instead of hiding behind a veil of secrecy, let him be open and honest with the public, and print the

[Mr. Welsh]

assumptions on which he made his claim that his proposal will produce lower bills for the consumer. If he believes that, he should put it to the test. Will he publish the Government's figures for public scrutiny? The Minister can answer that now. All he has to do is say yes.

Higher price increases are the result of Government policy, but the Minister is not prepared to admit that. If he can prove otherwise, he should do so. Consumers have a right to know, because their water service assets are being stolen from them and they will be forced to pay higher prices for the privilege, simply because of the Government's totally mistaken policy. It is not good enough. The Minister has the answer, and I hope that he will produce the figures for which I have asked.

Mr. Stewart: I shall start by speaking to the amendments that hon. Members have questioned. I have placed a memorandum on the Strathclyde study in the Library. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) asked about amendment No. 16. The term "sewerage services" was replaced by a fuller and more precise term in a number of places in the Bill on Report. One occurrence of the term was overlooked, and that omission has been rectified.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan raised various conspiracy theories about the purpose of amendments Nos. 17 to 23. I hope that I can reassure him—hope springs eternal. He asked about the purpose of the provision. It could be of use, for example, where someone has moved house to a new water and sewerage area, but wishes to pursue an outstanding difference with the authority for his old area. That is the only purpose of the amendments.

Mr. Salmond: As I noted in my remarks, there might be an entirely innocent explanation for the amendment, but the two alternative sinister explanations which I gave are equally an interpretation of that amendment.

11 pm

Mr. Stewart: I can absolutely assure the hon. Gentleman that both his conspiracy theories are precisely that: they are both completely wrong. I give him that assurance.

Mr. Salmond: Is the Minister giving the House an assurance that the Government will never privatise Scottish water?

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear on innumerable occasions that the Government have no intention of privatising water and sewerage in this or any other Parliament.

Mr. Salmond *rose—*

Mr. Stewart: That could not be clearer.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) raised a number of general points about water. He did not say how his party in government would finance what is widely agreed to be the extra investment necessary in water and sewerage in Scotland, but we look forward to hearing from him on a future occasion.

I should like to make it clear, however, that hon. Members have perhaps misinterpreted amendment No. 29. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) has been misinformed on the appointment of chief executives, as will become clear in due course.

Amendment No. 29 has a simple purpose—to allow existing councils to pursue the private finance initiative.

Mr. Donohoe: Will the Minister confirm whether the posts of chief executive of the three boards in Scotland will be advertised?

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

Mr. Donohoe: When?

Mr. Stewart: Of course they will not be advertised until the Bill has received Royal Assent.

As I was saying, the purpose of amendment No. 29 is simply to allow existing regional councils to pursue the private sector initiatives under the private finance initiative BOO schemes. A number of regional councils are known to be pursuing discussions with the private sector. I have no reason to believe that that facilitating mechanism is in any way controversial, and I therefore commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Salmond: What about amendment No. 24?

Mr. Stewart: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman.

Amendment No. 24 and the related amendments are technical amendments, to ensure that the ownership of the sewers laid across land will be with the owner of the sewer, not the owner of the land.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Minister address the specific questions that I raised? Is he saying that BOO schemes will be cheaper than traditional financing methods? If so, I do not believe him. Will he make the figures public to show on what he bases the view that BOO schemes and private finance schemes will be cheaper than traditional methods? I should like to see the figures and get to the truth of the matter. He has not addressed the fundamental question about value for money for water consumers. Under the Government's scheme, they will be paying more.

Mr. Stewart: No, that is not correct. As I have told the House, I have placed a memorandum in the Library. The hon. Gentleman referred to the Strathclyde document that is available to hon. Members today. We shall, of course, be studying that and, if appropriate, we will respond to it.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 65

CODES OF PRACTICE FOR NEW WATER AND SEWERAGE AUTHORITIES

Lords amendment: No. 17, in page 57, line 38, after ("potential") insert ("or former")

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 220, Noes 85.

Division No. 323] **[23.05 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Derek Conway

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Olner, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter

Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Wallace, James
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mr. Nigel Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the Minister may have inadvertently misled the House in his speech, and may want to take the opportunity to put it right. He said that he had placed a memorandum in the Library. In fact, since then, Strathclyde has produced a detailed refutation of the memorandum. Has another memorandum been placed in the Library since the original? I am not clear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. I am sure that the Minister will have taken note.

Clause 66

SCOTTISH WATER AND SEWERAGE CUSTOMERS COUNCIL

Lords amendment: No. 18, in page 57, line 44, after ("potential") insert ("or former")

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 70.

Division No. 324] **[23.17 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter

Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David

Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector

Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Michael Bates.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foste[illegible]on Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kirkwood, Archy
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAvoy, Thomas
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Olner, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mr. David Chidgey.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 67

Functions of the Customers Council

Lords amendment: No. 19, in page 58, line 7, after ("potential") insert ("or former")

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 208, Noes 65.

Division No. 325] **[23.27 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter

Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Michael Bates

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Connarty, Michael
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don (Bath)
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAvoy, Thomas
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wallace, James
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mr. David Chidgey

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 20, in page 58, line 10, after ("potential") insert ("or former")

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 205, Noes 67.

Division No. 326] **[23.40 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Gryls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)

Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Michael Bates

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Connarty, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don (Bath)
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAvoy, Thomas
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wallace, James
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mr. David Rendel

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 21, in page 58, line 16, after ("potential") insert ("or former")

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 65.

Division No. 327] **[23.52 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric

Porter, David (Waveney)
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. Bowen Wells

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Connarty, Michael
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don (Bath)
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAvoy, Thomas
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wallace, James
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nick Harvey and
Mr. Andrew Welsh

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 22, in page 58, line 33, after ("potential") insert ("or former")

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 199, Noes 65.

Division No. 328] **[00.03 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)

Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bowen Wells and
Dr. Liam Fox

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Connarty, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Foster, Don (Bath)
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
McAvoy, Thomas
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 23, in page 58, line 38, after ("potential") insert ("or former")

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 61.

Division No. 329] **[00.14 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)

Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary

Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Dr. Liam Fox and
Mr. David Willetts

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Connarty, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Foster, Don (Bath)
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric

Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAvoy, Thomas
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 100

AUTHORISATION OF CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN PRIVATE SEWERS ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 24, in page 80, line 10, after ("Act") insert

("and shall instead vest in him").

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 68.

Division No. 330] **[00.26 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)

Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David

Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (NW Hampshire)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Willetts and
Mr. Derek Conway

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Connarty, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kirkwood, Archy
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. John Spellar

Question accordingly agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 25, after clause 147, to insert the following new clause—*Road works register*—

" . In section 112 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (road works register)—

(a) in subsection (4), for the words from "of road" to "section" there shall be substituted the words "under this section of such road works authorities as he may specify";

(b) after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(4A) Before making any arrangements under subsection (4) the Secretary of State shall consult—

(a) any road works authority having duties under this section which he intends not to specify for the purposes of the arrangements; and

(b) any undertaker (other than a person having permission under section 109 to execute road works) having apparatus in a road for which such road works authority is responsible."; and

(c) in subsection (5), after the word—

(i) "require" there shall be inserted the word "the"; and

(ii) "authorities" there shall be inserted the words "so specified"."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 55.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The islands councils do not wish to use a central register and regard a local register for the purposes of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 as better suited to their needs. Amendment No. 25 meets that point.

Amendment No. 55 corrects a technical inconsistency.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister has told us the purpose of amendment No. 25. It arises out of correspondence that I had with him previously and an amendment moved in another place by my noble Friend Lord Mackie. The islands areas felt that there would be less bureaucracy and that it would be cheaper if they arranged their own register rather than join the central register. It is a victory for common sense and I thank the Government for responding to the representations that have been made.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 167

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT SERVICES COSTS

Lords amendment: No. 26, in page 111, line 27, leave out from ("to") to first ("a") in line 29 and insert ("publish").

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 27.

Mr. Stewart: This amendment is acceptable to both sides of the House and to the local authorities.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 27 agreed to.

Clause 169

FUNCTIONS TO INCLUDE PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lords amendment: No. 28, in page 114, line 20, leave out from ("enactment") to end of line.

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 45 to 49, 51 to 54, 65 to 69, 73 to 86, 90, 91, 108, 109, 111, 113 to 117, 119 and 120.

Mr. Stewart: These are technical amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 29, after clause 179, insert the following new clause—*Further Transitional Provisions*—

(" .—(1) Until 1st April 1996—

(a) section 70 of the 1973 Act (acquisition of land by agreement) shall have effect as if, in subsection (1), after paragraph (b) there were inserted ", or

(c) there being provided by some person other than themselves a system, to which the public shall have access, of drains, sewers or sewage treatment works,";

(b) section 71 of the 1973 Act (acquisition of land compulsorily) shall have effect as if, in subsection (1), after "enactment" there were inserted "or of there being provided, by some person other than themselves, a system, to which the public shall have access, of drains, sewers or sewage treatment works"; and

(c) section 15 of the Water (Scotland) Act 1980 (power to acquire land) shall have effect as if, at the end of each of subsections (1) and (3), there were added "or for the purpose of there being provided, by some person other than themselves, a supply of water to the public".

(2) If the Secretary of State provides, by order under section 181(2) of this Act, that any provision of Part II of (or of Schedule 13 to) this Act which—

(a) amends section 1, 16, 21(1), 22, 23 or 48 of the Sewerage (Scotland) Act 1968 or section 32 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974; or

(b) adds to the said Act of 1968 a new section 3A or 16A or to section 20 of that Act a new subsection (5),

shall come into force before 1st April 1996, he may provide in the order that the section amended, or as the case may be the section or subsection added, shall until that date apply as if modified in such manner as he shall specify in the order; the modifications being such as appear to him to be requisite having regard to the fact that some other provision of that Part (or that Schedule) is not for the time being in effect.")—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 62.

Division No. 331] **[00.39 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga

Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bowen Wells and
Mr. Simon Burns

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clelland, David
Connarty, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don (Bath)
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kirkwood, Archy
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McMaster, Gordon
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Clarke and
Mr. Jim Dowd

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 180

INTERPRETATION AND AMENDMENT OF STATUTORY REFERENCES

Lords amendment No. 30 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 31, in page 125, line 34, leave out

("or the director of social work")

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 63.

Division No. 332] **[00.50 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)

Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Foster and
Mr. Andrew Welsh

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Connarty, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maddock, Diana
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McMaster, Gordon
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Simon Burns

Question accordingly agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

POWER TO REMOVE OR REDUCE CERTAIN STATUTORY BURDENS ON BUSINESSES, INDIVIDUALS ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 21, leave out ("Chapter") and insert

("section and sections 2 to 4 below")

1.3 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Jonathan Evans): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 2, 4, 9 and 10, and Lords amendment No. 79 and amendments (a) and (b) thereto.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friends the Members for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) and for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith), in whose names amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 79 stand, were prime movers in prompting our consideration of this whole issue. Hon. Members may recall that, during debates of the Bill in Committee and at subsequent stages, a number of my hon. Friends pressed for the Bill to include measures on the enforcement of legislation. My hon. Friends the Members for Scarborough and for Chingford argued persuasively that, while the Bill provided an important new means to remove or reduce burdens imposed by legislation, it lacked a means to ensure that regulations were not over-zealously or unfairly enforced. Hon. Members from both sides of the House echoed the anxiety about over-zealous enforcement.

I should make it clear that it is not the Government's intention in any way to undermine the proper enforcement of rules and regulations, and I emphasise that the provisions could not be used to do so. The powers cannot be used in situations in which that would jeopardise any necessary protection afforded by the legislation in question. The powers also cannot be exercised in a way that would prevent the taking of immediate action where that is justified, or that would require the disclosure of information contrary to the public interest; nor do we intend those provisions to apply to aspects of legislation that involve deliberate wrongdoing.

The new powers would apply to legislation affecting businesses or charities, but not to legislation the sole or main effect of which is on individuals in a personal capacity. The exercise of those powers by a Minister may be in respect of any primary legislation passed before the end of the 1993-94 Session, and any order or regulation made under such legislation.

The sheer diversity of the existing appeals can be, in itself, a problem for business. The second new clause therefore provides that the Secretary of State may prescribe by order a model standard appeal mechanism. The new clause sets out several key elements that the model provisions would include. It makes it clear that the Secretary of State is to draw up the provisions in such a way as will secure that appeals can be determined without unnecessary delay, and that costs and expenses that will be incurred by the parties are kept to a minimum. The model appeal mechanism would be available to be incorporated into future legislation as appropriate, either with or without variations.

I leave it to my hon. Friends to speak to the amendments that appear in their names before responding to the issues that they raise but, in concluding my remarks, I emphasise that it is important for businesses to be able to clarify the status of, to understand the reasons for, and to be able to challenge, decisions at as early a stage as possible. The provisions provide that important means of ensuring that they can.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): In moving the group of amendments, the Minister and the Government showed how ill-prepared they were. In some ways, I feel sorry for the new Minister. Let me be the first to congratulate him on his elevation—and to commiserate with his predecessor, who put in a great many hours of hard work on the Bill, on the Floor of the House and in Committee. We look forward to hearing from the Minister's predecessor as soon as possible, and we wish him every success in the direction in which he is going now.

As for the group of amendments before us, it is ridiculous that the House, at 1.12 in the morning, is being asked to consider a major amendment to the existing enforcement procedures.

Nothing better typifies how ridiculous and shambolic the Government's treatment of deregulation is than the fact that in the amendments are recommendations of the local government enforcement scrutiny team, which were published as recently as September this year, in a report that was sent out for consultation. The consultation period covered by the amendments on which we are being asked to vote does not expire until 20 January 1995. This is a panic measure, if ever there was one.

The Government have asked the people who will be responsible for a key measure of enforcement—the trading standards officers—to give their opinions on it. Unfortunately, trading standards officers, like many other enforcement groups such as environmental health officers and even the police, have not had the chance to respond in the consultation period that the Minister's predecessor and the President of the Board of Trade set. Therefore, the Institute of Trading Standards Administration, representing more than 1,500 trading standards officers in the country, has not had a chance to respond to the document.

Trading standards officers are saying individually to the Minister that any procedure of the suggested type would place yet a further burden on them—on local authority enforcement that is already overstretched by the additional legislation that the Government have introduced, governing food safety and other matters. That has been done without a concomitant increase in the number of trading standards officers.

1.15 am

Amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 79 have been tabled by the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes). The hon. Gentleman was courteous enough to advise me outside the House that he intended to table such amendments, but I do not think that he made it clear to me that his proposal, especially as it is contained in amendment (b), was designed specifically to allow people against whom trading standards officers were acting to intimate that they intended to appeal to a magistrate or justice of the peace. The amendment would allow such people to ignore enforcement while they were waiting for the appeal to reach the court.

The problem with that part of the amendment can be shown by the example of a builder who illegally starts to demolish a listed building and is ordered by planning enforcement officers to halt the demolition. By lodging an appeal he would be able to continue the demolition until magistrates had heard the case. That shows why we cannot accept the amendments.

In another place the noble Lord Ferrers voiced concern about how an appeals procedure might be conducted. The appeals procedure being considered by their lordships was informal and outside the judicial system. Just a few weeks ago that Minister in the other place was proposing such a new system, but a Conservative Back Bencher, with the support of the Minister, this morning tabled an amendment that would circumvent the current judicial system.

Why did the Minister feel the need to encourage this last-minute amendment when in the other place Lord Ferrers was proposing an appeals procedure that would be outside the judicial system? I note that, in moving the amendment, the Minister did not deal with that but said that his Back-Bench colleague might touch on it. The amendment would ensure that some people had a pre-eminent right of appeal.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: In the interests of saving time, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the Government do not intend to agree to amendments (a) and (b). His presumption in that regard is misplaced. That may enable him to finish his speech somewhat earlier.

Mr. Griffiths: I could have reduced my speech by five minutes and saved the time of the House if the Minister had made that clear when moving the amendment. He nods his agreement. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding it difficult to hear the hon. Member, and I wish to do so.

Mr. Griffiths: I assume from the Minister's failure to say earlier that he was unwilling to accept his hon. Friend's amendments that he is now persuaded that they are unnecessary. I hope that the Minister will not waste more of the House's time by failing to say what is acceptable in the other 11 key issues that we intend to pursue and vote on.

Concern has been voiced to me—I hope that the Minister had a similar briefing—by the Local Authorities Committee on Trading Standards, LACOTS, which the Department of Trade and Industry helps to fund. It co-ordinates the views of local authorities on trading standards, and it is disappointed that it has not been specifically consulted on amendments Nos. 9 and 10. It wants to ensure the transparency in decision making that some of the amendments would also ensure. I have no objection whatsoever to people receiving in writing the full details of any enforcement order and the terms with which they have to comply. Although it will take up the time of local authorities, I recognise the justice in that as it ensures that there is no confusion. LACOTS, however, would have liked to have been consulted. It is concerned that if the Bill is not enacted in a practical way, it will prejudice proper enforcement and standards.

The tightening up of the matter was, of course, the subject of the Opposition Front-Bench initiative in the House of Lords where the amendments were generally welcomed.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): I note the warm welcome that my colleagues have given me this morning. First, may I offer my hon. Friend the Minister a warm Yorkshire welcome to the Front Bench? Secondly, the English language has a famous phrase, the "Scarborough warning". Historically, the Scarborough warning means no warning at all—the blow first and the warning after.

In Scarborough, robbers were dealt with in a summary manner—by a Halifax gibbet law or lynch law. As we had no warning that the Scottish Nationalists and the Labour party in Scotland were to have such a big fall-out tonight, it is not right for me to detain my hon. Friends any later than necessary and besides, I have no wish to become the first Member of Parliament to be hanged in public since the 18th century by former colleagues in New Palace yard.

I shall, therefore, say simply that the amendments that I propose would have the effect of obliging an enforcement officer first, to state in writing the reasons for any decision that he has come to in relation to the person or business against whom he is regulating, and, secondly, to inform that person or business of any appeals procedure that may exist in relation to his decision.

No such rights exist at the moment. It should be the duty of the regulatory authority to provide such information and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider my amendment seriously.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The understandable atmosphere in the House is due to the succession of Divisions that we have had on a matter which is highly serious for those north of the border—the scrapping of what some of us regard as democracy. I wish to refer to the new clause after clause 4 or amendment No. 9, which represents an extension proposed by the other place—no doubt at the behest of the Minister—of what I consider to be a principle that is objectionable and ultimately undemocratic. On Second Reading I used the term "semi-fascist" and, for reasons that I shall explain, I do not withdraw it in respect of the new clause now before us because it follows the same pattern.

The key phrase in the new clause is:

> "any provision made by an enactment a Minister of the Crown is of the opinion".

The new clause under amendment No. 9, which we might call 4A or 5—as it will probably be if it is passed—removes from the House that opinion. It removes from the House the ability to change by enactment—the changing of an Act in the same way as that enactment was made—a requirement which in this case is the means of enforcement of the Act itself. That enforcement may be put in place by some statutory instrument, but it may be by the Act.

The Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but it appears that the amendment seeks to make it possible for a Minister of the Crown, irrespective of any existing Act, by placing an order under the proposed Act, on his opinion, and subject to anything else in the Act, to change the methods of enforcement.

The amendment says something more particular than that. In subsection (b) it states:

"by exercising any one or more of the powers conferred by Schedule (*Powers to improve enforcement procedures*)"—

that is, the one and a half pages of schedule being written into the Bill by amendment No. 79—

"to this Act, it would be possible, without jeopardising any necessary protection, to improve (so far as fairness, transparency and consistency are concerned) the procedures for enforcing the restriction, requirement or condition."

That provision means that there will be a whole series of subjective judgments. Who is to say whether it is possible? Even if it is, is it practical? If it is, do we do it without jeopardising any necessary protection? What is a necessary protection? What is meant by "to improve"? What is fairness? What is transparency? What is consistency? Those are all matters of subjective judgment. By passing the new clause, the House passes over its powers of enactment—lock, stock and barrel—to a Minister in Whitehall.

Those of us who believe in parliamentary democracy believe that that is a reversal of what the Government sometimes say—that is, "Bring it nearer to the people; let the people decide; let it be discussed in public." [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Conservative Members here tonight do not understand what they will be doing when they vote: they will be handing over our powers of enactment to Ministers in Whitehall, struggling home at night through the traffic, reading their briefs by the light of lamps and probably signing something that they scarcely understand.

Clause 4, which precedes the new clause, is bad enough, but the new clause is even worse because it strips away the protection that some people might derive from the judgment of this House by statute and puts it in the hands of a Minister.

The next new clause is introduced under amendment No. 10 and relates to provisions with respect to appeals. Of course, the Minister will not judge appeals. The amendment sets out a large number of fairly complex provisions. It provides for the Secretary of State to appoint persons to hear appeals. What sort of person will be appointed? To what supervision by a Committee of this House will he be subject? A procedure for that is included for other clauses. Will it be entirely up to the Secretary of State whom he appoints and under what rules he works?

While we might approve the extension of appeals as being superficially satisfactory, it is again a centralising, authoritarian measure that removes from elected Members powers which reside in this place and which adjudicate between the people who make the rules and the people who are protected by them. It removes the balance which should reside in Parliament, not in Whitehall. If it goes to Whitehall, it will increase the power of patronage and, therefore, the possible extension of what I have rightly called neo-fascism.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) to his new post on the Front Bench. It is no reflection on him, but I want to say how much I regret the fact that our hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is no longer in that post and replying to the debate, as he would have been were it not for the nonsense of the past few weeks.

I accept that the Government have moved a long way on our recommendations on the matter—and quite rightly, too. Any hon. Member who doubts that need only consider the response of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) to what we are doing. The Opposition do not like it, which tells us that we have moved a long way in the right direction.

1.30 am

Many small business men throughout the country have been beset by problems of over-officialdom, by constant over-imposition of regulations, by people acting beyond their brief and by the extra charges levied against them, forcing them out of business because they can no longer afford to be in business. I accept that the Government, particularly with Lords amendment No. 10, have gone some way towards rectifying that.

However, I do not believe that as yet we have found a good alternative, impartial way in which to allow business men the right of appeal against what they consider to be the result of someone acting beyond his brief. The Bill provides for the appointment of persons to hear and determine appeals, and I hope that during the next few weeks and months my hon. Friend will try hard to find a strong mechanism by which that can be done. I still recommend the judicial process—the magistrates courts. The only way in which people throughout Britain will be able to have the basic principle of the right of redress is to go down that road. I therefore urge my hon. Friend to consider the matter carefully in the future to find a way of winding it in.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): In view of the late hour, I shall speak briefly.

First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister, my constituency neighbour, on his new appointment, and wish him well at the Dispatch Box. Naturally I am disappointed when I hear him say that he is unable to accept amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 79 standing in the names of my hon. Friends the Members for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) and for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith). I congratulate them on the initiative that they have taken in bringing forward those two measures, which would have been widely welcomed by British traders and business men. They will be disappointed to know that the Government do not see fit to accept them.

In a perfect world, the enforcement of the law would be an even-handed matter and would always be within the bounds of the law as enacted in this place, but there is far too much evidence of enforcement officers acting in an intimidatory and over-officious way, exploiting the ignorance of traders and business people in order to deprive them of their rights under the law.

Too often, the enforcement officers move into a business and browbeat the traders and business people into doing things that they are statutorily under no obligation to do. Amendments (a) and (b) seek to oblige enforcement officers to state exactly the terms and conditions under which they have the right to do what it is that they propose to do. I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough on tabling the amendments.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman said that enforcement officers are making business people do things that they are not statutorily obliged to do. Will he give us some examples?

Mr. Gill: Yes, I should be pleased to give the House an example. It is well known—I speak with some little experience—that, for several years, the meat industry has

[Mr. Gill]

been intimidated into removing wooden butchers' blocks. We now discover that all that was done in a purely intimidatory way, without the force of law and at a huge expense to the industry. Those who have removed their wooden blocks—the majority of those in the meat industry, because they were persuaded that the law was on the side of the enforcement officers—have now discovered that the law was not on the side of the enforcement officers.

When an enforcement officer goes into a business, generally, the person running that business accepts—or has accepted in the past—that that officer knows his stuff and knows what he is entitled to do within the law. I repeat that there has been far too much evidence of such officers going into businesses and acting beyond their rights under the law; that has been a great annoyance to businesses, and has severely disadvantaged the businesses in many instances.

I hope that my hon. Friend and his Department will look at the matter again, and try to ensure that the rights of the traders and business men are made as substantial as the rights of those who set out to enforce the law. I am sure that my hon. Friend will look at the problem. We must see that there is equity between those who enforce the law and those who are obliged to comply with it.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I believe that the amendment very much reflects the discussion that we had in Committee, about a general recognition that small businesses and small traders, which, of course, must comply with regulations that are necessary and agreed, should not be harried in the difficulties of their business without adequate recourse.

I believe that the Opposition's amendment has found a formula that provides for local, simple redress, or something close to it. At the moment, the Government's formula, although we do not know the details of it, effectively means that Government Departments could be clogged up with many complaints from businesses—we do not know how they will be handled—whereas it would be much better for businesses to know that they could get local recourse within the magistrates court or, as suggested in the other place, possibly in the small claims court.

It should be some simple mechanism that would enable traders to say, "We think that this is unreasonable and oppressive. We want you to justify it, and if you cannot, we should not be put in a situation where we are faced with regulations that are not justified, and which could threaten our business."

I am slightly surprised that Labour Members have not had the representations, which we and Conservative Members have obviously had, from small traders who, in the main, are prepared to accept reasonable regulations, which are required for health, hygiene and safety, and who become extremely angry at the occasional over-officiousness of officials who do not have an understanding of how businesses are run, but who can nevertheless harry small businesses, which have enormous difficulty just making ends meet.

It is important—it would be preferable if we had all-party agreement on this—that we find some simple procedure to enable businesses to ask, "Is this justified? Is this within the law? If not, we should not be expected to comply with it. If it is, we will of course comply with it, and accept that enforcement procedures will follow."

It must be cheap, simple and effective. Unless the Minister can give us some assurances, we are left in a slightly difficult position as to how to handle the amendment. I would like to press it if those who tabled it are not prepared to do so. I am not sure that I can support what the Government are saying, because I do not think that they have explained how one can provide a simple system such as that being sought.

The Minister should acknowledge that there is real concern about the need to ensure simple redress that enables business men to run their businesses, know what the regulations are, and find a clear way of ensuring that officials are acting within their powers.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) and many of my hon. Friends for the warm welcome that they gave me for my new responsibilities. I am pleased that many of my hon. Friends referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) and paid credit to him for all his work in the Department in relation to the deregulation initiative.

I was surprised—astonished, in fact—to hear the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South approach the amendments in such a negative way. In the other place, his noble Friend Lord Peston said:

> "The over-zealous, unfeeling and unreasonable enforcement of statutes and orders is a matter about which one feels more than irritation . . . I am anxious to be supportive and to give matters a fair wind."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 11 October 1994; Vol. 557, c. 841-42.]

In the circumstances, it is difficult to reconcile those remarks with the remarks that we have heard from the Opposition Front Bench this evening.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: The Minister should concede that, when Earl Ferrers moved his amendments in the House of Lords and my noble Friend responded, he responded to a completely different set of amendments. Earl Ferrers said that people should not have the sword of Damocles of an appeal hanging over them for months on end, and that if the appeal procedures turned out to be too costly, they simply would not be used.

The Government have now had some time to come up with an alternative programme, and such a programme has been called for by the Minister's hon. Friends, but he has not been able to offer it tonight.

Mr. Evans: I have said that the amendments that I am supporting result from the pressure imposed by many of my hon. Friends. I think that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are somewhat misplaced.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the concern expressed by the Local Authorities Committee of Trading Standards, and suggested that that body had not been specifically consulted. Let me me make it clear that we certainly intend to consult, as appropriate, when we consider the areas of legislation to which the new power should be applied. We would certainly take into account the impact on effective enforcement at that time.

But let us not forget what the new powers do. There are five powers, the first of which is to require that when, without taking formal action, an enforcement official tells a business to take some remedial action, the business should be entitled on request to a written statement making it clear what action is necessary and why. I should have thought that that was a fairly unobjectionable change in the law, and I am surprised that it should be resisted.

Second is a power to require enforcers, where they take immediate action against a business, to provide a statement as soon as practicable, explaining the reasons for the immediate action. That would apply where observance or compliance with the burden imposed would be likely to involve expenditure of a single amount. Again, given the mode of expression, I am surprised that it would be regarded as in any way objectionable.

The third power is a power to require enforcers to issue a business with a notice that they are minded to take enforcement action. The business would then be entitled to have its point of view heard and taken into account within a specified period before any formal action was taken.

Fourthly, a power is provided to require that, when formal action is taken, the business should be told exactly what rights, as contained in the relevant enactment, it has to appeal. In those circumstances, it is very important that businesses should be made aware of the grounds on which an appeal can be made, to whom it should be addressed, within what time scale, and whether the enforcement decision can be stayed upon appeal. Finally, a power should be provided to apply relevant provisions to third parties which had had a direct economic interest in an enforcement decision.

Expressed in that way, the powers to which I refer do not square with some of the remarks that we have heard from Opposition Members. The hon. Gentleman referred to the possible cost of increase in regulation; the impact on costs—both for enforcement authorities and for business—will be considered in a particular case in deciding whether to exercise the powers, but, as our proposals build on what is already included in enforcement practice, we see no reason to believe that they will impose undue costs on enforcement authorities where they are applied. The problems were sorted out earlier, and should benefit everyone.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) suggested, in rather extreme language, that the proposals were objectionable, undemocratic and semi-fascist. I do not know whether it is the first time that those remarks have been uttered in the Chamber by the hon. Gentleman, but I doubt it. He suggested that a Minister must express an opinion. In fact, the provision to which he referred is extremely common; it is not as rare as he seemed to suggest. He will be aware that there is precedent for the fact that the courts have the power to intervene if the opinion expressed by a Minister is unreasonable.

Let me also reassure the hon. Gentleman that the powers do not allow Acts to be changed, as he seemed to indicate, except in one very minor respect, in respect to time limits.

The hon. Gentleman also described further complaints. General issues have emerged from the Government's analysis, which are relevant to enforcement of a wide range of legislation, and we want to tackle those issues. Given the diversity and complexity of existing mechanisms, it is not appropriate to superimpose new arrangements across the board. There is a need for flexibility to apply to any or all of the elements in a particular case, depending on the existing arrangements in that case and where the business is experiencing difficulty.

It has been said that the new powers are too significant to be enacted by secondary legislation.

Mr. Spearing *rose*—

1.45 am

Mr. Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to address this matter first?

As I said earlier, the order-making powers can be used only to amend existing legislation in the limited respect of time limits within which proceedings must be brought. The powers will enable existing procedures to be supplemented where appropriate in ways clearly specified in the provisions, and we believe that the negative resolution procedure provides an appropriate degree of scrutiny of such provisions.

Mr. Spearing: I am sure that hon. Members will say that I am not given to extreme language. Do the words

"any provision made by an enactment"

mean what they appear to mean? I presume that the new clause 5—that is what it will be—is of the same nature as the humorous, yet not so humorous, clause 4, which does just what the Minister says. I shall enlighten him about the rather extreme remarks in a more private way afterwards if that is necessary. I hope that I am wrong about the new clause 5. I will withdraw my remarks if I am, but not in relation to the existing clause 4.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman heard what I had to say about that matter.

I am aware of the concern outlined by my hon. Friends the Members for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes), for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith and for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) about the effect of over-zealous regulation upon businesses. They have pressed that cause with my predecessor and myself, and I pay tribute to them for that. However, in recognising that, it is important to outline why the proposals cannot be accepted by the Government.

Amendment (a) relates to the first new power, that a written explanation of suggested remedial action should be given. That power could apply when, without taking formal action, an enforcement official tells a business that it should take some remedial action. Amendment (a) would mean that, if the power were to be applied in every case, irrespective of the circumstances, where any suggestion or observation was made by an official, it would have to be accompanied by a written statement. We do not believe that that is necessary or desirable.

In many cases, it will be clear to businesses whether they are being given advice or being told of a new legal requirement, and why the action is being suggested. In those cases, it would lead to unnecessary bureaucratic paperwork to provide that they were always provided with a written explanation. Advice is given and suggestions are frequently made by enforcement officials, and it is important that businesses should be able to obtain a written explanation when they want it. That is what the Lords amendment will provide.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough has discussed this matter with me at length. He has argued strongly—the Government accept this—that it is important that, where the right applies, businesses should

[Mr. Evans]

know that they are entitled to written clarification. I can assure the House and my hon. Friend that we intend to ensure this, through appropriate publicity and guidance material.

Amendment (b) was supported by my hon Friend the Member for Ludlow and by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). I have every sympathy with the hon. Members' desire to ensure that action taken against businesses should not be disproportionate. In another place, my noble Friend Lord Vinson raised the issue of proportionality in the context of these provisions. My noble Friend the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms gave a detailed response in the other place.

The main point is that disproportionate action against business may arise for one of two reasons: either the requirements of the law may be unduly burdensome, or they may be interpreted or applied in an over-zealous or unreasonable way. Amendment (b) would cover both cases, and would provide a sweeping new power to magistrates courts. In effect, it would allow magistrates to make a clear legal requirement unenforceable because they took the view that it was

"a disproportionate means of maintaining any necessary protection".

We do not believe that that change is desirable or necessary. In clause 1, we have already provided a means of changing or removing unduly burdensome legal provisions, subject to important and stringent safeguards as to consultation and detailed parliamentary scrutiny.

As my noble Friend Earl Ferrers explained, that power could also be used in appropriate cases to amend legislation so as to provide a dispensing power for particular cases. Clause 1 therefore already provides the means to deal with legislation that is disproportionate or that cannot be applied in a proportionate way, subject to appropriate parliamentary control, which the Government consider to be important.

The other case that amendment (b) would cover relates to a case in which a reasonable law has been interpreted or applied in an unreasonable way. It is not clear how the new appeal procedure would mesh with existing appeal mechanisms against enforcement action. Nor am I persuaded that magistrates courts would necessarily be the most appropriate forum for deciding such matters, as I told my hon. Friends the Members for Chingford and for Scarborough. The term "disproportionate" can also give rise to a variety of meanings in legal terms, as I have already explained.

Mr. Gill: Will my hon. Friend look into the files in his offices, which I am sure will reveal a letter that I wrote to his predecessor concerning a constituent of mine who was eventually driven out of business? That all stemmed from the fact that my constituent sold three T-shirts, the total value of which amounted to £6. The trading standards officer considered that they infringed the Walt Disney copyright. Other people, however, were responsible for producing the garments that were sold by my constituent, and they were not affected by the enforcement.

My hon. Friend would agree, I think, that it is unreasonable that the eventual seller of the articles should have been the one to bear the full brunt of enforcement, rather than the wholesaler or the manufacturer, who was more culpable than my constituent.

Mr. Evans: Both the House and my hon. Friend will understand that I do not intend at this hour to be drawn into a debate about that specific case, although one of the objections to putting the matter before magistrates, as proposed in amendment (b), is that it would give rise to the very inconsistency that many businesses have complained about in dealing with the way in which the rules are enforced. That is one of my objections to amendment (b).

The provisions in the Lords amendments are important. To make the rules proportionate and reasonable, which the deregulation order-making power would help us to do, is only half the battle. We must ensure that they are also fairly and properly interpreted and applied, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow is asking. The provisions would help us to do that.

In the light of what I have said, I hope that my hon. Friends will feel able to withdraw their amendments. As I have said, we are most grateful to them for prompting us to consider these matters in the first place.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 142, Noes 43.

Division No. 333] **[1.54 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Fabricant, Michael
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger

Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Bowen Wells

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dixon, Don
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. Dennis Turner

Question accordingly agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 17

BETTING ON SUNDAYS

Lords amendment: No. 12, in page 20, line 7, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

("(3) After section 31 there shall be inserted—

"*Betting workers: Sunday working*

Rights of betting workers as respects Sunday working.

31A. Schedule 5A to this Act shall have effect for the purpose of making provision about the rights of betting workers as respects Sunday working."")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Norris.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 13, 28, 37, 38 and 81 to 148.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: This late group of amendments seek to rob workers in the betting industry of essential protection. The Minister seeks to imply that the only workers in the betting industry who should be covered by the provisions of the abolition of the Sunday trading legislation are those who are directly involved in the taking of bets.

Many people are employed in greyhound racing who do not directly take bets, and they will have to work on Sundays. The Minister is seeking to deprive those people of the protection that hon. Members on both sides of the House thought they had secured for them earlier in the summer. Those people include those who take the coats, work in car parks or perform other tasks on courses on Sundays.

It is quite wrong that this group of amendments should seek to limit the protection only to those people who are directly involved in the taking of bets. The amendments will rob all the other workers—the majority of workers in the industry—of protection, and will leave only a small minority of people protected. I hope that the Minister will accept that, in pressing this group, he will force us to divide the House.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I have just one question for the Minister. Now that we are past clause 4, can he give an undertaking that the deregulation recommendations made by the Procedure Committee, both here and in the House of Lords, will be adopted by the Government? I am fairly certain that the answer will be yes, but it would be nice to have it confirmed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not germane to what we are discussing.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) has made his case for being determined to divide the House when most sensible people understand precisely the nature of the amendment. As he says, it conveys rights in certain circumstances, as agreed during the contentious passage of the Bill. I see no need to detain the House by rehearsing all the arguments again. If the hon. Gentleman is content to divide the House, so be it.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 138, Noes 41.

Division No. 334] **[02.29 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony

Bates, Michael
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Fabricant, Michael
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bowen Wells and
Mr. David Willetts

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clelland, David
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dixon, Don
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAllion, John
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. Dennis Turner

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 13 agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 14, after clause 17, to insert the following new clause—*Sporting events and activities on Sundays*—

> ". The entertainments and amusements to which the Sunday Observance Act 1780 applies shall not include any sporting event or activity."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Norris.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 29.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I do not want to repeat at length the arguments that were made in the other place but, although there are welcome aspects of the clause and the amendments, anxiety has been expressed that people doing the jobs not in the betting firing line will still not have the workers' protection that was promised when the Government repealed the Shops Act 1950. People doing administrative jobs—clerks who work with bookies, catering workers, cloakroom attendants and car park attendants—can all now be required to work on Sundays, but without the protection afforded by the Sunday Trading Act 1994.

If the Sunday Trading Act had not made concessions in relation to workers who did not wish to work on Sundays, it would not have been passed by the House or the other place. Ministers promised safeguards to workers who, for conscientious family or other reasons, did not wish to be compelled to work on Sundays. There has been a breach of faith as those workers are being compelled to work on Sundays, and anxiety about that is reflected on the Opposition Benches.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 15, after clause 19, to insert the following new clause—*Repeal of remainder of the Shops Act 1950*—

> ". In the Shops Act 1950—
>
> (a) Part II (conditions of employment), and
>
> (b) section 67 (business of hairdresser or barber not to be carried on in Scotland on Sunday),
>
> shall cease to have effect."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Norris.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 40, 168 to 174 and 178.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: This is another important group of amendments and it causes us a great deal of anxiety. The Sunday Trading Act, which the House passed recently, extended trading hours greatly in the retail sector. I think that the Act received Parliament's support because it responded to the requirements and needs of consumers in the 1990s and, critically, it provided a great deal of protection for retail workers, who can in law decline to work on Sunday, or, if they undertake such work, they can undertake it on grounds of their own choosing.

Within months of that legislation passing through the House, and being accepted on both sides of the House on that basis, it is wrong for the Government now to bring before the House proposals to remove the remaining controls and provisions of the Shops Act, which should not be swept away without any thought or concern for the hundreds of thousands of shop workers directly affected by them.

I should like to place on record the fact that I am sponsored by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. We oppose the amendments and will divide the House on them.

It is hard to see any demand or justification for the controls that the Minister proposes on weekly trading hours. Even those who have pressed for liberal Sunday retail trading are not pressing to be allowed to trade any later in the evening than is currently permitted. There is no substantial evidence of a consumer lobby seeking extended weekday trading. The Government's move towards that extension shows their blinkered and narrow ideology and not the wishes of the public or even of many people in business.

The real cost of accepting the amendments will be borne by shop workers. Many Conservative Members are worried about the impact on family life of extending Sunday trading. Such concerns apply to weekday trading too. The impact could even be greater during the week because there is only one Sunday but several weekdays when shop workers—usually women—are drawn into evening work. If the amendments are accepted, many women will be forced to work in the evening and will see less of their families—often at critical times in the development of their families.

Staff face other dangers. Violence towards retail staff is rising, and it ranges from verbal abuse to physical assault. Staff are in the firing line and often have no security. People who work late at night are often the victims of violent incidents. A survey carried out by USDAW found that more than 30 per cent. of the violent incidents that shop workers reported to it occurred after 5 o'clock in the evening—the period that the amendment seeks to force shop workers to work. It is clear that the Minister's proposal to abandon controls on late-night working would place workers under even more pressure.

Not only workers but the police would be affected. I understand that the Association of Chief Police Officers has voiced concern about the total deregulation of shopping hours. The Government propose to abolish some provisions of part II of the Shops Act 1950, to the detriment of shop workers and the public. The legal requirement of a half-day holiday per week for shop workers is to be abolished.

Until 1986, millions of working people who were covered by wages councils orders were entitled by law to annual holidays and holiday pay. The Wages Act 1986 abolished that for workers covered by wages councils, and now Britain's workers have no statutory entitlement to holidays or holiday pay. That is a return to pre-Victorian values, because at least in the latter years of the Victorian era people recognised the need for workers to have paid holidays. Our lack of statutory entitlement puts us out of step with our European counterparts. For all those reasons, it is important to oppose the amendments.

Likewise, we are concerned about the Government's sanction, which gives employers the ability to abolish the statutory right to rest and meal breaks. That is one of the terrible problems with such a catch-all Bill as this.

Interestingly, the very concerns that have been expressed to us by shop workers, by USDAW and by others are reflected in recent evidence published by the Department of Employment. The *Employment Gazette*, published last November, made it clear that management grades were increasingly having to work on Sundays on an unpaid basis.

2.30 am

The problems that have been highlighted by the police, by shop workers and by those representing them are echoed by council members of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. They are concerned that the interests of public order and safety and the prevention of crime would be harmed by the removal of the requirement on shops to close. That is why a number of councils have made representations to the Minister and to the Government seeking powers to enable them at least to step in where there are problem areas, not just to grant a licence for shops to open for 24 hours, irrespective of the harm that might do the community or the costs of policing it.

In Sheffield, for instance, Ministers were told that areas where night cafes were opening were already proving a magnet for louts. Under this tranche of amendments, a council could not impose restrictions on shops that were causing a problem.

In its submission to the AMA, Newham council said that the knock-on effects of the amendments could well mean an increase in night-time crime, robbery and so on. The problem was again voiced to the AMA by the Association of Chief Police Officers; the majority of its members were concerned that unrestricted opening might place an extra demand on their stretched resources—for instance, traffic movements and other nuisances such as I have already outlined.

We are asking the Minister to justify the total deregulation of shop hours and to explain why Ministers were able to say in the spring and early summer that they would maintain safeguards and protection for shop workers who did not wish to work long hours, especially on Sunday. How can Ministers justify now seeking to remove all the protections that they were so keen to reassure their Back-Bench colleagues would be in place? Why are they now so keen to remove them?

Ministers must come clean to the House tonight and reassure hon. Members that the problems that I have mentioned will not occur. The sad truth is that they cannot assure us of that because they are interested not in the small corner shop but in the big multiple stores that have been pressing for the change in legislation and that sponsored the change in legislation earlier in the summer, spending tens of thousands of pounds on lobbyists and campaigners.

It is wrong that the Government should have deceived the House—as did those companies—into accepting changes intended to bring us into the 1990s, only now to propose that shop workers and others should be robbed of all the entitlements that have been established in the past century, taking us back to previous centuries when there were no rights and people were ruthlessly exploited.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 138, Noes 29.

Division No. 335] **[02.34 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Fabricant, Michael
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harvey, Nick
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Simon Burns

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clelland, David
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McAllion, John
McMaster, Gordon
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Purchase, Ken
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Turner, Dennis
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jim Dowd

Question accordingly agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 24

CONTROLS ON LONDON LORRIES: REPLACEMENT OF DISCRETIONARY EXCEPTIONS

Lords amendment: No. 21, in page 22, line 14, leave out from ("that") to ("the") in line 15 and insert ("doing so—

(a) will have the effect that less of a burden is imposed on")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Jonathan Evans.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 22 to 24.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): This issue is of particular concern to all Londoners, because it deals with the Government's proposals to remove the necessity for a permit to be issued to enable lorries to travel on prescribed routes at certain hours—the London lorry ban. I should be grateful if the Minister replied to a specific question.

2.45 am

In perusing the Lords amendment, the noble Lord who responded on behalf of the Government stated that the implementation of the ban—if the necessity for a permit is indeed to be lifted by the Government—would be imposed by the police. That is in direct contradiction to what the police have said—that the imposition of such a ban would be a particularly low priority.

How will the London lorry ban, which has been of enormous benefit to all Londoners during the past 10 years, be imposed if the requirement for a permit is to be lifted from members of the Freight Transport Association? In the light of the recent royal commission report, which highlighted the pollution, both airborne and noise, caused by vehicular traffic, particularly in urban areas—and there can be few urban areas more congested than London—I find it extraordinary that the Government should be considering for a moment the relaxation of the stringent rules which currently apply, and which, for the past 10 years, have prevented lorries driving through the residential streets of London. I should be most grateful if the Minister would respond.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Can my hon. Friend the Minister confirm that, when the lorry ban was brought in by the Greater London council, there was an exemption system and that 20,000 firms filled in 10 pages—that is, 200,000 sheets of paper—that 2,500 signs were put up, at a capital cost of £250,000, that the recurrent costs until the scheme is dropped are probably up to £1 million a year for the residents of London boroughs, and that when it was brought in, the number of lorries denied exemption permits amounted to four?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend has it in a nutshell. Every Conservative Member would certainly want to see London protected from the unnecessary intrusion of lorries. The idea that that is somehow a prerogative of Opposition Members is bizarre, but the scheme as it exists is a particularly ludicrous piece of Stalinist nonsense inherited from the GLC. Apart from protecting the environment and preserving quite a few trees, which would, as my hon. Friend suggested, otherwise be chopped up in administering the lunatic system of paper chasing, we have made it quite clear that we intend to replace the scheme with one that has a greater accent on effective enforcement.

My answer to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) is that that means that no scheme will be introduced to replace the existing scheme unless it is clear that enforcement—dealt with by police, officials dealing with the vehicle inspectorate or officials dealing with the lorry ban scheme—will be in place and available to operate on behalf of Londoners.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I am sorry to hear a distinguished former Transport Minister make such a comment, as if the number of people against whom enforcement measures were taken was a necessary sign of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the legislation. I think it important to clarify that it may well be a measure of the effectiveness of the deterrent that further action need not follow: many Londoners would agree with that.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I thought that I had spoken clearly and accurately. All the information that I gave was given by the Greater London council in its dying days. The GLC itself said that the number of lorries not covered by the exemption totalled four. I was not talking about enforcement; I was talking about what the GLC actually did.

Mr. Griffiths: I thought that the gist of the hon. Gentleman's comments was that that was an indictment of the system. Many Londoners did not want exemptions: the fact that four were actually exempt is a tribute to the system in the eyes of—I am sure—the vast majority of Londoners.

Let me tell the House why we shall not vote against the amendment. It is clear that, when the Government drafted the measure originally, it was going to open the floodgates; however, it is clear from the arguments advanced in the House of Lords that their Lordships were persuaded that there had to be the possibility of tougher sanctions, and we do not wish to oppose that view. However, let me tell everyone who lives in London, and Labour Members who have diligently pursued the matter, that we shall continue to monitor it, and will not fail to bring to the attention of Londoners and the public any failures that the Bill brings about in the regulation of heavy traffic in London, to the great benefit of the public.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 27

POWER TO REPEAL CERTAIN HEALTH AND SAFETY PROVISIONS

Lords amendment: No. 25, in page 24, line 19, at end insert—

("(2A) Instead of consulting such other persons as the appropriate authority considers it appropriate to consult under subsection (2) above, the authority may require the Health and Safety Commission or, as the case may be, the Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland to consult such persons as it considers appropriate for the purpose of deciding how it should respond to consultation under that subsection.

(2B) Instead of consulting a person whom the appropriate authority considers it appropriate to consult under subsection (2) above, the authority may require the Health and Safety Commission or, as the case may be, the Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland to consult the person for the purpose of deciding how it should respond to consultation under that subsection.

(2C) The appropriate authority may require consultation under subsection (2A) or (2B) above to be carried out in accordance with the authority's directions.")

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment deals with the health and safety matters in the Bill. It was a matter of great debate and concern—on the Floor of the House, in Committee and in the House of Lords—that drastic powers were being given to the Secretary of State to sweep away health and safety protection. It was almost at the Secretary of State's discretion, with minimal safeguards for workers who have suffered from the failure of health and safety legislation, especially the lack of inspection in recent years.

We do not think it right that health and safety matters should be deregulated in the way that the Government propose. Although, again, arguments in the other place have persuaded the Government that they were going too far, we certainly do not think that the current proposals command widespread support.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Without this amendment, the Secretary of State could not authorise the Health and

Safety Commission to carry out consultation on his behalf, and consultations already undertaken would have to be duplicated. The amendment makes consultation more flexible, and allows the Secretary of State to authorise the HSC to consult on his behalf. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 26, after clause 27, to insert the following new clause—*Inspection of independent schools—*

". After section 87 of the Children Act 1989 there shall be inserted—

"Suspension of duty under section 87(3).

87A.—(1) The Secretary of State may appoint a person to be an inspector for the purposes of this section if—

(a) that person already acts as an inspector for other purposes in relation to independent schools to which section 87(1) applies, and

(b) the Secretary of State is satisfied that the person is an appropriate person to determine whether the welfare of children provided with accommodation by such schools is adequately safeguarded and promoted while they are accommodated by them.

(2) Where—

(a) the proprietor of an independent school to which section 87(1) applies enters into an agreement in writing with a person appointed under subsection (1),

(b) the agreement provides for the person so appointed to have in relation to the school the function of determining whether section 87(1) is being complied with, and

(c) the local authority in whose area the school is situated receive from the person with whom the proprietor of the school has entered into the agreement notice in writing that the agreement has come into effect,

the authority's duty under section 87(3) in relation to the school shall be suspended.

(3) Where a local authority's duty under section 87(3) in relation to any school is suspended under this section, it shall cease to be so suspended if the authority receive—

(a) a notice under subsection (4) relating to the person with whom the proprietor of the school entered into the relevant agreement, or

(b) a notice under subsection (5) relating to that agreement.

(4) The Secretary of State shall terminate a person's appointment under subsection (1) if—

(a) that person so requests, or

(b) the Secretary of State ceases, in relation to that person, to be satisfied that he is such a person as is mentioned in paragraph (b) of that subsection,

and shall give notice of the termination of that person's appointment to every local authority.

(5) Where—

(a) a local authority's duty under section 87(3) in relation to any school is suspended under this section, and

(b) the relevant agreement ceases to have effect,

the person with whom the proprietor of the school entered into that agreement shall give to the authority notice in writing of the fact that it has ceased to have effect.

(6) In this section—

(a) "proprietor" has the same meaning as in the Education Act 1944, and

(b) references to the relevant agreement, in relation to the suspension of a local authority's duty under section 87(3) as regards any school, are to the agreement by virtue of which the authority's duty under that provision as regards that school is suspended.

Duties of inspectors under section 87A.

87B.—(1) The Secretary of State may impose on a person appointed under section 87A(1) ("an authorised inspector") such requirements relating to, or in connection with, the carrying out under substitution agreements of the function mentioned in section 87A(2)(b) as the Secretary of State thinks fit.

(2) Where, in the course of carrying out under a substitution agreement the function mentioned in section 87A(2)(b), it appears to an authorised inspector that there has been a failure to comply with section 87(1) in the case of a child provided with accommodation by the school to which the agreement relates, the inspector shall give notice of that fact to the Secretary of State.

(3) Where, in the course of carrying out under a substitution agreement the function mentioned in section 87A(2)(b), it appears to an authorised inspector that a child provided with accommodation by the school to which the agreement relates is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the inspector shall—

(a) give notice of that fact to the local authority in whose area the school is situated, and

(b) where the inspector is required to make inspection reports to the Secretary of State, supply that local authority with a copy of the latest inspection report to have been made by the inspector to the Secretary of State in relation to the school.

(4) In this section—

(a) "proprietor" has the same meaning as in the Education Act 1944, and

(b) references to substitution agreement are to an agreement between an authorised inspector and the proprietor of an independent school by virtue of which the local authority's duty in relation to the school under section 87(3) is suspended."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Jonathan Evans.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 35 and 36.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: This is another group of amendments to which we take the gravest exception, and we shall divide the House.

It is wrong that the Minister should seek to remove from the public domain and to privatise the inspection of independent schools. Under the legislation, the schools will be entitled to choose their inspectors and to pay for them. We all know that he who pays the piper calls the tune. That is the basic flaw in the legislation.

The party that has done so much to support the private inspectorate service is making sure that tenders are given and that private schools will be able to have their own inspection system. That commands almost no support from independent bodies and there is no support from any body that is not directly concerned with the profit-making private school sector. We shall oppose the amendments.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I oppose Lords amendment No. 26 which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) said, allows independent and private boarding schools to opt out of the local authority social services inspection system that was set up under section 87 of the Children Act 1989.

I shall outline my reasons for total opposition to the new clause. It is worth reminding ourselves why section 87 was put in the Children Act. Hon. Members will recall that in the late 1980s there was concern about abuse of children in a small number of private boarding schools. At that time Crookham Court school was highlighted by the "That's Life" programme. I believe that the proprietor and one of the teachers are still serving prison sentences for offences against children in that school. I am glad to say that Crookham Court school was not typical and that most of the boarding schools work to high standards. However, that case highlights one extreme of what can happen if there is no proper system of regulation.

Under section 87 of the Children Act, the local authority social services inspectors inspect for various purposes. First, they respond to complaints or suspicions that there may be abuse of children. Secondly, they inspect to ensure that there is good practice in the schools and that the systems of care are in place. Thirdly, they take action if it is needed and if there are complaints that can be justified.

We were told that the purpose of the Bill is to remove oppressive regulation that creates undue burdens relative to its benefits. I have heard or seen nothing to convince me that the new clause to be added to the Children Act will help in that respect. The Department of Health did a survey of 250 heads of private and independent schools. A total of 77 per cent. of the head teachers said that the social services inspections were useful or very useful. I submit that the schools that were not satisfied with those inspections should attract our greatest concern.

There has been no outcry from the schools about oppressive regulation. In fact, there is clear evidence that there has been widespread satisfaction with the inspections that have taken place. The House has an interest in the matter and we need to legislate both for the general welfare of children and because many of the schools are being supported by the taxpayer to a substantial extent. Each year, private and independent schools receive up to a third of a billion pounds in taxpayers' money through the service boarding scheme, the assisted places scheme and other schemes that Ministries run so that children may receive private education.

In my constituency, a large number of families benefit under the service boarding scheme—my particular interest in this matter. Children, particularly those of service families, are often detached not just in terms of being away from home, but because their parents are in another country. They are, therefore, denied ready and easy access to their parents.

3 am

As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South said, the main objection to the new clause involves the fact that, to be effective, inspection should be impartial and take a detached view. Most of all, however, it should be independent. The amendment allows private schools to choose their own inspectors—albeit ones approved by the Secretary of State—to carry out that vital inspection under the Children Act, although the school will pay for the inspection. That creates a client relationship—the school becomes a client of the inspector. How can that possibly be an independent system of inspection?

The big danger is that the relationship between the school and the inspector could become too cosy. The inspection system through local authorities must be proactive. It must be put into action not when it has been stimulated to do so by the school, but when it has been stimulated by other sources or by the need to carry out the inspection at a certain time. I liken the proposed system to a café choosing its own food hygiene inspectors.

I feel that the amendment was spawned in the other place from misleading information. The first amendment was moved by Baroness Young on 4 July this year in the other place. Her statements were made in good faith but they were misleading and inaccurate. I shall cite two. She said:

> "There is hardly an independent school now without a telephone line where children can make private telephone calls home."

I have read some of the few Ofsted reports on private schools. One of the criticisms that they consistently make is that those schools do not have private telephone lines so that children can call home in privacy. Often, the telephone is located in a teacher's office with children having to make the call in front of the teacher.

The most misleading information that led the Government to propose the amendment related to Childline, which was set up at that time for six months. Baroness Young stated that

> "not a single case of sexual abuse came to light."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 4 July 1994; Vol. 556, c. 1122-23.]

The Minister now knows that that information was inaccurate and totally false. In fact, 155 children rang Childline from private or independent schools and made allegations of sexual abuse, mainly by teachers. Another 37 children made complaints of another nature. That must justify having an independent system of inspection and take away any suggestion that inspections can be carried out by bodies appointed by schools. They must be carried out by independent people, working independently.

The Government are pandering to producer interests. I remind the Minister that many of the schools, such as the one that I mentioned earlier, are run by one proprietor, sometimes for private profit. I fear that if the amendment is passed, we shall in the very near future have to return to this issue because of serious concern about the abuse of children.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): I oppose the amendment. I first became interested in the subject when two parents came to see me a few months ago to complain about something that had happened to their children at Fettes college in Edinburgh. I shall not go into details of the various incidents but I wrote to the director of social work about one of them, which makes it relevant to our debate.

Briefly, the incident involved the child of one of the parents being locked up for nine hours without food until a confession of drug-taking had been extracted. The boy denies the charge but, in a sense, that is not relevant to the story. I wrote to the director of social work who wrote back, saying that he could not get involved, although if he were in England he could have got involved. That is one more reason why we must have a children Bill for Scotland and why it must provide for social work departments, as we call them in Scotland—social services

[Mr. Malcolm Chisholm]

departments in England—to have the power to inspect private schools. From that point, knowing that a children Bill was coming for Scotland, I took it on myself to ensure that I lobbied for that provision.

I was told, not only by the director of social work for Lothian region but by others involved in social work in Scotland, that they were all looking forward to the provision because they had heard from their colleagues in England how helpful it had been in improving the lot of children in public schools. I was, therefore, utterly amazed when I heard fairly recently that it was being sabotaged in another place. I read the report of the debate on 4 July and noted the Government's intention to table their own amendment, which is that which we are debating now.

There is nothing in the amendment to improve the lot of children in boarding schools—quite the opposite, in fact. The bodies set up to protect children can testify to that. We have already heard about Childline and the figures that were possibly not deliberately misquoted in another place. The National Children's Bureau is worried, as is the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I stress that fact to the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs as I am told that he was a parliamentary consultant to that body. I therefore suggest that he listens to what the NSPCC is saying.

To accept the amendment would be a retrograde step. One point that I do not think has been mentioned is that there will be far less frequent inspections. I believe that they will occur once every four years but perhaps the Minister will confirm that. In any event, they will be far too infrequent.

Most important, schools will be able to choose their own inspectors on the "choose and pay" principle. That is the fundamental flaw in the amendment because it means that the school can choose someone much more sympathetic and far less critical than an independent social services or social work department. That was confirmed when I read the debates in another place. I especially remember the speech made by Earl Ferrers, who moved the amendment. I could hardly believe what I was reading. He said that people from social services departments had talked to pupils when teachers—or masters, as he called them—were not present. He thought that that was quite inappropriate, which let the cat out of the bag. The amendment is about protecting the schools, and especially the head teachers, and ensuring that there is no interference in the way they run the schools.

An especially obnoxious feature of the scheme is the kind of people moving the amendment: Earl Ferrers admitted that he was a fellow of Winchester college and Baroness Young, who first suggested it, is chairman of the Governing Bodies of Girls Schools Association, although she did not declare an interest. The public school lobby in the Conservative party is trying to protect what my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) called the producer interest while the best interests of the children are not being considered.

What we really have here is a heads charter. Yet what is wrong with public schools at the moment is the fact that heads have far too much power. I have learnt that from my examination of what has been happening at Fettes. When parents—not only those who came to me—complained to the board of governors, the matter was simply referred to the head. Indeed, in the case of Fettes, writs were sometimes issued if parents made statements in public. All the power is concentrated in the head. We need supervision of those schools, but if the amendment were passed we would lose that.

We need not a heads charter but a children's charter. I remind the Government of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which they have signed. If they read both the small print and the large print of that convention they would realise that they must act to protect children in schools, and must ensure that there is an independent inspectorate.

As for the end of the incident that I described, I wrote to the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) about it, and under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, inspectors have been able to go into Fettes. Although the hon. Gentleman is in the Chamber, he probably cannot speak in the debate. None the less, I hope to receive a guarantee that the report will be published.

Even that, however, would take place two years after the incident, and some of the other incidents, happened. It would be far better if there were on-going annual inspections of such schools. That would benefit some of their present pupils—and if such inspections had taken place in the past, how many more children would have benefited? If we are to believe the book recently written by Jonathan Dimbleby, one of the people who would have benefited would have been the heir to the throne.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): I, too, shall speak against Lords amendment No. 26. I apologise for keeping the House up at this hour, but in terms of social policy and children's welfare we are dealing with a substantial matter, which the House should consider carefully even at this late hour.

There is something terribly wrong about tagging such an important debate about social policy on to a Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. If there was a case for an amendment, one should have been introduced by the Department of Health. Ministers from that Department, advised by the social services inspectorate, should have presented an argument to the House at a sensible time. We are talking about a major amendment to the Children Act 1989—an Act for which I commend the Government because it is a major piece of social policy. I hope that the amendment will not be passed; if it is, it will constitute a betrayal of that Act and it stands every chance of harming children.

If the amendment is carried we shall hear in future about cases of abuse within such institutions, and people outside will shake their heads in bewilderment that the amendment was carried at this hour, in such a Bill, and that so little attention was paid to it by most Members of the House. Such a change should not have been presented to the House of Commons in that way, so late, tagged on through a Lords amendment.

There are two important questions. First, does abuse occur in private schools? Secondly, if it does occur, can it be safely and responsibly left to the schools and the schools' own inspectors to cope with the problem?

As I have argued, the background to the measure is nothing to do with deregulation, but involves the growing concern about children's welfare in Britain and in societies such as ours over the past 10 to 15 years—and, sadly, the growing evidence of physical and sexual abuse, often against very young children. No one can quantify that, or say with any confidence how much abuse occurs in different institutions, but it is clear that abuse occurs.

We know that the child abuser can strike within the child's family, in foster care and in institutional care of different kinds. Our private schools, especially boarding schools, are not immune. That is obvious, and I hope that that much is agreed. The evidence has already been cited that when, for six months in 1991, Childline had a special telephone line, 155 children telephoned with allegations of sexual abuse, mainly by teachers. There were only allegations, and I recognise that we can never find out the truth about them, but to ignore cries of help from young children would be a fatal mistake by the House.

Can regulation be safely left to the schools? I understand that the Secretary of State will keep an eye on who the inspectors are, and that Ofsted has a role. But how often will schools be inspected? From the point of view of a child—perhaps a tiny child—who is being abused and is afraid, how often will the inspectors come around? That is a genuine question which I hope that Ministers can clarify. There is a suggestion that Ofsted might inspect only every 10 years. Is that the case? Will the Independent Schools Joint Council—the school authority itself—inspect only every 10 years?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis) *indicated dissent.*

3.15 am

Mr. Wicks: The Minister shakes his head, and I hope that he is right. I have no interest at this hour in making a debating point, but the Minister owes it to the House to tell us how often the schools will be inspected, not least from the perspective of a small child who may be being abused on a day by day, week by week basis.

We are told that the inspectorate teams appointed by schools will contain people with welfare expertise. That was stated in another place. What will be the nature of that welfare expertise? What will be the training and the experience of the people appointed? Are there criteria laid down? The Minister must reassure the House on that point.

There is a question, too, as to how independent the inspectors can be. I do not wish to rehearse the arguments again, and I know that there is a difference of opinion in the House as to how independent an inspectorate appointed by and paid for by schools—albeit with some criteria from the Department—can be. I side with those who are concerned that if inspectors are paid by schools which are companies trying to maximise profits, an inspection team which gains a reputation for being tough on child abuse—we should all be tough on child abuse—may not get business in the future.

Will a school that knows that it has a problem say, "We will appoint that team because it was tough in another school"? It defies imagination that that will be the case. Throughout our history, stretching back to the origins of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools—a more noble organisation than Ofsted—we have learnt that inspections must be independent and rigorous if they are to create confidence and make an impact.

Interestingly enough, we have heard that head teachers were cross-examined about that by, I believe, the social services inspectorate. I do not know if that report has been published. If not, it would be useful if the Minister could tell us when it will be published. We understand that the majority of head teachers found that social services inspections were useful. That seemed to be their evidence—if I am wrong, the Minister will no doubt tell the House.

If the head teachers find the visits useful, why has the amendment appeared? I think that it is because the private school industry—with a lack of imagination about its own role which will lose it the confidence of many parents and much public opinion—decided that it was too much of a bother to have inspections from social services agencies. Clearly, and sadly, the industry used the Government and its contacts in another place, and said, "Look, this is all a great mistake. We are finding this to be a hassle and a nuisance. Some social workers are starting to ask difficult questions. Can you amend the Children Act?"

It is an abuse of the parliamentary system that this matter should be brought forward through a deregulation Bill by Ministers who do not have authority to make judgments about children's welfare. It has come forward as though it were a bit of commercial deregulation, and it will produce [illegible] arguments which will adversely effect the welfare of some children. It is a serious matter and I believe that there are serious people on the Conservative Benches who will understand the force of the argument. I hope that they will have the courage, for the sake of our children, to vote accordingly.

In another place, Earl Ferrers said—I am never sure whether one is allowed to quote from the House of Lords—that the amendment had been drafted after discussion with the Independent Schools Joint Council. That is an honest statement and it shows where the impetus comes from: it comes from the industry.

I wish to ask the Minister a number of questions on which he may wish to consult Ministers from the relevant Department before answering. Has he sought the views of major children's organisations about the amendment? If so, what organisations did he consult and what are their views? The House needs to know them. Many of us might regard the views of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the National Children's Bureau and others as more important in this context than those of the Independent Schools Joint Council.

Secondly, what is the view of Childline? What discussions has the Minister or the relevant Ministry had with Childline about its experience of the nature and incidence of child abuse, either sexual or physical, within children's institutions, which is what independent schools are? The Minister must spend some time telling the House the answer to that question because it is important.

What is the evidence from the Minister's own social services inspectorate? I say the Minister's own, but obviously I mean that of the Department of Health. You will have to excuse me for talking about the relevant Department in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The social services inspectorate has investigated many of the schools and the inspectors are the experts. We have a chief inspector with a status rather like that of the chief medical officer. Was he consulted? What was his advice? The House needs to know the answer to that question if we are to make a wise judgment even at this late hour when wisdom is not always in large quantity.

We know from experience that the child abuser can be found in many institutions. As we have found out more about the problem, we have found that the child abuser is often ruthless about finding his way into institutions where the most vulnerable are to be found. The paedophile network and paedophiles are remarkably and tragically able to find the weakest points of the system. If we accept the amendment, another weak point will emerge. To suggest that there are not paedophiles in the public school system would be extraordinarily naive. We need to remember that. Paedophiles and child abusers will be in some of the most humble children's welfare institutions. They may also, equally tragically, find their way into some of our most famous public boarding and day schools.

Some child abusers will be fellow pupils. Some will be teachers. Some, I suspect, will be head teachers. After a decade of mounting evidence and concern, the amendment is not only an affront to well-informed opinion in this area but a tragic betrayal of some of our weakest children. We cannot, should not and must not sacrifice the frightened and sometimes abused child on the ideological altar of deregulation.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: We have heard some misinformed comment from Opposition Members, possibly as a result of hostility rooted in their objection to the private education system. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) correctly pointed to the fact that, prior to my appointment to this office, I was the honorary consultant in the House to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. May I make it clear that the Government do not intend to undermine or reduce in any way welfare protection for children, and the new clause will do nothing of the kind.

The Children Act 1989 currently requires local authority social services departments to take action to satisfy themselves that independent boarding schools are adequately safeguarding the welfare of boarders. I should remind the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) that, when the Children Act was passed, a commitment was given to keep that provision under close review. I have just reassuringly informed my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London that I have a speech on the Children Act which takes an hour and a half. I am sure that my hon. Friends will not want to hear it on this occasion. Thus, the matter has been flagged up as an issue to be kept under review in that way.

The new clause will enable the Secretary of State for Health to appoint to undertake the function of inspection an organisation that already inspects the education service of the school, provided that it has the necessary expertise. It is important to stress what we regard as the necessary expertise. An approved body would be required to follow the same guidance as social services authorities are required to follow in their inspections and would be subject to statutory requirements to notify the Department for Education and local social services authorities as appropriate if it discovers serious concerns.

Inspection teams will be expected to include at least one member with the necessary expertise or experience of running or inspecting residential child care services. It is envisaged that the organisations that wish to carry out the functions must undertake to include at least one such person with that experience.

As the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West asked about frequency, may I inform him that it is expected that inspections should take place no less frequently than every four years, in view of what has been said about the 10-year figure during this debate. The organisations will have a statutory duty to report schools' failure to safeguard welfare to the Secretary of State and report child abuse allegations to local authorities, as I have described.

The new clause will give schools a choice of who should undertake the monitoring arrangements at independent boarding schools, but subject to the same provisions as I have already outlined.

Mr. Wicks: If, under the new system, inspections will be as rigorous and expert as those undertaken by social services departments, why make the change?

Mr. Evans: As the NSPCC has been quoted so much in this debate, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that it is not only local authorities that may undertake inspections in relation to allegations of child abuse. This House has given statutory authority to the NSPCC along exactly the same lines as local authorities. Nobody dismisses the NSPCC's role or expertise in conducting inspections in exactly the same way. So the presumption that only local authorities can undertake that function is misplaced.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): In pursuing that point, may I put it a little more succinctly to the Minister? I refer him to the words at the beginning of the Bill. Clause 1(1)(a) says:

"the effect of the provision is such as to impose, or authorise or require the imposition of a burden".

What is the burden to which the Minister specifically refers? He has yet to explain that.

Mr. Evans: I have made it clear that, when the Children Act was passed, a commitment was given that the provision would be kept under review. The proposal does not alter the protection given to children, but if schools so wish, at the time of an education inspection they will be given the alternative of having an inspection undertaken by an organisation that has the necessary expertise, as I have outlined. I make it clear that that is a situation that does not in any way undermine the protection of children, as has been claimed by some Opposition Members.

I consider that protection of children is a matter of special importance. I believe that the measure is sensible.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: The Bill is about removing burdens. Which burden is being removed by the measure?

3.30 am

Mr. Evans: I have already told the hon. Gentleman that the Government are thereby responding to the commitment given at the time of the passage of the Children Act 1989, and a commitment given in the House.

The measure is sensible. I hope that the House will approve it.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 132, Noes 29.

Division No. 336] **[03.30 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)

Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Fabricant, Michael
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)

Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Bates and
Dr. Liam Fox

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clelland, David
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)

Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
McMaster, Gordon
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.

Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Turner, Dennis

Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jim Dowd

Question accordingly agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 48

UNDERTAKINGS GIVEN ON APPLICATIONS

Lords amendment: No. 47, in page 47, line 10, at beginning insert—

("(1A) After subsection 14(3)(b) there shall be inserted—

"(c) that there will not be any adverse effects on local environmental conditions as a result of the activities of the licence-holder."")

Mr. Norris: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is well meaning, but it has not been thought through, and I regret to have to advise the House to disagree with it.

The Government are sensitive to the need to ensure that passenger transport operations do not have adverse environmental effects, but the question is whether the controls envisaged in the amendment are necessary, and how far they would be feasible or effective as currently drafted.

In any situation where a transport service is being provided for the public, a balance necessarily has to be struck between the needs of local people for an efficient transport system and the needs of residents for a pleasant environment in which to reside. There are already quite sufficient powers available to local authorities to ensure that balance. We believe that there is no need to introduce a further raft of controls on environmental grounds into the PSV operator licensing system.

Public service vehicle operating centres are, for the most part, well established and accepted in their localities. Before a new operating centre can be used, the operator must have planning permission, and that provides an opportunity to deal with any potential environmental problem.

Powers are available to traffic authorities under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to impose traffic regulation orders on various grounds, which include preserving or improving the amenities of an area. Such an order may be used to prohibit or restrict the use of a road by a particular class of vehicle. Thus, if a local authority is of the view that buses are spoiling the local environment, it can ban buses completely or take the lesser step of imposing parking and waiting restrictions.

Suitable safeguards already exist to ensure that smoky vehicles are kept under control. All PSVs are subject to metered checks of emissions when they receive their annual roadworthiness tests and, in addition, spot checks are undertaken by the vehicle inspectorate throughout the year.

[Mr. Norris]

The amendment is expressed in general terms, which could be interpreted very widely. For example, it might be taken to mean that there should be no adverse effects in the immediate vicinity of the operator's operating centre. On the other hand, the phrase

"activities of the licence holder"

could refer to the operator running local services along new bus routes where there were objections from residents, or it might refer to the adverse effects of smoky diesel engines which are poorly maintained. In short, it is imprecise in meaning.

I remind the House that the purpose of the Bill is to deregulate and reduce the level of unnecessary controls on industry. The amendment would introduce new constraints on PSV operators that are both unnecessary and unacceptable. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but I did not catch what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) said. *[Interruption.]* Frankly, it probably was not worth listening to. The amendment would not help to improve the environment, and would add needlessly to the hurdles facing those wishing to start a new business in the bus industry.

3.45 am

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: The Minister was uncharacteristically tetchy. For a moment, I thought that, due to the lateness of the hour, he had turned the page and come to that fatal civil servant's note, "It's quarter to four in the morning, you sod; you're on your own."

Mr. Norris: I want to make it perfectly clear that none of the excellent personages now assembled to advise me would do any such thing.

Mr. Griffiths: I certainly would not want to fall out with them, as they will shortly be working for me.

The serious matter before us, which the Minister skirted around, is that, under the Transport Act 1985, there has been an explosion in the number of private bus operators. It is important that the environmental safeguards that currently apply to testing centres for lorries under the Transport Act 1968 should be extended to PSV operating centres, given the large rise in the number of PSV vehicles operating under the 1985 Act. The existing ability to object on environmental grounds to an application to run a lorry operating centre should also apply to bus operating centres.

That argument was put forcefully in the other place, and it carried the day. I believe that the same should be true here, so we shall put the matter to the vote.

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I endorse the remarks of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths). The amendment does no more than bring into line the requirements for PSV operating centres to be the same as those for lorry operating centres. If, as the Minister suggests, the amendment is unsuitable, perhaps he could explain why there is that disparity between the two regimes.

Although the hon. Gentleman referred to the regulations that might cover the highways and the pollution that buses might make, he did not explain how, in a broader sense, any environmental check might be brought to bear.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 127, Noes 24.

Division No. 337] **[03.48 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Fabricant, Michael
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Neubert, Sir Michael
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Dr. Liam Fox

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. Gordon McMaster

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 48, in page 47, line 42, at end insert—

("( ) In section 17(1) after the words "as to professional competence" there shall be inserted "and the Traffic Commissioners shall also revoke the licence if the holder has shown consistent disregard for drivers' hours regulations."")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.—[*Mr. Norris.*]

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I am pleased that the Minister, having recognised the weakness of his argument on the previous amendment, has not sought to elaborate on this one.

The amendment was made by the other place to protect the public from PSV operators who have a bad record. It gave the powers to ensure that the licence holder was someone who—at least in terms of treating his or her own drivers, if he or she had drivers—had not breached the regulations. There was particular concern about the disregard for regulations on drivers' hours.

4 am

Their Lordships were considering the matter in the wake of a crash that killed nine American tourists on the M2; driver fatigue was a contributory factor. Their Lordships believe—and we agree—that people who put lives at risk should not be responsible for holding operators' licences. They may advance a case for mitigating circumstances, and such a case would be listened to, but that should certainly be one of the key criteria to be taken into account when granting or refusing a licence to such operators. We shall back up the other place, and put this to the vote.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the House in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 125, Noes 23.

Division No. 338] **[04.00 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Fabricant, Michael
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Neubert, Sir Michael
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pickles, Eric
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Dr. Liam Fox

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Kilfoyle, Peter
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Miller, Andrew
Olner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Jim Dowd

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 58

FUNCTIONS OF MINISTERS AND OFFICE-HOLDERS

Lords amendment: No. 49, in page 53, line 11, leave out ("subsection (2) or")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Jonathan Evans.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 50, 51, 60 and 158.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: There is a strong feeling among Labour Members that where people are involved—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It could be good news.

Mr. Griffiths: It is nice to see that so many people have been able to return to our proceedings from the bar. *[Interruption.]* I think that a lot of Conservative Members are lawyers.

We are dealing with a legal matter and the contracting out of legal services, and it is important that the Opposition put on record their objection to the contracting out of certain aspects of legal services that we think should firmly be in the public service.

The Government's practice of privatising elements of the legal and prison services has not met with stunning success or with much public support. The Minister will claim that the roles of a number of employees are merely administrative, are ripe for privatisation and should be handed over to the private sector. However, as the peers in the other place pointed out, many of those people deal with aspects of life that are important and private to members of the public, to businesses involved in insolvencies and bankruptcies and to politicians involved in challenges to local election results. They also deal with highly confidential matters that relate to children in family cases and that are in the public interest.

Some matters with which administrators deal are far too important to be contracted out. That is the reason why we oppose the proposals.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The amendments respond to particular concerns that were expressed about the status of courts and tribunals under part II of the Bill. The Government take the view that courts and statutory tribunals should not be or be seen to be susceptible to any outside pressure or influence.

In recognition of concerns about the adequacy of court lists and the absence of any exclusion for tribunals, the Government introduced the amendments, which make it clear that any exercise by an office holder of the jurisdiction of any court or tribunal that exercises the judicial powers of the state could not be the subject of an order under clause 58 and could not by that means become susceptible to contracting out.

I hope that that reassures hon. Members and I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Committee appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to certain of their amendments to the Bill: Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. Richard Ottaway, Mr. Brian Wilson, Mr. Nigel Griffiths and Mr. Jonathan Evans; Three to be the quorum of the Committee.—*[Mr. Jonathan Evans.]*

To withdraw immediately.

Reasons for disagreeing to certain Lords amendments reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With permission, I shall put together motions Nos. 4 to 9 relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INCOME TAX

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Estonia) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Vietnam) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Guernsey) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Isle of Man) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Jersey) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Switzerland) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INHERITANCE TAX

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Estates of Deceased Persons and Inheritances) (Switzerland) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

FOODSTUFFS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5934/94 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 22nd June 1994, relating to foodstuffs intended for particular nutritional purposes; and agrees with the Government's intention to support this proposal.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

Question agreed to.

Tourism (Scotland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

4.15 am

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): It may come as a surprise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to know that, at 4.15 am, I am delighted to have secured a debate on a vital aspect of the Scottish economy—the tourist industry.

Few will deny that Scottish tourism is a major business, which contributes some 5 per cent. of the gross domestic product and employs more than 180,000 people, many of whom are my constituents. Tourism is the largest employer in North Tayside. Indeed, tourism and the whisky industry are major contributors of overseas earnings to Scotland and, in many instances, their activities are linked. For example, the visitors' centres and distillery tours are enjoyed by thousands of people every year.

The good news is that the value of tourism—especially tourism from overseas—was last year estimated to be £670 million. That was an increase of 8 per cent. over the previous year, making last year the third successive year of growth. However, the bad news is that Scotland's tourist industry is now operating below the levels of the 1980s. There has been a massive decline this year in the number of visitors to Scotland's many stately homes. In some cases, the fall has been between 10 per cent. and 20 per cent.

What is the problem? The problem is that, in 1993, United Kingdom tourism expenditure was still some 17 per cent. below that of 1989. Domestic tourism accounts for 68 per cent. of all tourism expenditure in Scotland. Eighty-three per cent. of the United Kingdom's population live in England, so they form the major segment of Scotland's tourist market.

Although the United States, France and Germany are vital for overseas earnings, they and visitors from the rest of western Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and elsewhere account for about 1.8 million overnight trips. English visitors account for about 3.7 million overnight trips; Scottish internal visitors account for 4.9 million; and visitors from other parts of the United Kingdom make 400,000 such trips. That makes a United Kingdom total of 9 million overnight trips to Scotland. Therefore, the internal United Kingdom market, and especially the English market, is vital to the continuing prosperity of Scotland's tourist industry.

The Scottish tourist board estimates that 1994 has not been a good year for Scottish tourism. That is associated with the decline in the United Kingdom market. Although the overseas market has probably grown, a decline in tourism of about 6 per cent. in real terms is expected in the market as a whole.

Several factors have probably contributed to that decline. The recession has made people cautious; they are unwilling to spend money. The hard firm pound that is good for the United Kingdom economy also helps our people to buy more abroad and less, relatively, within the United Kingdom. Poor summer weather in 1991 and 1992 did not help, and we may not have competitive prices in hotels and restaurants. Worse still, we may have given offence to customers and potential customers from

[Mr. Bill Walker]

England. Everyone who has worked in the service sector knows that a cardinal rule of the business is not to give offence to the customers. I shall return to that subject.

Moreover, we may not be marketing Scotland adequately—I shall say more of that later, too. Certainly the decline of salmon stocks in Scotland's rivers—due, many of us believe, to the number of fish drift-netted off the north-east coast of England—has encouraged many of our former regular visitors to Scottish rivers to seek better fishing overseas. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) in the Chamber, because the River Dee has suffered in that way.

The failure of Scottish football teams in European countries may also have influenced those who used to travel from England to see games in Scotland. Furthermore, an Automobile Association survey has highlighted the absence of non-commercial rest areas on the main tourist arterial routes, a lack of round-the-clock fuel facilities, and an absence of public toilets.

I hate to think what the proposal of the Royal Commission on the environment to double petrol prices would do to the highlands. Perhaps there would be a second highland clearance; I do not know—but certainly, if implemented, that proposal would kill the tourist trade from England.

Thus far, I have highlighted some of the problems. What can and should be done today to bring the visitors back from England and encourage them to resume their delightful visits to Scotland? First, I wish to commend and not to condemn—as some hon. Members did—Scottish Hydro-Electric for what it said about price rises:

> "The company, which serves northern Scotland, said the price rises proposed by the Office of Electricity Regulation would not be enough for proper maintenance of its network . . .
>
> Chairman Lord Wilson said, 'It is not right that the massive investment of our predecessors to provide electricity throughout the Highlands and Islands should now be jeopardised. We would be failing in our duty to our community if we allowed our service to deteriorate by accepting these proposals.'"

The board of Scottish Hydro-Electric is to be commended, not condemned. It is right to be concerned about continuing supplies for the elderly, the tourist industry and other vulnerable groups.

In a letter that I have sent to my hon. Friend the Minister, the chairman of the Perthshire tourist board, Councillor Tom Campbell, tells me that Eire has enjoyed an annual increase in tourism of 6 per cent. over the past decade. People are going from England to Eire in ever-increasing numbers, and Councillor Campbell attributes that fact to vigorous and well-funded marketing. He further claims:

> "It is my Board's belief that the Scottish Tourist Board undoubtedly has the expertise to carry out its functions, but that it is unable to make the Scottish tourism message heard in a competitive international market-place because of insufficient funding from central Government.
>
> The Scottish Tourist Board has stated that, if it were to receive additional Governmental investment of just £7 million annually, (all of which would be devoted to marketing), by the year 2000 there would be an additional 39,000 jobs created in Scottish tourism and an increase in annual spending (in real terms) of £430 million by the year 2000. There can be few, if any, other areas of investment which would provide such high levels of return."

That is one suggestion from the chairman of the Perthshire tourist board and, in this instance, I must tell my hon. Friend that Mr. Campbell has my support.

I also suggest that a commitment to electrifying the main railway line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen would send some positive signals to people living in England and in Europe, and would help the oil and gas industries. I hope that we will see something positive on that soon.

More roadside facilities, as highlighted by the AA, are a must, and the removal of drift netting from the north-east coast of England within two years would help Scotland's salmon rivers and bring back England's fishermen. Scotland's hotels and restaurants would benefit from a reduction in non-domestic rates, and I hope that the new local authorities will hear that. The hotels in turn would be able to act, because they should examine closely their pricing structure to give value for money.

Scottish welcomes should be the order of the day. Everyone in Scotland should be made aware of the damage which can be done by giving offence.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): On the subject of giving offence, is my hon. Friend aware that extreme elements of the Scottish National party waged a campaign in my constituency in which they put up posters entitled "Settler Watch"—a campaign against those people who come in from outwith Scotland to settle in my constituency and enhance the economy of the area? Does he think that that enhances the tourism prospects of Scotland?

Mr. Walker: No, I do not, and I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution. I believe that narrow nationalists—and, I am sorry to say, some socialists—should be made aware that they are giving offence when they prattle on about land ownership and the way in which Scotland's moors and mountains are visited by individuals for grouse shooting and deer stalking. Those visitors and the anglers on our salmon rivers spend substantial sums of money locally and provide employment for native Scots in the more isolated and remote areas, where no other employment is available.

Narrow nationalists must also be told in no uncertain terms to stop making anti-English statements of the kind mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside, both inside and outside Scotland. Some hon. Members might bear that in mind. Narrow nationalists must also be told to stop painting anti-English slogans on bridges and at other prominent positions throughout the tourist areas of Scotland. Those give offence and drive people away.

I repeat what I said earlier—if one is in the service sector, one must never give offence to customers or to potential customers. The activities of narrow nationalists must be blamed for much of the decline in the numbers of tourists coming to Scotland from England. The House will note that I did not say "English tourists", because there are a lot of people living in England who are not English born and bred. However, they used to come to Scotland in substantial numbers, and they are important to Scotland.

I trust that my hon. Friend will take on board some of my thoughts, and I hope that he will be able to act where he can on some of my proposals.

4.28 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I pay tribute to my hon. Friends who are present at 4.30 in the morning to hear this important debate on Scottish tourism. They include my hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch), for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) and for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), who have attended the debate in part or in whole.

I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North on raising the subject. I am, of course, aware of the recent publication by the Campaign For Rail Electrification Aberdeen to Edinburgh of the feasibility study of electrification north of Edinburgh. I understand that British Rail and Railtrack co-operated with the CREATE campaign group in looking at the case for electrification. It is, of course, for Railtrack to come forward with investment proposals that it considers worth while and for it to determine priorities within the resources available to it.

However, the Government are prepared to consider assisting railway investment schemes which, while they do not earn an adequate financial return, provide a satisfactory cost-benefit return when the wider benefits are taken into account. Any proposals would be given careful consideration within the resources available. I assure my hon. Friend that the Aberdeen to Edinburgh line remains an integral part of the east coast main line franchise.

I agree with my hon. Friend that slogans such as "English go home" should be strongly discouraged. All graffiti should be discouraged and removed. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), who has just joined us, in the Chamber. It is highly irresponsible of a few individuals to paint on buildings hostile signs against the English. The only effect of that is to reduce employment in Scotland. Indeed, such graffiti have given rise to complaints to the Scottish tourist board. I should ask the relevant communities and local authorities to take every action to remove the graffiti.

I remember some time ago making complaints to a council. It said that it removed only politically offensive graffiti. I regard graffiti such as my hon. Friend described as politically offensive, but I also regard all graffiti as giving rise to offence. They should be removed.

People come to Scotland because of the environment, the people and the heritage. They like the wide open spaces, the friendliness of the people and the magnificence of the heritage. In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North, or not so far away, there are Discovery point, the Perth art gallery, Dunkeld cathedral, Blair castle and the Pitlochry festival theatre as well as the excellent distillery. All those places—

Mr. Bill Walker: Do not forget Glamis.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right.

The visitor spend in Scotland has fluctuated, but it has increased from £1.8 billion in 1990 to £2.1 billion in 1993. Of course, tourism is the biggest single employer in the whole of Scotland. It is of vital importance to the economy and to the area that my hon. Friend represents. It is therefore particularly appropriate that we should debate it tonight.

We recognise tourism world wide as a growth industry of particular potential. It is a major creator of employment and wealth. Around the globe, countries and destinations want to win an ever-increasing share of those benefits. Such success cannot be achieved overnight. It is a continuous, constantly evolving process. Strengths have to be recognised and built on, weaknesses identified and remedied, trends and the aspirations of potential customers monitored and responded to. Of course, the competition is increasing all the time. New destinations appear every year to fight for their place in the world tourism market.

I fully recognise the challenges which face the Scottish tourist industry. We are pledged to do what we can to assist a very important sector of the Scottish economy—not, I may say, by displacing the industry's own actions. In the final analysis, the industry must prosper through its own efforts. Our role is to facilitate and encourage the industry's endeavours. That role is not simply about providing funding support—we provide substantial support—although that is important. There are other, equally significant, ways in which our resolve to help the industry must find expression.

In 1992, we conducted a major review of the way in which public sector support for tourism was directed. The outcome was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in June last year. The review signals the Government's determination to assist the Scottish tourist industry to maximise its potential. It was undertaken because, self-evidently, it was needed. Support arrangements for tourism had evolved in a piecemeal fashion over a considerable number of years. In our judgment the time had come for a major reconsideration of the fundamentals of public support. That was clear from the consultation.

The review identified the important role played by the public sector at both local and national level. It noted widespread concern that current arrangements were fragmented and no longer effective. From that, we concluded that Scottish tourism needed a support structure that was administratively straightforward, was based on partnership, incorporated effective liaison arrangements and operated within the context of a national strategy. Above all, it had to be accepted and understood by the industry that it served.

While achieving a revised support structure inevitably meant change, we also accepted the widespread view that such change should be achieved through evolution—in other words, through existing Government agencies at a national level and the existing partnership between local authorities and the tourism trade at a local level.

All the detailed decisions flowing from the review have been funded on those general principles. I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that we have made rapid progress in implementing the review's conclusions. Arrangements at the national level have been clarified. The Scottish tourist board is responsible throughout Scotland for marketing and for area tourist board sponsorship. In addition, business development activities are now consolidated in the Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise networks.

Links between the boards of the Scottish tourist board, of Scottish Enterprise and of Highlands and Islands Enterprise have been strengthened through cross-membership. In recognition of the importance of tourism in the highlands, the Scottish tourist board will

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

establish a substantial presence in Inverness by 1 April 1995. A minimum of 40 full-time jobs will be located there, together with the board's quality assurance inspectorate.

The Scottish tourist board also remains my right hon. Friend's statutory advisor on tourism matters. The board has been given responsibility for drawing up a strategic plan in consultation with a wide range of partners, including representatives drawn from Scotland's tourism industry. I shall say more about that later.

At local level, my right hon. Friend announced in March our intention to establish a network of 14 area tourist boards by 1 April 1996. I am sure that my hon. Friend is delighted that we decided that Perthshire should retain its own tourist board—an outcome for which he campaigned vigorously and consistently. I had the pleasure earlier this year of officially opening the Perthshire board's new headquarters. The work which the board undertakes is impressive. It is the only ATB in Scotland that operates a visitor attraction—a working corn mill—in the same premises as its headquarters' office. I am certain that Perthshire will continue to prosper in the years ahead under the new ATB structure.

We attach great importance to the work of area tourist boards. They market their local area and provide services to visitors, such as accommodation booking. They operate over 170 tourist information centres throughout Scotland. They also have an important role to play in training and development issues. Arguably most important of all, they represent the interests and provide the voice of the tourist industry itself—over 16,000 tourism businesses are members of an area tourist board.

The Scottish tourist board has been charged with the task of assisting the area tourist board network in managing the changes that are taking place. That is an important element of the review. The new structure must meet local needs while at the same time retaining local loyalties.

We do not intend to impose detailed working arrangements on the new boards. Although the boards will be established under statute, it will be for local interests to determine membership and operational matters. The only exceptions are in respect of a very limited range of circumstances specified in the legislation currently before Parliament. Those have been debated at length and need not be gone over again tonight.

Over-arching those changes are our proposals to improve co-ordination within and between the public and private sectors. Excellent progress has been made here. The membership of the Scottish tourism co-ordinating group, which I chair, has been expanded. That group will continue its work of putting together the views of public sector bodies with an interest in tourism. It will continue to act as a forum for consideration of tourism-related issues of national significance. Most importantly, the group will be responsible for the preparation, dissemination and on-going review of the national strategic plan.

The plan is now in its final draft form, and is on course for launch and publication early next week. Suffice it to say that the plan's purpose is to identify where we are now, where we would like to be and, in general terms, how to get there. It offers a clear framework for joint progress by the public and the private sectors towards mutually agreed goals.

We have also established the Scottish Tourism Forum, which held its first meeting on 23 September. The establishment of the forum recognises the widespread desire, expressed in the responses to the tourism review, that the industry itself should have a voice in the determination of tourism policy. It brings together a wide range of private sector organisations with a significant interest in tourism matters. It will, I believe, stimulate an informed debate on issues of common concern.

More formally, we look to the forum to provide the Scottish tourism co-ordinating group with advice on the strategic plan. To ensure that that takes place, we have decided that the forum's chairman will be a member of the STCG. That will, I hope, strengthen the close ties that we want to be developed between the public and private sectors.

My hon. Friend mentioned the statistics for tourism for the current year. I am aware that the preliminary statistics prepared by the STB in respect of the early part of the year as regards visitors to Scotland from within the United Kingdom are not encouraging. However, as my hon. Friend knows, the available information is in respect of the period January to June only. We must be careful in extrapolating the data to the full year, especially as the main holiday period is not included in the statistics that my hon. Friend quoted. I hope that the position will improve in relation to the year as a whole.

I am encouraged, however, to learn that the number of overseas visitors to Scotland has apparently continued to increase. That upward trend has occurred for several years, on the back of strong overseas marketing campaigns by the STB, which, I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend, will certainly continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the number of tourists coming from England has declined, not only this year, but in earlier years, according to the evidence? Does he agree that the behaviour of the Scottish nationalists earlier, when they delayed the business of the House, is a typical example of the way that offence is given, and that such practices have stopped people coming to Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is possible. We have to obtain the complete figures and study them, but I also think that it is possible that, with the ending of recession, more people in England are taking holidays in the sun, rather than their normal holiday north of the border. Obviously that is a cause of concern. We are examining it closely, and we shall study those matters with regard to the public expenditure survey and Scottish Office funding.

I shall also mention the comparison with Ireland. International comparisons are fraught with difficulty, because of the differences in the structure and financing of the industry. The STB's budget is only one of several components of public sector support for tourism here, and a much more detailed analysis would be required if true comparisons were to be drawn.

In the few minutes remaining, I shall respond about resources. First, the primary responsibility for investment, training and marketing lies with the industry itself, and the purpose of public expenditure should be to supplement private expenditure where that is necessary. Secondly, the public sector—which includes both enterprise networks, local authorities and organisations such as Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Sports Council and the Scottish Arts Council as well as the tourist board—already makes a significant contribution to supporting the tourism industry.

Several of the public sector bodies that provide assistance have the flexibility to adjust their priorities according to new needs. They will need to consider resource allocations against the priorities set out in the tourism strategic plan, as indeed the Scottish Office will consider resources against those priorities.

The Scottish tourism industry also benefits enormously from European funding, and will do so to a substantially greater extent in future, under the objective 1 programme for the highlands and islands.

I must say also to my hon. Friend that the public purse should not necessarily be the automatic first call when new resources are deemed necessary. The STB exists, as I have said, to support the tourism industry's own efforts—to correct market failure.

The Government are doing a great deal to ensure the well-being of Scotland's tourism industry. The package of measures that I have described will help to achieve a significant improvement in Scotland's position as a visitor destination. It is now up to the industry itself to play a positive and forward-looking role in helping turn our proposals into a success story.

I say briefly to my hon. Friend that, in 1993, more than 10 million tourists took overnight trips, and those resulted in generating spend of more than £2 billion. The census of 1991 put the number of tourism jobs at 171,000—8 per cent. of all employment.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Five o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 2 November 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty

1. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty recently signed in Washington.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I attended the signing of the treaty which took place on the Israel-Jordan border. It was a very moving occasion. The treaty is important and courageous and the British Government applaud it.

Mrs. Kennedy: Although we all welcome the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, does the Minister share our sense of disappointment at Syria's recent failure to condemn terrorism and to enter into direct negotiations with Israel? What measures has the Minister taken to encourage Syria to cease its sponsorship of terrorism in that region and to enter into the talks?

Mr. Hogg: Three weeks ago I had the opportunity of talking to President Assad of Syria on the importance of a comprehensive peace treaty with Israel. I stressed that it is an opportunity not to be missed. I believe that Syria is intent on peace and that Israel is as well. The problem is which will be the first to start the process. It is the unwillingness of the Syrians to embark on bilateral talks that I find most troubling.

Mr. John Marshall: In view of the treaty between Israel and Jordan and as it is many years since there was a state visit to Jordan, does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that it is high time that there was an official state visit to Israel by Her Majesty the Queen?

Mr. Hogg: That sounds a splendid idea.

Mr. Janner: In recognising that peace throughout the middle east is important, did the Minister meet with Mr. Nashashibi, the Palestinian Finance Minister? If so, and even if not, will he consider how Britain can help the Palestinians to re-establish themselves and their administration, police and education, because without that the entire process may collapse?

Mr. Hogg: Indeed, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Nashashibi about three weeks ago when he called on me in London. We discussed what the Government could do to assist in the Gaza strip and in the territories. I said that we had already contributed or were intending to contribute £75 million over three years. I drew his attention in particular to the recent grant of £5 million, of which £3 million was for the Palestinian police force.

European Union

2. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about action being taken by the United Kingdom Government to encourage further enlargement of the European Union to include countries in central and eastern Europe.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We support the enlargement of the European Union to include the associated countries of central and eastern Europe. We are working closely with the German presidency to ensure that a substantial package of measures to help these countries prepare for full membership will be ready for agreement at the Essen European Council on 9-10 December.

Mr. Thompson: When my right hon. Friend attends the summit in Essen next month, will he emphasise the benefits, especially to national and international security, of the enlargement of the Union to include eastern European countries? Will he urge examination—and, where necessary, reform—of the outdated institutions and structures within the Union, for example, the common agricultural policy?

Mr. Hurd: It is hard to imagine the CAP in anything like its present form being extended to the new central and eastern European countries that we hope will join the EU. They simply could not afford it. The reforms that are already under way need to go a good deal further before we could envisage a common policy that would include those countries. The same is true of the structure plans.

Mr. Jim Marshall: In future enlargement discussions, will candidate countries be encouraged to join all the institutions, including associated institutions such as the Western European Union?

Mr. Hurd: That is up to those countries. It is what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister means when he talks about a flexible Europe. At the moment, Ireland is a full member of the EU, but not of the WEU—the defence organisation. I suspect that that will be true of Austria next year and probably of Finland. Those countries that join the EU can, if they wish, become members of the WEU, but they do not have to do so.

Mr. Dykes: Does the Foreign Secretary find it interesting that, coming back to the framework of the EU policies, without a single exception, all the existing or future, potential or actual applicants for membership, accept the acquis communautaire in all its aspects, Maastricht, Maastricht stage 2 and the future policies probably developing out of the 1996 conference? Is not that encouraging and will the United Kingdom Government do the same thing?

Mr. Hurd: We are not committed for the future and the applicant states were not in such a strong position as we have been as regards the social chapter.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the Foreign Secretary have any view on whether the change in portfolios of the Commission this week has strengthened or weakened the progress towards enlargement? Does he recall the Prime Minister describing Mr. Jacques Santer as a reconciler and a healer—the right man for the right job at the right time? As the British Conservative Commissioner is the only one dissatisfied with his new job, would the Foreign Secretary care to repeat that description today and can he carry Sir Leon Brittan with him in that view? Or did not the events of last weekend confirm that the Prime Minister at Corfu picked the wrong fight over the wrong job?

Mr. Hurd: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment to his portfolio and on the brio with which he has embarked on his job. I look forward to many such exchanges in the future. Whether he will prove to be the right man in the right job, we will know as time passes. I am sorry to read that, like Sir Leon Brittan, he is a little disappointed at the way in which things have turned out, but I hope that he will reconcile himself to the position that he has.

I do not have any doubts about the views of Mr. Van Den Broek on these matters. I have known him for a long time and I do not have any doubt that the decisions that we have taken already on enlargement, on which we have touched already, will be continued. I do not have any worries about that. It is a pity that Leon Brittan, with his experience and achievements in this particular area, could not continue in it, but the essential thing so far as he and Britain are concerned is that he continues to hold the external trade portfolio.

"Partnership for Peace"

3. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the development of the NATO "Partnership for Peace" proposals, including practical co-operation.

Mr. Skinner: He is the only Minister with a clean pair of hands.

Mr. Hurd: I wish that the hon. Member would stop being so polite. It is extremely worrying.

"Partnership for Peace" is developing well. Partners have established offices at NATO headquarters and SHAPE.

The first military exercise under "Partnership for Peace", Co-operative Bridge, took place in Poland from 12 to 16 September, involving forces from 13 alliance and partner countries. Since then there have been two further exercises under "Partnership for Peace", Co-operative Venture, from 29 September to 7 October, and Co-operative Spirit, from 24 to 28 October. British forces took part in all three exercises.

Mrs. Lait: I thank my right hon. Friend for news of that encouraging process. I assure him that I do not treat this matter lightly.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the volatile nature of many of the eastern European countries is such that they need to be drawn swiftly into the military and political ambit of NATO? Can he give me some idea of the progress made towards common standards?

Mr. Hurd: We see "Partnership for Peace" as a good idea in itself and we are delighted that it has had such good take-up from our former adversaries in the Warsaw pact, including Russia. I hope that my original answer showed the progress made on that. It may lead forward in some cases to the expansion of NATO, but the timing of that remains to be considered. I agree with my hon. Friend. We need to do everything that we can to show those who were our adversaries to the east in the Warsaw pact that for them NATO is not a hostile organisation and "Partnership for Peace" shows the practical ways in which that can be proved.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: But is not there an eloquent example of practical co-operation rather nearer to home in the proposal that the Royal Air Force and the French air force should now indulge in operational co-operation? Is not such practical co-operation essential to achieve an effective European defence, as the right hon. Gentleman clearly envisaged in his recent speech to the Franco-British Council?

Mr. Hurd: I am certainly in favour of close military co-operation between ourselves and the French. We see that in action in Bosnia at the moment and it is extremely valuable. We have not yet concluded arrangements for the combined air forces group but may do so at the Anglo-French summit soon. It will simply be a joint planning capability, which could draw together the air assets from Britain and France for use in suitable operations on which we agree.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is it not important that "Partnership for Peace" be not just a question of hanging around in antechambers but that it provides an opportunity for NATO applicant countries eventually to become full participants in the alliance? In that context, is it not vital that no obstacles be placed in their path, such as that for the right of collective security, and that they must make commensurate contributions, because smaller countries are the most vulnerable and needful of the alliance's collective security arrangements?

Mr. Hurd: I believe that some nations currently involved in "Partnership for Peace" will become full members of NATO, as my hon. Friend wants. That will be up to them and to us. Certainly we are not closing that door.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that an orderly and verified reduction of the bloated armament industries of eastern Europe is essential to achieve the objectives of "Partnership for Peace"? Does he see NATO and also the European Union playing a role in that achievement?

Mr. Hurd: The countries of eastern Europe and certainly Russia need to convert their industries, which are overbalanced on the military side, to civilian use. They find that difficult. We can help to some extent, but it is not so much a matter for NATO as for individual effort.

Mr. Churchill: Although it is clear that any extension of NATO's nuclear guarantee can be done only with great care and circumspection, does my right hon. Friend agree that countries that were our allies during the second world war and which were cut off from their alliances only because they were occupied by the Red army—specifically Poland and the Czech and Slovak republics—should be put on a fast track for NATO membership, and that Hungary should be included among them?

Mr. Hurd: It is likely that the countries that my hon. Friend mentioned, given the history that he described and their present policies, will want to become full members of NATO and will succeed. We and they must consider the timing—no dates have been fixed. Meanwhile, it is important that they all make full use of "Partnership for Peace", which offers experience of joint exercises such as those that I described, and joint training and planning.

European Parliament

4. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards the future democratisation of the European Parliament.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): All present Members of the European Parliament are already directly elected. MEPs who will represent acceding states will in the first instance be appointed by their national Parliaments, but they will be subject to direct election within two years of the accession of those states.

Mr. Williams: In view of the difficulties that surrounded the appointment of the President of the European Union earlier this year and, more recently, Sir Leon Brittan's responsibilities, where does the balance of the argument lie in terms of appointing a President of the European Parliament? Is there an argument for MEPs to be given the responsibility of electing their own President, and for that person then to appoint his own European Commissioners, as happens with every other directly elected Parliament?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman misses the importance of the role of sovereign states. The current arrangements are perfectly satisfactory.

Mr. Shersby: Is my hon. Friend aware of Malta's strong desire to play its full part in the European Parliament following its successful application for European Union membership? What is the Government's policy on the Maltese application, and when is it likely that consideration will be given to applications from micro-states?

Mr. Davis: The Government of the United Kingdom take a positive view of the application of Malta, and, of course, after its subsequent accession, whenever it occurs, one will foresee a point at which it is properly represented in the European Parliament. The intergovernmental conference, at its meeting in Corfu, issued a statement on that. We stand entirely by it.

Subsidiarity

5. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to implement the principle of subsidiarity in the levels of decision-making within the European Union and the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Davis: The Edinburgh European Council established clear guidelines for the operation of subsidiarity within the European Union, and the Government have pursued the application of that subsidiarity with great vigour in conjunction with other Governments and the Commission. The principle of subsidiarity does not apply to the internal arrangements within member states.

Mr. Jones: In his recent book entitled "The Europe We Need", Sir Leon Brittan describes subsidiarity as something that should

> "allow for the ebb and flow of responsibility between regional, national and European authorities."

Does the Minister agree?

Mr. Davis: That is a very thinly veiled expression of the hon. Gentleman's well-known views on the position of Wales within the United Kingdom. If I may, I will address that point directly, because it is predicated on three wrong precepts: first, legally, because it was made very clear at the meeting of the Heads of Government at Birmingham, and at other times, that subsidiarity does not apply within states, and that it is up to the states themselves to decide the distribution of power within the states. Secondly, there is a practical oddity. The hon. Gentleman likes to pretend that there is not a great deal of devolution of power within the United Kingdom. That is not true. In Wales, £3.6 billion of expenditure each year comes under the control of local government, so that is hardly a small issue. In political terms, the hon. Gentleman conveniently forgets that, when the Welsh people were asked what they thought of devolution, they voted four to one against it.

Mr. Forman: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is, perhaps, a minority opinion on the Conservative Benches, which might not be shared by him at the moment—that, as an English Tory, it is possible to welcome the principle of subsidiarity being applied within the United Kingdom as well as within Europe? One does not have to be a Welsh nationalist to see some force in those arguments.

Mr. Davis: With a name like mine, Welshness is not a monopoly of hon. Members on the Opposition Benches. The fact of the matter is that the United Kingdom Government see subsidiarity as a very important component of stressing the importance of the nation state within Europe. We have put our efforts principally into ensuring that the European Union reflects and respects that status. We have seen one of the best outcomes of that—the reduction of proposed directives from the Commission from 185 a few years ago to 39 so far this year. That is a very good measure of what subsidiarity is really about.

Mr. Barnes: Does not subsidiarity mean anything that anyone wants it to mean? It has no legal or constitutional significance. It is useless as far as the European Union is concerned, and therefore would be useless as far as the United Kingdom's provisions are concerned. We should have clear constitutional divisions and provisions, and democratic arrangements.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman condemns his own argument out of his own mouth, because subsidiarity is written down in the treaty and is specified very clearly. What is more, it has practical effects, which I have just described in terms of the reduction in the number of directives, and it will see continuing practical effects in future presidencies. I expect the French presidency coming up to treat it very seriously, too.

Inter-Parliamentary Union

6. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account he will be taking of the resolutions passed by the 92nd Inter-Parliamentary Union conference held in Copenhagen during September as they affect his Department.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): We were grateful for the report from the leader of the British delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in Copenhagen in September and have taken particular note of the adoption of resolutions passed, including those on human rights and the Uruguay round.

Mr. Bruce: My hon. Friend will know the welcome that the conference gave to the latest general agreement on tariffs and trade and how it can be used to help alleviate poverty throughout the world. Will he tell us, in respect of Her Majesty's Government, who have been at the forefront of the negotiations, how well her country has done with ratifying the treaty and whether we will meet the target of 1 January 1995?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend, who was at the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference, is absolutely right. The GATT round, which follows the excellent work done by, among others, Sir Leon Brittan, is good news for Britain. The deal agreed last December is a big step towards freer and more open international trade: it will lead to major tariff reductions for trade in goods. The round will bring major benefits for United Kingdom industry and consumers alike, in the form of increased growth, more jobs, lower prices and wider choice. Every hon. Member should be pleased about that.

Mr. Flynn: How do the Government react to the concern expressed at the conference about the potential military threat posed by Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave, the only route to which runs through Lithuania? Has the Minister had an opportunity in the past two days to discuss with the Prime Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Adolfas Slezevicius, the further moves that can be made to connect Lithuania and the Baltic states more deeply with the organisations for peace in the European family of nations?

Mr. Baldry: I have not had such an opportunity, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—the Minister of State—has.

Sir Michael Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a direct relationship between the resolutions of the IPU conference that has just ended and the proposed United Nations social summit in Copenhagen next year? Will he take this opportunity to assure the House that Her Majesty's Government will give all possible assistance in ensuring that parliamentarians can play a full part in UN activities, not only in Copenhagen but throughout the year of the UN's 50th anniversary?

Mr. Baldry: I am sure that the whole House will wish to join me in paying tribute to my hon. Friend, who has just completed his three-year presidency of the IPU. It was a very successful presidency, helping to establish a higher and well-deserved international profile for the IPU, for which thanks are owed to my hon. Friend.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend will chair an IPU working group arranging a special meeting in New York to coincide with the UN's 50th anniversary celebrations. We too are organising a major national commemorative ceremony in Westminster hall in June next year for the 50th anniversary of the signing of the UN charter. We shall, of course, want to ensure that parliamentarians here can play a proper part in UN conferences, as they did at the recent very successful UN conference in Cairo on international population and development.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Is the Minister aware that one of the most remarkable and welcome features of the conference was the return of a multi-party, multi-ethnic delegation from the new South Africa? Will he continue to give priority to democracy-building in South Africa, and assisting the IPU and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in their relations with the country? Will he also give a special welcome to the newly formed British South Africa group in the House, which is chaired by the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn)?

Mr. Baldry: Yes. I hope that all hon. Members will read the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in South Africa, in which he made clear our support for the new South Africa and referred to the large amounts of aid that the United Kingdom will devote to supporting it.

European Union

7. **Sir Wyn Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to encourage inter-regional relationships within the European Union.

Mr. David Davis: I welcome inter-regional and cross-border co-operation within the European Union. We have, for example, given full support to the Interreg II Community initiative, an important source of Community funding for such activities. The overall policy co-ordination for this is the responsibility of the President of the Board of Trade.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I welcome the progress that has been made, particularly with Interreg II, and in the context of Wales and Ireland. Does my hon. Friend agree that that programme, and others like it, will deepen and develop the relationships between British regions and their European counterparts, and that real benefits are in sight?

Mr. Davis: Indeed, I do. The Interreg programme will certainly help communication and trade between Wales and Ireland and will, therefore, help to deepen and widen those links. The Government are looking at the allocation of the programme, but I expect the overall benefit to amount to about 99 million ecu for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: Is the Minister aware of the tentative efforts taking place involving representatives from the Scottish highlands, Merseyside, Ireland and Northern Ireland over the collective anxiety that is being felt about the way in which objective 1 is proceeding in those areas, not least in regard to the smaller-sized private sector companies? As the Minister acknowledged, much of this comes under the remit of the Department of Trade and Industry, so if I send him the details, will he undertake to pass them on to the President of the Board of Trade so that the anxieties can be fully examined?

Mr. Davis: I shall of course do that. We secured objective 1 status for Merseyside and the highlands and islands in addition to Northern Ireland. The sum total was about £2 billion, so it is important that it is applied properly.

Rwanda

8. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support his Department is offering to Rwanda; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Since 6 April, we have committed over £60 million in humanitarian assistance. The Overseas Development Administration and British non-governmental organisations have provided water and emergency supplies to 2 million Rwandan refugees. Within Rwanda we are financing rehabilitation projects, and human rights monitors. We have also provided 600 troops to the UN force. They have helped restore transport routes and have operated a field hospital which has treated over 106,000 people. This has been a substantial, timely and successful effort.

Mr. Llwyd: Given the continued and unmitigated disaster in Rwanda, does the Foreign Secretary agree that it is up to him to argue with those in the Treasury to secure the budget for the next two or three years? It is my understanding—I am sure that he will agree with this—that there is a projected cut of £60 million in the ODA budget for Africa over the next three years. Therefore, I call on him to do something about it. If he does not, his Department will not have the necessary flexibility to deal with similar future emergencies.

Mr. Hurd: I am discussing with the Treasury as part of the normal public expenditure round the ODA budget for the next three years. Comments such as that have been made from the Opposition Benches over and over again in past years. What we have done in Rwanda, and particularly what the ODA has done, has shown that we have been and remain capable, as much as any other country, of putting prompt, effective and substantial help in the field.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Is not one of the basic problems with Rwanda that the United Nations was slow to forecast and prevent that catastrophe? Will my right hon. Friend spell out what the British Government will be doing to try to get better forecasting of such situations?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend will accept that it is difficult for the UN or anybody else to plan in advance the extent to which they will intervene in the internal affairs of a member state. It is not easy. When I talked to the General Assembly in September I put forward some British ideas about how we could help Africans forestall such problems in the future. That is the way that we should help. I have discussed the matter with the Secretary-General of the UN and we shall press on with those ideas.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that tomorrow the aid agencies will express their concern at growing intimidation in the refugee camps by militia of the former Government of Rwanda? Can he assure those agencies that Britain will support any UN measures to improve security in the camps to allow aid work to continue and to enable those refugees who want to return to Rwanda to do so free from intimidation by the very people who carried out the mass murders?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on what I think is the most dangerous aspect of the problem at the moment. It is a real problem. It is not easy for the UN to decide how to deal with it without making it worse. I discussed it with Mr. Boutros Ghali when he was here last week and he knows that we will support any action that he thinks is justified.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Britain is providing considerable support to the people of Rwanda, but that it is not the cash figure that is significant but the individual quality of the programmes concerned?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree. It is speed and quality that count on such occasions, and we have been good at providing both.

Indonesia

11. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Indonesia to discuss bilateral relations.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no current plans to do so. I visited Indonesia in April.

Mr. Banks: I am glad to hear of my right hon. Friend's visit in April. Does he agree that Indonesia continues to make rapid economic progress under a stable Government and that we should encourage contact and trade at all levels between our two countries? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that the National Human Rights Commission there must be seen to be independent and a power unto itself if it is to deal effectively with the exaggerated statements of the overseas media and to settle grievances?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right—Indonesia is a country that, while it still has a low income, has enjoyed rapid development, adopted sound economic policies and made good use of aid, from the Asian Development bank, the World bank, the Japanese, the Germans, ourselves and others, to reduce poverty. The country is a major potential market for the United Kingdom and will come to assume greater economic weight in the region.

The National Human Rights Commission was set up only earlier this year, but Amnesty International has acknowledged its active and energetic approach. The commission has already surprised its critics with the strength of its public statements on domestic human rights issues. I agree with what my hon. Friend says about it.

Mrs. Clwyd: I find the right hon. Gentleman's attitude amazing and complacent in the teeth of a recent report by Amnesty International. Does he not know that the Government in Indonesia are suppressing freedom of speech and assembly, and that arbitrary killing and widespread torture continue? Does he not realise that the hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) and some of his hon. Friends have just been on a visit to Indonesia, paid for by the Indonesian Government? Does he not realise that, while our Government fawn over that evil regime, it continues to violate basic human rights, both in East Timor and in Indonesia? Why does he not condemn that?

Mr. Goodlad: I welcome the hon. Lady to her new position and hope that we shall enjoy further exchanges in future. On reflection, she will not consider it wrong for hon. Members to visit overseas countries—she has done so herself. Through such visits, hon. Members are able to speak with greater knowledge.

The Indonesians are well aware of the importance that we attach to their living up to their human rights obligations. We raise our concerns whenever appropriate, both bilaterally and with our European Union partners. I did so when I visited Indonesia in April. Our experience of the Indonesian Government shows that confidential dialogue is often more effective in bringing about changes in attitudes than public hectoring. Independent observers of Indonesia have said that there has been an improvement there. Amnesty International acknowledges in its report that Indonesia has taken a number of steps to demonstrate its commitment to protecting human rights, such as setting up the National Human Rights Commission and granting more freedom of access—for example, allowing human rights representatives from the United Nations.

This year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights commented favourably on the greater access recently granted by the Indonesian authorities to human rights and humanitarian organisations. The commission agreed that Indonesia should invite Mr. Wali N'Diaye, the special rapporteur, to visit Indonesia. Indonesia has been elected as the chairman of the non-aligned movement and has recently been elected a member of the Security Council of the United Nations. I think that, on reflection, the hon. Lady will be ashamed of what she has said from the Labour Front Bench.

Indo-British Partnership Initiative

12. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on progress with the Indo-British partnership initiative.

Mr. Hurd: Our partnership with India is going splendidly. Bilateral trade has increased by nearly 50 per cent. since the partnership was launched by the Prime Minister in January last year. New British investment increased fivefold last year and the momentum is continuing. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Export Trade will lead an 85-strong delegation to India next month.

Mr. Nicholson: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity—supported, I am sure, by the whole House—to pay tribute to the skill and bravery of the Indian police who effected such a dramatic rescue a couple of days ago? Does he agree that his reply shows how considerably Britain's relations with India have improved in recent years? Does he further agree that the increase in our investment there is partly a result of the significant economic reforms that India has introduced?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend on all points, especially on the first. We were delighted and relieved that the three Britons held hostage were released so soon and we are most grateful to the Indian police for their professional and effective operation. On behalf of the House, I should like to express our regret about the deaths of two Indian policemen in that operation, and our sympathy to their relatives.

Middle East

13. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government propose to move forward the middle east peace process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We strongly support the peace process. As I have already said, we regard the treaty between Israel and Jordan as a very important step. We now look to progress in the negotiations with Syria and Lebanon and to further negotiations with the Palestinians.

Mr. Alexander: Will my right hon. and learned Friend welcome the decisions taken at the Arab-Israeli conference in Casablanca last week to end the Arab boycott and establish a regional economic community? Does he agree that that helps to underpin the peace process and that countries that trade with one another are the least likely to go to war with one another? Will the Government co-operate to the greatest possible extent in those economic developments?

Mr. Hogg: I had the pleasure of going to Casablanca to participate in the conference. It was an important occasion, partly because it brought Israel and many of the Arab states together in discussion, which is greatly to be welcomed, and partly because it drew the attention of the wider world to the economic opportunities in the region. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) that if nations trade together they are much less likely to fight.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Government have identified the protection of human rights as a key confidence-building measure. Will the Minister assure us that when the temporary international presence for the calling of elections in Gaza and Jericho is established, pursuant to Security Council resolution 904, he and our European partners will insist that a viable human rights mandate is to be a central plank of that protection force? That would be in contrast to what has happened with the temporary international presence in Hebron, which is regarded as an absolute failure by the whole Palestinian community.

Mr. Hogg: I would rather deal with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, about elections, which are very important. I had the opportunity of talking to Yossi Beilin last week on that issue. I should like elections to be called, and called soon.

Kenyan Investors Conference

14. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to attend the Kenyan investors conference in London on 17 November.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will not be attending the investors conference. However, he will be calling on President Moi during the President's stay in London. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will deliver the opening address to the conference.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Does my hon. Friend agree that, since last year's meeting of the Paris club of Kenya's creditors, the Kenyan Government have embarked on a truly remarkable programme of economic reform? Is not the outlook for British investors in Kenya better now than it has been for some time?

Mr. Baldry: Yes. The United Kingdom is by far the largest overseas investor in Kenya, with assets valued in excess of £1 billion. I am glad to say that this year United Kingdom exports to Kenya have increased by 22 per cent. on a similar period last year. We very much welcome the action being taken to improve Kenya's economic performance and look forward to discussing those issues further with President Moi and his colleagues during their forthcoming visit.

Mr. Corbyn: When the Minister meets the President of Kenya, will he convey to him the concerns of many people about the fact that Kenya does not have a genuine multi-party democracy or genuine freedom of speech, and that far too many people have spent too long in Kenyan prisons for attempting to speak out against the current regime?

Mr. Baldry: We shall have a constructive dialogue with President Moi when we meet him and, of course, whenever there are concerns relating to human rights or other issues, we raise them.

Rwanda

15. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with United Nations counterparts with the aim of establishing an international judicial tribunal to rule on war crimes in Rwanda; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The preliminary report of the UN Commission of Experts has been received, and work is now being done within the Security Council on the question of a draft.

Mrs. Ewing: That is welcome news, but does the Minister accept that strong representations have been made by, among others, Amnesty International, to the effect that there must be a judicial review of what has happened in Rwanda? Does he accept that it is essential that war crimes are examined and war criminals tried and sentenced, especially when they have been guilty of genocide? Will the Government ensure that all initiatives undertaken by the Security Council are given the full moneys and the support of the House?

Mr. Hogg: It is entirely right that those who have committed serious crimes should be brought to trial. It is equally important that when we set up, define and formulate a tribunal we try to ensure that the processes are as just as they can be made.

Mr. Worthington: Is not it better to prevent war crimes? What do the Government intend to do to prevent future war crimes? We were promised in May that 5,500 troops would be deployed in Rwanda, but we have now been told by Baroness Chalker that the deployment of those troops will take another 10 weeks. Now, in November, we are still two battalions short because of the failure of the major powers to provide the logistical support to get the troops there. Is not that in great contrast with what happened recently in the Gulf? Is not it true that, to the Government, oil wells are more important than African lives?

Mr. Hogg: War crimes will stop when human nature changes.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, although Britain has made an outstanding contribution in Rwanda, as in many other countries, it really is pushing it when a party that has consistently called for defence cuts suggests that our overstretched armed forces should make even larger contributions to try to prevent incidents that, as my right hon. and learned Friend rightly says, are ultimately the result of the ugliness of human nature?

Mr. Hogg: We have indeed made a contribution in Rwanda, and an even larger contribution in the former Yugoslavia. I do not think that the British Government can in any way be criticised for the steps that we have so far taken.

European Union

16. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his European counterparts on the accession of new states to the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I have had discussions on that matter with our opposite numbers in the European Union at several meetings, up to and including the Foreign Affairs Council on Monday.

The Foreign Secretary said earlier that the Essen Council will propose a strategy for the accession. That will contain substantial measures—for example, trade liberalisation, political dialogue and integration with the single market. Meanwhile, we welcome the progress already made by the European Free Trade Association members.

Mr. Salmond: Now that Austria and Finland, as small European states, have voted to join the European Union, and we hope for further progress from Scandinavia, will the Minister tell the House why the nation of Scotland should settle for B-league status in Europe—as part of Britain, with Commissioners who are humiliated and a Government who are out of step with all other

Europeans—instead of aspiring to an independent status and to equality of status with those other small European nations?

Mr. Davis: It seems to fall to me today to defend our nation state against its main aggressors.

Mr. Salmond: The enemy within.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman describes himself as the enemy within. I am a Member of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, and that United Kingdom brings benefits to all its members, in Scotland, in England and in other parts. I am proud of that fact, and so are most people in all parts of the United Kingdom. For that reason, the hon. Gentleman's question is not only hypothetical but implausible.

Mr. Colvin: I have always advocated the widening of the European Union rather than its deepening. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the recent four new members of the European Union, the Scandinavian countries and Austria, are all net contributors to the European budget, but that the next four waiting to join—Poland, Hungary, the Czech lands and Slovakia—will all be big beneficiaries of the European budget, which will more than double its size? Therefore, is not further widening of the EU to be regarded as a long-term aim and not something to be rushed into quickly?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend raises an important point which relates to how we must prepare for the next accession and the next stage of the enlargement of the Union. The two principal components of the fund flow that he describes from the current Union to the accessionary states of the Visegrad four would be the structural funds and the common agricultural policy. If we took the route of enlargement with those policies as they currently stand, we would see a transfer of—probably—some 50 billion ecu. That tells me, and the whole Union, that we have to get those policies properly corrected and properly structured before the next accession and the next stage of enlargement.

Ms Quin: Can the Minister clarify the Government's policy towards a defence role for the enlarged European Union? I ask this question given the different reports in the press last week. It was reported one day that the Foreign Secretary was keen to see a defence role for the enlarged European Union, but the next day that there was deep disquiet among Government Back Benchers about the matter.

Mr. Davis: I welcome the hon. Lady back to her old role and I am glad that she is still there. Security in the European Union and its enlargement, which is what this question is about, after all, is an extremely sensitive issue, and it is important that people understand public statements. To that end, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has put the text of his speech in the Library of the House of Commons.

Mr. Jessel: Could enlargement entail too many Commissioners? Has my hon. Friend noticed that both Sweden and Norway have nominated Commissioners although they have not yet had their referendums, the results of which are uncertain? Are not they pre-empting the results of their referendums?

Mr. Davis: Yes, they have put forward names for their Commissioners, but that is a matter of practicality. The European Parliament votes on the proposed Commissioners very quickly after the accession date. Yes, we think that there are too many Commissioners. Indeed, our policy is to reduce the number.

Mr. McAvoy: Does the Minister accept that the overwhelming majority of Scottish people believe that their interests are best served by being part of the United Kingdom? However, does the Minister also accept that the best interests of the United Kingdom in the European Union would be best served by the maximum subsidiarity in the United Kingdom through the maximum devolution of a Scottish Parliament, a Welsh assembly and English regional assemblies?

Mr. Davis: I commend the hon. Gentleman. For a long time I have known him to be a bastion of the Union—indeed, he is built like a bastion of the Union—but this is a rather long stretch of the subject of enlargement.

Saudi Arabia

19. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Hurd: They are excellent.

Mr. Dalyell: What have the Saudis said to the British Government about the commercial activities of Mark Thatcher?

Mr. Hurd: Nothing.

Gaza Strip

21. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British support to the Palestinian authorities in the Gaza strip.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We support the negotiations and are providing £75 million over three years.

Mr. Hanson: Will the Minister recognise that, while that sum of money is very welcome, it does not go very far towards meeting the needs of the Palestinian authorities? Indeed, it is not as much as some other western countries are contributing. Will he kindly review the amount of money that we are giving? In addition, will he put pressure on Syria, following last week's Casablanca conference, to ensure that it contributes to the Palestinian authorities in Gaza and, in doing so, avoids the threat of militancy and extremism?

Mr. Hogg: The most important and constructive thing that the Syrians could do is enter into discussions with Israel with a view to achieving a full peace treaty between Syria and Israel. That is the course of action that I commended to President Assad and it is something for which the British Government will continue to press.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that peace in the middle east is a very fragile flower and that the Palestinians are having much difficulty at the moment as a result of the terrorist actions of Hamas? Will my right hon. and learned Friend and his Department try to intervene with the principals of Hamas and, in particular, with the state of Iran to ensure that it will do everything in its power to encourage Palestinians to remain at peace with Israel?

Mr. Hogg: It is important that Chairman Arafat should do all that he can to prevent Hamas operating as against Israel. However, it is also fair to point out to the Government of Israel that it is sometimes rather hard to expect of Chairman Arafat a result and outcome which Israel herself, with all her forces, could not achieve.

Mr. Burden: Does the Minister accept that, while we condemn the kind of terrorist attacks that took place in Tel Aviv on 19 October, collective punishment of the Palestinian people is neither acceptable nor lawful and that we really require more progress to an early relaxation of the border restrictions between Gaza, Israel and the west bank?

Mr. Hogg: I would prefer not to address the two issues, as it were, in the same paragraph because that might suggest that there is some justification for terrorism and I know that that is not what the hon. Gentleman meant.

With regard to a relaxation in the prohibitions on people from Gaza entering Israel, there needs to be an early relaxation. I am glad to say that on 1 November, the Israelis announced that they would grant 8,000 licences for people in the construction industry to go into Israel. I welcome that. We look to a further and early relaxation with a view to a very substantial increase in the number of people from Gaza able to work in Israel.

European Union

22. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a further statement on United Kingdom policy towards the further enlargement of the European Union to encompass the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Mr. David Davis: As I have already said, we support the eastward enlargement of the European Union. At the Essen Council, in conjunction with the Commission and the German presidency, we shall be looking for ways to help that process take place, including substantial measures, as I have said, in trade liberalisation, political dialogue and integration with the single market.

Mr. Brown: This is the first opportunity that I have had to congratulate my hon. Friend and next-door neighbour on his new responsibilities. Will he confirm that the impetus for the enlargement process with regard to eastern Europe has so far come largely from the efforts of the United Kingdom? Will he give an assurance and an undertaking that that impetus, which so far has been stimulated by this country, will continue?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right in a sense. It is rather more generally a mark of the success of our view of the future of the European Union. That view has been taken up by many other countries and many others subscribe to it. However, it is not the only example. One could also say that we have been successful in pushing the causes of subsidiarity, of enlargement—which my hon. Friend mentioned—and of the single market, and our arguments on deregulation with respect to increasing employment in the EU are now also winning the day.

Mr. O'Hara: With regard to enlargement, will the Minister give an assurance that the British Government will not make the accession of Cyprus to the European Union conditional on the prior resolution of the current situation in Cyprus?

Mr. Davis: Clearly, the division of the island of Cyprus is a problem for us, but we shall look at the matter in January.

Mr. Simon Coombs: What more can my hon. Friend and the Department do to encourage and promote cultural and trading links with the countries of central and eastern Europe, so that British influence in those areas can be sustained by direct contacts?

Mr. Davis: A great deal is already happening. As part of the PHARE programme, British companies are winning between 16 and 17 per cent. of technical advice contracts. That is already leading to enormous influence for British ideas in eastern Europe.

Exports (Far East)

23. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help is given to British industry and commerce by United Kingdom embassies to develop the export of United Kingdom goods to far eastern countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Commercial officers in our far eastern posts use their specialist market knowledge to give exporters practical help, advice and support. For instance, they provide exporters with targeted information about opportunities for their products and help exporters identify overseas representatives. They also give background information about local firms with which British companies plan to do business.

We attach high priority to expanding exports to the rapidly growing far eastern market. By using savings made elsewhere, manpower resources devoted to commercial work in Asia and the Pacific rim have risen by 23 per cent. since 1990. Last year, 28 new front-line commercial jobs were created in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. I am glad to say that exports to the region rose by 28.5 per cent. in 1993, to £13 billion.

Mr. O'Brien: Given that, in recent years, the Government have tended to emphasise the exporting of arms and military equipment, may we be assured now that there will be a greater emphasis on more domestic products, and that assistance will be given to exporters, especially in west Yorkshire, so that we can develop the export trade to the far east?

Mr. Goodlad: I have visited Yorkshire and spoken to exporters, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that they will get all the help that we can give them.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry came to the House some time ago and made a statement, based on the options set out in the White Paper, on the Post Office. It now seems that the options that were described to the House have been cast aside and that fresh proposals are being cobbled together in an ad hoc way and are being discussed at this very moment in an upstairs Room.

Can the House be given a statement on the options for the Post Office; and can it be communicated to the Secretary of State that the future of the Royal Mail and the Post Office is not a matter to be dealt with as a bartering process among Conservative Members?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member will have seen that there are appropriate Ministers on the Treasury Bench. I have not been told by any Minister that he is seeking to make a statement on that matter today.

I had anticipated that there would be a point of order for me today about the events that took place last night when the Committee of Privileges finished its meeting. As there is no point of order, however— *[Interruption.]* I can cope without one. It is a matter of great seriousness and great importance. What has taken place could have repercussions for the working of the whole of our system of Select Committees. Clearly, the matter has privilege aspects— *[Interruption.]* Order. Does the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) have a point of order for me?

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I do not know what you are talking about, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Perhaps, once it is printed, the hon. Member will do me the courtesy of looking at the *Hansard* report.

As I was saying, the matter clearly has privilege aspects, and for that reason I could have insisted that it was first raised with me in writing. But because of its importance, and because this is the last full working day of the Session, I have decided, exceptionally, to make an interim ruling today.

My ruling is that the Committee of Privileges must have an opportunity to make a report on this matter to the House before the House takes any action. Members will find described on page 136 of "Erskine May" the practice of the House whereby

> "A matter alleged to have arisen in committee but not reported by it may not generally be brought to the attention of the House on a complaint of breach of privilege."

The purported written report from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was issued, so I understand, after the conclusion of yesterday's meeting of the Committee of Privileges. The Committee has therefore not yet had the opportunity of making a report on it to the House of the kind to which I have just referred. I hope that, following its next meeting, the Committee will make such a report so that the House can have an early opportunity to consider this matter in an orderly manner and to take any action that it may think fit.

For those reasons, I do not propose to take any points of order on this matter today. The House knows exactly where it stands if hon. Members have listened very carefully to all my words.

Disabled Persons (Consultation)

3.35 pm

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for a system of consultation when legislation relating to disabled persons is proposed and to set rules for formulating compliance cost assessments in the case of such legislation.

The House will be aware that the Government have recently consulted on their proposals to tackle discrimination against disabled people. It will also be aware that that exercise was conducted in response to the overwhelming support for the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. No doubt that accounts for the attendance in the Chamber at this time.

I am sure that support for the Bill, inside and outside the House, encouraged the Government to put forward their own proposals. I am also sure that their consultation document was published in response to the widespread disquiet at the manner in which the Government blocked that Bill temporarily. Nevertheless, I welcomed the consultation exercise, not least because, by issuing that consultation document, the Government made it quite clear that disabled people face systematic discrimination and that they believed that this must be tackled through legislation. Therefore, in common with other hon. Members, I eagerly await the Government's publication of the results of that consultation exercise and further debate on that issue. In the meantime, my Bill is a modest attempt to address and correct some of the serious limitations in that consultation exercise.

The main issues that we must consider are the way in which consultation exercises are undertaken and the misuse of so-called compliance cost assessments. For example, it is said by many people, including the Prime Minister, that the price tag on the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill is £17 billion. As I shall demonstrate, that figure has no basis in fact. That a document claiming to be a compliance cost assessment could come up with that figure suggests that we should carefully review the rules for compliance cost assessments in order to ensure that truthful figures are produced, not figments of people's imagination.

In relation to the consultation process, my Bill recognises that the Government may, of course, consult on whatever proposals they wish—there is no question about that. Disabled people, however, have felt and still feel that it was regrettable that, in the recent consultation exercise, the Government refused to consult on the one proposal for tackling discrimination against disabled people that disabled people wanted—the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill.

I recently received a communication from the Spastics Society—I am sure that hon. Members would like to join me in congratulating that society on the fact that, tomorrow, it will change its name to Scope—in which it pointed out that it regretted that the Government had excluded from their consultation exercise items that featured in the civil rights Bill. That regret has been repeated by other organisations of and for disabled people.

My Bill contains some very modest proposals. It would require that, when the Government undertook a consultation exercise, they would include with their proposals for disabled people any proposals relating to similar matters that disabled people supported. That seems perfectly reasonable.

Secondly, it would also be reasonable to state that any proposed Government consultation should include legislation that received an unopposed Second Reading in the Chamber. A Bill is not carried every day of the week by 231 votes to nil on Second Reading. That vote expresses the view of the House and should be the subject of consultation.

Thirdly, my Bill would require that any legislation that had successfully completed its Committee stage should be a matter for proper consultation. Finally, any legislation that had completed either of those stages in the other place should also be the subject of consultation.

I am sure that hon. Members are reasonable, although I do not want to over-egg it, and I am sure that they would agree that any legislation that has passed any one of those four tests, let alone all of them, is worthy of detailed consultation in the sort of exercise in which the Government have just engaged.

The second issue dealt with in the Bill concerns compliance cost assessments for proposed legislation. Those sound very grand. Some people think that the assessment is based on a widely accepted technique for evaluating policy, whether by economists or anyone else. It is not and no self-respecting economist would touch many of the assessments with a bargepole. Indeed, the appalling errors in the compliance cost assessment for the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill have led me to suggest these new rules. They are not controversial, but they are worth stating.

First, when undertaking a compliance cost assessment, one should refrain from counting the same thing twice. Double counting, whether by accident or by design, obviously inflates estimates of costs. That may be welcome to someone who opposes the legislation, but it hardly brings such an exercise into good repute. For example, the compliance cost assessment for the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill included the cost of providing access to existing buildings in the environment section, but some of the costs were counted again in the sections on employment and education. That double counting accounts for £6 billion of the alleged £17 billion costs.

Secondly, one should not assume a phasing-in period that is not contained in the proposed legislation. It was assumed that everything contained in the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill would have to be done within five years. That does not feature in the Bill. If we allow for a proper phasing-in period for transport, we could reduce the costs by yet another £6 billion.

I am running short of time, so suffice it to say—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, Hear."]—I appreciate why some opponents of the Bill might be happy about that. The £17 billion figure should never be used again. According to the Government's assumptions, if we avoid double counting and do not allow for time periods that are not in the Bill, we are down to £5 billion.

Compliance cost assessments should also be required to take into account the benefits of legislation. It has been estimated that discrimination excludes disabled people from the labour market at a cost of between £3 billion and £5 billion a year. The cost of inaccessible transport is £1 billion. My Bill would ensure that much more meaningful consultation took place on legislation relating to disabled people and it would ensure more meaningful cost-benefit

[Mr. Roger Berry]

analyses. Today's Bill, like the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, has all-party support and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Roger Berry, Mr. John Austin-Walker, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. David Congdon, Ms Jean Corston, Mr. Don Dixon, Sir John Hannam, Mr. Alan Howarth, Ms Liz Lynne, Mr. Gordon McMaster, Mr. Alfred Morris and Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

DISABLED PERSONS (CONSULTATION)

Mr. Roger Berry accordingly presented a Bill to provide for a system of consultation when legislation relating to disabled persons is proposed and to set rules for formulating compliance cost assessments in the case of such legislation: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 173.]

Privileges

3.45 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In the light of your wise and understandable statement, and as the Government knew perfectly well as far back as 10 May that a letter had been written on House of Commons notepaper, is not it rather odd that we should give preference above other business to a debate such as this at this time? We must remember how long the Government have known about the letter and surely your statement rather alters events, does it not?

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The motion on privilege is extremely narrowly drawn—as you reminded us when we considered a similar motion earlier this week. In view of last night's events, there will be a clear temptation in today's debate for hon. Members on both sides to discuss the proceedings of the Privileges Committee. That is something which you warned us against previously and which I am sure you will warn us against today.

Secondly, anyone voting for the motion today cannot have any idea whether, if carried, the complaint will be considered by the Committee in public or in private, or how the proceedings of the Committee will be arranged.

Madam Speaker: Order. Could I have a point of order for me?

Mr. Madden: I believe that to consider the motion today would be premature. Could it be withdrawn to enable us to consider it when the proceedings of the Privileges Committee are themselves clear and made known to the House?

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I can deal with the two points of order now. I think that I have captured the mood of the House on this matter. There is certainly no conflict between the motion before us today and the statement that I made earlier. The motion is in perfect order and it is ready for debate. Quite frankly, the House has a responsibility, at this stage, to deal with the motion now.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you know, during the time that you have been in the Chair and prior to that, there have been countless instances every year of people, both inside and outside the House, using House of Commons notepaper when they should not have done so. Can you tell me on how many occasions such people have used the notepaper but not had it brought before the Privileges Committee?

Madam Speaker: Of course, I cannot give the hon. Member a figure for that at this stage, but I shall certainly have some research carried out and do my best to respond to his question. It is not a point of order for me, but I am always willing to give as much information as I can to individual hon. Members.

3.48 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I wish to call attention to the alleged action of *The Guardian* newspaper in representing that a letter sent by it to the Ritz hotel, Paris, was sent in the name of an honourable Member of this House.

I beg to move,

That the matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

There are occasions when I would give my eye teeth to address the House in prime time and on an important issue, but this is not one of them. This debate opens up all sorts of predictable criticism and offers us assorted traps into which we can all fall. I fully understand that in a debate such as this it would be very easy to sound pompous, sanctimonious and utterly party political, but when we seek to defend our collective reputations and, more importantly, the status and symbols of the House, there will always be a risk of allegations of hypocrisy, oversensitivity and being out of touch.

While the debate is, of necessity, about a possible abuse of the House and contempt of Parliament, I hope that the whole House would be just as concerned if the victim of this alleged conspiracy, impersonation and forgery were the proverbial Joe Bloggs, whose letter heading did not have a portcullis or the words "House of Commons".

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I would have much more sympathy with the case being made by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) if the information about the use of a piece of notepaper purporting to come from the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) had been brought to the attention of the House when the right hon. Gentleman himself knew about it. He knew about it on 10 May. The Cabinet Secretary knew about it on 18 May. Why was not the House so informed at that time if it is so important now?

Mr. Wilshire: I am happy for other hon. Members to make their case in their way, but I prefer to make my case in the way that I think is best.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is a point for you. You have emphasised, understandably, that this is a matter of precedence over other business. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) says, the matter was known about in the public print on 10 May and the Cabinet Secretary wrote letters on 18 May. Why is it given precedence?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member cannot disrupt our proceedings in this way with points of order that are really not points of order. It has been determined that this matter takes precedence today and it is the responsibility and duty of the House to debate it. It is about time that we faced up to some duties in the House.

Mr. Wilshire *rose—*

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): In view of the points that have just been raised, does my hon. Friend accept that the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary apparently considered referring the matter to the Press Complaints Commission, but as at that time Mr. Peter Preston was a member of the Commission, they felt that it was not worth doing so?

Mr. Wilshire: Again, those are interesting points, but I should like to press ahead.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can we now assume that the rules involving raising matters at the earliest possible moment no longer apply?

Madam Speaker: As I have told the House and the hon. Member, the motion before us and the way in which we are proceeding are completely in order according to the business of the House and precedents that have stood us in good stead over many years.

Mr. Wilshire: Thank you, Madam Speaker. All that I can say is that as soon as I knew about the matter, I raised it with you on Monday morning.

I also want to make it clear at the outset that in saying what I say this afternoon I do not seek to criticise all journalists and all editors when I criticise one. I make no claims at all to be better than or different from anyone else. I know that I run the risk of setting myself up for abuse and criticism, but so be it. That is the lot of all politicians.

All I know is that if I was caught forging faxes, however much I felt that I could justify it, I would expect to be pilloried by every newspaper in the land, and that is a fate that I would richly deserve. If, when I was found out, I indulged in self-righteous self-justification, I would rightly deserve the contempt of every fair-minded person.

Again at the outset I want to say that I am anxious to try to avoid cheap party politics. *[Interruption.]* I guessed that that would get a hollow laugh. All I can say is, please hear me out and then judge at the end whether I am playing party politics.

I am relieved that you, Madam Speaker, have made it clear that the debate must confine itself to narrow issues—in fact, the issues in my motion—because those are the issues that I wanted to raise when I wrote to you on Monday. Whatever an hon. Member may or may not have done is not part of the issue, although I can quite understand why there are people in the House who want to pursue that story.

This issue is sufficiently important to require separate and immediate attention. What concerns us today are the methods employed by a respected national newspaper when investigating a Member of Parliament. At best, those methods were ethically flawed; at worst, they were downright criminal. Whichever they were, they were a flagrant abuse of the House and need to be investigated.

I say that for three reasons. Those in a privileged position must be above reproach—at least, that is the message that newspapers have been trumpeting these past few weeks. I am perfectly happy to accept that Members of Parliament are in a privileged position, even if most of us do not have much power. I am, however, clear in my mind that newspaper editors are in an equally privileged position and wield substantial power.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does the hon. Gentleman believe that Mr. Peter Preston acted

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

in the public interest in revealing the fact that Conservative Members failed to register pecuniary interests: yes or no?

Mr. Wilshire: If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself and hear me out, he will get his answer.

If editors maintain that Members of Parliament should be above reproach, it follows that they also should be beyond reproach. My second reason is that two of the most important duties of all Members of Parliament are to stand up for the rights of the individual and for the rule of law. Perhaps the greatest threat to both is the belief held by people in powerful positions that the ends justify the means. Down that route lurks the jackboot and the lynch mob.

If I understand history correctly, this Parliament came into existence to protect the citizen from arbitrary abuse and victimisation. Throughout Parliament's history, we have had to square up to the over-mighty who seek to place themselves above the law.

My third reason is the total lack of a proper apology by the editor of *The Guardian*. From time to time, we all allow our enthusiasm to run away with us and do things that we later regret. When I do that, I find people willing to accept a proper apology, while I want to hide in a dark corner for quite a while. But not so the editor of *The Guardian*. Over the past few days, and again in Mr. Preston's letter of resignation from the Press Complaints Commission last night, the nation has been treated to the mocking of decency and honesty, and to the attempted justification of deceit and deception.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilshire: No. I will press on because I have been generous with interventions up to now.

My description of the details of the allegations is based on comments made by Mr. Preston, Mr. Al Fayed and reports in *The Guardian*. In the circumstances, I hope that the House will find all those sources reliable. Last autumn, Mr. Al Fayed told Mr. Preston about a Ritz hotel bill. Quite how or why an extremely busy international tycoon found time to interest himself in such a matter of detail is not reported, as far as I can discover. Mr. Preston wanted a copy of that bill, while Mr. Al Fayed wanted to protect his own reputation and that of his hotel. They concocted a plan to forge a fax.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance. Are we debating whether the matter should be considered by the Committee of Privileges, or are we debating what should be discussed by the Committee at a later date?

Madam Speaker: That is a very good point of order. We are debating today whether the House should refer the matter to the Privileges Committee. I have just read the motion for the umpteenth time and it is very narrow. Although references may be made to certain matters, they should not be detailed and ought to be brief. The House should keep it in mind that it is considering only whether the matter should go before the Privileges Committee for detailed investigation there.

Mr. Wilshire: I shall certainly try to keep my reasons for wanting the matter referred as brief as I possibly can.

As I said, because Mr. Preston wanted a copy of the bill, a plan was concocted to forge a fax. I am no lawyer, but that sounds like a criminal conspiracy to me. As a result, Mr. Preston arranged for the top of a letter from my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), on official House of Commons stationery, to be stuck to the top of a fax to make it appear that it came from a Member of Parliament. That sounds remarkably like forgery to me.

Finally, Mr. Preston worded the fax to suggest that the sender was my right hon. Friend's private secretary. Lawyers to whom I have spoken tell me that that sounds remarkably like impersonation. Thus, it appears to me that Mr. Preston has admitted not only to an abuse of Parliament, but to criminal activity. That is why I have referred the matter to the police.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilshire: No—I have detained the House long enough. I want to make a couple more points; then I am sure that you, Madam Speaker, could call the hon. Gentleman to speak, if he is on your list.

I can think of no better way to sum up my case than to quote something that I heard on Radio 4 on Monday morning:

> "I think that anyone other than a Member of Parliament writing on parliamentary paper is unacceptable and I think that there does need to be some investigation into exactly what happened. I don't think it's right for others than Members of Parliament to take on that role, and I think there are some questions that need to be answered there."

I agree with every word of that comment made by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), Labour's shadow Leader of the House. Thus the hon. Lady and I stand united across the party political divide. That is why I want the matter referred to the Privileges Committee. That is why I want to hear its verdict and its views on possible punishment. That is also why I welcome the verdict of a jury and the punishment handed down by a judge.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton) *rose—*

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the House is Chairman of the Privileges Committee, which will deal with the matter. He used his casting vote on a previous occasion, and I have no doubt that if it meets again he will use it for this matter. I want to know why he can take part in the debate, leading on behalf of the Government, when he will be acting as judge and jury.

Mr. Newton: As I had indicated to you, Madam Speaker, I felt it appropriate to say a word, but really only two sentences. First, as Leader of the House, I hope that the House will accept my hon. Friend's motion. Secondly, as Chairman of the Privileges

Committee, I think that the House will understand that it would not be appropriate for me to comment beyond that.

4.2 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I, too, will be brief as the matter before the House is relatively straightforward and the motion is very narrow.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire). I very much regret the extravagant and intemperate language that he used, which did not help his case.

The basis of the complaint is that the editor—*[Interruption.]* If we are able to consider the matter carefully, it will do the House a great deal of good; it is an extremely important issue.

The basis of the complaint that the hon. Gentleman made, in respect of allegations that the editor of *The Guardian* used House of Commons notepaper and forged the signature of a member of staff of a Member of the House, is very serious, and on Monday, you, Madam Speaker, instigated inquiries through the Serjeant at Arms.

The motion proposes that the matter be referred to the Privileges Committee. Clearly, there has been a prima facie breach of parliamentary privilege. I repeat what I said on Monday morning, which the hon. Member for Spelthorne quoted. I made it clear, as soon as I heard the allegations against Mr. Preston, that for anyone other than a Member of Parliament to use official notepaper is completely unacceptable, as it clearly is for anyone to forge any signature. It is unacceptable behaviour for an editor of a newspaper or, indeed, for anyone else. Anyone who receives a letter on House of Commons writing paper must be able to believe that the letter is genuine, not least to protect our ability to serve our constituents. When we write to doctors, lawyers or, indeed, anyone else, those recipients must feel confident that the letters are genuine.

The reference to the Privileges Committee is therefore inevitable and entirely appropriate. I do not seek to defend the actions of the editor of *The Guardian*, or to justify them. Mr. Preston has said that, in retrospect, he may have been wrong to do what he did. He was wrong; he was foolish; and it is right for the Committee to consider his actions.

I hope that the Committee will also consider when hon. Members first knew of the fax, and of the forgery that forms the subject of this inquiry. It is important that the Committee finds out who knew about the forgery, when they knew about it and why, if Members of Parliament knew that there had been a flagrant breach of this kind, they did not report it earlier to you, Madam Speaker.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Why does the hon. Lady think that the timing is relevant? The important point is that either this was done, or it was not. I gather from what the hon. Lady is saying that she thinks it was thoroughly wrong to do it. It was against the principles and rules of the House, and that is the end of the matter.

Mrs. Taylor: I think that any hon. Member who finds that there has been a flagrant breach of privilege has a responsibility to report it to the House. I think it entirely right for the Committee of Privileges to examine this matter as well as the other details that have been mentioned.

Statements have been made in today's press that Cabinet members—including the Prime Minister as well as the Chief Secretary to the Treasury—knew all about the misuse of House of Commons paper several months ago. It is not for the House to consider that in detail this afternoon, but I believe that it is relevant to the inquiry, and I hope that the Committee will take that aspect on board.

The fact that Mr. Preston was wrong should not be used as a reason for ignoring the issues that he was raising and, indeed, the evidence that has come to light. Mr. Preston might claim that he used a foolish device to verify essential evidence and to protect his source of information. It is interesting that no one has challenged the factual information that he presented, nor are those facts challenged by this debate.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): The hon. Lady, surely, is trying to change the facts completely. Surely what happened was a conspiracy by Mr. Preston to try to hide the fact that he was working with a blackmailer in an attempt to bring down the Government.

Mrs. Taylor: I am sure that the Privileges Committee will hear everything that is said. *[Interruption.]* As some of my hon. Friends are saying, it would be wise not to make allegations of that kind outside the House.

Mr. Corbett: I do not disagree with a word that my hon. Friend has said. Does she acknowledge, however, that although paragraph 7 of the Press Complaints Commission's code of conduct, which was generally approved by the Government, states that subterfuge should not be used, it also states that it is possible if it is in the public interest?

Mrs. Taylor: It is interesting to note that, when Opposition Members have attempted to increase the accountability of the press, they have generally been blocked by Conservative Members. We are considering one aspect of the means used to obtain information. The ends do not justify the means, but neither do the means invalidate the attempts to raise issues of genuine and important public concern. The methods adopted raise some big questions and we should not lose sight of the fact that journalists and others are trying to prise out information because we do not have a sufficiently transparent system of accountability in this country. If we had a better system of registering the interests of Members of Parliament and Ministers, this might not have happened.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You told the House, rightly, that this is to be a narrow debate. The hon. Lady is attempting to make some party political points.

Madam Speaker: I am listening to the debate carefully; the hon. Gentleman can leave it in my hands. The hon. Lady is doing perfectly well at the moment. I believe that she is about to finish, if the hon. Gentleman will allow her to do so.

Mrs. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was about to conclude. I have tried not to be partisan because these issues are in the interests of us all.

[Mrs. Taylor]

The Nolan committee will consider some of the wider issues, and it is important that the House does so too. Mr. Preston's action must be referred to the Privileges Committee, and I hope that its members will investigate all the issues that are raised by this reference.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, arising from what was said by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who moved the motion. He said that he had reported this matter simultaneously to the police. For many years, the House, which has a jurisdiction of its own, has kept a wide boundary between its jurisdiction and that of the courts. If this is to be pursued in the courts with, presumably, a prosecution for forgery, while the Committee is handling the matter, we could be in difficulties. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the House will listen because this is a point of substance.

If the case is taken to court, it will be heard in open court, whereas in the Committee of Privileges it will be heard in secret. *[Interruption.]* Yes, that is the decision of the Committee. If Mr. Preston is referred to the Committee of Privileges and he asks for the right to print in his newspaper what happened in the Committee, he will be guilty of another breach of privilege for revealing the Committee's proceedings. I am drawing to your attention, Madam Speaker, an important question. We have stumbled into this without thinking it out. There are two jurisdictions and two regimes: an open regime in the court and a private regime in the Committee. If Mr. Preston were to be hauled up, he would be put in an impossible position.

Madam Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point, but it is not a point of order for me. It is a speech that he might wish to make during the debate, when he may have something of substance to say. It is not a point of order at this time.

Mr. Benn *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have given my ruling.

Mr. Benn *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Sit down for a moment. I listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman. It is not a point of order at this stage. It is a point that right hon. and hon. Members may wish to employ during the debate. It is not a point of order on which I can rule.

Mr. Benn: With great respect, I have no intention of speaking today because I spoke on Monday. By accepting a motion after we have been told that the issue is going to another jurisdiction, the jurisdiction of the House is infringed. That is a matter for you, Madam Speaker; it is not a matter of judgment for the House. It is for you to protect the jurisdiction of the House and to order the hon. Member for Spelthorne, if we do proceed, not to take the matter to the courts, otherwise the rights of the House of Commons will be taken over by the courts.

Madam Speaker: I gave the matter careful consideration before it came before the House today. There is no sub judice involved—we are perfectly in order, as was the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) in moving the motion. I spent a great deal of time taking legal advice on the subject, and the way in which we are proceeding is perfectly in order.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that one reason why Committees sit in secret is that they collect evidence? Police and other investigations are carried out in secret, and only when all the information has been looked into and collected—

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members are attempting to conduct the debate through me. They must wait for me to call them. I hope that there will be no more points of order—we must proceed with the debate.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Dale Campbell-Savours, who has not had a point of order yet.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I was rising to speak in the debate.

Madam Speaker: What a wise man. I shall call him after I have dealt with the points of order.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) asked a number of questions that other hon. Members had asked earlier. It was clear that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) was either unable or unwilling to answer those questions, which related directly to the motion. The House requires clear information that the Leader of the House was unable to give—

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order, but a matter for debate. Hon. Members are raising matters for argument, not points of order. There has been no breach of our Standing Orders or procedures. Hon. Members are raising matters for debate across the Floor of the House.

Mr. Dalyell: I have a point of order that is directly for you, Madam Speaker; it falls within your jurisdiction. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) asked my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) what possible relevance there was in the timing of all this. Is there not an obligation on the Government at least to give an explanation? They may have a perfectly good explanation, but the debate cannot continue without their explaining why something that was known in May was not tackled until November. That is a fundamental point and the Leader of the House of Commons has an obligation to explain.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me; it is a debating matter. The hon. Gentleman is attempting to extract information, which is perfectly reasonable, but he cannot extract information from me; he must do it through other hon. Members.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall take no more points of order.

4.17 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I wish to raise five matters that are relevant to the decision that we will be required to take later today. I shall confine those issues strictly within the bounds of the motion. I am well aware that some of what I have to say will not be palatable.

Before raising those issues, I want to ask the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) a question. She indicated that she intends to support the motion. In the light of her partisan statements and the partisan comments from Labour Back Benchers, I want to know whether the Opposition intend to support the referral of a breach of privilege to the Committee. Will the hon. Lady's Back-Bench colleagues support that referral?

Mrs. Ann Taylor: That is a matter for the House, and I hope that all hon. Members will exercise their judgment. I clearly said that I support the referral to the Select Committee on Privileges. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should ask me about that.

Mr. Gale: It seems that Opposition Members are trying to have their cake and eat it by half-heartedly condemning the clear breach of privilege while trying to curry favour with the press.

The press have sought to give the impression to the public that we are discussing the misuse of House of Commons writing paper and, in so doing, have sought to trivialise the matter. They have given the impression that we are talking merely about a letter that was written on paper, which we now know was not stolen paper but just the clipped heading of a piece of House of Commons paper. They have given the impression that the matter involved a trivial misuse, and simply represented a mistake.

That is not all that we are dealing with this afternoon. We are dealing first with the forgery of a letter purporting to come from a Minister of the Crown, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Secondly, we are dealing with a very clear intent to deceive. Thirdly, we are dealing with the impersonation not only of a member of the Chief Secretary's staff but of someone who was at the time a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Defence, whose signature was copied.

That is the first series of issues. They are not trivial matters but serious and possibly criminal offences. The use of writing paper was certainly a discourtesy to the House, but the matter goes much wider than that and we need to focus on it, however much others may seek to mislead the public.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): In the world of modern communications, whether one is dealing with a fax or another communication to a newspaper, are not the chances of a letter getting into general circulation—even with none of the explanations attached to it that the editor of *The Guardian* has sought to attach to it—such that they make such an action even more culpable and fraudulent?

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I hope and believe that those responsible for bringing criminal charges in this case will consider his point very seriously. I would expect a criminal action to follow, but that is not what we are here to consider today.

This matter does not relate only to *The Guardian*, although we are debating the referral of the actions of its editor to the Privileges Committee. *The Guardian* set itself up as the gamekeeper of political morality and all the other Fleet street newspapers clung to the gamekeeper's coat tails. The gamekeeper's coat pockets have now been found to be full of stolen pheasants. The other newspapers that ran stories about my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, that ran pictures of his wife and children and that sought to drag him and his down, are left with sizeable egg on their faces. If I may mix my metaphors, the rats are now quickly leaving a ship that is holed and sinking.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): The hon. Gentleman, like me, is a journalist by profession. Is he even mildly curious about what the former Minister of State for Defence Procurement was doing in a hotel in Paris at the same time as three Saudi arms dealers?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) will not pursue that, as to do so would stray wide of the motion.

Mr. Gale: I am entirely content to accept the explanations that have been offered to the House, as they should have been, by my right hon. Friend. If I may digress slightly in response to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin)—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have cautioned the hon. Gentleman and the House. The hon. Gentleman knows full well how narrow the motion is. We are debating whether, if the House so wishes, to refer the matter to the Committee. We are not arguing the merits or demerits of any individual.

Mr. Gale: My right hon. Friend is answerable not to *The Guardian* or any other medium but to two sets of people: his constituents and hon. Members. His constituents have faith in his integrity and he has answered to the House.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my hon. Friend agree that the tone of the debate, especially from the Opposition, is frightening? We have seen a casual disregard for the rule of law, which is a frightening portent of what would happen if the Labour party were to get into power.

Mr. Gale: Much has been made of the fact that knowledge of the forgery was in the hands of certain people—in particular, the Cabinet Secretary—some time ago. It is important that we consider that because the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman has referred to it, as have other Opposition Members. As I said in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), my understanding is that referral of the forgery to the Press Complaints Commission was considered carefully by the Cabinet Secretary, who concluded that, as the editor of *The Guardian* was at that time a member of the commission, there was little point in asking the turkey to vote for Christmas.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*—

Mr. Madden *rose*—

Mr. Gale: No, with respect to the hon. Gentlemen, I shall not give way. Many hon. Members wish to

[Mr. Gale]

intervene in the debate. It is better if I conclude my remarks and let other Members make their own speeches.

Last night the editor of *The Guardian* resigned from the Press Complaints Commission, not as a matter of personal honour but as a result of pressure from inside the House.

We must consider another salient point. Throughout the affair, the Press Complaints Commission has maintained a stunning silence: not one word of condemnation has been heard. *[Interruption.]* It is another issue, but I suggest that the time has come for the House to create an independent press tribunal with statutory powers—

Madam Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. We are not discussing any press tribunal. I have cautioned the hon. Gentleman; many people want to speak in the debate, and I now ask hon. Members to stay with the point and get on with debating the motion.

Mr. Gale: We have been discussing whether the editor of *The Guardian*, a former member of the Press Complaints Commission, should be referred to the Privileges Committee. I seek to give the House instances showing why I believe that that referral should and must take place. I believe that because of the forgery, the deceit and the impersonation that he has practised, using House of Commons notepaper, Mr. Preston's conduct as a member of the Press Complaints Commission is part and parcel of the matter that we are considering.

The press, especially the editor of *The Guardian*, have set themselves up as the guardians of the public interest, but that guardian angel has turned out to be the whore from hell. I believe that some good may yet come from the matter. If it is referred to the Privileges Committee and the Committee considers it correctly, as I believe it will, and the report is published and debated by the House in full, as it will be, the public may at last realise the depths to which that editor and others are prepared to sink to stand up a story at whatever cost to the truth.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) asked whether any hearing would be held in camera or in public. That is an interesting question, and I am sure that the press will take a keen interest in it. If the matter is referred to the Privileges Committee, as I believe it must be, I should prefer Mr. Preston to have the opportunity to give his evidence in private.

I believe that the Committee may also wish to call Mr. Al Fayed—[HON. MEMBERS: "Fayed."]—and to hear Mr. Fayed's evidence in private. That should not be turned into yet another media circus and yet another feeding frenzy. For that reason, if for no other, I hope that the Committee, if the matter is referred to it, will decide to hold the hearings in private, and then to publish in full.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gale: No. I apologise to my hon. Friend, but as I refused to give way to Opposition Members I must refuse to give way to him too.

I have written to the chairman of Guardian Newspapers to ask whether the company believes that its editor has acted properly and whether he still has the confidence of the board. If former Ministers should be required to resign their offices to clear their names, the editor of *The Guardian* should be required to do the same.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In deciding whether to support the motion, several of us will find ourselves in a dilemma because of the following question: did the editor of *The Guardian* and his newspaper, using House of Commons notepaper—using it wrongly; I do not try to justify its use—intend to serve a genuine public interest in trying to secure information that he believed could not be obtained in any other way? I ask you, Madam Speaker, whether in those circumstances we could have a little more information. As matters now stand, many of us will have some difficulty in approving the motion.

Madam Speaker: I feel that hon. Members are trying to debate the motion through the Speaker. I cannot answer questions such as that. Hon. Members have to attempt to extract that information from others. It is certainly not a point of order. Perhaps, if the debate were to proceed, we may get the information. If hon. Members were to speak briskly, I could call as many as possible and the information may come.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: This is about the fourth point of order that I have had from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Madden: It is relevant, Madam Speaker. As everyone so far has been unable or unwilling to answer the questions which a number of hon. Members have put, I assume that those questions were put by the Serjeant at Arms in the inquiries that you asked him to undertake. Therefore, assuming that his report has been completed, may I ask that it is made available to hon. Members before the vote takes place in the hope that the Serjeant at Arms' report reveals the information which a great many hon. Members require?

Madam Speaker: There is only one matter before the House today—the motion printed on the Order Paper. It is for the House to determine whether the subject is of such seriousness that we want it examined by our Privileges Committee. That is all. If we want to leave the matter as it is, the motion is defeated. If we want to go further into it, it is for the Privileges Committee to go into all those details, not the House at the present time. There is a simple motion before us.

4.30 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I suspect that some hon. Members would expect me to declare an interest in the present debate in the sense that I was the subject of what I considered a scurrilous piece of journalism by a sister paper of *The Guardian* fairly recently. Some may think that I rise, in some sense, to even the score, but I assure colleagues in the House that I shall be either abstaining or voting against the motion. I want to explain to the House and put into context the reason why I have come to that decision. As someone who co-authored a biography of Harold Laski, it is with some sense of irony that I speak today when we are looking at a problem involving the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). Much of my time, when I was writing that biography, was involved with an illustrious or notorious predecessor of his in the famous Laski 1946 libel trial, which is interesting for the historical record.

It seems to me that there are two institutions in crisis at present in Britain. The first is our Parliament, where we seem to be in so many senses out of touch with what ordinary people think or believe or care about. This debate is very much about whether by its actions tonight, we will show that we are in touch with ordinary opinion or totally out of touch with it. The second institution that I believe is in crisis is the British media—the newspapers and the other media. One can analyse easily why our media are in crisis. It is a question of the new media of communication, increasing competition, new technology—

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Low standards?

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman says it is also a question of low standards. Perhaps some of those low standards are a consequence of the failure of the Government to act on a crisis, which has been coming for a very long time and has been unanswered by the present Government. That is the crisis of increasing monopoly ownership of the media, cross-ownership of the media between the Fleet street media as they used to be called—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman has been in attendance throughout the debate. He will have heard Madam Speaker's firm ruling on what the debate is about. It is certainly not about the ownership of the press.

Mr. Sheerman: Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I only—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being sorry, but Madam Speaker has ruled and I am confirming her ruling. I should be most grateful if he carried on with whatever other points he has to make.

Mr. Sheerman: I was merely putting into context the reason why I shall be abstaining or voting against the motion tonight. As I was saying, the institutions that are out of touch with ordinary opinion are Parliament and the media. I was explaining why I believe that the media are in crisis. Increasingly, there is a war in Fleet street which is not just about price and whether *The Times* is 20p or *The Independent* is 30p. The war is also about who can produce the most scurrilous story.

That competition in Fleet street, not just in the tabloids which seem to concentrate more on the royal family and sex scandals, but in the broadsheets, seems to have undermined our strong and excellent tradition of investigative journalism. Investigative journalism now seems to be any story—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman seems to be having some difficulty relating his contribution to the motion. The motion is very clear about referring the matter to the Privileges Committee. Unless the hon. Gentleman can relate his remarks firmly to the motion, I must ask him to resume his seat or develop his argument properly.

Mr. Sheerman: I was about to develop that argument. I believe that Fleet street has moved towards picking up stories that are poorly researched and presented in a tradition of investigative journalism in respect of which we once led the world. I believe that that has led us to our present problems in respect of which the House is considering whether to approve the motion.

I believe that we should not pass the motion because the House is becoming out of touch with what ordinary people want and perceive. Day after day, ordinary citizens, including my constituents, face a serious and dangerous life with the press. These people are the subject of scurrilous stories. The person involved may be a plumber in Huddersfield. It may not involve a leading politician from an aristocratic background. However, the facts are the same.

When we are deciding whether to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee, we must bear in mind the impact on the rest of the country. If we are perceived to be members of a cosy little club which is going to rush off and have a special tribunal in order to try the editor of *The Guardian* just because someone has used a piece of House of Commons notepaper in a fax—

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): If the hon. Gentleman believes that the behaviour of *The Guardian* should not be referred to the Privileges Committee, given that some of us would agree with his attitude towards scurrilous and ill-researched stories, what should be done with *The Guardian*?

Mr. Sheerman: Most sensible people outside the House would have said, "Ignore it." There has been an on-going investigation into the behaviour of certain hon. Members and members of the Government in particular. My answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is that the Government should act in terms of setting an example in public standards and introduce legislation which protects the ordinary citizen in this country in the way that the Government seek to protect a member of their own Government.

When an ordinary person in this country is attacked by the press and when an injustice occurs, there should be mechanisms for that ordinary citizen to obtain justice. Time after time, ordinary people are given no opportunity—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already drawn the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that this debate is purely about whether the matter should be referred to the Privileges Committee. The hon. Gentleman said three times that he was coming to that point, but on each occasion he has not come to it. This is the last time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now purely refer to whether the matter should be referred to the Privileges Committee and not refer to his constituents or to any problems they may have.

Mr. Sheerman: I was coming precisely to the point of advancing the argument that if we take part in a cosy conspiracy that leads to decisions being taken in secret in the House, ordinary people who are denied justice day after day throughout the country will feel angry and frustrated with this institution. I speak as one who

[Mr. Sheerman]

understands very well what it is like to be the subject of a scurrilous story in the press. But what is the choice for the ordinary citizen? He has the option of an expensive libel suit or of going to the Press Complaints Commission, which has no real power or standing any longer. In short, there is no justice for the ordinary citizen.

If the House decides this evening to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee in this cosy little world of Parliament, that will prove more than ever before that the House is out of touch with the citizens of this country, and that it is about time it was reformed.

4.40 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): To say that the press or the elected members of this House are out of touch with ordinary people is perverse.

Newspapers have to find their constituency every day or every week among members of the public; and Members of Parliament, besides what they do between elections, have to take part in electoral contests when people have a choice. So to argue that any of us—journalists, editors, politicians, Ministers or shadow spokesmen—is out of touch is absurd.

Before dealing with the motion I should like to say where I stand. It is not easy to make a speech that is not popular or which does not seek party advantage. One of the tasks of this Parliament is to ensure that we frustrate all attempts to control the media.

Part of the freedom of the press is the freedom to be wrong. It is no true freedom if we say that the press has the freedom only to be right or to say things which it can prove in a court of law.

The Guardian is to be both congratulated and criticised—there were two examples of this yesterday. It is to be congratulated for its persistence over the years in the Carl Bridgewater case, over which the paper has challenged the courts. It is to be condemned—although not to the same degree—for its absurd front-page story about the Minister and the part-time dentistry.

What exactly are we trying to refer to the Committee of Privileges? The point at stake is a narrow one. I must declare an interest, as having earned £200 from *The Guardian* and accepted a meal from its editor. The issue solely concerns the use of the House of Commons letter heading. It does not concern whether a piece of paper was stolen—we do not know whether it was. At stake is the representation as from the House of Commons. We are not discussing the signature of the private secretary either.

The issue for the House concerns whether the editor is prepared to tell the Privileges Committee, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake."

There are of course plenty of other issues to debate, criticise or defend, but they are not especially important for the Committee.

Some issues should be discussed inside the newspaper itself and in the media generally: how far was *The Guardian* being used by other people? How far was it conscious of being thus used? Did the paper—regardless of my views—pursue what it thought was a legitimate line of inquiry?

The editor of *The Guardian* is not in the same position as other people. In times past the paper may have sought special privileges for itself, as it did in 1974-75 over the capital transfer tax and the wealth tax. It may have had the advantage of £70 million falling off the back of a lorry into its trust in 1990.

Its editor's position is in effect a protected freehold. There are also arguments within the trust about the independence and character of *The Guardian*. All these are matters for the paper to decide.

The House has two tasks, of which the first, for the Committee of Privileges, is to find an answer to the question: does the editor accept he was wrong to use the House of Commons letterhead, as he did?

Secondly, and away from the Committee, will we go on frustrating the efforts made by Members on both sides of the House to shackle the media? By all means let us get involved in arguments with the press and criticise it, but we must not use the Privileges Committee to try to control what journalists do in their legitimate role of vacuum cleaners, picking up the dirt and sifting it, sometimes making mistakes but often getting it right when they decide what to publish for the public.

4.44 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): We have just heard a sensible and refreshing speech by the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley)—probably the only one of its kind that we shall hear from a Conservative Member today.

That Mr. Preston was wrong, and that *The Guardian* was unjustified and fell below acceptable standards in falsifying a fax transmission so that it appeared to come from a Member of this House has been frankly admitted.

I do not know what kind of admission Conservative Members expect from Mr. Preston. Do they expect him to walk naked through the snow, crying, "I'm guilty!"? We have already heard a great deal of exaggeration from Tory Members today.

Mr. Preston's act was certainly reprehensible, although in many ways the use of the House of Commons logo was less reprehensible than the use of the signature of an entirely innocent civil servant who has nothing to do with these issues.

All this is much to the discredit of *The Guardian* and Mr. Preston and it must colour how we decide to vote tonight. But what worries me about this debate, about the motion and about the whole issue is the fact that it has been characterised by an extraordinary outburst of self-righteousness and by subjective and political indignation of the kind that does this House no good. It brings politicians into further disrepute and it shows that at least some Members of the House are out of touch with the real indignation felt by members of the public about Members of Parliament. The public feel that some Members of this House do not seem to know the difference between the legitimate exercise of judgment, occasionally appetised by a free lunch, and burying their snouts so deep in corporate troughs that they have been able to enjoy a diet almost entirely comprising lobbyist-fed truffles.

Before we decide whether to refer this matter to the Committee of Privileges, let us look for a moment at the real effect of Mr. Preston's subterfuge. Amid the accusations of blackmail and forgery it has emerged—putting it at its lowest—that at least some of Mr. Al

Fayed's statements are true. Still, it is not surprising that there should at an early stage have been a degree of mutual distrust between *The Guardian* and Mr. Al Fayed.

What is described in the motion as a letter was not used to deceive anyone in any responsible position, inexcusable though it was. Two conclusions should be drawn from this episode. The first is that Mr. Preston did go beyond the limits of legitimate journalism; that will certainly be a factor colouring how we vote later. The second conclusion is that the evidence confirmed as a result of the subterfuge raises matters in the public interest which are important and which require further explanation from the Chief Secretary—along with other allegations made in this morning's *Daily Mirror* which are also of great seriousness. Uncomfortable though Conservative Members may find it, it is a fact that, despite the subterfuge, *The Guardian* has done the country a service.

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North) *rose—*

Mr. Carlile: I am sorry; a great many Members want to speak.

In my view, the House, in deciding how to vote on the motion, should accept that *The Guardian* should be congratulated on bringing into the public domain issues concerning the behaviour of Members of the House which are legitimate matters for public interest. Those are the issues that we must address in gauging the point on the scale of indignation where our judgment should rest at the end of the debate.

It should not be forgotten by those of us who go into the Lobby that the Government have known about the action on the part of Mr. Preston since 18 May. It should not be forgotten that the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) knew about the fax on 11 May. I have a copy of his response to it and it is extremely relaxed and far from as indignant as the expressions on his behalf by right hon. and hon. Conservative Members.

When we decide how to act tonight it should not be forgotten that the way in which the issue has emerged has involved a degree of politicisation of the Cabinet Secretary, a man of integrity, which has sent shudders through First Division civil servants. Nor should it be forgotten that the Government's incandescent reaction to Mr. Preston's conduct does not lie comfortably if a test of consistency is applied. The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) is not in his place now, but I heard him fulminating about how disgraceful it was for a piece of House of Commons notepaper to be used in a forged fax. Of course, he is right. He is also certainly right that an issue of that sort should go to the Committee of Privileges. But there should be a degree of consistency, so I ask Conservative Members why a very different view was taken in 1992 when someone employed by the Serious Fraud Office forged a fax from my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir. D. Steel) on House of Commons paper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not considering that. [Hon. Members: "Oh yes, we are."] Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman is experienced and learned and he knows that we are not considering on this motion evidence of activities that took place in 1992.

Mr. Carlile: In deciding how we vote tonight we are surely entitled to debate, among other things, the issue of how consistent the Government have been in their actions. On the occasion to which I referred, the Attorney-General—I am glad to see the right hon. and learned Gentleman in the Chamber because I gave notice that I intended to raise this issue as part of my argument—and the Government were satisfied enough for the Attorney-General to state on 7 July 1993 that that forgery was just an unfortunate practical joke committed on April Fool's day.

It would appear that a different set of values were applied to an attack on my right hon. Friend in a fax which was sent to those attending a court of law, in comparison with a fax that relates to a member of the Government.

Mr. Madden: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlile: I shall not give way because many hon. Members wish to speak.

A Government who fail to take disciplinary measures against an officer of the law, who sent a forged fax to persons attending a court building, and in the name of a Privy Councillor, with the clear intention to deceive, are hardly in a position to do any more than set new standards of unjustifiable sanctimoniousness in respect of the fax under dispute, which deceived nobody.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the hon. and learned Gentleman is mistaken about his facts. The issue is remote from the debate. I would be grateful if he clarified those facts for himself before he proceeds further with that issue.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Tell us the facts then.

The Attorney-General: The error in his understanding is that the letter in question was produced by a police officer. The matter was looked at extremely carefully and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) and the hon. and learned Gentleman were carefully written to. He is misleading himself about the accuracy of the background.

Mr. Carlile *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. While it is perfectly fair and appropriate to refer to a number of incidents that took place when charging hon. Members to make up their minds, the hon. and learned Gentleman then developed his argument with the result that the Attorney-General quite rightly raised a point of order. The hon. and learned Gentleman is responsible for his own words, but it is my responsibility to ensure that he debates the motion. I trust that he will now return to it.

Mr. Carlile: I would like to answer the Attorney-General and would do so, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall obey your injunction.

I hope that no newspaper will ever again make use of the House of Commons logo or of a Member's name in the manner under debate. I also hope, however, that the Nolan committee, a rigorous inquiry by the Committee of Privileges and a thorough investigation by the Select Committee on Members' Interests will result in any future debates of this kind not being caused by highly questionable dealings with murky arms dealers, freebies at the Ritz and fistfuls of Harrods vouchers.

[Mr. Carlile]

Before we decide how to vote tonight many questions remain to be answered. The person who has already had the courage to ask many relevant questions has been the fallible Mr. Peter Preston. We should bear that in mind in deciding how we vote. I hope that after the reproof which the debate clearly implies, Mr. Preston will not only regret the sending of the fax, but will pursue issues such as: how can the Home Secretary really expect the House to believe that he was trying to ensure that Mr. Ali Al Fayed's nationality application was fairly—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman may be an experienced lawyer but those remarks are entirely out of order and beyond the scope of the debate. If he has nothing else to say, I should be grateful if he concluded because a number of hon. Members wish to speak. Does he have anything further to say?

Mr. Carlile: It is my submission to the House that if there is to be a reference to the Committee of Privileges, the sort of question to which I started to allude should not be cast away in a cursory inquiry. It is not enough for the Committee of Privileges simply to demand Mr. Preston's attendance so that he can say sorry.

On balance, I shall vote for the motion because I trust the Committee of Privileges to carry out a full inquiry. I also trust it to include the actions not only of Mr. Preston, but of all those right hon. and hon. Members who have been tainted by evidence that their pockets may have dictated their judgment. I also trust the Committee to include evidence not only from those right hon. and hon. Members, but from Mr. Al Fayed and Mr. Rowland. I trust it to carry out a rigorous inquiry, free from party interest and founded, for a change, upon a genuine search for the truth.

4.57 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I hesitate to say anything that may get Mr. Peter Preston off the hook, partly because he was the newspaper editor who shopped Sarah Tisdall and ensured that she went to prison and partly because, some years ago, I had occasion to look into the background of Mr. Al Fayed and I am bound to say that I came to the conclusion that he was pathologically corrupt. I will say something on behalf of Mr. Peter Preston, however, and argue why we should not refer this matter to the Committee of Privileges.

In terms of consistency, equity and fairness the public will be a bit uneasy about what the House is doing tonight. Some years ago, a question arose about the use of Downing street notepaper by Mr. Denis Thatcher. On that occasion, I do not remember some demented hyena from Thanet, North fulminating at the mouth—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not sure if I heard the hon. Gentleman right, but if he used the term "demented hyena", I would be most grateful if he would withdraw it.

Mr. Sedgemore: I shall certainly withdraw the remark, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not hear the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) fulminating at the mouth and asking that Mr. Denis Thatcher be reported to the Privileges Committee, brought to the Bar of the House, or humiliated in some other way. We must treat the editor of *The Guardian* in the same way as the husbands of Prime Ministers.

On the subject of notepaper, we can all fulminate somewhat pompously about the use of that paper. Like everyone else, I have to deprecate its use by anyone other than a Member of Parliament, although on at least one occasion I used a sheet of House of Commons notepaper for private and personal business. I suppose that that constitutes theft, but I am not sure. Even this morning, I received a note from the researcher of another Member of Parliament on a little sheet of House of Commons notepaper, which asked me out to lunch. I am not sure where that comes in the great pantheon of such things, but we can whip ourselves up into an unjustified frenzy.

I understand that additional factors are involved and I will come to them, but I am concerned that the public will think that the British establishment and Parliament are once again saying that the accuser should become the accused. It would not be the first time that that has happened here or in some other countries.

In the mid-1980s, I investigated a bank and Lloyd's. We were not talking about a sheet of notepaper, but of millions of pounds and of hundreds of millions. A small analogy is that at the end of the investigation, a detective chief inspector and a detective sergeant came to question me in a room in this House and suggested that I might be a conspirator in the case and that the whole investigation might have been a result of my conspiring with someone who ran abroad to destabilise the British Government. That is absurd. The accuser became the accused.

In Italy recently, Mr. Berlusconi found himself in difficulties. He was accused and what did he do? He turned on the judges and said that they were breaking the law and the constitution. There is always a tendency for people who are engaged in wrongdoing to protect themselves by attacking others.

The public may think that that is what is happening in this case. Mr. Peter Preston has launched some allegations, some of which may be true and some false, but we are being asked to turn him into the defendant and the criminal to deflect those allegations.

I am sure that Madam Speaker has been given the highest legal advice and I would not challenge anything that she said. I speak as a very modest and humble lawyer. Whatever the legal advice she has been given, once the matter is referred to the Privileges Committee, it will find itself in conflict with the law. Today, we have heard several allegations about criminal offences—mostly judicially illiterate stuff, but never mind that—committed by Mr. Peter Preston. When the Committee launches its inquiry, even within the terms of the motion on the Order Paper, it will have to discuss whether he has committed those offences.

Neither the House nor the Privileges Committee has any right to act as a court of law in a criminal case. For the Privileges Committee or the House as a whole to set themselves up as a court of law in a criminal case is both improper and unconstitutional. That is why my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) raised a point of law. Perhaps he should have raised it as a point of debate. That seems the most powerful reason for us to decide that there is another way out.

In that splendid voice, which is renowned throughout the world, Madam Speaker gave Mr. Peter Preston a wigging. She made it clear exactly what she thought of him. She does not like what he did and nor do most of the rest of us. Surely that is enough. We do not want to become involved in a conflict between this House and the judiciary and we do not want to make ourselves look absurd or pompous.

5.4 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) as he used many of my arguments, so my remarks can be shorter.

Notwithstanding my long interest in the freedom and the responsibilities of the press, the very fact that we are dealing with the press today shows that the issue of privilege is involved. The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) carefully argued that there is a delicate balance between press freedom and the freedom of the press to investigate politicians.

My argument follows directly on from that of my colleague the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch. If we bring a newspaper editor before the Privileges Committee and possibly to the Bar of the House to be disciplined in some way for raising questions about the Government's conduct, the House will be misunderstood. People outside will not understand—although they have reason to criticise the press and be critical of the way in which it deals with individuals and groups—primarily because they also understand that one of the roles of the press is to call to account the Executive and to some extent the legislature. For that reason, the House needs to be very careful before it disciplines the press.

Part of the function of the press is to challenge us. That does not make Peter Preston right over the fax. Clearly, he was wrong and has said so openly.

I remind Conservative Members who are minded to vote for the motion to remember that the Opposition have infinitely more experience of our party being attacked by the press. It happens all the time [*Laughter.*] Yes, it happens all the time. That situation has changed in recent years, not because the press has been critical of the Tory party, but because of criticism of the present Prime Minister. I accept that that is happening in a major way, but that does not alter the fact that usually the Labour party is attacked. That should not trouble us in this debate but it warns both parties and all Members of Parliament that we would be setting a dangerous precedent by arraigning an editor.

If I wanted to be Machiavellian I might suggest that Conservative Members should think carefully about what is involved. If I became aware of a breach of privilege of the House I would have two options—bring the matter to the notice of the House or say nothing about it. I might have good reason for doing the latter, but what would happen if another Member of Parliament brought up the matter, as the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) did today? It would then be debated in the Privileges Committee and afterwards in the Chamber and hon. Members might want to know why the breach was not reported in the first instance—in this case, back in May. In all honesty, if the Conservative party wants to debate that in such a way, from a purely party political point of view I should be happy to do so. However, I do not think that it makes much sense for it to do so.

In this case, it would be a serious mistake for the House to overreact and to arraign the editor of *The Guardian* before a Committee of the House. It would be totally misunderstood outside, as some of my colleagues said. If anyone has doubts, he should refer to the debate in the House on 24 January 1957, when it arraigned Sir John Junor, then the editor of the *Sunday Express*, to appear before it. I have little time for him as I think that he was an appalling editor, but that is neither here nor there. The House called him before it because he claimed that if petrol rationing came in, Members of Parliament would vote themselves large allowances to get round it. When we look back on that case, we think that it was crazy and that we were going over the top.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman has an account of the words that John Junor used, perhaps he would share them with the House.

Mr. Soley: The words are not recorded in *Hansard*. However, if the hon. Gentleman buys today's copy of *The Guardian* he will find them accurately reported there. Mr. Junor was alleging that hon. Members would abuse their position by ensuring that they had additional rations.

Mr. Bottomley: Mr. Junor did say he was sorry.

Mr. Soley: That is right.

I say in all seriousness that the House should not get into this ball game and arraign editors of the press. As I showed clearly through my Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill, many people outside the House have good reason to be angry about press irresponsibility. What happens to them is often far more serious than what happens to Members of Parliament and Ministers, who are better able to defend themselves. If we took a hard line with editors when they attacked Members of Parliament, but not when they attacked vulnerable groups or individuals outside the House, that would be utterly misunderstood, and rightly so.

It would be much better to back off now, which is why I shall vote against the motion. Although Mr. Preston was wrong to send the fax, it would be stupid and wrong of the House to arraign a member of the press. If we did, when we looked back on it in 20 years' time, as we look back now to the 1957 example, we would say, "What on earth were we doing? What on earth were we thinking about?"

I would be tempted to vote for the motion only if, included in the Committee's deliberations was the question of why hon. Members and members of the Government, who were aware of the breach of privilege in May, did not choose to report it to the House.

5.11 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I declare an interest as a journalist who has very occasionally worked for *The Guardian*.

I oppose the motion without in any way minimising the serious error of judgment of which Peter Preston is guilty. I have been the victim of not one, but two forged letters on my headed notepaper. Both of them were given to the police and thoroughly investigated, although the culprits have not yet been found. The hurt and anger caused when

[Mr. George Galloway]

someone's headed notepaper has been used to impersonate and misrepresent, and the plausibility of a letter purported to come from a Member of Parliament, are serious matters. However, it is critical that the House keeps the matter in perspective and avoids over-reaction.

The earlier part of the debate, although not the later, was not an edifying sight. Tory Members worked themselves into a lather—this time it was against the left-wing newspaper *The Guardian*, but only a few months ago it was against the right-wing newspaper *The Sunday Times*. They have shot the messenger and disregarded the message. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) cried "smear". If any hon. Member knows about smears, it is him. It has not been a pretty sight.

I began to question the judgment of Mr. Peter Preston long ago, even though I occasionally took work from him. As has been said, he caused a young, vulnerable woman, Sarah Tisdall, to go to prison because of his failure to protect her as his source in the Ponting case. Perhaps Mr. Fayed, a richer and much more powerful individual, required more protection than that young, vulnerable woman, but that does not strike me as being very plausible.

I believe that Mr. Preston will regret the extent to which he climbed into bed—I hope that you will forgive that phrase, Mr. Deputy Speaker—with Mr. Fayed. His name is not Al Fayed; that is one of the many misrepresentations of which he has been guilty while in this country. He is a liar and a crook. The Government's investigation of him during the takeover of Harrods made that quite clear. He was thrown out of Haiti by Papa Doc, who could not bear his stench of corruption. He blackmailed—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying beyond the motion. Will he return to it, please?

Mr. Galloway: I accept your stricture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the fact that Mr. Preston's judgment is flawed for all to see is germane to whether we should leave the matter there as has been suggested, or compound it by referring it to the Privileges Committee. Nevertheless, I accept your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will say no more about Mr. Fayed—other than that the editor and Members of Parliament who were in bed with him will have cause to regret it. He is a man who keeps the receipts; he is a man who keeps the tape recordings; he is a man who, as we may soon discover, even keeps the video recordings from the bedrooms of the Ritz.

It is not plausible for hon. Members to work themselves into a lather about the mere misuse of a House of Commons logo. After all, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) emblazoned one on the elegant ankle of a stockinged lady on the cover of her sexy novel, which is selling like cold cakes in the remainder shops.

I do not know whether the former Prime Minister's son, when travelling in her gravy train, ever used House of Commons notepaper, but his father certainly did.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is an abuse of the debate. I should be grateful if, for the second time of asking, the hon. Gentleman would return to the motion.

Mr. Galloway: You are the boss, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it seems to me that precedent and consistency are issues—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That may be so, but conjecture is not.

Mr. Galloway: In that case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall avoid conjecture.

Many people misuse our notepaper. Indeed, one hon. Member used it to send out an offer of South African wine at knocked-down prices under apartheid. It was the Member for Pretoria, South or Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle); I forget which. The fact is that many people have done similar things. It is always wrong, but it is important to keep a sense of perspective—

Mr. David Shaw: That was not forgery.

Mr. Galloway: Forgery is a criminal offence. I am not a lawyer, but I know that for something to be a crime there must be criminal intent. I do not believe that any hon. Member thinks that Peter Preston, as fallible and mistaken as he was, did what he did with criminal intent.

Mr. Shaw: It was forgery.

Mr. Galloway: It was forgery only if it was done with criminal intent.

Mr. Shaw: Peter Preston has already admitted forgery; the question is whether that is a criminal offence. As I understand it, forgery in itself is not necessarily a criminal offence—although it is a very serious matter—and that an important factor is whether there was financial gain. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that financial gain may have been the intent both of Mr. Fayed and of Mr. Preston, in terms of increasing his newspaper's circulation.

Mr. Galloway: Forgery, by definition, is a crime. If Mr. Preston is guilty of forgery, he is guilty of a crime. However, he can be guilty of forgery only if his action was based on criminal intent. Many people sign documents when they apply for jobs as our researchers and they are not always open and above board, but we do not drag them before the Privileges Committee. Perhaps we should. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Dover brought a prostitute into the House under bogus—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members will know that I am not a lawyer either and we are not here to debate the legal definition of certain acts. We are here to debate whether, under the motion, the editor of *The Guardian* should appear before the Privileges Committee. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now succinctly put his reasons why that should or should not happen.

Mr. Galloway: I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having been dragged into the gutter most often frequented by the hon. Member for Dover. The electorate will deliver its verdict on the hon. Gentleman very shortly.

Peter Preston has been a fool; he may even have been a knave, but the public outside are more concerned about the activities and actions of Members of the House of Commons than they are about the actions of newspaper editors. If we fool ourselves about that we do ourselves and this place no credit at all. We shall merely deepen the deep cynicism and hostility that is growing in the country towards Parliament if we are seen to pursue the mediaeval route of dragging a newspaper editor to the Bar of the House, uncovered, as the regulations say, and arraigning him for an offence of bad judgment when so many Members of the House of Commons daily demonstrate bad judgment themselves.

5.21 pm

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): I have three interests to declare. First, some 20 years ago I had the honour to be president of the National Union of Journalists. I am now a Member of Parliament but I still consider myself in part a journalist—an honourable, decent and necessary profession.

Secondly, I have taken *The Guardian* shilling, so I must declare some fees from that paper. However, even after several years of attempting to get my articles accepted, my fees do not yet amount to the £1,000 offered and accepted by two Conservative Members for asking questions.

Thirdly, on the issue of subterfuge, which is part of the debate, I was dismissed by the BBC some 20 years ago when, on the instruction of a producer, I faked a phone call to a phone-in programme on the BBC. I paid a heavy professional price and thus I was interested when I heard the right hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), the chairman of the Conservative party, at the recent Bournemouth conference, invite Gideons, as he called them, to make fake phone calls to put in propaganda on behalf of the party.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): What has that got to do with the motion?

Mr. MacShane: What it has to do with it is that 20 years ago that was the standard set for subterfuge. Two or three weeks ago, that standard disappeared when a Cabinet member invited the British public to practise subterfuge on our airwaves.

The logo is germane to the debate. I am concerned about that because this weekend my children got hold of some House of Commons notepaper and were busy scribbling on it. I am not sure whether they will have to be brought before the Committee of Privileges. If they are, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will not be taking notes of what they have to say, but instead will read them one of the fairy tales with which he so often beguiles the nation.

It is difficult for Opposition Members ever to book a Dining Room in the corridor downstairs. Time and again they are all being used for Tory fund-raising dinners organised on House of Commons notepaper. Reference has been made to the wonderful book of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). We authors appreciate each other's writings. I enjoyed the hon. Lady's book and I understand why she put the House of Commons logo on its cover.

We come then to the question of forgery. I read in *The Times* this morning that in the 18th century someone was executed for forging a letter. We have heard much talk of crime. I understand that the mover of the motion, the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), is also referring the matter to the police. We have heard a great deal of talk that what took place was a criminal action. I cannot understand then why in May, when the Chief Secretary, the Cabinet Secretary and the Prime Minister knew of this so-called criminal action, it was not reported to anyone. Either it was a crime then or it was not. If it was, they were grossly derelict in their duty.

The NUJ and the Press Complaints Commission have a code of conduct which covers matters such as this. The NUJ code states:

> "A journalist shall obtain information, photographs and illustrations only by straightforward means. The use of other means can be justified only by over-riding considerations of the public interest. The journalist is entitled to exercise a personal conscientious objection to the use of such means."

The code of conduct of the Press Complaints Commission is along much the same lines. It would be helpful if the two could be combined and we could, to use a phrase from the Government, have a charter of journalism that could be taught in schools. It would not be a statutory code, but it would be part of a journalist's way of life.

There we have the words:

> "The use of other means can be justified only by over-riding considerations of the public interest."

The person who decided that dodgy stays in the Ritz were a matter of public interest was not Mr. Preston but the Prime Minister when he dismissed the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) for taking that money and staying in the Ritz. He dismissed another Minister for having a financial relationship with Mr. Fayed. It was the Prime Minister who decided that there was overriding public interest.

So we come to the question of Mr. Preston. Yes, he was wrong, and every single journalist to whom I have spoken since the affair broke agrees that he was wrong. The Sarah Tisdall affair was referred to earlier. There was no question then, when Mr. Preston did the Government a favour by shopping her, of bringing him to the Bar of the House, but Mr. Preston suffered—

Mr. Dalyell: Will my hon. Friend reconsider the use of the word "shopping" in that context?

Mr. MacShane: I am sorry. Perhaps that is a question that Ms Tisdall and Mr. Preston can answer better than I can.

The obloquy that Mr. Preston suffered then came from his journalist peers, just as the unhappiness that he feels today is because many British journalists think that he has done wrong. The tone of remarks made so far in the debate is probably winning, minute by minute, the journalists and the people of Britain to Mr. Preston's side. I would regret that.

The House can make a gesture tonight, but the real problem is that the House is parlous in so many things. We live in a form of democratic, one-party state. We have a centralised Government who have replaced local and other democracies with their placemen and their wives. The press, for all its faults, is our only bulwark against the kind of centralisation of power that we are daily witnessing.

I am a new Member. As a son of two immigrants who, in years gone by, would have loved to have had parliamentary democracy, I value what the House stands for. On a

[Mr. MacShane]

question such as this, if it is the House versus the press, the British people, able to vote every five years for a new House, will prefer to support those who have brought the attention of the public to matters of grave concern.

I enjoyed the speech made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). However, his conclusion in no way followed from his argument. I shall be going into the No Lobby tonight.

5.29 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I have no criticism of the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who is an honourable man, but I am surprised that he learnt only recently of the alleged fraud in question.

Mr. Wilshire: I lead a sheltered life.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman must lead a cloistered existence—one that does not involve reading newspapers, which is unusual for a Member of Parliament.

An atmosphere of hysteria is settling over the House, and that is destructive. Mud tends to stick to all of us, even the most innocent—of which, I hasten to add, I am not one. Therefore, it is important that these matters are speedily and publicly resolved.

I am not interested in the actions of the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) or in who paid for his weekend in Paris. I recognise that there could be implications for the rules governing the conduct of Ministers, but that is for others to decide. Much as I would like to, I cannot condone the methods by which information on the hotel bill of the right hon. Member for Thanet, South was secured, although I suppose that a public interest defence could be entered. Only time will tell whether the methods used were justifiable.

It is not simply a matter of using House of Commons notepaper. That has been done by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. They had their wrists slapped, but they were not reported to the Committee of Privileges. There is an added dimension, in the form of a signature that purported to come from the office of the right hon. Gentleman. That is different from just using a piece of House notepaper.

We are told that time is of the essence in everything that we do, and this matter is out of time. That is why I shall not support the motion in the Lobby tonight. One keeps returning to relevant questions. When did the right hon. Member for Thanet, South first become aware of the use of House of Commons notepaper in a letter purporting to come from him? It appears that he knew around 10 May. In a letter to the editor of *The Guardian*, the right hon. Gentleman said that he clearly knew of that and would report it to the Government.

When the Ritz found out that it had received an illegal or fraudulent fax purporting to come from the right hon. Gentleman, it alerted him immediately. He faxed back this germane reply:

> "The Guardian article has caused surprisingly little serious interest here, probably because it was one of the most boring journalistic examples of an Editor's personalised obsession ever to find its way into print in a newspaper. Moreover there is really little or nothing for even an ill-wisher to follow up since nobody has done anything wrong, even in the light of The Guardian's somewhat flawed and inaccurate story.
>
> Because of the above-mentioned reaction my present plan is, as my teenage children would say, to 'stay cool'. However, I am taking further legal advice and so is the Government in the light of the new dimension to the story which your fax has revealed."

That fax was dated 11 May. If the right hon. Gentleman was prepared to stay cool on 11 May, why are Conservative Members getting hot about the issue on 2 November?

Mr. Dalyell: Was there not at least a moral obligation on the part of the Leader of the House to give his parliamentary colleagues in all parts of the House some explanation for that delay? Apart from anything else, that would have been good parliamentary manners. Normally, the parliamentary manners of the Leader of the House are impeccable. On this occasion, he owed it to us, as a matter of debt, to provide an explanation. There may be one, but we have not heard it.

Mr. Banks: I entirely agree. Appropriate answers might colour our judgment on how to vote later. The hon. Member for Spelthorne, by his own admission, did not know anything about it before, so he cannot answer questions arising out of his own motion. That is an absurd way to conduct tonight's business.

As to the time factor, in a letter to the editor of *The Guardian* dated 18 May, the Cabinet Secretary clearly said that he also knew about the use of House notepaper and the fraudulent use of name purporting to represent the right hon. Member for Thanet, South. It is inconceivable that the Prime Minister himself did not possess knowledge of the alleged forgery in May.

Why was no fuss made in May about serious matters that we are asked to consider on 2 November? Why were the House authorities not alerted to those serious matters in May? Why were you, Madam Speaker, not told about them in May, when you might have decided to refer them to the Privileges Committee? You, Madam Speaker, were kept in the dark from May until November, which shows great disrespect to you and to your office.

Mr. Madden: Does my hon. Friend agree that we are also entitled to know whether the Attorney-General gave any advice? Was the matter referred at any time to the Director of Public Prosecutions or to the House authorities? It is wrong that the Leader of the House or somebody else representing the Government did not give the House the information that it has been seeking for the past three hours.

Mr. Banks: I agree entirely. As you tell us, Madam Speaker, time is of the essence when contacting your office in respect of a private notice question. We must demonstrate that we were unable to come to you with knowledge at the time that we first knew about it. We are often ruled out because of time. The motion should have been ruled out for the same reason. Conservative Members, and particularly the principals concerned, had ample time to raise the matter with you. Of course one accepts your ruling, Madam Speaker, but it seems to me that the motion should not have been accepted in the first place.

If the right hon. Member for Thanet, South felt aggrieved and if the matter was so serious, why was no action taken at the earliest possible date? We must return to the question again and again. If we cannot defeat the motion, the Privileges Committee must consider the issue. I suggest that when it does, it throws the complaint out.

The alleged fraud surfaced publicly only last weekend, in *The Sunday Telegraph*. That is a fine choice of newspaper. One knows why the information was put in that loyal Tory newspaper. If Mr. Preston did something wrong, he did it more than six months ago. All the principal characters in this saga knew about it. It was not a matter, as the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) said, of considering whether the matter should be referred to the Press Complaints Commission. All the principal characters had a duty to bring the matter before the House and to complain here—not to shove it on to the PCC. If such action were appropriate then, now that Mr. Preston has resigned from the PCC perhaps the motion should be withdrawn and the matter referred to the commission now. Conservative Members cannot have it both ways.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Press Complaints Commission will sit in secret and that we shall never have a full account of its proceedings?

Mr. Banks: I am sure that among all those trustworthy journalists, one would be prepared to leak what happens on the commission.

We are witnessing an organised exercise in synthetic anger, devised to divert attention. What value can we place on today's outrage when it has spent six months in preparation? It is synthetic outrage.

The last question that I want to address is to someone who is not present in the Chamber—the principal character, the right hon. Member for Thanet, South. Did he want the matter to be referred to the Committee of Privileges? He had ample opportunity to do so. He is not present to answer that question. Did the right hon. Gentleman ask the hon. Member for Spelthorne to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee? If the aggrieved party decided not to refer the matter to the Committee himself, the hon. Member for Spelthorne should not have done so.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Gentleman asked me a simple question—

Madam Speaker: Order. Was the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) giving way?

Mr. Banks: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Gentleman asked me a simple question, to which the answer is no.

Mr. Banks: Well, I must say in conclusion, then, that it is very noble of the hon. Member for Spelthorne to work up so much anger on behalf of the right hon. Member for Thanet, South when his right hon. Friend knew about it on 11 May and said that his position was to "stay cool". I suggest that that is good advice and the House should follow it tonight.

5.39 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I declare an interest because, as a number of hon. Members have pointed out, I do a bit of freelance writing, although I feel bound to observe that, as *The Guardian* pays so badly, my work very seldom appears in that newspaper. I also, perhaps, have slightly more experience of the matter than many hon. Members, because earlier this year I was referred to the Committee of Privileges, as Madam Speaker will remember, on the same question of the use of the House of Commons logo.

It seems to me that there are a number of problems, some of which have been sensibly highlighted by the speeches that we have heard, about the whole idea of referring to the Committee of Privileges. Hon. Members suggested that that will be seen as if the House of Commons is acting trivially. Of course, that is a difficulty. One of the reasons for my distinctive behaviour earlier this year was that I took the view then—indeed, I take it now—that the reputation of the House is determined not by a squiggle on a piece of paper, but by the behaviour of all its Members and Officers.

Nevertheless, it is well to put on record, as I have been criticised for it twice so far in speeches by Opposition Members, that following the representations that were made to me, including your own, Madam Speaker, I asked my publisher to take the logo off and to modify it, and Opposition Members who trouble to buy a copy of the paperback edition, which is now available at £8.99—*[Laughter.]*—will find that the logo has been altered.

Another difficulty with the Committee of Privileges, and a much more serious one, is that hon. Members may be seen to be protecting themselves, and reference to the Committee is seen in that way. In many ways, that does not invalidate the motion. A difficulty will be created, however, if hon. Members will not serve on that Committee. It would make far more sense if hon. Members who said that they are concerned that Members are seen by the public to be protecting themselves were clamouring instead to serve on the Committee of Privileges and, indeed, were voting for the motion. That is rather more the attitude of Front-Bench Opposition Members, who, I understand, plan to vote for the motion. It is a long-standing practice in the House that there is no party difference on references to the Committee of Privileges. It is a shame if some hon. Members prejudge its activities by refusing to serve on it.

A different problem, which, correctly, has been raised, is whether the Committee of Privileges is a serious enough body to bring home to *The Guardian* and other press representatives their duty to behave responsibly. That is why I put a question earlier to a Labour Member, who was so agitated about the press and had such strong reasons for feeling concern at the way in which it sometimes operates against many of us and many other people in public and private life. He said that he was going to abstain or vote against the motion. I asked him what he would do if the press behaved so badly and if there are so many criticisms correctly to be made, if he did not vote for the Committee of Privileges in this case. His answer was, "Ignore it." That is not good enough. We cannot ignore it, so we should vote for the motion.

Much inconsistency has also been flying around tonight. One of the reasons why I came to listen to the whole debate and eventually sought permission to speak was that we have heard speech after speech from Opposition Members deploring subterfuge and bad behaviour, and praising high standards. I must tell them that that applies to the press as well, and that the behaviour of hon. Members and members of the press is not mutually exclusive. We are all expected by our constituents and our readers outside to behave according to the highest possible standards. If it applies to the press as well, it should be appropriate to vote for the motion and take one small step, possibly, to try to re-establish the reputation of what in the past has been a great newspaper.

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

The real privilege in the House is the right to speak freely. In fact, it is the only privilege that is really worth having. It has been somewhat abused today by much of what has been said, and some of the views that have been flying around have rightly been pulled up by yourself, Madam Speaker, and your deputy. But that privilege has existed in the House for centuries. That is the source of the prohibition on general publication that we had in the House until 1972. *Hansard* publishes only with the permission of the House.

It is necessary for us to be able to speak in this place without fear. That is a privilege that I have used sparingly from time to time, and I am glad that I have had that opportunity. Scrutiny by the press is one thing, but subterfuge is another, and that is the issue at the heart of *The Guardian*'s bad behaviour. That is why it is right that it should be considered by a Committee of the House. That is why I shall vote for the motion.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I am not seeking to frustrate hon. Members who have been here throughout the debate and who still seem to want to speak, but I ask them for a little voluntary restraint, as we have been debating the motion for two hours.

5.45 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As the House would like to draw to a conclusion and proceed to a Division, I shall make only three succinct points.

I am the only hon. Member in the House—my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) did not have to do it—who has actually had to stand where that white line is on the Floor of the Chamber and face a full House of Commons, as a result of the Privileges Committee. Whatever anybody says, I do not believe other than that people would find it an awesome and rather terrifying experience. I can assure hon. Members that, having had to be in that position, I know that it is not something that is lightly undertaken.

That is not only my view as a Member of the House of Commons. It was also the view of John Junor. I know because I talked to him about it. As an outsider, he, too, found it an awesome experience. Therefore, what we are proposing for Peter Preston is an extremely serious matter, and we cannot pretend otherwise. Some people may laugh it off, but it is no laughing matter to be brought before the legislature of one's country.

That leads me to the first question. Are we sure that we have got it in proportion? Many other people have done other—shall we say "controversial"—things, who, perhaps, might have greater deserts than being brought to the Bar of the House. So on proportionality I have doubts.

Secondly, I have further doubts, because there are conflicting matters. All right, there is the issue of misbehaviour over House of Commons notepaper, and forgery. There is one point on which I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor)—I do not think that the matter is straightforward. Nothing to do with the Privileges Committee, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) knows, is straightforward.

The matter of protection of sources is a very important issue. It was most succinctly put in an excellent book, well written, called "Officially Secret". This is what the author said:

> "In my reply to General Alexander, dated 20 January, my first priority was to assure a helpful contact that I would obey one of the fundamental rules of journalistic ethics and would not reveal him as my source. I therefore wrote in my reply: 'As for your having shown me a copy I will maintain a grave-like silence about this. Indeed in the very unlikely event of anyone asking me I will know nothing whatever of the existence of your copy.'
>
> My second priority",

says the author,

> "was to protect my own subsequent contacts over the Scott Report delivery to the Telegraph. In order to keep all knowledge of Curtis Brown Limited, Hugh Fraser and Yorkshire Television out of reach of the possible investigations, I ended my letter to the General on an ingenuous note, giving the impression that I had no idea how Hugh Fraser got his copy of the document, and finished with the words:
>
> If I hear any Fleet Street or Biafra lobby gossip on the Scott leak I will let you know. I am most grateful to you for writing as you did about all this, and can assure you that my lips are very firmly sealed—Yours ever, Jonathan."

"Jonathan" was Jonathan Aitken, and it was an extremely good book. He put the point about sources as eloquently as I have ever seen a point about the protection of sources put.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Surely the point is that the protector of sources is meant to have been Mr. Fayed himself, who was deceiving his own employees. That is what is now being put around. I, for one, do not understand how the editor of *The Guardian* can have been required to deceive Mr. Fayed's employees with Mr. Fayed's collusion. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can explain that.

Mr. Dalyell: I admit that my answer to that question wil be tangential. This is a grey area.

For 11 days I sat in the Old Bailey during the trial of Clive Ponting. Reference—ill conceived, in my view—has been made to Sarah Tisdall by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane). The position was more complicated than he suggested. There but for the grace of God went I, in relation to Ponting: fortunately, I kept it as a proceeding in Parliament. But what should people do in such circumstances? Some might argue that the Ponting trial, and what Massiter and Tisdall did, were in the public interest; that too is controversial. The hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) made a legitimate, fair and pertinent intervention, but, as I have said, this is a grey area.

You asked me to be brief, Madam Speaker, but may I have one last go at the Leader of the House while the House is quiet? I feel that this question is very important. I genuinely do not understand the position.

It is said that the Government knew about the matter in the middle of May, when it was the subject of considerable discussion among members of the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to the letters, but he and I know—as will anyone else who reads them—that it was not just a case of Ministers dropping off odd letters; there was intense discussion in the Government.

At the beginning of the debate, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) interrupted my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury to ask, "What on earth is the relevance of time?" Let me say to the Leader of the House—gently, I hope—that that is exactly what bothers us. The reason why we went on about time at the very beginning is our unworthy suspicion—we may be told that it is misplaced, but we feel it nevertheless—that the Government thought, "Ah: in extremis, we now have knowledge of the forged letter." That knowledge, thought the Government, would keep *The Guardian* quiet, and would stop it asking all sorts of questions about other matters. The Government would have something on *The Guardian*, and could exert pressure on it.

"Blackmail" is an unparliamentary word, and I will not use it.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): The hon. Gentleman just has.

Mr. Dalyell: No, I will not use it. The tone of my speech is serious, not yah-boo.

Let me, as courteously as I can, invite the Leader of the House to give his parliamentary colleagues of all parties some explanation of why we are presented with such urgency in November, when the facts were known in May. I think that he owes it to us.

5.54 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I promise to be exceedingly brief. Let me say in passing that I hope never to suffer the experience undergone by my old and hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in 1968, when he appeared at the Bar of the House.

As what I might modestly call a lesser light in this place, I am anxious to make a point. I entered the Chamber today with an open mind. In my view, Mr. Preston has behaved in a dishonourable and foolish way; I remember being deeply dismayed by his actions all those years ago when he failed to protect a young girl whom he should have protected, although he might have suffered in prison for any length of time. He behaved dishonourably then; recently, he behaved in an equally dishonourable way.

Nevertheless, the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) has not convinced me. I came here with the thought that I might abstain, but I intend to vote against the motion, because I feel that Conservative Members have left unanswered questions relating to what can be described only as a most unseemly affair. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow was right to ask the Leader of the House the reason for the unaccountable delay between mid-May and early November. There can be no excuse for such a delay, and—although I have no sympathy for Mr. Preston—I believe that some kind of cover-up is going on.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Godman: I will, but my hon. Friend must be brief, because I have promised to speak briefly.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that a further cause for concern is the conduct of the debate during the past 45 minutes, when I have been listening to it? We have seen the conviction of a person before that person has even been tried; and he is to be tried by a Committee that is politically motivated. That cannot be open and fair judgment, in any event.

Dr. Godman: My hon. Friend has put it in a nutshell: this man is having to endure a political trial, and I think that the House has behaved badly—or it will behave badly if it approves the motion.

Mr. Preston has suffered a tongue-lashing from you, Madam Speaker, and you are a formidable lady in every respect. He deserved it—

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member flatters me.

Dr. Godman: I assure you that I am no flatterer, Madam Speaker. I, too, have felt the sharp edge of your tongue, for far less serious acts. [HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it."] I am getting on with it. I am saying—as one of the lesser lights of this place—that it will do itself a disservice if it votes for the motion. I believe that this man has been found guilty without a chance to defend himself. Perhaps a written letter of apology to you, Madam Speaker, would suffice.

Mr. David Shaw: He has admitted it.

Dr. Godman: He has admitted it, in another place. As my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) pointed out, this is a political trial, and I urge my hon. Friends to vote against the motion.

5.58 pm

Mr. Wilshire: Hon. Members have pressed me to clarify two brief points. First, I was asked when I knew about the matter: the answer is last Sunday. Secondly, I was asked whether I was in touch with my constituents' feelings. I have heard from six today: four were in favour and two against, which suggests to me that I have got it about right.

I learnt something today from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), and I am rather glad that I have never stayed at the Ritz hotel in Paris. Other than that, it simply remains for me to say that, when stripped of all the rhetoric, the facts are clear and simple. There was an abuse of the House; it is documented, and has been admitted. When stripped of all the point-scoring, there is a large measure of agreement across the Floor of the House, and I therefore invite my hon. Friends to agree with me and Opposition Members to agree with the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor).

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 313, Noes 38.

Division No. 339] **[6.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Alton, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas

Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Carlile, Alexander (Montgomry)
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chidgey, David
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'clif)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jowell, Tessa
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maddock, Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Olner, William
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Powell, William (Corby)
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Bowen Wells

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Callaghan, Jim
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Corbyn, Jeremy

Dalyell, Tam
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Hardy, Peter
Hood, Jimmy
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Sedgemore, Brian
Soley, Clive
Wicks, Malcolm
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Ronnie Campbell

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

Local Government

6.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): I beg to move,

That the draft Local Government Act 1988 (Competition) (Defined Activities) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

Madam Speaker: With this we shall also discuss the draft Local Government Act 1988 (Competition) (Defined Activities) (Construction and Property Services) Order 1994.

Mr. Jones: The orders seek to extend the scope of compulsory competitive tendering to legal and construction and property services of local authorities and other bodies. They will also extend CCT to further manual services—supervision of on-street parking, vehicle fleet management and security work. They are the first of the new services to be exposed to competition, as promised in the November 1991 White Paper "Competing for Quality".

Compulsory competitive tendering has proved an excellent vehicle for testing the calibre of in-house staff. It has been with us now for 14 years. I am sure that many will acknowledge that it has led directly to better value public services. Independent research carried out for the Government has found that, so far, competition in the provision of local services has produced average cost savings of about 7 per cent. a year, with the biggest savings in those services that attracted the biggest competitive response. Those savings far outweigh initial tendering costs. However, that is only half the story because the same research shows that CCT has also led to better quality services flowing from organisational and managerial improvements within local government—not increased bureaucracy, but better management. It is all those benefits that we wish to bring to local authority professional services.

Local authorities of all political colours nowadays are adopting a refreshingly undogmatic approach to securing efficient services. Competition is no longer a dirty word. Few still believe that efficiency automatically equates with direct provision. Indeed, no less a person than Jack Dromey of the Transport and General Workers Union has accepted that there is no ideological reason why certain services should be done by the council. At some risk, I fear that I must agree with Mr. Dromey. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with in-house service provision; indeed, some of the best work is done by local authority direct service organisations. But retaining work in house should not be an ideological goal of local authorities.

Our original proposals to extend the scope of CCT were published in November 1991, and our decisions on the way forward announced in November 1992. The services in question are at the core of the local authority and we have considered the implications carefully. The regime will be tough, but realistic and, where necessary, flexible. Local authorities will be free to organise the delivery of white-collar services in the manner most suited to their needs. We are not seeking to dictate an approach to service provision or to stifle innovation.

The regime for legal services, and construction and property services, has been developed in consultation with the local authority associations and a number of local authority staff with a wealth of practical experience in the

[Mr. Jones]

disciplines involved. I would like to thank them all for their time and effort. While we have not seen eye to eye on every matter, discussions in the various working groups have been constructive and I have no doubt that our approach has benefited from the associations and their members' input.

We have also spoken to the professional bodies—the Law Society and the General Council of the Bar, the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Our proposals have also been subject to public consultation. Again, while we may not have agreed with everything said, that broader discussion and input has certainly been helpful and, I am sure, contributed to the regime being both realistic and workable.

The orders have been before the House for some time and hon. Members have had time to consider them. The regime that we are putting in place has been developed paying close heed to the concerns of professionals, both inside and outside local government. I believe that it will successfully balance the need for competition with authorities' legitimate service delivery aims and objectives. It will lead to fair and even-handed competition that will benefit local authorities and the taxpayer alike.

I commend the orders to the House.

6.17 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Minister said that he would answer the questions asked during the debate. I trust that he will listen carefully to the technical issues that have been raised.

The Minister's bullish view of compulsory competitive tendering is not borne out by the facts. I am aware that the Government commissioned a survey from the Institute of Local Government Studies, which reported as he said. But he is aware that that was a study of a fairly small sample of local authorities. There is a general presumption that, had the Government simply left things alone, without introducing any aspect of compulsion, local authorities would have achieved the same results in house simply because of the pressures on them over those years.

The Minister spoke of the refreshingly undogmatic approach of those in local government. That approach is not mirrored by the Government. We know that when the Government introduce orders such as these to the House they do so as one of their periodic fixes. The Government are hyped up and addicted, and when they cannot get the privatisation of the Post Office on the agenda, they consider instead a little privatisation in the local authority sector.

We know that the measures have little to do with efficiency. The Government were warned by two different consultancies that the costs of legal services outside local government were liable to rise compared with the costs inside local government.

The case for our debating the orders has not been made. They are part of the Government's ideological fixation, but it is a pity that the Minister and his colleagues cannot take the "refreshingly undogmatic" approach that local authorities have taken and see local government for what it is—an important partner in the delivery of local services to our communities. I wish that the Minister would begin to see matters in that light.

It appears that the Minister wants us to quote expert for expert. He claims that the evidence supports the Government's view of CCT, but many people have said that, although the argument might apply to those services which have already been subject to CCT—very often those involving manual work, which can be repetitive and where the impact of CCT is easy to monitor—it will be considerably more difficult to impose CCT on professional services.

I cite Professor Gerry Stoker of the university of Strathclyde's department of government. He said that

> "with CCT moving from blue collar to white collar services, it doesn't follow that the same level of savings will be achieved."

It is incumbent on the Government to make it clear why they expect savings to be made in the professional services and not simply take us once more down an ideological blind alley.

Other voices have also been raised in concern about the impact of CCT. I quote briefly from a speech made recently to the Society of Information Technology Managers' annual conference in Edinburgh. One of the speakers said that CCT

> "had reduced scope for local initiative".

That is an important criticism because it came from the Department of the Environment's deputy secretary, Mr. Christopher Brearley. When someone on the inside is voicing such concerns, one assumes that Ministers share them. I do not want to involve officials in an argument in this place, but I assume that Ministers are aware of those worries. Perhaps the Minister will do the House justice and put it on record why the Department of the Environment itself is beginning to have doubts about CCT and the reduction in scope for local initiative.

That speech was reported in an article in *Municipal Journal* under the headline "Inflexible CCT threat to local democracy, warns mandarin". Again, I should be interested to know whether the Minister goes that far. Does he see CCT as a threat to local democracy? Is that what he wants? I hope that he will make it clear that that is not his aim.

The article details an exchange at the conference. It was suggested to Mr. Brearley that, in view of the uncertainty suffered by the work force and because of the lack of flexibility caused by CCT, it would be more sensible to reduce regulation of CCT. Mr. Brearley replied:

> "You'll have to ask ministers . . . ministers are suspicious when we talk of the need for flexibility."

Tonight we have a benchful of Ministers of one kind or another; perhaps they—individually or collectively—would like to show flexibility and even respond one after another. *[Interruption.]* The Minister for Local Government says that the flexibility is to be able to leave; of course, he is quite at liberty to do so. It is interesting to hear that Ministers are suspicious of the need for flexibility. I hope that the Minister will prove that those suspicions are unfounded, even if only among those whom I might call his nearest and dearest, or those who were his nearest and dearest before they made speeches to professional conferences. I hope that the Minister will recognise that some aspects of the orders require greater flexibility than has been demonstrated so far.

I now refer specifically to the services involved. It is a little surprising that there has been no attempt to justify this particular selection or ragbag of services coming before the House now. It would have been helpful had the Minister told us of the experience of the one or two remaining flagship Conservative local authorities of voluntarily market testing services. Westminster is such a council and Croydon was one in its previous incarnation, before it changed control in May and became Labour controlled. They had put some aspects of legal services into the private sector. I am told that such is the parlous state of legal services in at least part of the capital—because of the collapse of the housing market and the need for lawyers to earn what I might describe, at least in this place, as an honest crust—that private sector lawyers are interested in taking up the contracts. The Minister should have said at least a little about the trade-off between cost and quality.

I believe that the Department of the Environment is prepared to consider the need to ensure quality in respect of professional services. During the passage of the Local Government Act 1992, we debated quality and the dual envelope concept which was later dropped because it was recognised that it was not the most sensible way to deal with quality. We need a reassurance that quality in legal services will be on the agenda from the start.

It is partly because there are doubts about quality that a significant number of people have questioned whether the move towards CCT with regard to legal services and professional, construction and property services is consistent with efficiency. The Government commissioned Kieran Walsh, the professor of local government at the Institute of Local Government Studies, to carry out a survey. He has recently written about the need to maintain core services within local government and the importance of ensuring that local government has sufficient professional in-house competence to operate as a local authority, not simply as the managing structure for disparate businesses. I hope that the Minister will at least comment on that point because it is intimately connected with the arguments and technical debate about how many services should be subject to CCT.

The Minister said that there had been meetings between the Department of the Environment and other bodies about legal services and CCT. He almost said that there had been some agreement, although I am sure that some bodies such as the Law Society and local authority associations might be surprised to hear that there had been a great meeting of minds. However, it is fair to put it on the record that local authority associations accept that a number of the matters that they raised were recognised and acted on. Having put that on the record, I must say that there are still some basic problems in this respect.

The Government employed two consultancies—PA Consultants in 1991 and Coopers and Lybrand more recently—which both reported that CCT would in all likelihood mean that the cost of legal services would rise for local authorities. The Law Society felt that there were two flaws in the proposals. The first was that there would be a "crowding out" in respect of legal services, whereby ordinary people could not gain access to lawyers because local authorities were employing them. Secondly, and perhaps more significant, it felt that CCT in this instance might compromise lawyers if the local community felt that they were heavily in alliance with the local authority and therefore unable to offer them unbiased advice in any action that they wanted to take against the authority.

The real doubts that local authorities still have relate first to the time scale and secondly to the 45 per cent. cut-off point for the work to be tendered out. No doubt the Minister will say to the House that the Government have already relaxed a little on the time scale. I accept that, but there are still concerns about the short time scale being imposed on local authorities.

The Government have moved the deadline for legal services to April 1996, but the local authorities are saying that it would be helpful and in everyone's interests if a further relaxation of that time scale could be considered. As the issues have not yet been decided, I hope that the Minister will at least agree to take them away and consider the possibility of a further six months' remission.

Equally, the size of the competitive requirements worries local authorities and the local authority associations. The Minister will be aware that PA Consultants originally recommended that 33 per cent. of services be made available for the tendering process. The Government increased that to 45 per cent. One of PA Consultants' arguments in favour of a 33 per cent. level concerns the difficulty that local authorities will have in hitting a precise figure, which means that they will need to over-tender to be certain to fall within the guidelines.

It is being argued that a 45 per cent. requirement is harsh anyway. I shall say more about that in a moment. However, as well as being harsh it is even more unwieldy simply because of the fluctuations in the need for legal services over time.

The main argument against the 45 per cent. requirement is that it is onerous anyway and forces local authorities to put out to tender more services than is helpful. That will threaten local authorities' ability to run a core legal service, which is not simply a professional and technical service, there to be hired at will, but is part of the way in which a council relates to its corporate duties as a local authority. I hope that the Minister will consider that argument carefully. It has been put to him before, and I hope that he will comment on it tonight, if only to say that he will take the issue away and reconsider it.

The Minister will know that similar arguments about the time scale have been raised in connection with the next area—construction and property services. He has been asked whether such haste is necessary in implementing the tendering process. And again, perhaps the more important issue concerns the specification that 65 per cent. of work must be tendered out. There is concern about the "de minimis" threshold for the minimum percentage of work that local authorities must tender.

The local authorities have argued consistently that some areas of work should be excluded from the tendering block, because they are integral to authorities' democratic functioning or strategic policy making, or because they are essential for maintaining an expert client function able to liaise with consultants, or because they have to be retained in house on the grounds of public interest and probity.

I hope that the Minister will accept, as I believe the Government already have, that there is an argument that at least some of those areas of work should be excluded. The reason why I want to push the Minister to reconsider

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the 65 per cent. limit is explained partly by a survey conducted by the local authority associations, which found that in a significant minority of local authorities—38 per cent.—the client core functions represented significantly more than 35 per cent. of construction and property services.

I hope that the Minister accepts the case that there is a need for a core service. If he does, I hope, too, that he will recognise that if local authorities say that core services account for more than 35 per cent., he needs to reconsider the specification.

When the Minister said that considerable consultation on professional construction and property services had taken place with the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Institute of British Architects, he seemed to suggest that there was a degree of agreement among those bodies with the way in which the Government were going. It is worth placing on record the fact that at no point did the professional bodies express any support for the tendering process. In fact, they all oppose it, and I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that.

The next area consists of security services, vehicle fleet management and the supervision of parking. The Minister said that there had been considerable dialogue about that with various bodies. That may have been true for legal services and professional construction and property services, but there is a feeling that there was little dialogue about the other activities, and little opportunity for local authorities and others to make their views known.

For example, although the consultation document appeared before Christmas last year, the draft order laid in June this year contains considerable changes, and even now there are many areas in which local authorities are not sure of the position regarding the precise implementation of tendering.

A letter of reply was sent to the secretary of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities from the director of local government within the Department of the Environment, Mrs. McDonald. It said:

> "As you will by now be aware, we have debates in both Houses on the draft Order timetabled this week"—

the letter was dated 31 October—

> "Once the House has approved the Orders we will lay the timetable Regulations. Although this is slightly later in the day than we might have hoped, local authorities have been well aware of our intentions for some time, and details were confirmed in the Minister's announcement of 14 June when the Order was tabled. There is no reason why they could not have begun planning for CCT, and indeed I know a number are well advanced in their preparations".

That might seem fine at first sight, but the Minister must realise that there is still considerable uncertainty about how tendering in those three different areas will operate in practice. For example, the AMA wrote to the Department of the Environment on 16 August asking whether about 15 aspects of security services—I shall not read them all into the record—would be exempted from the tendering process on the ground that each consisted of works carried out under byelaws that gave local authorities specific powers, such as powers of arrest, which could not be passed on to private contractors.

That letter was written on 16 August, but the AMA has not yet received a reply. The official Department line is that enough notice was given, and that would be reasonable had the Department given proper notice, such as a response to questions involving the technical detail that local authorities really need before beginning the tendering process. With no attempt to frustrate the impact of the orders, local authorities are entitled to say that they need time to implement them.

Specifically, the timetable for the three areas of security services, vehicle fleet management and supervision of parking means that the metropolitan authorities and the London boroughs will have to begin the CCT process by October 1995. The local authority associations and the local authorities feel that that is much too tight a timetable. They reckon that it takes at least a year for authorities to advertise the contracts, prepare the specifications and interview the contractors.

I believe that in the past the Department itself has accepted that a year is the minimum period—the Minister can contradict me if I am wrong. As a matter of simple record, it is now November 1994, and if the process is to start by October 1995 local authorities have less than a year.

As we saw with legal services and property services, the Government are being asked to allow some movement on the timetable. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider that request. Some adjustment is necessary if things are to be done properly and if the local authorities and local authority associations involved are to have the answers that they need from the Department in order to make real sense of the tendering process.

There are specific questions on security services, some of which, perhaps, the Minister cannot answer tonight. But, certainly, he has at least to allow for the fact that local authorities are asking legitimate questions. Greenwich council, for example, raised an issue about its parks police because they have been given powers of arrest under a byelaw. That power of arrest is not transferable to a private contractor. Greenwich sought to have answered, for itself and on behalf of other local authorities, how that would impact on exemption from the tendering process. I believe that it received a reply today. However, the Minister will understand that, since the order is going through Parliament tonight and went through another place two days ago, that reply is quite late in the day, even for Greenwich, and it will be quite some time before other local authorities know the situation or the answer given to Greenwich.

Birmingham council also wrote to the Department of the Environment seeking clarification of the role of its market inspectors, who have similar powers to the parks police, and asking whether they would be exempted. As I understand it, even as of today, it is still awaiting a reply. So I hope that the Minister accepts that, while some may have criticisms—and those criticisms have been made—of the CCT process in general, such technical questions about the timetable for consultation on legal and property services are important. The amount of those two services which will be put out to tender is also important and I hope that the Minister will consider them in particular.

Precisely because the local authority associations do not feel that they have had time for consultation in other areas, such as security services, vehicle fleet management and supervision of parking, and because the timetable is so tight, I hope that the Minister will agree to be flexible—that flexibility which he so commended for others—and will promise tonight to consider seriously the complaints made by the local authorities and see whether there can be some easement in the process. If nothing else, that will allow the tendering process to be done in a way that the Minister himself would want—one that makes sense for local communities and for local efficiency, not one which is simply there because it is necessary to push the orders through at speed.

6.41 pm

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): As we all know, it is getting towards the end of the Session. I am not sure how many hon. Members were still in the House at 4 am, as I was.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *indicated assent.*

Mr. Rendel: Those who were—the Minister indicates that he was one of them—will no doubt be beginning to feel that we are getting towards the end of another long day, so I do not intend to detain the House for long.

One or two arguments concerning the orders need to be rehearsed. Most of the main arguments have been rehearsed before—in the House and elsewhere—but, sadly, until now, whenever compulsory competitive tendering has been discussed they have not won the day. The Government have used their majority to push through CCT in the face of arguments that, I believe, should have triumphed.

There are, in fact, some good arguments in favour of competitive tendering by local authorities. It allows local authorities to compare the quality, standard and price of their services with those of outside contractors, and that is very welcome because comparison can throw up new ideas about how services can best be delivered. Indeed, such comparison could even throw up ideas for entirely new services.

Such comparison can also reveal—I imagine that to some extent this is what the Minister was referring to in opening—wasteful spending, which can then be eliminated. There is no question but that, when competitive tendering has been properly used, some wasteful spending has been eliminated.

In addition, outside contractors may have particular expertise over and above that normally available to an authority. The opportunity to choose between its own expertise and that of an outside contractor can only increase the likelihood of an authority improving the value for money that it obtains for the services it provides. The best local authorities, with my party's full support, have always been prepared to consider increasing the use not only of contractors but of their own employees for many of their services.

That is not the whole argument. The problem, which my colleagues and I have highlighted time and again and which we have always seen in the CCT policies of the Government, lies in the compulsory nature of those policies—it is the first "C" that needs to be removed—and especially in the regulations on how the tendering process is to be judged.

Those of us who have worked in local authorities know how difficult and unfair the method of accounting for transitional costs is. It works in a way that is often extremely unfair to local authority employees who are trying to put in a tender. Indeed, an outside contractor's bid can often appear to be cheaper, even when its real costs to an authority may prove to be more than the cost of providing and running those same services in house.

The only criterion that can, in practice, be used in deciding between tenders is the tender price. Again, those of us who have been involved, as I have, in many such negotiations know that it is well-nigh impossible to give the work to a contractor or, indeed, to an in-house group, on the grounds of quality or extent of services, even when the authority believes that that would provide better value for money.

Value for money surely should be the ultimate criterion, not simply the tender price. Those of us who have been involved in local authorities have, sadly, seen all too many examples of services costing more as a result of competitive tendering, or have seen either the level or quality of services suffer. In my authority of Newbury, almost without exception, when services have been awarded to a contractor the price has not been lowered as a result. If it has lowered, it has been only because the level of services has fallen.

There are further problems with compulsory competitive tendering, such as the accountability of services to a local authority. Accountability is inevitably reduced when a service is contracted out. We should highlight that matter—especially tonight—when we are considering legal services. One of the most fundamental needs of any member of a local authority is the certainty of obtaining objective, fair and honest legal advice from the authority's legal officers. The loyalty that an employee feels if he is directly employed by the authority must surely be far greater than his loyalty if he is indirectly employed through a contractor. That loyalty in an area such as legal advice is extremely important. As a member of a local authority, I would never like to feel that all my legal advice would be provided through contracted-out services.

We must also consider local independence. One of the Government's hallmarks is the centralisation of services. The destruction of so much local independence has been one of the worst features of the past 15 years. If things were going wrong in a local authority—the Minister has said that some authorities have been able to make services more cost-effective and more efficient by tendering—the Government should have solved that problem not by centralising power in Whitehall and Westminster but by making local government more accountable. That is where the Government have fallen down so badly.

The Government are very much a top-down Government; we would like to see government from the bottom up. This is a centralising Government who believe that only central Government know best. That is their approach, but local elections up and down the country have shown that, in practice, people think the opposite—that, on the whole, central Government know less than local government.

An example of that is the way in which the Conservative party now controls just one county council, whereas the Liberal Democrats currently control four—and that figure may well rise fairly shortly. We believe

[Mr. Rendel]

that local people should be allowed to choose their own way forward because they are the best judges of their own needs.

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rendel: I am just about to finish.

That is an important principle for the Liberal Democrats and it should be an important principle for the Government.

Mr. Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. It is clear that the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) is not giving way. I call Mr. Rendel.

Mr. Rendel: I have finished, Madam Deputy Speaker.

6.49 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones: With the leave of the House, I wish to reply.

The hon. Members for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) said that one of the "Cs" in CCT should be dropped. I do not agree that the same results would have been achieved without the compulsory element. Local councillors and local officers to whom I have spoken since I have been a Minister, and in my many years as a councillor and a Member of this House, have confirmed that the discipline of having to prepare specifications and judging and monitoring tender results produces huge benefits, quite apart from cost savings.

I do not believe that CCT is exclusively about savings, although of course we are delighted by the savings that have occurred and the benefits that they have brought to council tax payers. Compulsory competitive tendering involves managers and elected representatives in thinking from basics about the level of service that they want to deliver, how that can be achieved and how they are going to judge the results. That is not a threat to local democracy because local democracy must be about elected representatives taking decisions about standards for their areas.

The hon. Member for Newbury referred to the London borough of Richmond, which is controlled by the Liberal Democrats. When I talked to councillors and housing officers in Richmond about CCT for housing management, they said that they were involving tenants on a large scale in an attempt to decide the level of service that should be prescribed in the tender. That enhances local democracy, and such practices are being used not only in Richmond but in many authorities of various political persuasions.

Mr. Rendel: Why should CCT be compulsory? Should not such matters be left to authorities such as Richmond, which in any event probably would have opted for that route?

Mr. Jones: The London borough of Richmond has been controlled by the Liberal Democrats for several years and it was controlled by the Conservatives prior to that, but what I have described did not take place until CCT arrived on the scene. I believe that CCT has concentrated minds wonderfully, to the benefit of the ultimate client whom we should all be serving—in the case of housing management, the tenant and, with other services, different customers.

The hon. Member for Stretford referred to flexibility. We have tried to approach these matters flexibly. That is the underlying rationale for the percentage approach and for not trying to draw too rigidly the line between the client side and the contractor side. Different authorities will want to approach that in different ways. That is as true of the construction professions as it is for legal services.

I cannot accept the view of the hon. Member for Newbury that we cannot obtain independent advice from a lawyer unless he is directly employed by an authority. That is clearly not true of counsel's opinion, which local authorities seek all the time on specialist issues. It is also not true in respect of run-of-the-mill legal advice, although it is clearly handy to have advice on hand within a local authority and the orders make provision for that.

The hon. Member for Stretford referred to quality. Quality can be very subjective. What some people may refer to as quality others would not. With the professional bodies, we have tried to develop an approach to defining and judging quality. We have been working with the Royal Institute of British Architects on guidance for obtaining architectural services through CCT. We have also been working with the Construction Industry Council on guidelines for value assessment for CCT and with the Association of Consulting Engineers on value assessment and the selection of consulting engineers. That is a very good way of going about it.

It may be possible to extend those principles further because quality is important. I was very closely associated with total quality management and BS5750 and BS7750 until I became a Minister. I welcome the focus on quality.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: If quality matters in professional services, it also matters in blue-collar or manual services. Can quality criteria be built into those services?

Mr. Jones: I should like to think that there is already such a criterion because, for example, specifications lay down how often refuse collections should be carried out and the standards to which streets should be cleaned. It is more straightforward to lay down such conditions in the original specifications for blue-collar services than it is for professional services.

The hon. Member for Stretford raised a specific point about security and referred to a point about the London borough of Greenwich that affects other authorities as well. I recognise that competition may not always be appropriate for local authority security work. That is why we are considering a specific exclusion from CCT for certain byelaw enforcement work. We have already sought the local authority associations' views on that and expect to introduce detailed proposals shortly. I give an undertaking to look at those matters against the background of the timetable and I will contact the hon. Member for Stretford when I have formed a definitive view.

I find it difficult to understand how people can accuse the Government of being dogmatic in their approach to CCT. I served on a local authority virtually constantly from the age of 21 until I became a Member of this House. I cannot say that I came across a local authority that did everything by direct labour or everything by private contractor. We are talking about how to draw a boundary between what is done by the private sector and what is done in house.

We can approach the matter ideologically by allowing a local authority to say, "Well, we think that this should be done by our direct labour department," or "This should all be done by contract," or it can be achieved by more objective means by laying down a specification and inviting tenders against that specification, evaluating them and awarding a contract to the organisation, whether it is a direct labour organisation or a private contractor, which fulfils the specification in the best way. That is a very undogmatic approach and it has delivered considerable benefits. That is why I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Local Government Act 1988 (Competition) (Defined Activities) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

Ordered,

That the draft Local Government Act 1988 (Competition) (Defined Activities) (Construction and Property Services) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 20th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert B. Jones.]*

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Deputy Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together motions 5 to 12.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

That the draft Weights and Measures Act 1985 (Metrication) (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 19th July, be approved.

That the draft Weights and Measures (Metrication) (Miscellaneous Goods) (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 19th July, be approved.

That the draft Units of Measurement Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 19th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INCOME TAX

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Kazakhstan) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Mexico) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Russian Federation) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 20th July.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

TRANSPORT OF ANIMALS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8441/93 and the second Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 4th July 1994, and European Community Document No. 8128/94, relating to the protection of animals during transport; and supports the Government's intention of seeking to negotiate high standards of care for animals throughout the Community during transport.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

FISHERIES POLICY

That this House takes note of the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 19th April, relating to fisheries: Spanish and Portuguese arrangements, and of European Community Documents Nos. 8940/94, relating to Community fishing areas and resources, 8941/94, relating to the Common Fisheries Policy control system, and 7541/94, relating to fisheries: multi-annual guidance programme 1993; and supports the Government's determination to secure measures to safeguard the fish stocks around the United Kingdom's shores and to protect the interest of United Kingdom fishermen through its fisheries policies.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Mr. Robert Nortcliff

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

6.59 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): As I hope I shall explain in this debate, my constituent, Mr. Robert Nortcliff, has suffered an intolerable experience to which Parliament should attend. I hope that the attention that is given will lead to the view that his fate was unacceptable. I believe that my constituent acted as a responsible man in a matter that should be considered to be of serious public importance; and I believe that he has suffered a grave injustice. Perhaps the Minister would be good enough to agree with my assessment. I intend to raise a number of matters relating to Mr. Nortcliff's experience, and I hope that I will receive a clear and helpful response from the Minister.

Mr. Nortcliff is an engineer. His earlier industrial career was in the mining industry, in which he reached a responsible position. That experience is relevant, for it meant that he was brought up in a culture of safety which has been responsible for the dramatic improvement in mine safety since 1947—a culture underpinned by regulation, which led to the National Coal Board becoming the safest deep-mine operator in the world. This safety record was achieved, and it continued even when production records were repeatedly shattered. There remain misgivings about recent changes, as the Minister may be aware, but the safety culture in which Mr. Nortcliff gained his first industrial experience meant that he was well aware of the importance of a proper attitude and of decent priorities.

With the closure of the collieries, Mr. Nortcliff decided to pursue a career in the oil industry. He secured employment in the middle east and gained valuable experience there. Returning to Britain, my constituent obtained a position with a contracting business engaged in offshore activity, Nabors of Aberdeen. He was engaged to work on the Elf platform Piper Bravo as an electrical supervisor. He joined the project in 1991 and was dedicated to it from the shipyard right through commissioning to production. I have heard no complaint concerning my constituent's abilities, commitment or expertise.

Unfortunately, Mr. Nortcliff observed dangers and an inadequate response to the arrangements made to safeguard those employed on the platform, and he felt that he had to draw the attention of the management of his company and of the platform's proprietors, Elf, to the risks that he perceived arising from the practices that he observed.

Mr. Nortcliff's oral representations and advice had little or no effect. He then submitted a written memorandum, again achieving little—except perhaps a degree of irritation on the part of the people who should have paid much more attention to his advice. The memorandum was dated 24 February 1993. It pointed out that proper technical judgment had been ignored in the interests of production. He felt that the contracting company, Nabors, was too ready to ignore relevant technical advice.

Not long after, my constituent found that his desk had been moved to another room, but he continued to work with diligence and enthusiasm even though there was little change in his employer's approach. Cynics will know how to respond to the fact that, at the next employer appraisal, it was noted that Mr. Nortcliff's performance had dropped remarkably. That was the first sign that he had of any employer dissatisfaction with his work, and it may have been related—I believe that it was—to the fact that he had drawn senior management's attention to certain deficiencies, submitted in the written memorandum.

My constituent took the view that this criticism was related to the fact that his professionally necessary and technically competent memorandum had created resentment, perhaps because it was seen as a challenge to those who were not paying adequate regard to the permit-to-work system which is supposed to govern the conduct of operations on a platform.

Mr. Nortcliff then felt that he had little alternative but to inform the Health and Safety Commission's offshore division of his concerns. This was after Nabors had suggested that he move to another oil field. It suggested that he went to the Ninian field, a much older, declining field. Mr. Nortcliff, who was passionately involved and interested in the development at Piper Bravo, felt it right to decline this offer.

Then, in December last year, my constituent was told that he was no longer the Elf Piper Bravo electrical supervisor and that he had to transfer to the Ninian field. He then appealed to his employers and asked that they look into his safety concerns again, pointing out to them that he would have to refer the matter to the Health and Safety Executive if things were not put right. Nabors suggested that he had no proof and that he could not substantiate his fears. The company stood by its decision to replace him as electrical supervisor. I contend that Mr. Nortcliff had no alternative but to draw these serious matters to the attention of the Health and Safety Executive.

My constituent was most concerned and felt, given the company's insistence that he be degraded and removed, that he had no choice, in his own interests, but to inform the relevant parts of the media about his employer's actions. Apparently a senior member of staff at Nabors told him, "You must do what you feel you must do." He did, and immediately informed the relevant newspapers.

The HSE continued its investigation and Mr. Nortcliff remained suspended while it proceeded. Meanwhile, Nabors continued to deny that his suspension had any connection with his removal from the platform or his referral of these matters to the HSE. However, Mr. Nortcliff feared that the conclusions of the health and safety examination would result in his dismissal.

At this point Mr. Nortcliff contacted me, and I wrote to the managing director of Nabors, Mr. Heidt, about my constituent's position. Mr. Heidt replied:

> "There is no question of Mr. Nortcliff being disciplined for his disclosures to the Health and Safety Executive."

A very short time later, however, Mr. Nortcliff was dismissed on the ground that he had spoken to the media in breach of his contract. He does not deny that there was a breach of his contract, but he did inform Nabors of his intention to release the information, and he still believes—I agree with him—that he had no alternative but to pursue that course of action.

Most fair-minded people, knowing the treatment that he received, would consider that he acted quite properly. As a qualified, skilled and experienced engineer Mr. Nortcliff was fully aware that giving production an overriding priority above safety can cause and has caused, far too often, tragedies in industrial and offshore operations.

Hon. Members will recall that for quite a few years many of us felt that the HSE's role should be extended to cover North sea operations. The accident rate offshore justified our call. Many hon. Members will know of constituents who suffered death or injury offshore. That concern led to calls from many of us for improved safety checks—apparently those requests went unheard and unheeded for a long time.

I was concerned not least because of an earlier tragedy when a fine young man from my constituency lost his life on Piper Alpha. I recall that I sought to comfort his bereaved parents by saying that that tragedy would lead to an improved safety regime offshore, which would mean that many more lives would be saved. Yet here we are, a few years later, and I am describing a case concerning not Piper Alpha but Piper Bravo.

The health and safety investigation was concluded in March and further unsatisfactory developments followed. I understand that Nabors claimed that the health and safety report gave it a clean bill of health; in effect implying that Mr. Nortcliff's representations were utterly unfounded. The person responsible for that claim was the personnel manager, Mr. Paterson. He was Mr. Nortcliff's superior and was the official who had instructed Mr. Nortcliff to leave Piper Bravo and transfer to the Ninian field.

I then wrote to Nabors about Mr. Nortcliff's position. I was unaware then that the same Mr. Paterson would also serve as judge and jury as well as supervisor and reporter.

Following Mr. Nortcliff's dismissal, I expressed serious concern to the company and I said that I thought the case should be aired in the House of Commons—perhaps after Mr. Nortcliff's dismissal had been considered by the employment appeal tribunal. I was then astonished to receive a letter from Nabors' solicitor, Mr. J.K. Tierney of Paul and Williams, of Aberdeen. He stated that Nabors would defend the case of unfair dismissal. He also went on to state:

> " I also consider that it would be inappropriate for the matter to be raised in the House of Commons, but this is doubtless a matter which is governed by the House's own rules of procedure."

I found that response astonishing because that solicitor should have known that whether powerful individuals or organisations like it or not, the House provides an opportunity for the plight, difficulties or injustices experienced by our constituents to be aired. We must be able to raise matters affecting our constituents, especially when they experience the type of unfairness that Mr. Nortcliff suffered. I was astonished to receive such a letter from someone who, were he a Member of the House, might possibly be called learned.

At the beginning of the long recess we were awaiting the hearing at employment appeal tribunal. Nabors had already said emphatically that it would contest the case. I welcomed that decision, because it meant that the truth would be established in a public arena. Just before the tribunal hearing, however, Nabors settled. That may have provided a little comfort and some necessary compensation to my constituent, but the case was not aired. I believe that it is right that it should be put before the House tonight.

I was grateful for the fact that the health and safety officials said that they would have been prepared to give evidence and present the facts at the tribunal—perhaps that is why Nabors was particularly eager to settle.

It is a pity that there has been no previous public examination of the case, but at least we have a modest opportunity to do so now. This debate might be the only opportunity to consider the essential purpose to which Mr. Nortcliff was dedicated.

Since I considered that my constituent's case was not wholly one for Nabors, I also sought to contact Elf, the platform operator. I did so through the Earl of Lauderdale, who has had a long honourable involvement in energy matters and with that company. I regret that its reply was unacceptable, because it sought to suggest that it considered that responsibility rested solely with Nabors. I was disturbed by that response, because I do not believe that the operators of oil installations can transfer responsibility, legal or moral, to the contractors that work for them. The senior employers at Elf, were, however, aware of the grounds for my constituent's concerns. Platform operators and major oil companies should not simply opt out of their responsibilities, especially when that could have fatal consequences. I do not believe that such a responsibility can be evaded and I regret that Elf was evasive in this case.

No one has sought to deny that Mr. Nortcliff acted responsibly, yet he was dismissed and his efforts and concerns were set at naught. The Minister might care to consider how Mr. Nortcliff felt when, having been belittled, criticised and sacked, his employers then claimed that the examination carried out by health and safety officials vindicated their actions. Mr. Nortcliff is naturally dissatisfied with the results and naturally he feels somewhat aggrieved at the response from those officials.

My constituent had asked for an investigation into several incidents, including one in October 1993 when blocks weighing around 50 tonnes smashed into the crown bumping beam, causing a good deal of damage. I am told that that was due to the fact that the protective arrangements had been deliberately shorted out, apparently with the knowledge, if not on the instructions, of the rig superintendent and of Elf.

In November 1993, operations were continued when the top drive electrical service loop was damaged. The covering on high-voltage cabling was torn and the related junction box was smashed, leaving live conductors exposed. Also in November 1993, a magnetic sensor had to be replaced on the derrick crown. As the electrical supervisor, Mr. Nortcliff proceeded in the proper manner by drawing up the necessary permit to enable that work to be done. He was told that someone else would do it, without a permit—a complete breach of safety arrangements. The job was done without machinery being isolated. We should bear it in mind that that happened on Piper Bravo, but we still remember what happened on Piper Alpha. Electrical systems should not be switched off and safety arrangements abandoned so that production may be maintained.

On another occasion, someone modified an item of electrical equipment without certification when a request for a replacement had been rejected. That suggests that economy looms rather larger than safety in the minds of some of those responsible.

I believe that any examination of those events shows that the health and safety report vindicated not Nabors, but my constituent, Mr. Nortcliff. I regret that those officials did not make it clear that it was unacceptable to suggest that Mr. Nortcliff's claims were unjustified. They should have been sufficiently responsible to set the record straight. Health and safety considerations required that Nabors put its systems right.

The report revealed an obvious awareness that production had been the overriding priority. The officials knew that the rules had been breached, so perhaps the Minister would agree that it would have been better had a

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

firmer line been taken at that time. The failure to do so meant that my constituent's punishment was particularly severe.

I hope that lessons have been learned and that the Minister will be able to give the House information to suggest or provide evidence that they have. I also hope that he will offer other assurances. I hope that he will assure the House that he and his Department accept that Mr. Nortcliff acted responsibly by proceeding with the complaints about conditions and practices on Piper Bravo. I hope that he will agree that it was entirely right for him to ensure that safety had a higher priority and that it is entirely right for the House to attend to the case.

I also hope that the Minister will accept that offshore employers should recognise, or if necessary be made to recognise, that production cannot command a priority over safety, as was the case on Piper Bravo. That being so, I hope that the Minister will commend Mr. Nortcliff and share my hope that a more responsible company will recognise his ability to provide a significant and professional contribution to the industry and, by implication, make it clear that both Nabors and Elf have cause for shame for their attitude.

The other day I saw a tape of a television programme, in which a leading business man, speaking at a conference some years ago, suggested that the reality of the effect of the United Kingdom's oil resource on the British economy in the 1980s was that it might better have been left in the ground. The Minister might agree that the Government's policies would have looked rather sick if that had happened. As a nation, we must accept that the resource was not put to its best use—it was as if a golden bullet emerged from the wrong end of the gun.

If a similar situation to that which my constituent tried to put right occurs offshore again, and if the nation is prepared to tolerate an inadequate emphasis being given to safety—as was the case on Piper Bravo—people such as Mr. Nortcliff ought not to bear the blame. Perhaps it should be borne not by the Health and Safety Executive but by the whole of our society, if it is prepared to tolerate such risks. My constituent has done nothing of which he should or could be ashamed. I hope that the debate will have pointed to the direction that that shame should take.

One other matter is important. I have visited several offshore establishments. Some years ago, I stayed on a platform and was greatly relieved at the concern for safety exhibited there. Some offshore companies reveal a far greater care for safety than has been demonstrated in this case. Does the Minister agree that those companies that have cared and have served priorities properly ought not to be let down because their competitors cut corners even at the risk of bringing the industry into disrepute? Will the Minister assure the House that the Health and Safety Executive will not be slow or reluctant to act with that austere sternness that past tragedies, such as Piper Alpha, necessitate?

Work on the North sea is far from land and close to hazard. It is potentially exceedingly dangerous and it is inappropriate for that danger to be compounded by inadequate priority. At least Mr. Nortcliff can be comforted by the fact that much attention has been focused on the record of his former employers and that of the operator, Elf.

I was recently greatly obliged to receive a publication called "Blowout", which describes itself as

> "the voice of the offshore worker".

It is a fine publication, at least as far as the presentation of Mr. Nortcliff's case is concerned.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Perhaps my hon. Friend should explain that that sort of blowout is not the type to which we normally refer in the House. It is a technical term used in oil and gas fields.

Mr. Hardy: I am grateful for that intervention. I have eaten offshore and all the meals were first class. Perhaps they did not quite reach the standard of the Ritz hotel in Paris, but they were substantial—perhaps they did not cost quite so much as those at the Ritz either. I do not know what the meals were like on Piper Bravo, but on the rigs on which I have eaten they were very satisfactory. As my hon. Friend said, however, they do not justify the term "blowout", which has a different definition in this context.

The front page of today's issue of "Blowout" refers to the fact that

> "Nabors dodged the publicity of an industrial tribunal by settling out of court . . . Nabors can count itself lucky to have got off so lightly. Had the industrial tribunal gone ahead, it would have highlighted mismanagement of safety of astounding proportions. This, on the platform which is the successor to Piper Alpha and which has been held up as a shining example".

One is still left with a rather nasty taste.

The publication states that Mr. Nortcliff claims that the case reveals that

> "The HSE has refused to condemn actions by individuals where the law was broken . . . condoned actions in breach of company safety rules and procedures; and . . . took no cognisance of interference by his supervisors"—

in the exercise of the duties of a responsible and qualified employee. My constituent and I have much sympathy with that view. He questions the statement made by Mr. Allan Sefton, director of operations for the offshore safety division, that

> "Our policy is to allocate sufficient resources to investigations to determine the root cause of concerns and to ensure action is taken by duty holders to rectify conditions to prevent recurrence."

"Blowout" also states that the HSE sees its way forward by "proactive intervention", by which it means

> "influencing all employers and maintaining a regular presence".

That statement worries me because it is related to resources. Perhaps the Minister will assure the House that there will be no difficulty about providing adequate resources for the maintenance of official health and safety regulations offshore. Mr. Nortcliff's case emphasises the need for that.

There is a case for decent relationships. There is a role for persuasion. If the rules are broken and safety equipment is shorted or switched off, one must be willing to pursue the matter in the courts, otherwise regulation becomes diminished.

I hope that there has been no case for the diminution of safety so far in the debate and trust that the Minister's observations will take us a little further and reassure us that Mr. Nortcliff's experience is never likely to be repeated.

7.28 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I did not enter the Chamber determined to join the debate, but the topic is so related to my past experience that I felt compelled to comment. I appreciate the fact that the Minister kindly agreed that I should be allowed to participate in the Adjournment debate as, under normal protocols, I would not be allowed to intervene.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on raising this matter, which he outlined to the House with considerable skill. He presented a powerful case very clearly. I would not want to comment on it specifically, other than to emphasise the argument that ought to be emphasised—that Mr. Nortcliff had been involved in the Piper Bravo project from day one. He had been involved from the shipyard to hook-up in the North sea, which means putting pieces together in exposed conditions; to commissioning, which means bringing the piece to fruition; through to production. That displays a remarkable personal commitment. We have to understand the mentality of a construction worker if we are to understand that commitment. I say that speaking as one of them. I shall try to explain the base from which I speak.

Having taught for almost 10 years, I left the profession and became a construction worker. I did not "go into construction", as one says; I became a construction worker. That means that I became a labourer. I dug foundations, lay footings, erected scaffolding, carried the hod and generally did what was necessary. Of course, my qualifications as a schoolmaster hardly qualified me to be a construction engineer. After some years, having covered almost every job from one level to another, I became a construction project manager. I was involved in construction work as a member of senior management.

At the same time, I was a committed trade unionist. Although a project manager, I also sat as a lay member on the national executive of my trade union, which at that time was referred to as AUEW-TASS. Indeed, I served on the north regional council of the Trades Union Congress. I had several heads and I had to be very careful about which hat I put on which head at what time. As far as I am aware, I did not commit any major error. My loyalties were always clear to everyone, on whatever team, and I never betrayed anybody or any responsibility.

As a project manager, I had to employ individuals of all grades: industrial—from labourers through to engineers—administrative and managerial. I also had to look after their welfare as a responsible employer. At the same time, I had to look after the welfare of my fellow trade unionists with other employers. It was a strange position, but I managed to live with it.

Of course, there were peaks and troughs and at times I had to release personnel. I had to send them out into the wider world saying, "Sorry, we can't employ you for the moment, but as soon as we can we will let you know. If you want to come back then, you will be more than welcome." Some did not always get the "welcome" bit, but that is the way of things. At times I tried to find them other employment, which meant making contact with other employers engaged in similar work and asking them whether they could use the skills of my workers and whether they had any slots in which to place them.

It was through that process that I began to realise that some employers were not as careful or as caring as I sought to persuade my board of management to be. Those employers would cut corners, underpay and demand—it was not just a question of salami slicing—unsafe working. That frightened me so much that I stopped co-operating with them. I felt responsible for putting in jeopardy people who had worked for me and done a decent job.

All that happened between 1970 and 1975, but it leads to another aspect that is more relevant in today's world. I assure the Minister that I am making these comments in a spirit of constructive counselling. I am not making any party political comments; it is my view of how the world has gone. Employees are now required to assess the position where they work and comment on whether or not it is safe. They are required by a law that was introduced after 1979 to say to their supervisor, "Boss, this position is unsafe and therefore I will not work here until you put it right." That is what we, as legislators, have required workers to do.

On the face of it, that is a reasonable requirement to place on a mature journeyman who is experienced in the industry. What is unreasonable is to allow the employer or his representative to turn around and say to that worker, "Do it or you are finished." Yet that is what happens in numerous cases. It is all very well to say that the worker can go to an employment tribunal and gain satisfaction. That is not sufficient. First, the dangerous position—the hazardous circumstances—continues. Secondly, no matter how much compensation is awarded to someone who loses his employment, it is still an affront to his dignity.

I want to quote an example from this very place. The scaffolding erected on the Terrace for cleaning the facade was in a desperate state. Three times over a period of seven weeks I went to the Serjeant at Arms Department, which said that the Property Services Agency had been told to put it right. When I was in the construction industry, I had to ensure that the scaffolding on my sites was examined and certificated as safe every 28 days. However, there was no such requirement for the scaffolding on the Terrace because this is a Crown building. The only way that I could get redress was to come to the House on a Friday afternoon and raise a point of order with the Speaker of the day, now Lord Weatherill.

Although the Serjeant at Arms Department had responded well to my complaints on those three previous occasions, on this occasion it acted with great alacrity and when I returned to the House on the following Tuesday the scaffolding at the Commons end of the Palace was absolutely pristine—indeed, more than in Bristol fashion—up to the line separating the responsibilities of the Serjeant at Arms from those of Black Rod. The scaffolding on the other side of the line was in terrible order, and that is how it remained.

My point is that the conditions in the House largely reflect the circumstances in the North sea, which do not fall within the standards and requirements that apply on dry land. As the crew of Piper Alpha would testify, being that far out to sea calls for conditions immeasurably better than they are on dry land.

I have made my comments not in any way to provoke inter-party disagreement; that does not enter into it. I was a member of management and I was also a trade union representative. I ensured that my clients, the purchasers, got a straight deal from my employer, which was the contractor, and I ensured that the work force for which I was responsible also got a straight deal. We used to play it according to the book. It is pointless having a book unless everyone abides by it and I saw to it that everyone did his fair whack. That is the way to run things.

I offer these comments because the present climate of deregulation weakens that kind of common and reflected trust, and in the knowledge that we come here as

[Mr. Frank Cook]

individual Members with a duty to represent the needs of those who send us here. It does not end there, and anyone who thinks that it does is making a great mistake.

We sit here collectively, representing a nation of people who are so diverse, with all sorts of talents, aspirations and needs. Many of those people, in our interests and in the interests of the national economy, put themselves in jeopardy day in, day out, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 52 weeks a year out in the North sea on gas and oil installations.

I firmly believe that we have a collective duty to ensure that health and safety standards out there, perhaps beyond the 12-mile limit, are respected every bit as much as we would expect them to be in Crawley, Croydon or Crewe. I am sure that the Minister will recognise that. In that spirit I offer these comments to the Minister tonight.

7.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Phillip Oppenheim): I thank the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) for raising this important issue. I shall not dwell in detail on his comments about dinners at the Ritz, except to say that my experience in that area is sadly limited. Unfortunately, no one ever thought me sufficiently important or influential to invite to the Ritz, so I bow to the hon. Gentleman's greater knowledge. However, I hope to be enjoying the cuisine of an offshore oil installation before long and I shall report to the hon. Gentleman as to whether standards have slipped.

I also thank the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) for his interesting contribution, drawing as it did on his wealth of personal experience, which is always invaluable in this subject. I assure him that when it comes to deregulation our aim is to deregulate only where burdens on industry and business are unreasonable and where the result of those burdens would be to reduce employment.

If the hon. Gentleman looks at the record, he will find that, particularly with regard to construction sites, we have tightened up and are significantly tightening up regulations in many areas. Health and safety regulations are now, in almost all instances, much tighter than they were a few years ago, and they continue to be tightened. We take this matter very seriously.

The hon. Member for Wentworth rightly raises an important issue. He has an enormous wealth of experience in health and safety matters, particularly onshore. Safety on offshore installations is a top priority. There can be no question about that. No one will forget the horrors of Piper Alpha and we are determined that such a tragedy will not happen again. The Government accepted every one of the 106 recommendations of the Cullen report. More than half of those have already been implemented, and we are making new regulations to implement many others. Much has already been done which will make the industry safer, but I accept that we in Government, the Health and Safety Commission and Executive and the industry must never be complacent. We must all continue to be vigilant.

The case raised by the hon. Gentleman concerns an individual worker. Individual workers are vital to safety. It is they who are exposed on the cutting edge to the hazards. They are often best placed to identify new hazards and to suggest ways of controlling them. We strongly encourage all companies to involve their workers in safety, as responsible companies do.

I make it clear that any offshore worker who has a concern about safety should always raise it with the safety representative in the first instance and, after that, with the supervisor or manager. If those sanctions do not work and a worker is not satisfied, he can approach an HSE inspector direct. A telephone number for contacting an HSE inspector is posted on every offshore installation and callers are guaranteed anonymity if they request it. That is an important point.

It is the policy of the HSE to consider every complaint or query on offshore safety matters whether made by telephone, letter or in any other way. The HSE does not shrink from taking tough action when required.

I come now to address the two main issues raised by the case of Mr. Nortcliff. First, and perhaps most importantly, there are his concerns regarding health and safety in relation to his employer and, secondly, there is his complaint about the HSE's handling of the report into his concerns.

It was totally legitimate and right for Mr. Nortcliff to raise health and safety matters. I understand that he first raised them with safety representatives and then they and Mr. Nortcliff raised the issues with management. It was because he was not satisfied with the response from management that Mr. Nortcliff first made known his concerns to the HSE, as was his right, although I understand that no complaint was made to the HSE by any elected safety representative.

Mr. Nortcliff's written complaint was received on 17 January 1994. The HSE acted promptly in conducting a full investigation into all the issues raised in the complaint. In the course of the investigation, it made two offshore visits, had seven visits and meetings at the company's head offices and held three meetings with Mr. Nortcliff himself. All in all, some 300 staff hours were involved in investigating Mr. Nortcliff's concerns. I make that point to illustrate the fact that the HSE took the complaints seriously.

As a result, a report dated 11 March was sent to the installation owners, the drilling company which employed Mr. Nortcliff, the safety representatives on the installation and to Mr. Nortcliff himself.

As a result of its investigation the HSE required both the operator and the driller to make procedural changes to health and safety aspects of their drilling operations. Some of those had been made or were already being developed at the time of the investigation. But the fact that the HSE required action to be taken shows that Mr. Nortcliff's concerns were in large measure justified. The HSE specifically recognises that.

Mr. Hardy: I am extremely grateful to the Minister for those comments. That takes us to the point that I touched upon in my remarks: that the employer sought to create the impression that he had been given a clean bill of health by the Health and Safety Commission, inevitably implying that my constituent had acted improperly.

inaccurately or irresponsibly, when, as the Minister has shown by his recent words, the HSE exonerated my constituent, vindicating him, not his employer.

Mr. Oppenheim: It is correct to say that Mr. Nortcliff was correct in going to the HSE and his raising of the concerns was ultimately vindicated because the HSE required action. It is fair to say that in some instances the company was already taking action in some of the areas. But the bottom line is that Mr. Nortcliff was totally justified in going to the HSE with his concerns. I make that absolutely clear.

The hon. Gentleman referred to enforcement action. I understand that the HSE considered taking enforcement action, including prosecution for breaches of safety law. However, in view of remedial action which had already been taken and further action agreed by the company, it was considered that an improvement notice was not appropriate. Further, it was considered that there was insufficient evidence to sustain a prosecution case. Therefore, on the balance of evidence, and in view of the remedial action taken, it was decided not to refer the case to the procurator fiscal for possible prosecution. I stress—and in many ways, this is the most important point of all—that the HSE is continuing carefully to monitor the situation, to ensure that all necessary remedial action detailed in the report has been carried through.

Mr. Nortcliff's complaints about the HSE's handling of the investigation were considered in some detail not once but twice, by senior managers who were not involved in the original case. After receiving his copy of the HSE's report, Mr. Nortcliff telephoned an offshore safety division principal inspector on 16 March and raised further concerns. The inspector met Mr. Nortcliff on 22 and 23 March to discuss the aspects of the HSE case with which Mr. Nortcliff was unhappy. He appeared to accept that the OSD's investigations had concentrated on the facts of the case and on the evidence from interviews with the workers and managers concerned.

Under caution, Mr. Nortcliff said that he did not wish to make a formal statement contradicting the signed statements already taken from personnel on the installation during the HSE investigation. However, the HSE agreed to explore further two issues—whether a certificate of fitness had been invalid during the lead-up to one incident, and drilling procedures. Additional HSE inquiries did not reveal evidence of offences and Mr. Nortcliff was told that on 29 March.

Mr. Nortcliff then made a formal complaint about the way in which the division had conducted its investigation. As a result, all relevant papers were reviewed by the senior OSD manager responsible for the team that had carried out the investigation. He wrote to Mr. Nortcliff on 27 May indicating that he believed that the investigation had been properly conducted and that the companies concerned were now taking appropriate remedial action.

As Mr. Nortcliff remained unsatisfied, the division's operations director asked senior personnel, who had not been involved with the investigation, to review the papers. The operations director wrote to Mr. Nortcliff in late July, stating that he was satisfied that the HSE had investigated the complaints properly. Mr. Nortcliff replied on 1 August, expressing continued dissatisfaction. The operations director responded on 5 September, setting out fully his reasons for believing that appropriate action had been taken and stating that he considered the matter closed. A further letter from Mr. Nortcliff, dated 12 September, refused to accept that decision.

I give those details not because they will be new to the hon. Gentleman but because they show how seriously the HSE takes any complaints about its handling of investigations, and that it took that particular set of complaints most seriously.

As to Mr. Nortcliff's original health and safety concerns and his subsequent complaint about the HSE's handling of the report, I am satisfied—having talked to the officials responsible—that the HSE acted in a fully professional and satisfactory manner. However, I repeat that that does not detract from the important point that Mr. Nortcliff was right and justified to raise the issues in the first place.

It is most regrettable that Mr. Nortcliff found himself out of a job. He was absolutely right to raise the issues that he did. Safety was at risk, and as a result of Mr. Nortcliff's action, steps were taken to correct safety deficiencies. I cannot comment in detail on the rights and wrongs of Mr. Nortcliff's dismissal. That matter would have been for the industrial tribunal to decide, had Mr. Nortcliff chosen to continue his complaint. If he had done so and won, it would have been open to the tribunal to order his employers to reinstate or to re-engage him, and to award significant additional compensation if they had refused. However, as the hon. Gentleman said, Mr. Nortcliff chose instead to accept settlement, and he was of course entirely free to do so.

I assure both hon. Members that the Government continue to regard safety as paramount. It is essential that the HSE retains the confidence of the offshore work force, so that all employees are able to exercise their legal right and their duty to contribute to the better management of offshore health and safety.

As I made clear but will repeat, because it is important, any worker may raise a safety issue with the HSE in confidence, via the use of an on-site telephone if he or she wishes. It is of course essential that a worker raising a safety issue should not feel that he or she is likely to be prejudiced or victimised in any way. The Government recognised legitimate concerns in that respect, and introduced legislation last year to extend protection against dismissal for reasonably raising health and safety issues with an employer to all workers, not just safety representatives. Industrial tribunals will take that matter very seriously. The Government also consider it to be of immense seriousness and have taken steps to deal with the problem. I will make it my personal business to ensure that that remains the case in future. I thank both hon. Gentlemen for raising the subject in the way that they did.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 3 November 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair]*

Message to attend the Lords Commissioners:

The House went:— and, having returned:

Royal Assent

10.9 am

Madam Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that the House has been to the House of Peers where a Commission under the Great Seal was read, authorising the Royal Assent to the following Acts and proroguing this present Parliament:

Sale of Goods (Amendment) Act 1994
Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
Marriage Act 1994
Sale and Supply of Goods Act 1994
Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1994
Drug Trafficking Act 1994
European Union (Accessions) Act 1994
Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994
Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994
University of London Act 1994

Prorogation

Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech

Madam Speaker: I have further to acquaint the House that the Lord High Chancellor, one of the Lord Commissioners, delivered Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech to both Houses of Parliament, in pursuance of Her Majesty's Command. For greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy and also directed that the terms of the speech be printed in the Journal. Copies are being made available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

The Duke of Edinburgh and I were pleased to receive the State Visits of His Excellency the President of Zimbabwe in May and of their Majesties The King and Queen of Norway in July.

The Duke of Edinburgh and I remember with pleasure our visit to several Commonwealth Caribbean countries and Bermuda in the spring. We were pleased to visit France to inaugurate, with the President of the French Republic, the Channel Tunnel in May and to attend the ceremonies to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Normandy Landings in June. We were also pleased to visit Canada to attend the Commonwealth Games in August. We recall with pleasure our state visit to Russia last month.

My Government have continued to make provision for the defence of the United Kingdom and our allies and the promotion of international peace and stability, including a substantial contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and to United Nations operations. Recently, my Government have deployed forces to help to defend Kuwait against a threat of invasion by Iraq.

My Government have continued to fight terrorism in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

My Government continued to play a full part, both bilaterally (in particular through the Know How Fund) and with partners in supporting the post-communist states of Europe and Asia in their response to the historic challenge of political and economic transformation.

My Government welcomed the conclusion of the accession negotiations for Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria to join the European Union, and the positive results of the referenda held so far in two of the applicant countries. My Government continued to work to bring the countries of Central and Eastern Europe into a closer relationship with the European Union. My Government welcomed the successful conclusion of the GATT Uruguay Round of trade negotiations.

My Government worked for progress on the European Union's priority action plan on justice and home affairs and made a number of proposals for further co-operation in this field. My Government worked with our European partners to ensure the effective implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy under the Treaty on European Union. In December 1993 my Government launched an initiative jointly with the Italian Government to involve the six Central and Eastern European countries which have Europe Agreements with the European Union

[Madam Speaker]

more closely in the work of the two intergovernmental pillars. My Government welcomed the Commission's report on subsidiarity to the Brussels European Council.

My Government have continued to work for a peaceful settlement to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. My Government made a substantial contribution to international efforts to provide humanitarian relief to all those in need, particularly through the deployment of troops with the United Nations Protection Force.

My Government have pledged substantial aid to the Republic of South Africa following the holding of free elections and the establishment of a Government of national unity. My Government were pleased at South Africa's rejoining the Commonwealth after an absence of over thirty years.

My Government continued to seek to co-operate with China over all issues related to a smooth transfer of sovereignty in 1997 in the best interests of the people of Hong Kong.

My Government responded to the horrifying situation which arose in Rwanda by providing humanitarian relief, and have contributed troops and other support to the United Nations Force in Rwanda.

An Act has been passed to place the Secret Intelligence Service and the Government Communications Headquarters on a statutory basis, and to make provision for their oversight and that of the Security Service by a committee of Parliamentarians.

Members of the House of Commons

I thank you for the provision you have made for the honour and dignity of the Crown and for the public service.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government have pursued firm financial policies which have allowed the recovery to broaden and strengthen while reducing inflation to its lowest level for a generation.

My Government have brought together tax and expenditure decisions in a Unified Budget. Measures have been introduced to ensure that the budget deficit is brought back towards balance over the medium term. Steps have been taken to help business, to promote investment, and to improve the training and education of the workforce. My Government have successfully implemented a range of substantial measures to help our exporters win in world markets.

My Government have put forward proposals in the Green Paper on Resource Accounting and Budgeting for all departments to publish departmental resource accounts drawn up on commercial accounting principles by 1999, and for resource accounting subsequently to form the basis of the Public Expenditure Survey, to improve both the management of public spending and accountability for taxpayers' money. My Government have published a White Paper on the Civil Service.

Legislation has been passed to remove unnecessary regulatory burdens, to facilitate the process of deregulation in the future and to remove obstacles to contracting out in central and local government.

An Act has been passed which reforms the laws governing Sunday trading in England and Wales by allowing all small shops to open all day on Sundays and most larger shops to open for six hours.

Legislation has been passed to transfer the costs of Statutory Sick Pay to employers, whose National Insurance contributions have been reduced to meet those costs. An Act has also been passed to restructure the long term Incapacity Benefit from April 1995.

Legislation has been passed to enable British Coal to be privatised; and to modernise the law on trade marks and improve protection against their misuse.

An Act has been passed to improve the organisation and management of the police so that they are better able to combat crime; and to strengthen the administration of magistrates' courts.

Legislation has been passed to allow the courts to deal more effectively with young offenders and to make a wide range of other improvements in the criminal law and the criminal justice system.

An Act has been passed to enable the establishment of a Teacher Training Agency and to reform student unions.

Legislation has been enacted to reform local government in Scotland and Wales.

In Northern Ireland my Government have welcomed the ceasefires announced by the IRA and anti-nationalist paramilitaries. They have maintained progress towards a comprehensive political settlement, through discussions with the main constitutional parties, with the Irish Government, and through the Joint Declaration. They have worked to improve social and economic conditions.

My Government have made the first use of a new Parliamentary procedure for uncontroversial law reform, introducing measures recommended by the Law Commission to simplify and clarify the law of property.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may attend you.

Thereafter a Commission for proroguing the Parliament was read, after which the Lord Chancellor said:

"My Lords and Members of the House of Commons: by virtue of Her Majesty's Commission which has now been read, we do, in Her Majesty's name, and in obedience to Her Majesty's Commands prorogue this Parliament to Wednesday the sixteenth day of this instant November, to be then here holden and this Parliament is accordingly prorogued to Wednesday the sixteenth day of this instant November."

End of the Second Session (opened on 18 November 1993) of the Fifty-First Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in the Forty-Second Year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 17 October 1994

TREASURY

Inflation

Mr. Hood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the inflation rate from 1 October 1992 to 30 September 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Anthony Nelson: In September 1993 the headline rate of inflation, as measured by the 12-month increase in the all items retail prices index, was 1·8 per cent.; and the underlying rate of inflation, as measured by the 12-month increase in the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments, was 3·3 per cent. In September 1994 the headline rate was 2·2 per cent. and the underlying rate was 2·0 per cent. — the lowest rate since 1967.

EC Budget Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a statement on the matters discussed and decisions taken, along with any votes taken, at *(a)* the EC Budget Council on 25 July and *(b)* the Ecofin Council on 27 July.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I represented the United Kingdom at the Budget Council on 25 July. The Council considered the Commission's preliminary draft budget for 1995. The draft budget established by the Council totalled 75·7 billion ecu or £59·8 billion in commitment appropriations. The draft budget would require own resources totalling 1·999 per cent. of Community gross national product, compared with the existing own resources ceiling of 1·20 per cent. of Community GNP.

The Council took no formal votes, with the Presidency concluding that the necessary majority existed to establish the draft budget for 1995.

The summary table compares the outcome of the Budget Council to the proposals in the Commission's amended preliminary draft budget by reference to the financial perspective ceilings.

Further information is contained in explanatory memorandum 8782/94 on the draft budget, which was deposited in Parliament on 27 September.

The European Parliament will consider the draft budget for 1995 at its plenary in October. The Parliament's amendments and modifications will be considered at the second Budget Council in November. The European Parliament's Second Reading is likely to be in mid-December.

The Budget Council also briefly discussed own resources shortfalls and agreed that the issue would be considered again in September after the Commission had provided more up-to-date figures.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer represented the United Kingdom at the Economic and Finance Council on 27 July. A copy of the press release, 8718/94, from the general secretariat of the Council has been placed in the Members' Library.

The Council discussed the taxation of savings — withholding tax. My right hon. and learned Friend resisted any agreement in principle to action at the Community level, on the grounds that it was unnecessary, likely to be ineffective, and would divert business away from financial centres in the European Union.

The Council reviewed progress on the new own resources decision. The Council discussed the definitive VAT regime. The Council agreed the following criteria which any definitive system should meet: fundamental simplification and fewer administrative obligations; no reduction in income for member states from VAT; no increased risk of tax fraud; and preservation of the neutral effect on competition of VAT. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor fully agreed with this list, and endorsed the Presidency's emphasis on simplification.

The Council took note of a progress report from a working group on the VAT simplification directive. The Council was then informed of progress on a long-standing Commission proposal for a Community system of taxation of interest and royalty payments made between parent companies and subsidiaries in different member states.

The Council discussed the question of a carbon/energy tax. The Chancellor agreed that member states should implement measures to ensure that commitments agreed under the Rio convention were met, but doubted that Community-wide tax was necessary. My right hon. and learned Friend noted that the United Kingdom was already on target to meet its own commitments using national measures. A range of opinions was expressed; but there was general agreement that the alternative of building on existing minimum excise duty rates for oils should be explored, and that ECOFIN should continue to take the lead role in discussing this issue.

The other principal issue discussed was the possible case for the introduction of a reduced rate of excise duty on biofuels. There was a broad range of views. The Chancellor stated that he was sceptical about whether there were any benefits to be gained from such subsidies; and that it was wrong in principle to subsidise a product which was unlikely to become commercially viable in the near future.

No formal votes were taken.

	Financial perspective expenditure ceilings		*Preliminary draft budget*[2]		Budget Council draft budget	
	mecu	£ million[1]	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million
Commitment appropriations						
1. Common Agricultural Policy	36,994	29,219	36,994	29,219	36,994	29,219
2. Structural operations	25,264	19,954	25,264	19,954	25,264	19,954
3. Internal policies	4,652	3,674	4,605	3,637	4,286	3,385
4. External action	4,605	3,637	4,555	3,597	4,363	3,446

	Financial perspective expenditure ceilings mecu	£ million[1]	*Preliminary draft budget*[2] mecu	£ million	Budget Council draft budget mecu	£ million
5. Administrative expenditure	3,852	3,042	3,827	3,023	3,691	2,915
6. Reserves	1,146	905	1,146	905	1,146	905
Total Commitments	76,513	60,432	76,390	60,335	75,745	59,825
Total payment appropriations	72,924	57,597	72,412	57,193	71,955	56,832

[1] Throughout this reply the rate of £1=1·2661 ecu has been used. The rate notified in the *Official Journal* as prevailing on the last working day of last month—31 August.

[2] As amended from the figure which appeared in the Commission's overview of the PDB for 1995, to take account of the higher bids of the small institutions on administration under category 5.

Prescription Charges

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the amount per pound which would need to be added to income tax to raise a sum equivalent to the amount raised by prescription charges for the national health service.

Mr. Aitken: The expected income from prescription charges in 1994–95, including receipts from the sale of prepayment certificates, is approximately £350 million, for the United Kingdom as a whole. This is equivalent to about one fifth of the yield of 1p on the basic rate of income tax.

Resource Accounting Proposals

Mr Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the costs of implementing resource accounting proposals in the civil service.

Mr Aitken: To the extent that resource accounting requirements can be incorporated in the normal cycle of replacement and upgrading of systems, there will be no additional cost to departments. The implementation target in the Green Paper, April 1998, has been set with this in mind. Departments are currently working up their detailed proposals for resource accounting on the basis of the Green Paper, but will need to be sure of the outcome of the current consultation process, which should be known early next year, before finalising their proposals.

Civil Superannuation Vote

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what supplementary estimates will be required for civil superannuation votes in the years 1994–95, 1995–96 and 1996–97;

(2) how and when parliamentary approval will be sought for the supplementary estimate for the Civil Superannuation Vote, referred to in the White Paper "Continuity and Change".

Mr. Aitken: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) on 19 July, a winter supplementary estimate will be needed in 1994–95 for HM Treasury's civil superannuation vote. Parliamentary approval will be sought in the supply resolutions and winter Consolidated Fund Bill that will follow presentation of the winter supplementary estimates in mid-November. No requirements for supplementary estimates in 1995–96 and 1996–97 are foreseen at this time.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals on the control of clandestine trade in nuclear materials and equipment were put forward by the United Kingdom, and what proposals by other EU member states were agreed to by Her Majesty's Government at the Finance Council meeting in September.

Mr. Aitken: No proposals were put forward at the ECOFIN Council in September. This issue is being considered by the Foreign Affairs and Interior Ministers Councils.

Endowment Assurance

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce measures to permit, without loss of exemption of the policy proceeds from taxation, extension of existing policies of endowment assurance to provide cover against critical illness.

Sir George Young: The Inland Revenue is currently conducting a review of life assurance taxation which includes consideration of the way in which policyholders are taxed. The Government will decide in due course in the light of that review whether or not changes to the present rules on policyholder taxation should be introduced and whether or not existing policies will be affected by any changes. However, under present legislation, it is already possible in certain circumstances for critical illness cover to be added to the cover provided by an existing endowment policy without affecting the exemption of the proceeds from taxation at the higher rate. There is also no bar to policyholders taking out separate critical illness cover.

Council of Mortgage Lenders

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer met the Building Societies Association, whose members are also members of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, on 21 June this year.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what matters were discussed, what decisions taken and which were decided by vote, at the Ecofin Council on 19 September in Brussels.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I represented the United Kingdom at the Economic and Finance Council of the European Union in Brussels on 19 September.

The Council heard a summary from the President of the European Commission on current work on the White Paper follow-up. The Presidency outlined Ecofin's role in the run-up to the European Council at Essen in December. I emphasised the need to pull together the different strands of work effectively before Essen, and on trans-European networks, I stressed the importance of examining each priority project individually and reviewing the situation on the basis of results.

The Council examined the revised convergence programme for the Greek economy 1994–99. It urged the Greek Government to pursue vigorously all the policies necessary to achieve the targets of the programme. The Council agreed to review, in the context of the Union's multilateral surveillance procedures, including the excessive deficits procedure, the implementation of the convergence programme year for year over the period covered by the programme.

The Council welcomed Ireland's convergence programme 1994–96 and noted the strong performance of the Irish economy including the sound fiscal position and the continued reduction in Ireland's debt ratio. The Council encouraged the Irish Government to pursue the structural reforms and other policies necessary to improve the investment performance, sustain growth and achieve an enhanced employment performance.

The Council decided in accordance with article 104c.6 of the treaty on European Union that each member state, except Ireland and Luxembourg, has an excessive deficit.

The Council agreed a draft of the Presidency statement to the IMF/World bank meeting in Madrid.

The Council briefly discussed the Italian reserve on the own resources decision. It was agreed that this issue would be discussed again at the 10 October Ecofin.

No formal votes were taken at the Council meeting.

Defaulting Taxpayers

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions since 1 January 1993 the Inland Revenue has instructed sheriff officers to execute diligence on a defaulting taxpayer within 10 days of the sum falling due.

Sir George Young: The Inland Revenue has instructed sheriff officers to execute diligence on a defaulting taxpayer within 10 days of the sum falling due on 143 occasions since 1 January 1993.

The figures cover the period from 1 January 1993 to 6 October 1994.

Drugs

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many court cases involving drug smuggling have been initiated by HM Customs and Excise over the last year; how many of these have been thrown out of court due to lack of evidence; and what has been the cost incurred in investigating these rejected cases.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: HM Customs and Excise do not keep this type of record by case, but by reference to defendants: there may be several defendants in any case. In the year 1993–94 HM Customs and Excise prosecuted 1,457 defendants for drug offences; 16 of these were discharged on committal and a further 25, although committed for trial, were the subject of successful defence submissions and did not go before a jury.

Information on costs in investigating the rejected cases is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he discussed arms and military equipment exports with South African Government members during his visit to South Africa in September.

The Prime Minister: There was reference during my visit to the on-going confidential discussions between our two Governments concerning defence exports.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what matters in regard to nuclear safeguards, nuclear materials security and nuclear trade were raised during his visit to South Africa in September.

The Prime Minister: Those matters were not raised during my recent visit to South Africa. They are, however, frequently discussed by relevant experts from both our countries in the appropriate international forums.

Coppicing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the letter of the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) of 28 July, what assessment he has made of the environmental impact of coppicing as an integral part in Her Majesty Government's on-going programmes in renewable energy; what engineering assessment he has made of the development of suitable machinery for the harvesting of short-rotation coppice by Loughry college in County Tyrone; and what action he is taking to support its commercialisation in the marketplace.

The Prime Minister: The environmental impact of coppicing was studied by the energy technology support unit in 1988, in its report, "Energy Forestry in Britain: Environmental issues"—ETSU B 1166.

Its main conclusion was that such environmental impacts should be no more severe than those associated with other forms of arable farming. Nevertheless, further, more detailed, work continues, with advice from, among others, the Countryside Commission, the Countryside Council for Rural Wales, English Nature, the Game Conservancy Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Forestry Authority.

An assessment of the original version of the Loughry college harvester was reported in ETSU B 1382. A new, simpler, version developed with funding from the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, is now being assessed. This newer machine is not yet at a stage where commercial development would be appropriate.

Copies of the reports have been placed in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Weapons, Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he had with the Government of Saudi Arabia on their policy towards the Iraqi nuclear weapons programme during his visit to Jeddah on 19 September.

The Prime Minister: My discussions with King Fahd covered a wide variety of issues on Iraq, and underscored the closeness of our policies towards that country.

We support the United Nations' Special Commission's efforts to eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capability, as called for in United Nations Security Council resolution 687. Although United Nations weapons inspectors have noted improved Iraqi co-operation, gaps remain in accounting for Iraq's past weapons programmes. For that reason, and to avoid placing unhelpful pressure on UNSCOM, I believe that it is crucial that the length of the probationary period for monitoring Iraqi compliance remain open-ended.

Official Meetings

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer on 11 July, *Official Report*, column *375*, if he will now make it his policy to collect and publish statistics on the number of official meetings he holds with hon. and right hon. Members on constituency matters at 10 Downing street, broken down by political party and by regions in which their constituencies are situated.

The Prime Minister: No. I have nothing further to add to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member on 11 July, *Official Report*, column *375*.

Diesel Fuel

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the letter of 4 July from Baroness Cumberlege, Health Minister, to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of co-ordination between the Departments of Health, of the Environment, and of Transport, and the Treasury on the latest scientific understanding of the use of diesel fuel.

The Prime Minister: I am content with the existing arrangements. The Departments of Health and of the Environment are advised on health issues related to diesel and other fuels by expert committees. Officials from the Departments of Health, of the Environment and of Transport and the Treasury are in frequent consultation on those matters.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Peru

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid is to be given to Peru in the coming year; and for what it has been allocated.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd) gave to her on 23 March at columns *247–48*. The amount and nature of our aid programme to Peru is likely to remain broadly similar during the coming year. Since March, two further projects, in contraceptive supplies—£1·36 million—and support for animal health laboratories—£0·67 million—have been agreed and are under way.

In addition, during his visit to Peru in September, my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General announced the Government's agreement to a request from the Government of Peru to apply retrospective terms adjustment to outstanding bilateral aid loans to Peru, representing forgiveness of some £5·09 million of debt. This was granted to Peru on an exceptional basis in recognition of its progress in economic reform and substantial indebtedness.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration was given to the pension arrangements for United Kingdom national staff of the university of Zimbabwe during the Lancaster house talks on independence for Rhodesia.

Mr. Baldry: There was no specific discussion of pensions for United Kingdom nationals on the staff of the university of Zimbabwe during the Lancaster house talks. The constitution agreed at Lancaster house did, however, guarantee the payment of public service pensions abroad, although not protecting them against inflation or depreciation.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Zimbabwe concerning responsibility for the maintenance of pension levels for United Kingdom nationals who worked in the university of Zimbabwe and are now resident in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the level of pensions payable to former staff of the university of Zimbabwe recruited from the United Kingdom through the Inter University Council now resident in the United Kingdom; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have received several representations from former employees of the university of Zimbabwe recruited through the Inter University Council about the level of their pensions. Those making representations have been advised that staff recruited through the IUC became locally appointed employees of the university of Zimbabwe, which also had responsibility for their terms and conditions of service, including pension provision. Her Majesty's Government have no responsibility in this matter, and there have been no discussions with the Government of Zimbabwe on the question of responsibility.

However, we took the opportunity of this year's state visit by President Mugabe to draw the Zimbabwe Government's attention to the difficulties faced by United Kingdom citizens whose pensions have been undermined by inflation and depreciation of the Zimbabwe dollar.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initial priorities have been identified by the co-ordinator of non-governmental organisations activities in Hargeisa in north-west Somalia.

Mr. Baldry: The ODA NGO liaison and support officer has identified the rehabilitation of basic health and education services and capacity building for local NGOs as priorities for ODA assistance. Since April, we have committed £400,000 in support of those activities. Additional proposals are being developed.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the international response to the crisis in Rwanda and Zaire following the emergency session of the UN Security Council.

Mr. Baldry: Since the start of the crisis, the international community has committed nearly £382 million of humanitarian assistance for Rwandan displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries. This includes £60 million committed by the British Government.

South Africa

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of South Africa regarding the method of aerial delivery of relief supplies known as Operation Snowdrop.

Mr. Baldry: None.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of (i) men and (ii) women at each level of the judiciary in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table shows the number and percentage of men and women at each of the main levels of the judiciary in England and Wales as at 1 October 1994:

			per cent.
Lords of Appeal in Ordinary	Men	10	100
	Women	—	—
Lord Justices of Appeal	Men	28	96·5
	Women	1	3·5
Heads of divisions (excluding the Lord Chancellor)	Men	4	100
	Women	—	—
High Court judges	Men	89	93·7
	Women	6	6·3
Circuit judges	Men	483	94·3
	Women	29	5·7
Recorders	Men	832	95·3
	Women	41	4·7
Assistant recorders	Men	321	84·0
	Women	61	16·0
District judges	Men	266	90·8
	Women	27	9·2
Deputy district judges	Men	648	88·5
	Women	84	11·5
Stipendiary magistrates	Men	73	88·0
	Women	10	12·0
Acting stipendiary magistrates	Men	75	78·9
	Women	20	21·1
*Lay magistrates	Men	16,151	53·7
	Women	13,903	46·3

* as at 1 January 1994

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department to whom applications to become lay justices of the peace in Northern Ireland should be addressed.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Applications should be addressed to the Assistant Secretary of Commissions (Northern Ireland) at the Northern Ireland Court Service, Windsor house, Bedford street, Belfast BT2 7LT.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the duties of lay justices of the peace in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Justices of the Peace in Northern Ireland carry out a wide range of functions contained in numerous enactments. Their main functions are:

1. occasionally presiding in magistrates courts to remand accused persons in custody or bail following adjournment of criminal proceedings;

2. undertaking "out-of-court" duties such as hearing complaints, issuing summonses, warrants of arrest and search warrants as well as signing declarations, administering oaths or taking affidavits, affirmations or recognisances.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what criteria and qualifications are sought in respect of persons wishing to be considered for admission as lay justices of the peace in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Persons wishing to be considered for appointment as justice of the peace must be personally suitable in character, integrity and understanding for the functions which they have to perform. They must reside in, or within 15 miles of the boundary of the county court division for which they are proposed and should normally live or work within that division.

Legal Aid

Mr. Stephen Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the 10 highest contributions made out of the legal aid fund to assist individuals in the last five years, the individuals involved and the nature of the proceedings.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[pursuant to his reply, 20 July 1994, c. 222]:* The original answer listed a fraud case involving "Eagle Starr" (sic) as costing the legal aid fund £1·76 million. The reference should have been to "Eagle Trust".

Small Claims Court

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what provision he intends to make for costs in the small claims court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Although often referred to as "no-costs" regime, the small claims procedure does provide for the recovery of some costs, as detailed in order 19, rule 4 of the county court rules. Under this rule, the costs stated on the summons and the costs of enforcing the award may be recovered. In addition, the court may award allowances to be paid in respect of the successful party's and witness's expenses, and expert's fees. There are no current plans to change this provision.

Expert Medical Witnesses

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what research his Department has conducted into the average fees expert medical witnesses charge for preparing reports and giving evidence in court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Many of the respondents to the Lord Chancellor's consultation paper, "Small Personal Injury Claims", published in October last year, gave examples of fees charged by medical experts, and indicated the level of fees that respondents considered realistic. Respondents came from a wide range of interested groups, including the medical profession. Additional consultation with the British Medical Association was also undertaken.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Licences

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will instigate a survey of the average number of telephone calls which citizens require to make to the television licensing helpline before finding the number not engaged; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Under section 180 of the Broadcasting Act 1990, responsibility for the administration of the television licensing system, was transferred to the BBC with effect from 1 April 1991. The television licensing helplines are operated by TV Licensing under contract to the BBC; responsibility for ensuring that TV Licensing performs to an acceptable standard therefore rests on the BBC.

G-Tech

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what investigations were carried out by the Director-General of Oflot into the activities in the United States of America of G-Tech, a member of Camelot Group plc; how many Oflot staff were involved in the investigations; and what other Government Departments or agencies were involved.

Mr. Dorrell: This is a matter for the Director-General of the Office of the National Lottery. I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member and place copies of his reply in the Library of the House.

Advisory Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Mr. Sproat *[pursuant to his reply, 5 July 1994, c. 179]:* I regret to inform the House that the answer given was incorrect. The correct reply is as follows: the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art publishes an annual report which includes any advice given by the Committee to Government on matters connected with the export of cultural goods. Reports from the Library and Information Services Council may also include details of their advice to Government.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Sproat *[pursuant to his reply, 5 July 1994, c. 179]:* I regret to inform the House that the answer given was incorrect. The correct reply is as follows: the Government are not required to consult any of the advisory bodies for which my Department is responsible before legislation proposals, or to publish a response to their advice. However, my Department would normally consult an advisory body on policy matters which might affect it.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which are required to lay their annual report before Parliament.

Mr. Sproat *[pursuant to his reply, 5 July 1994, c. 180]:* I regret to inform the House that the answer given was incorrect. The correct reply is as follows: the Reviewing Committee on the Exports of Works of Art and the Library and Information Services Council are the only advisory bodies for which my Department is responsible which are required to report annually and whose reports are laid in Parliament. The Committee's report is presented as a Command Paper and the Council's report forms part of the Secretary of State's annual report on the public library service, published as a House of Commons Paper. Reports from the Royal Fine Art Commission are also presented to Parliament as Command Papers, although there is no requirement for it to report annually.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National heritage if he will list his Department' advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. Sproat *[pursuant to his reply, 5 July 1994, c..180]:* I regret to inform the House that the answer given was incorrect. The correct reply is as follows: the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, the Library and Information Services Council and the Theatres Trust are the only advisory bodies which are required to produce reports annually.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which have a statutory basis.

Mr. Sproat *[pursuant to his reply, 11 July 1994, c. 469]:* I regret to inform the House that the answer given was incorrect. The correct reply is as follows: the Library and Information Services Council was established under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and the Theatres Trust was established under the Theatres Trust Act 1976.

ENVIRONMENT

Access to Local Authority Housing

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what options for housing will be available to a homeless family accepted as being in priority need and not intentionally homeless for the 12 months after they became homeless as a result of the statement on access to local authority housing;

(2) what options for housing will be available to a homeless family accepted as being in priority need and not intentionally homeless for the 12-month period of the first temporary tenancy if they are still not entitled to a local authority home according to the waiting list, as a result of the statement on access to local authority housing.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: If such a family have no accommodation available which is suitable in terms of its general condition and in relation to the family's particular needs the Government's homelessness reforms propose that the local authority would have a recurring duty to arrange such accommodation.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to consult further on matters contained in the statement on access to local authority housing; on which matters he will be consulting; with which organisations; and during which time period.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My officials will be holding further discussions with local authority and housing association representatives, and other relevant organisations, both in preparation for legislation and in taking forward those matters which do not require legislation.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to tighten up the code of guidance so that applications should be more thoroughly vetted following the statement on access to local authority housing.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We intend to draw on current best practice among local housing authorities, to ensure that assistance goes to those applicants who are eligible for it.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to modify the provisions on intentionality in the context of the statement on access to local authority housing.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We are still considering this matter, in discussion with representatives of local authorities and other relevant organisations.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions are made under the proposals contained in the statement on access to local authority housing for a family accepted as homeless to be given a succession of temporary tenancies; and if it is intended that there will be a limit on the number of such tenancies or the period of time they can last for individually or together.

Mr. Roberts B. Jones: The terms of the provisions will depend upon how the legislation is drafted. But the Government's intention is that the local authority would have a duty to find accommodation for an eligible homeless household for a minimum of 12 months, and if the household continues to need assistance the duty would recur. In practice, a tenancy arranged by the authority to discharge its duty might well last longer than 12 months. In many parts of the country the household would gain local authority or housing association accommodation via a waiting list within 12 months.

Water Charges

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that the costs of leakages in the water system and of cleaning water from pollution not created by consumers should be clearly identified, and an equitable system devised for the costs that these factors create; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government believe that wherever possible, those responsible for pollution should bear the costs of any necessary treatment. Each water company must exercise effective control over losses from the distribution system. Their success in controlling such losses is reflected in the scope for further efficiency savings in their operations, which has a direct bearing on the price limits determined by the director general and hence the charges faced by consumers.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish an independent review of water and sewerage charges with the remit of establishing a system which does not encourage limitations in water use that create public and individual health risks and taking into account the contribution that customers, the water companies and their shareholders and also those polluting water supplies should make to the costs of investment in water and sewerage services.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have every confidence in the effectiveness of the existing regulatory system and the ability of the Director General of Water Services, who is carrying out his responsibilities as an independent regulator, and who has a duty to protect the interests of customers and to ensure that charges for water and sewerage are fair and equitable.

Public Rights of Way

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to meet the Countryside Commission's target to clear, waymark and remove obstructions from all the 120,000 miles of public right of way in England.

Mr. Atkins: Achieving the target is essentially a matter for local highway authorities, with farmers, landowners and path users also having a role to play. The Countryside Commission's "Milestones" initiative encourages all those involved with rights of way to work together to achieve the target. Good progress is being made.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that water companies should be required to indicate where disconnections have occurred in households in receipt of state support and to make public such disconnections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No. Where water companies disconnect a water supply to an inhabited house and do not restore the supply within 24 hours, they are already required, under the Water Industry Act 1991, to inform the local authority in whose area the house is situated.

Environmentally Adjusted Accounts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to develop pilot systems of environmentally adjusted national accounts by 1995.

Mr. Atkins: My Department, together with other Government departments, is to participate in a project led by the Central Statistical Office to develop a pilot system of satellite accounts linked to the input/output framework of national accounts.

Planning Policy

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce a review of planning policy guidance note 16.

Sir Paul Beresford: There are no proposals to review the policy on archaeology and planning as set out in PPG 16. However, the Department of National Heritage and English Heritage are reviewing the implementation of this PPG. Consultants have been appointed and preparatory work for a study is now under way.

National Environmental Agency

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to establish a national environment agency; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: Mr right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment published on Thursday 13 October draft legislative provisions to establish an Environment Agency for England and Wales and a Scottish Environment Protection Agency, together with a draft of the management statement for the Environment Agency. Copies have been placed in the House Libraries. The published draft clauses and schedules set out the constitution of the new agencies and their functions, powers and duties. They represent the core legislative provisions relating to the agencies, which will be presented to Parliament at the earliest opportunity as part of an environmental Bill. This early publication of the agency provisions will give interested parties a chance to inform themselves of the details of the proposed legislation before it is introduced to Parliament.

Countryside Commission and English Nature (Merger)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the cost of a merger between English Nature and the Countryside Commission.

Sir Paul Beresford: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 7 October that he has decided not to proceed with a merger of the Countryside Commission and English Nature. Instead, a programme of closer working is to be developed.

"Water – A Vital Resource"

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the British Medical Association report, "Water – A Vital Resource", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health published the Government's response to the BMA's board of science report "Water – A Vital Resource" on 16 June 1994, with which I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State are in full agreement.

Right to Buy

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the value of assets sold under the right-to-buy legislation, *(b)* the proceeds received by local authorities and housing associations, *(c)* the money which local authorities have been allowed to spend from the proceeds and *(d)* the amount of the proceeds spent by local authorities, for each year from 1980 to date.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Information is not held centrally by the Department in the form requested.

However, figures of receipts from sales of council dwellings to sitting tenants are collected by the Department and these show that between the introduction of right to buy in 1980 and the end of March 1994 the total value of such sitting tenant sales, net of discounts, is an estimated £18·5 billion.

The number of sales to sitting tenants during this period was about 1,280,000 and 92 per cent. of such sales resulted from tenants exercising their right to buy.

Water Pollution

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a full copy of the National Rivers Authority's report into the causes of pollution at Helpston Health landfill site, Cambridgeshire; and whether, as a result of the full report, he expects Hunt's Refuse or Shanks and McEwan to be prosecuted for allowing leaching from the site to pollute the water supply.

Sir Paul Beresford: Copies of the report commissioned by the National Rivers Authority on groundwater contamination in the area around Helpston, Cambridgeshire have been placed in the House Libraries. It is for the National Rivers Authority to consider whether or not it will prosecute.

Waste Management

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who represented his Department at the Plan for Profit conference on waste management in London on 20 September; what was the cost of attendance; and what assessment he has made of the benefits accrued to his Department from the participation of departmental personnel.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's directorate of pollution control and wastes was represented at this annual conference organised by the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors by the head of directorate, the head of wastes technical division and two other officers, as guests of the association. Representation was at a level consistent with the need to maintain the Department's working relationship with the industry and to keep abreast of issues of concern to the industry following the introduction of the new licensing regime earlier this year.

Wetlands Preservation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional sites have been added to the sites recognised as of international importance under the

Ramsar convention on wetlands preservation since August; how many sites within the United Kingdom or under the United Kingdom jurisdiction are now listed under Ramsar; and which additional sites are under consideration for inclusion on the Ramsar list.

Mr. Atkins: Three additional wetlands of international importance have been added to the list of Ramsar sites since August; Loch Maree; Broadland; and Booby Pond and Rookery, Little Cayman. There are currently 83 United Kingdom Ramsar sites, including two sites in United Kingdom dependent territories. In due course some 70 further sites within the United Kingdom are expected to be considered for listing under the Ramsar convention. Further listings can also be expected in the United Kingdom dependent territories.

Eco-labelling

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions there have been about eco-labels with other EC countries and EU institutions in the last three months; and if he will make a statement about progress towards an eco-labelling system in the EU.

Sir Paul Beresford: The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board has had discussions with the ecolabelling competent bodies in other member states and with the Commission about the delays there have been in implementing the EC scheme. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade wrote expressing his concerns about the delays to the Commissioner for Industrial Affairs and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State raised this matter at the Environment Council on 4 October. The Council unanimously adopted conclusions condemning the Commission for the delays and calling upon it to act quickly to put matters right.

Toxic Waste Dumping

Mr. Benton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take against the dumping of toxic waste and other hazardous materials *(a)* in the port of Liverpool and *(b)* other United Kingdom ports; and if he will give immediate consideration to the proposals set out in the letter to him from the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) of 19 September.

Mr. Atkins: Day-to-day control over imports of waste is a matter for local waste regulation authorities. In cases of waste entering the port of Liverpool, the responsible authority is Merseyside waste regulation authority.

Government policy on the export and import of waste was announced on 15 June. In line with the principle of self-sufficiency which was set out in the 1990 environment White Paper, the presumption in future will be against imports of waste into the United Kingdom for disposal, other than in exceptional cases where wider environmental considerations apply. Imports for genuine recovery operations will continue to be allowed. My Department will be consulting publicly on more detailed proposals, in the form of a draft waste management plan, later this year.

With regard to the proposals made by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) for a national waste disposal strategy, I refer to my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend, the Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on 20 July, *Official Report*, column 322, in which he announced the Government's intention to draw up a draft waste strategy for England and Wales. This will aim to provide a coherent framework for waste management policies throughout the country. The draft strategy will be issued for consultation by the end of the year.

Wildlife Trade

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if the police were consulted over changes to the bird registration system.

(2) if the police have been included in consultation over the deregulation of wildlife sales control.

Sir Paul Beresford: Yes. My Department consulted the police when the review started, and subsequently when our proposals to reduce the scope of the bird registration system were announced. The police have agreed to participate in an official level working group which will be reviewing the enforcement of sales and related controls.

Heartlands Urban Development Corporation

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are being taken to protect existing spending commitments to the Heartlands urban development corporation under the new bidding regime of the single regeneration budget; and what are the existing commitments for the financial year *(a)* 1995–96, *(b)* 1996–97, *(c)* 1997–98 and *(d)* 1998-99.

Sir Paul Beresford: UDC's form a self-contained grouping within the SRB and all existing commitments will be honoured. The level of grant in future years will be determined, in the light of corporate plans, at the outcome of the current public expenditure survey.

Birmingham Heartlands development corporation will have entered into commitments on the basis of its anticipated total income which includes receipts and funding from the European regional development fund. BHDC has been given an indicative wind-up date of March 1997 and its future expenditure strategy has been planned accordingly.

Housing Association Grant

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the level of housing association grant rate for 1995–96; what response he has made to the opinions of the Environment Committee on this topic; and what criteria he has adopted for determining that figure for 1995–96.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My colleagues and I received 88 letters concerning housing association grant rates for 1995–96 in the period to 12 October.

The Select Committee's report into the work of the Housing Corporation made no specific proposal concerning grant rates in 1995–96. Their general view that grant rates should be maintained in the absence of falls in procurement costs was carefully considered.

The Housing Corporation advised me on the implications of changes in development costs and tenants' incomes, and the likely impact of lower grant rates on rents and affordability and on the supply of private finance to support the development programme. Their analysis has been published, and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. It shows that the reduction in grant rates that my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration announced on 3 August 1994 was very largely justified by lower procurement costs.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from *(a)* the Council of Mortgage Lenders or *(b)* other private financial institutions on the level of housing association grant.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Ministers here, as well as officials from my Department and the Housing Corporation, are in regular contact with lenders and with the Council of Mortgage Lenders. On the basis of those discussions, I am confident that private finance will continue to be available to enable associations to deliver the substantial programme of new affordable homes for which we have made provision.

EU Directives

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for the last five years all EU environmental directives which have not yet been incorporated into United Kingdom law; and when he expects regulations to be published to do this.

Mr. Atkins: The main environmental directives still to be legally transposed in the United Kingdom are the nitrates directive, the urban waste water treatment directive and the habitats directive. The House of Commons has approved the regulations needed to transpose the habitats directive and these are being considered by the other place today. Regulations to implement the urban waste water treatment directive are being drafted and work to implement the nitrates directive is in hand.

Homelessness

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a reference for, or list in the *Official Report*, the budgeted expenditure on homelessness within the general fund of each local authority in England for the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have arranged for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Construction Industry

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's response to the report, "Constructing the Team", by Sir Michael Latham.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: In common with the whole of the construction industry, the Government have given a warm welcome to the trust of Sir Michael Latham's report. We have invited Sir Michael to lead the initial implementation phase and provided administrative and other resources to ensure that momentum can be maintained. We are participating fully with industry and client groups to develop detailed responses to the report's recommendations. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has approved an interdepartmental scrutiny of Government's procurement of construction in response to Sir Michael's recommendation that the Government should commit themselves to being a best practice client.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for legislation to govern construction contracts.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We shall now be examining with industry and client groups Sir Michael Latham's particular proposals. We have made it clear that we are prepared in principle to legislate on these matters subject to agreement on the need and form of such legislation.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policies his Department has for encouraging progress in the construction industry for operatives and companies from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Sir Michael Latham's report, "Constructing the Team", recommended that equal opportunities in the industry should be vigorously pursued. A joint task force is being established to progress this recommendation. My Department will take an active part.

Transitional Relief

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make an announcement on the future of transitional relief.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We expect to make an announcement about council tax transitional relief at the same time as the local government finance supplement proposals are announced, shortly after the Chancellor's Budget statement.

Urban Improvement Programmes

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was spent on programmes of section 11, estate action and urban programme in 1994–95; and what sum is committed to these programmes for 1995–96 *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Birmingham.

Sir Paul Beresford: Planned spending by my Department in 1994–95 on these elements within the single regeneration budget is £60·5 million on section 11, £372·6 million on estate action and £82·9 million on the urban programme.

In 1995–96 all existing commitments within the single regeneration budget will be honoured with the level of resources for each of the component elements of the budget determined at the outcome of the current public expenditure survey.

Within Birmingham commitments in 1995–96 are currently £22·08 million for estate action and £1·14 million for the urban programme. The basis for the calculation of future commitments under the section 11 programme is still the subject of discussion with local authorities.

Newham Borough Council

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state for the London borough of Newham the capital debt and relevant interest paid in respect of borrowing sanctioned by him or other Ministers in the year 1993–94 and the related standard spending assessment and basis of its calculations.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The level of borrowing undertaken in 1993–94, and the terms of any such borrowing, were a matter for the borough, subject to the limits permitted under part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The SSA element for debt charges is intended to cover in full the financing costs associated with the appropriate amount of debt which would allow an authority to provide a standard level of service. It is based on those elements of the 1989–90 grant-related expenditure assessment relating to capital financing and credit approvals issued since 1 April 1990. It excludes credits approvals and assumed debt associated with the housing revenue account and credit approvals which are not expected to lead to a net increase in long-term borrowing. Newham's SSA element for debt charges in the 1994–95 revenue support grant settlement was £18·903 million. This financing cost was based on assumed debt outstanding for SSA purposes of £136·512 million at 1 April 1994 and estimated credit approvals for 1994–95 of £9·115 million. The estimate of 1993–94 credit approvals used in the calculation of assumed debt outstanding at 1 April 1994 was £9·476 million.

Council Mortgage Lenders

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. Friend and Ministers in his Department have frequent meetings with the Council of Mortgage Lenders. Most recently, my noble Friend the Earl of Arran, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, met the Council of Mortgage Lenders on 7 June 1994.

Castle Vale Housing Action Trust

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are being taken to protect existing spending commitments to the Castle Vale housing action trust under the new bidding regime of the single regeneration budget; and what are the existing commitments for the financial years *(a)*1995–96, *(b)* 1996–97, *(c)* 1997–98 and *(d)* 1998–99.

Sir Paul Beresford: Housing action trusts form a self-contained grouping within the single regeneration budget and all existing commitments will be honoured. The level of grant-in-aid for the Castle Vale HAT for 1995–96 and indicative figures for the two following years will be determined in the light of all the trusts' corporate plans at the outcome of the current public expenditure survey.

Single Regeneration Budget

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the maximum sum available to the Birmingham area from new bids under the single regeneration budget in 1995–96 on a basis pro rata to the current distribution of the totality of programmes now within the single regeneration budget.

Sir. Paul Beresford: In the current financial year forecast expenditure on the single regeneration budget nationally is £1442 million and it is expected that £68 million of this will be spent within Birmingham.

The amount of resources available to the Birmingham area for new bids will not be known until the results of the bidding round are announced in January 1995.

Women's Refuges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many women and children used women's refuges in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years, and during 1994 to the latest available date;

(2) what assessment has been made by his Department of the level of demand for places in women's refuges; what plans he has to increase refuge provision; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many *(a)* women's refuges and *(b)* places in women's refuges have been available to women escaping domestic violence in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years and at the latest available date.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Department does not hold information about the numbers of women's refuges, or places in refuges.

The provision of women's refuges is best decided by local authorities and other agencies, taking into account such issues as the local supply of housing available for short-term use in emergency situations. Under the homelessness legislation local authorities have a statutory duty to provide accommodation or to assist persons who are at risk from domestic violence.

For information about Wales I refer the hon. Lady to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much *(a)* capital funding and *(b)* revenue funding has been provided by his Department to women's refuges in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: In 1994–95 the Department is providing, through the Housing Corporation, £3.1 million capital funding for women's aid projects in England, largely to provide refuge places. Comparative figures for earlier years are given in the table.

Year	*£ million*
1988–89	6·4
1989–90	2·1
1990–91	1·7
1991–92	5·2
1992–93	5·4
1993–94	5·8

Information is not available about revenue funding, or for years prior to 1988–89. For information about Wales I refer the hon. Lady to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Energy Saving Trust

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now list the funding available to the Energy Saving Trust over each of the next three years, the source of the funding and what steps the Government are taking to increase this funding; if he will make a statement about the future of the Energy Saving Trust and its contribution to achieving the United Nations conference on the environment and development, Rio summit, targets.

Mr. Roberts B. Jones: The Energy Saving Trust is an independent organisation, but I understand that funding for schemes in which it is involved is as follows:

a. Each electricity company in England and Wales has been set standards of performance on energy efficiency by the electricity regulator after consultation with the Trust. OFFER is also proposing standards for Scottish companies. Funding for schemes of up to £22 million in 1993–94 and £25 million over each of the next three years raised from electricity franchise customers will be available to help meet those standards. This includes funding proposed under the Scottish price control.

b. Funding of £1 million in 1994–95 is available for the second year of the Trust's pilot combined heat and power scheme. The level of funding to be raised from gas customers for future schemes is a matter for on the decision of the Director General of Gas Supply. She is currently considering proposals for five schemes submitted by British Gas based on proposals from the trust.

c. In addition the trust expects to raise some £2 million each year until 1997 from a variety of sources, including this Department, which will be spent on their pilot scheme for local energy advice schemes.

The Government are considering how energy efficiency schemes involving the trust might be funded in the future. The Government are committed to their climate change programme which includes energy efficiency measures involving the trust.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Upper Waiting Hall Exhibitions

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to assistance dogs for the disabled to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 31 October to Friday 4 November.

Travel Office

Mr. Orme: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how the acquisition by American Express of the travel management interests of the Thomas Cook Group Ltd. will affect the services provided for the House and hon. Members by the Travel Office.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I have received firm assurances that the acquisition of Thomas Cook Travel Management by American Express will have no adverse effect on the quality and range of services provided by the Travel Office. The Administration Committee nevertheless intends to monitor closely the performances of the office to ensure that its standards of service are maintained.

Ministerial Responsibilities

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council on what date he published, or plans to publish, a consolidated list of specific responsibilities or activities of each Member of her Majesty's Administration as of July.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been asked to reply.

The "List of Ministerial Responsibilities including Agencies" is published by the Cabinet Office: the latest edition was published in September. Copies can be purchased from that office, and are available to Members free from the Vote Office.

EDUCATION

Parents Charter

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many copies of the parents charter were distributed in *(a)* Southampton and *(b)* Hampshire; and what was the cost in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: The figures have been provided by the Royal Mail, which was contracted to carry out the distribution on behalf of the Department of Education:

(a) Southampton—245,130 copies;

(b) Hampshire (excluding Southampton)—147,782 copies.

The actual cost of the distribution is commercial in confidence and to disclose it would compromise the Department's confidential tendering procedures.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement concerning anomalies in the funding of London boroughs for salaries of teachers in receipt of inner London allowances; and what actions Her Majesty's Government have taken, or intend to take, on any necessary adjustments.

Mr. Robin Squire: London boroughs already receive appropriate compensation in their education standard spending assessments for the overall extra labour and other costs they need to incur to deliver a standard level of service. The Government, in consultation with the local authority associations, will continue to review the standard spending assessment methodology annually.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools have *(a)* fewer than 50 pupils, *(b)* 50 to 100 pupils, *(c)* 100 to 250 pupils, *(d)* 250 to 500 pupils, *(e)* 500 to 1,000 pupils, *(f)* 1,000 to 1,500 pupils and *(g)* more than 1,500 pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out as follows:

Pupil numbers are derived from the Department's January 1993 schools census and therefore included GM schools that were still under LEA control at that time.

	Number of GM schools		
Number of Pupils	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Total*
Less than 50	6	—	6
50 to 100	31	—	31
100 to 250	189	4	193
250 to 500	154	57	211
500 to 1,000	12	381	393
1,000 to 1,500	—	157	157
More than 1,500	—	16	16

Education Authority Funding

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was the education standard spending assessment for each local education authority in the current financial year; how much was distributed to each local education authority; and what were the total amounts in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: Most central Government support for local authorities is in the form of revenue support grant and non-domestic rates. Standard spending assessments are used to determine the overall RSG paid to each authority. The education standard spending assessments for 1994–95 for each English local education authority are as follows:

1994–95 Total Education SSA

	£ million
City	0·431
Camden	64·006
Greenwich	106·682
Hackney	101·461
Hammersmith and Fulham	50·987
Islington	78·237
Kensington and Chelsea	32·203
Lambeth	114·618
Lewisham	107·672
Southwark	102·889
Tower Hamlets	117·139
Wandsworth	82·667
Westminster	47·130
Barking	62·611
Barnet	102·209
Bexley	84·425
Brent	115·434
Bromley	93·379
Croydon	113·587
Ealing	113·070
Enfield	108·289
Haringey	93·825
Harrow	70·019
Havering	85·134
Hillingdon	88·522
Hounslow	85·358
Kingston upon Thames	42·350
Merton	54·216
Newham	124·425
Redbridge	91·838
Richmond upon Thames	36·845
Sutton	61·293
Waltham Forest	95·503
Birmingham	436·962
Coventry	113·298
Dudley	96·732
Sandwell	111·048
Solihull	63·030
Walsall	100·462
Wolverhampton	97·752
Knowsley	75·309
Liverpool	202·234
St. Helen's	63·692
Sefton	99·572
Wirral	125·582
Bolton	94·061
Bury	56·138
Manchester	184·189
Oldham	85·047
Rochdale	80·644
Salford	77·387
Stockport	86·738
Tameside	74·115
Trafford	69·128
Wigan	103·969
Barnsley	73·214
Doncaster	114·613
Rotherham	91·790
Sheffield	165·369
Bradford	207·828
Calderdale	72.075
Kirklees	138.275
Leeds	239·163
Wakefield	103·599
Gateshead	69·607
Newcastle upon Tyne	95·334
North Tyneside	64·739
South Tyneside	55·570
Sunderland	111·363
Isles of Scilly	1·135
Avon	297·673
Bedfordshire	211.153
Berkshire	267.815
Buckinghamshire	249·922
Cambridgeshire	222·581
Cheshire	328·551
Cleveland	218·506
Cornwall	155·039
Cumbria	161·414
Derbyshire	302·673
Devon	321·710
Dorset	191·515
Durham	208·516
East Sussex	207·757
Essex	548·518
Gloucestershire	170·799
Hampshire	502·990
Hereford and Worcester	216·529
Hertfordshire	351·155
Humberside	309·881
Isle of Wight	43·735
Kent	553·522
Lancashire	479·942
Leicestershire	313·809
Lincolnshire	199·967
Norfolk	237·184
North Yorkshire	215·596
Northamptonshire	206·719
Northumberland	108·114
Nottinghamshire	343·437
Oxfordshire	181·352
Shropshire	135·496
Somerset	141·986
Staffordshire	345·541
Suffolk	201·176
Surrey	285·235
Warwickshire	153·367
West Sussex	220·291
Wiltshire	185·524
Manchester	184·189
Oldham	85·047
Rochdale	80·644
Salford	77·387
Stockport	86·738
Tameside	74·115
Trafford	69·128
Wigan	103·969
Barnsley	73·214
Doncaster	114·613
Rotherham	91·790
Sheffield	165·369
Bradford	207·828
Calderdale	72.075
Kirklees	138.275
Leeds	239·163
Wakefield	103·599
Gateshead	69·607

	£ million
Newcastle upon Tyne	**95·334**
North Tyneside	**64·739**
South Tyneside	**55·570**
Sunderland	**111·363**
Isles of Scilly	**1·135**
Avon	**297·673**
Bedfordshire	**211.153**
Berkshire	**267.815**
Buckinghamshire	**249·922**
Cambridgeshire	**222·581**
Cheshire	**328·551**
Cleveland	**218·506**
Cornwall	**155·039**
Cumbria	**161·414**
Derbyshire	**302·673**
Devon	**321·710**
Dorset	**191·515**
Durham	**208·516**
East Sussex	**207·757**
Essex	**548·518**
Gloucestershire	**170·799**
Hampshire	**502·990**
Hereford and Worcester	**216·529**
Hertfordshire	**351·155**
Humberside	**309·881**
Isle of Wight	**43·735**
Kent	**553·522**
Lancashire	**479·942**
Leicestershire	**313·809**
Lincolnshire	**199·967**
Norfolk	**237·184**
North Yorkshire	**215·596**
Northamptonshire	**206·719**
Northumberland	**108·114**
Nottinghamshire	**343·437**
Oxfordshire	**181·352**
Shropshire	**135·496**
Somerset	**141·986**
Staffordshire	**345·541**
Suffolk	**201·176**
Surrey	**285·235**
Warwickshire	**153·367**
West Sussex	**220·291**
Wiltshire	**185·524**

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will show for each local education authority and for each year since 1988–89 *(a)* the percentage of the potential schools budget which is not delegated to schools through the aggregate schools budget, *(b)* the percentage of the general schools budget which is not delegated to schools through the aggregate schools budget and *(c)* the percentage of pupils in schools covered by schemes of delegation.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested at *(a)* and *(b)* is set out in the tables, for the financial year 1990–91, when the first statutory schemes for the local management of schools came into force, and subsequent years.

LMS schemes came into force in 1990–91 for all local education authorities with the exception of 10 whose schemes came into force in 1991–92—Croydon, Hereford and Worcester, Hertfordshire, Hillingdon, Isles of Scilly, Leicestershire, Manchester, Newham, Stockport, Wirral—and 12 whose schemes came into force in 1992–93—the inner London authorities other than Westminster. From their inception, these schemes covered all county and voluntary schools maintained by the authorities concerned; they have since been extended to cover all special schools, with effect from 1993–94 in the cases of Bedfordshire, Brent, Bromley, Buckinghamshire, Harrow, Lincolnshire, Northumberland and Rotherham, and with effect from 1994–95 in the case of all other authorities.

Local Education Authority (LEA)	*Proportion of Potential Schools Budget not Included in Aggregated Schools Budget*				
	1994–94	*1993–94*	*1992–93*	*1991–92*	*1990–91*
All LEAs where LMS in operation before April 1992					
Avon	14·4	14·2	16·4	17·2	17·7
Barking	14·7	11·7	12·2	14·8	13·0
Barnet	13·4	14·0	14·8	16·3	15·6
Barnsley	15·0	14·6	14·7	14·1	16·6
Bedfordshire	11·0	12·8	14·8	16·7	16·0
Berkshire	10·0	11·7	10·9	12·3	12·3
Bexley	12·4	12·2	11·7	18·7	18·7
Birmingham	13·2	12·6	15·7	16·6	17·0
Bolton	15·0	13·1	11·5	11·7	10·9
Bradford	13·5	13·9	15·3	13·3	14·0
Brent	10·0	10·2	13·1	16·5	16·4
Bromley	13·6	14·4	15·3	15·1	19·3
Buckinghamshire	14·9	14·7	14·7	13·4	15·1
Bury	11·7	12·7	12·9	14·7	18·1
Calderdale	12·3	13·9	14·4	14·5	18·1
Cambridgeshire	13·8	14·0	12·8	12·6	19·3
Cheshire	11·3	11·3	11·7	12·7	15·7
Cleveland	14·4	13·6	15·6	16·6	16·4
Cornwall	12·9	14·7	15·0	16·1	16·4
Coventry	12·9	13·9	17·0	17·2	19·1
Croydon	9·9	12·5	13·2	19·0	N/A
Cumbria	13·5	11·6	13·3	14·6	17·5
Derbyshire	15·0	14·6	15·5	16·0	16·6
Devon	12·2	12·7	12·7	12·9	16·9
Doncaster	15·0	14·2	15·8	16·0	14·6
Dorset	13·4	13·5	15·8	14·8	18·2
Dudley	7·5	9·5	14·9	15·5	16·0
Durham	14·0	14·2	14·7	17·8	16·9

Local Education Authority (LEA)	*Proportion of Potential Schools Budget not Included in Aggregated Schools Budget*				
	1994–94	*1993–94*	*1992–93*	*1991–92*	*1990–91*
Ealing	13·9	13·3	13·9	17·1	18·3
East Sussex	13·8	14·3	14·8	14·6	15·9
Enfield	12·1	13·0	13·6	15·3	18·5
Essex	14·1	12·9	14·9	14·9	16·0
Gateshead	13·9	14·6	16·1	16·1	16·7
Gloucestershire	13·6	15·0	16·8	15·5	13·2
Hampshire	13·4	14·1	13·4	13·9	14·2
Haringey	14·9	14·0	16·2	16·2	20·6
Harrow	11·2	13·4	17·2	17·6	18·5
Havering	11·7	13·6	13·9	14·9	16·1
Hereford/Worcester	11·7	12·6	14·5	16·0	N/A
Hertfordshire	8·7	8·9	12·9	13·8	N/A
Hillingdon	13·4	14·9	15·6	16·1	N/A
Hounslow	14·0	12·2	15·2	16·7	18·4
Humberside	14·1	14·9	14·8	15·4	18·3
Isle of Wight	13·1	15·0	14·2	16·3	17·5
Isles of Scilly	13·7	14·5	14·9	16·8	N/A
Kent	14·8	14·5	15·5	14·2	15·1
Kingston	14·5	15·0	14·4	15·7	21·5
Kirklees	15·8	14·8	14·5	15·0	16·6
Knowsley	10·9	13·4	15·6	16·8	18·1
Lancashire	14·7	15·0	15·7	17·3	17·3
Leeds	10·1	11·2	13·2	13·7	13·9
Leicestershire	13·6	11·5	14·6	15·7	N/A
Lincolnshire	13·2	12·2	13·7	14·5	14·9
Liverpool	13·5	15·0	15·5	17·1	15·1
Manchester	11·0	10·9	12·8	12·0	N/A
Merton	11·7	13·3	15·7	15·1	20·2
Newcastle	14·6	13·9	15·1	17·6	20·3
Newham	15·0	14·9	17·9	20·5	N/A
Norfolk	12·2	14·8	13·8	15·6	16·4
North Tyneside	14·1	14·9	15·2	15·5	17·7
North Yorkshire	13·1	N/A	14·6	15·8	17·4
Northamptonshire	10·7	12·4	12·4	14·0	15·3
Northumberland	11·1	12.1	12·8	11·8	13·5
Nottinghamshire	13·3	13·7	14·9	16·0	17·3
Oldham	13·2	14·7	15·7	16·9	18·4
Oxfordshire	11·3	11·9	14·1	15·3	18·6
Redbridge	13·0	13·8	15·0	16·9	17·3
Richmond	11·1	14·4	15·0	17·4	20·0
Rochdale	11·3	11·3	11·7	11·5	14·3
Rotherham	13·8	14·8	15·3	14·6	13·9
Salford	12·2	14·0	15·3	14·0	15·6
Sandwell	13·5	13·9	14·4	17·3	16·8
Sefton	13·0	11·6	11·2	12·1	12·6
Sheffield	15·0	14·7	15·9	14·1	17·4
Shropshire	14·6	13·8	13·7	13·9	15·4
Solihull	9·6	9·9	14·2	14·4	14·7
Somerset	13·8	14·6	14·4	14·5	17·1
South Tyneside	13·5	13·9	14·0	14·1	16·2
St Helens	14·5	14·8	14·6	15·5	16·7
Staffordshire	12·1	13·3	14·6	15·2	15·4
Stockport	10·7	12·5	11·7	11·3	N/A
Suffolk	12·4	12·4	13·0	12·4	14·3
Sunderland	12·1	12·3	11·7	11·6	13·1
Surrey	13·1	14·5	14·3	15·4	14·4
Sutton	14·0	14·4	15·3	14·9	16·6
Tameside	14·1	14·8	15·3	16·2	15·6
Trafford	13·4	13·5	15·3	16·1	15·6
Wakefield	14·6	14·9	16·0	15·7	17·1
Walsall	12·3	11·9	14·3	14·5	14·3
Waltham Forest	10·2	14·2	17·9	19·8	20·4
Warwickshire	14·3	13·9	13·0	13·3	14·8
West Sussex	12·9	13·2	12·6	12·3	12·5
Westminster	11·5	11·6	14·4	15·1	22·0
Wigan	13·1	14·4	15·9	17·0	16·7
Wiltshire	14·0	12·8	15·6	16·7	17·7
Wirral	13·7	13·3	14·3	14·3	N/A
Wolverhampton	11·3	10·1	19·1	18·5	18·2
Inner London LEAs where LMS in operation from April 1992					
City of London	13·0	13·5	13·0		
Camden	17·0	15·0	16·8		

Local Education Authority (LEA)	*Proportion of Potential Schools Budget not Included in Aggregated Schools Budget*				
	1994–94	*1993–94*	*1992–93*	*1991–92*	*1990–91*
Greenwich	10·8	13·7	20·4		
Hackney	16·5	18·4	20·2		
Hammersmith/Fulham	13·0	15·4	18·3		
Islington	7·5	7·4	14·8		
Kensington/Chelsea	14·2	18·3	23·9		
Lambeth	15·8	16·4	20·3		
Lewisham	15·4	16·2	18·9		
Southwark	13·9	16·7	20·9		
Tower Hamlets	13·8	14·1	22·8		
Wandsworth	17·7	19·2	15·8		

Local Education Authority (LEA)	*Proportion of General Schools Budget not Included in Aggregated Schools Budget*				
	1994–95	*1993–94*	*1992–93*	*1991–92*	*1990–91*
All LEAs where LMS in operation before April 1992					
Avon	25·1	23·3	27·8	32·4	34·5
Barking	28·1	22·0	26·9	25·6	34·9
Barnet	33·2	29·1	29·2	30·2	32·1
Barnsley	29·2	30·2	34·3	31·2	34·6
Bedfordshire	27·5	29·2	29·5	30·0	31·9
Berkshire	24·5	24·4	27·0	29·7	N/A
Bexley	30·8	30·3	30·4	33·4	33·2
Birmingham	29·0	26·8	30·0	32·6	33·1
Bolton	26·7	25·8	25·0	26·1	28·5
Bradford	33·2	33·0	34·8	34·2	34·1
Brent	28·5	25·3	26·5	31·6	33·7
Bromley	31·6	31·6	31·4	32·3	33·3
Buckinghamshire	29·3	29·5	29·4	29·1	31·9
Bury	24·0	24·1	26·1	27·1	30·9
Calderdale	26·4	25·5	34·3	34·4	37·1
Cambridgeshire	30·1	30·9	30·1	31·6	40·4
Cheshire	26·0	25·5	28·7	27·7	29·4
Cleveland	27·5	27·0	27·5	29·4	28·7
Cornwall	29·9	33·1	34·6	37·3	35·6
Coventry	27·4	28·5	35·6	37·5	42·3
Croydon	25·7	24·9	25·2	32·4	N/A
Cumbria	31·1	28·7	34·2	31·7	37·4
Derbyshire	31·3	30·8	32·7	33·6	33·8
Devon	29·1	29·6	32·0	34·5	N/A
Doncaster	26·2	25·7	27·7	28·7	27·5
Dorset	29·2	26·1	30·7	31·3	32·3
Dudley	23·7	28·3	30·8	31·7	N/A
Durham	27·2	28·5	30.7	31.6	30·8
Ealing	34·0	33·1	27·3	25·5	N/A
East Sussex	28·9	28·8	35·0	33·2	33·3
Enfield	30·3	30·0	32·0	38·3	44·9
Essex	27·8	27·8	26·4	26·4	27·6
Gateshead	26·7	28·2	33·8	34·2	33·5
Gloucestershire	27·4	25·5	31·5	30·9	29·7
Hampshire	26·3	25·9	26·1	26·1	27·0
Haringey	34·8	31·2	34·5	33·5	38·2
Harrow	27·4	28·9	29·5	28·4	30·7
Havering	23·8	21·7	23·4	28·2	29·4
Hereford/Worcester	26·1	25·7	28·3	31·2	N/A
Hertfordshire	21·2	21·3	26·8	27·7	N/A
Hillingdon	32·0	33·3	32·3	24·6	N/A
Hounslow	32·4	31·3	34·4	32·3	38·9
Humberside	27·6	27·5	28·3	29·2	31·8
Isle of Wight	29·9	28·1	29·1	35·5	33·0
Isles of Scilly	36·4	33·2	37·7	36·7	N/A
Kent	29·2	28·2	28·3	29·3	28·6
Kingston	28·0	25·0	23·1	30·3	N/A
Kirklees	32·6	32·7	33·3	33·1	34·6
Knowsley	25·0	25·9	27·7	27·3	N/A
Lancashire	29·7	30·1	31·1	32·5	N/A
Leeds	27·6	29·9	35·9	34·8	N/A
Leicestershire	26·1	22·7	28·2	30·0	N/A
Lincolnshire	28·1	27·9	26·8	25·3	29·3

Local Education Authority (LEA)	*Proportion of General Schools Budget not Included in Aggregated Schools Budget*				
	1994–95	*1993–94*	*1992–93*	*1991–92*	*1990–91*
Liverpool	27·2	25·7	24·6	26·1	25·9
Manchester	31·0	30·5	30·7	29·1	N/A
Merton	28·3	28·6	33·5	29·7	42·0
Newcastle	30·2	27·8	30·0	32·2	35·8
Newham	34·1	36·5	37·7	41·0	N/A
Norfolk	28·3	29·4	27·7	27·8	26·9
North Tyneside	22·2	29·9	28·7	28·6	30·3
North Yorkshire	25·3	N/A	29·2	31·5	31·8
Northamptonshire	23·4	26·2	24·0	27·4	27·8
Northumberland	25·7	26·7	32·7	32·9	31·9
Nottinghamshire	25·9	26·3	27·3	28·4	30·1
Oldham	29·1	30·2	34·3	38·5	34·3
Oxfordshire	30·2	31·0	29·1	30·2	34·7
Redbridge	25·9	25·8	29·2	31·2	32·6
Richmond	21·8	26·5	27·3	30·1	33·7
Rochdale	30·9	30·8	34·2	34·0	33·6
Rotherham	24·8	27·5	29·0	27·9	27·8
Salford	25·4	26·3	27·2	29·5	24·6
Sandwell	28·9	27·7	26·7	30·9	32·1
Sefton	24·2	24·2	23·5	24·6	N/A
Sheffield	29·1	29·8	30·7	30·1	31·9
Shropshire	30·9	28·6	27·3	30·7	29·8
Solihull	21·0	21·3	27·1	29·0	30·1
Somerset	26·8	28·2	27·8	27·2	34·5
South Tyneside	27·1	29·2	32·4	35·5	39·1
St. Helens	26·6	24·8	26·9	34·0	35·6
Staffordshire	25·8	27·3	28·7	30·0	31·4
Stockport	21·1	23·2	22·3	23·5	N/A
Suffolk	24·5	25·2	27·7	28·0	30·6
Sunderland	20·3	24·1	26·2	25·8	28·5
Surrey	32·1	32·9	30·9	31·5	31·0
Sutton	34·8	31·7	36·6	34·5	37·3
Tameside	26·1	28·0	29·6	31·1	30·6
Trafford	28·4	31·4	34·5	36·0	44·0
Wakefield	31·6	34·3	32·8	32·6	33·1
Walsall	25·2	24·9	29·0	29·4	30·5
Waltham Forest	29·7	35·6	38·1	37·7	42·5
Warwickshire	26·0	26·4	27·6	28·0	31·2
West Sussex	24·7	27·4	24·3	25·9	28·7
Westminister	24·5	24·8	27·2	32·3	37·8
Wigan	20·1	22·9	25·7	27·7	28·4
Wiltshire	27·3	25·5	26·1	29·8	N/A
Wirral	25·2	24·1	27·9	29·9	N/A
Wolverhampton	28·0	27·7	33·5	32·5	34·7
Inner London LEAs where LMS in operation from April 1992					
City of London	34·2	33·2	39·9		
Camden	30·1	26·9	29·6		
Greenwich	26·0	25·8	32·2		
Hackney	32·7	36·9	39·6		
Hammersmith/Fulham	27·7	37·3	34·8		
Islington	19·6	17·1	26·2		
Kensington/Chelsea	31·2	35·1	40·6		
Lambeth	32·0	31·9	36·5		
Lewisham	30·3	29·3	33·1		
Southwark	29·9	31·0	34·2		
Tower Hamlets	42·7	45·0	48·5		
Wandsworth	36·7	38·0	32·9		

Notes to Tables

1. A local education authority's General Schools Budget (GSB) is the authority's total planned expenditure in respect of the schools covered by its LMS Scheme: its Potential Schools Budget (PSB) consists of the GSB, less the authority's planned central expenditure on certain items which are either statutorily excepted from delegation to schools or are otherwise difficult to delegate: and its Aggregated Schools Budget is that part of the GSB which is distributed to individual schools in the form of "budget shares" determined by formula.

2. The figures in the Tables have been derived from the annual budget statements which local education authorities are required to publish under section 42 of the Education Reform Act 1988: all percentages have been rounded to one decimal place. "N/A" indicates either that no statutory LMS scheme was yet in operation for the authority, or that the authority's budget statement for the year in question is not to hand.

3. In the case of inner London authorities (other than Westmininster), the introduction of LMS was deferred until April 1992, and the delegation requirements applicable in their case differ from those applicable elsewhere. These authorities are therefore shown separately in the Tables.

Research Budget

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is her Department's total budget for research in education.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department's total budget for research in education is £1·1 million for 1994–95.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Boswell: On the basis of a computer search, since the beginning of the 1993–94 Session there has been one occasion on which information requested in a parliamentary question was refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Living Earth Project

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what contribution her Department is making to the Living Earth project on environmental awareness linking schools and business.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. We have no record of any approach by Living Earth.

Education Authority Funding

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will show for each local education authority and for each year since 1988–89 *(a)* the total capital expenditure per pupil in full-time education, *(b)* the proportion which is met by borrowing by the local authority, *(c)* the proportion which is met out of revenue by the local authority and *(d)* the proportion which is met from capital receipts by the local authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is taking some time to collate. I shall write to my hon. Friend with my reply as soon as possible.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for education how much has been spent by her Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information amongst visually impaired people.

Mr. Forth: *(a)* DFE expenditure on the production of public information for visually impaired people in Braille and on audio tape over the last three years is as follows:

	£
1992	6,730
1993	29,365
1994	[1]72,364

[1] to date

(b) DFE publications for the visually impaired are publicised alongside the conventionally printed versions, supported by mailings to organisations and associations with special responsibilities for blind and visually impaired people. It is not possible to disaggregate the cost.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if she will indicate what efforts have been made by her Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Forth: DFE publications are currently available in the following alternative formats for the blind and visually impaired:

(a) Braille:

The Updated Parent's Charter Special Educational Needs (SEN)—Code of Practice.
SEN—A guide for parents
SEN Tribunal—How to appeal National School Tests in 1994
Student grants and loans 1994–95

(b) Large Print: no publications available.

(c) Audio Tape:

The Updated Parent's Charter Special Education Needs (SEN)—Code of Practice
SEN—A guide for parents
SEN Tribunal—How to appeal National School Tests in 1994
The Charter for Higher Education
The Charter for Further Education

DFE publications for the visually impaired are publicised alongside the conventionally printed versions, supported by mailings and "Sound Advice", an audio-tape magazine sent to organisations and associations with special responsibilities for blind and visually impaired people.

National Governors Council

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what funding her Department has provided to the National Governors Council; what conditions have been attached to such funding; and what requirement there is that its affiliated members accept into membership governors of *(a)* local authority schools, *(b)* grant-maintained schools, *(c)* city technology colleges and *(d)* independent schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has made available grant of up to £31,000 towards the cost of drawing up the council's proposed constitution, and organising and running a one-day conference to launch the council on 29 October.

One of the council's aims is to be an independent forum for all associations of governing bodies in England and Wales, but there is no requirement for local associations to include specific categories of schools within their membership.

Pupil Distribution

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will show for each local education authority and for each year since 1988–89 *(a)* the proportion of pupils resident in the authority but educated outside the authority, *(b)* the proportion of pupils resident outside the authority but educated within the authority and *(c)* the difference between *(a)* and *(b)*, showing in each case whether the authority is a net exporter or net importer of pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: In the table, column A the percentage of pupils belonging to the authority educated in another local education authority; column B shows pupils from elsewhere educated in an authority as a percentage of pupils resident and educated within the authority; and column C the difference. The figures are based on pupils attending maintained schools, other than sixth-form colleges; and pupils attending independent schools or receiving education otherwise than at school, under arrangements made by local education authorities. The figures are for January 1993; the information requested for other years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Local Education Authority

	(A) *Exports*	*(B)* *Imports*	*(C)* *Net exporter*
Doncaster	1·17	0·86	0·30
Rotherham	0·75	3·76	–3·00
Sheffield	1·61	0·59	1·02
Bradford	3·26	0·65	- 2·61
Calderdale	1·48	2·52	–1·03
Kirklees	1·57	1·04	0·53
Leeds	1·14	1·48	–0·35
Wakefield	0·64	1·74	–1·10
Gateshead	2·58	2·22	0·36
Newcastle upon Tyne	3·89	3·58	0·31
North Yyneside	3·27	3·03	0·25
South Tyneside	1·35	1·95	–0·60
Sunderland	1·15	1·61	–0·46
Isles of Scilly	0·00	1·13	–1·13
Avon	0·61	0·89	–0·28
Bedfordshire	1·59	1·76	–0·17
Berkshire	2·65	2·67	–0·02
Buckinghamshire	4·91	2·00	2·90
Cambridgeshire	1·32	0·91	0·40
Cheshire	0·96	2·18	–1·22
Cleveland	0·21	0·45	–0·24
Cornwall	0·87	0·44	0·43
Cumbria	0·09	0·77	–0·68
Derbyshire	1·34	1·02	0·32
Devon	0·58	0·54	0·04
Dorset	0·52	2·42	–1·90
Durham	1·22	0·33	0·89
East Sussex	2·01	1·29	0·72
Essex	1·94	0·64	1·30
Gloucestershire	0·89	1·59	–0·70
Hampshire	1·46	0·93	0·53
Hereford and Worcester	2·58	1·96	0·62
Hertfordshire	1·06	4·21	–3·15
Humberside	0·63	1·18	–0·55
Isle of Wight	0·04	0·01	0·03
Kent	0·67	0·84	–0·17
Lancashire	1·17	0·54	0·63
Leicestershire	0·69	0·56	0·14
Lincolnshire	2·31	1·49	0·82
Norfolk	1·22	0·76	0·46
North Yorkshire	1·28	2·70	–1·42
Northamptonshire	0·63	1·24	–0·61
Northumberland	1·00	2·05	–1·04
Nottinghamshire	0·82	0·77	0·05
Oxfordshire	1·21	2·99	–1·78
Shropshire	1·15	1·42	–0·26
Somerset	2·13	0·98	1·15
Staffordshire	1·57	1·29	0·27
Suffolk	0·87	1·64	–0·77
Surrey	4·43	3·45	0·98
Warwickshire	2·18	2·89	–0·71
West Sussex	1·21	2·74	–1·53
Wiltshire	1·93	0·97	0·96

London Authority Education

	(A) *Exports*	*(B)* *Imports*	*(C)* *Net Exporter*
City	81·36	283·05	–201·69
Camden	20·61	40·71	–20·10
Greenwich	8·64	12·00	–3·36
Hackney	21·55	9·22	12·33
Hammersmith and Fulham	22·94	29·45	–6·51
Islington	22·86	21·18	1·68
Kensington and Chelsea	31·02	43·24	–12·22
Lambeth	29·33	9·14	20·19
Lewisham	16·84	11·01	5·83
Southwark	15·32	16·41	–1·09
Tower Hamlets	5·75	4·68	1·07
Wandsworth	16·68	18·02	–1·34
Westminster	24·25	51·88	–27·64
Barking	5·01	7·70	–2·69
Barnet	7·85	17·66	–9.81
Bexley	6·32	6·78	–0·45
Brent	19·60	7·07	12·53
Bromley	4·15	9·06	–4·91
Croydon	9·75	6·81	2·94
Ealing	11·08	5·37	5·71
Enfield	6·65	8·01	–1·36
Haringey	16·05	8·90	7·15
Harrow	11·02	8·87	2·14
Havering	3·49	5·14	–1·65
Hillingdon	5·53	4·23	1·30
Hounslow	10·12	13·94	–3·82
Kingston Upon Thames	8·10	14·73	–6·63
Merton	12·01	13·47	–1·46
Newham	4·59	2·14	2·45
Redbridge	6·28	7·62	–1·34
Richmond Upon Thames	8·90	29·50	–20·60
Sutton	9·33	11·71	–2·38
Waltham Forest	6·37	3·18	3·19
Birmingham	3·49	1·47	2·02
Coventry	1·32	1·46	–0·14
Dudley	3·44	4·33	–0·89
Sandwell	3·97	5·05	–1·08
Solihull	3·07	11·84	–8·77
Walsall	2·50	5·00	–2·50
Wolverhampton	4·41	2·85	1·56
Knowsley	13·20	4·91	8·29
Liverpool	2·68	3·45	–0·77
St Helen's	4·84	5·13	–0·29
Sefton	1·19	4·31	–3·12
Wirral	0·96	0·35	0·61
Bolton	2·02	3·16	–1·14
Bury	6·53	5·45	1·08
Manchester	7·74	4·07	3·67
Oldham	1·85	7·59	–5·74

	(A) Exports	(B) Imports	(C) Net Exporter
Rochdale	4·97	1·63	3·33
Salford	3·81	4·63	–0·82
Stockport	2·11	2·95	–0·84
Tameside	2·91	3·94	–1·03
Trafford	4·68	4·93	–0·25
Wigan	3·25	4·51	–1·26
Barnsley	2·74	1·22	1·52

Note: Minus sign shows that the authority is a net importer.

Education Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what matters were discussed, and what decisions were taken at the EU Education Council held in St. Petersburg on 15 and 16 September.

Mr. Boswell: This conference, which my right hon. Friend attended, was not a formal meeting of the EU Education Council. It provided a useful opportunity to learn about the efforts currently being made by the Russian Government to secure the reform of its educational system, and allowed Ministers to take stock of the assistance and co-operation programmes in education being pursued with the Russian Federation both at Community level and by individual member states. A communiqué was issued at the close of the conference. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

Nurse Training

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the working group established by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals to consider the implications of the transfer of nurse training to the higher education sector will report their findings; if this report will be published; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: This is a matter for the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

University Research Funding

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the present arrangements for funding university research.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Government assessed the arrangements for funding university research last year and set out their conclusions in the science, engineering and technology White Paper, "Realising our Potential".

Chemistry

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met officers of the Royal Society of Chemistry to discuss the role of chemistry in science policy.

Mr. David Hunt: I have not yet met the officers of the Royal Society of Chemistry. However, my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary will be opening the Society's annual congress in Edinburgh next spring, and we look forward to continuing close relations.

Public Service Reforms

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which OECD countries have introduced public service reforms similar to those in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Hunt: All OECD countries are introducing public service reforms. In many of these areas the United Kingdom is seen as the leading innovator and model of good practice. For the third year in succession the United Kingdom is offering an opportunity for OECD countries to exchange information and benefit from good practice through its international service for the citizen conference, on 8 and 9 December this year. Eminent speakers from eight countries have been invited to share their experiences of public service reform with an international audience.

EU Research Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what matters were discussed, what decisions taken, and which were decided by vote, at the EU Research Council on 29 September in Brussels.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The EU Research Council reached political agreement on seven specific programmes under the EU framework programme: information technologies, telematics applications of common interest; marine science and technology; standards, measurements and testing; co-operation with third countries; non-nuclear energy; and agriculture and fisheries, including agro-industry, food technologies, forestry, aquaculture and rural development. These will be formally adopted by the Council when the texts have been finalised. Furthermore, the Council reached a consensus on the controlled thermo-nuclear fusion programme under the Euratom framework programme. Member states also agreed a mandate for the Commission to negotiate a science and technology agreement with Israel.

"Innovation and the Tax System"

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology report on "Innovation and the Tax System" was published; when its work was completed; whether its recommendations were available to Ministers when they were drawing up the Government's recent White Paper on Competitiveness; and what further work he intends the Office of Public Service and Science to do on the report's recommendations.

Mr. David Hunt: The report was completed in March 1994 and published on 4 July. The recommendations were available to Ministers when drawing up the White Paper on competitiveness. My Department will take account of the recommendations in continuing to promote innovation based on science, engineering and technology.

Public Appointments

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if all fees and payments made to members of public bodies are held on the Purpose 24 databank.

Mr Robert G. Hughes: No.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information is held on the Purpose 24 databank, data protection registration No. FO220056.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Purpose 24 databank contains details about those people known to the public appointments unit to be interested in being considered for public appointments. The information recorded on the database is that provided by the individuals themselves or their nominators including personal details and details of posts and other positions held.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many nominations to public bodies were made from the public appointments unit's register of suitably qualified people who are willing to be considered for public appointments in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Some 3,000 nominations were made in 1991–92, over 3,500 in 1992–93 and over 4,000 in 1993–94.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much the public appointments unit cost to run in *(a)* 1991–92 and *(b)* 1992–93.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The cost of running the Public Appointments Unit was £260,466 in 1991–92 and £254,823 in 1992–93.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. David Hunt: There have been six occasions during the 1993–94 parliamentary Session when part of the information requested in parliamentary questions has not been given on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to instructing chairmen or women or chief officers of Government agencies or quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations personally to sign letters in reply to those hon. Members who would formerly have received signed replies from Ministers.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: It is for Ministers in each Department to decide the best way in which to reply to correspondence from hon. Members.

Where the correspondence covers operational matters dealt with by an executive agency, the agency chief executive, who has the detailed knowledge which the hon. Member is seeking, as well as the necessary delegated authority, is best placed to reply. It is open to an hon. Member who is dissatisfied with a reply from an agency chief executive to raise the matter with the responsible Ministers.

The term "quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation" is being used increasingly loosely outside government to embrace diverse organisations from both the public and private sectors. Ministers continue to answer where they have responsibilities in respect of particular bodies. Operational questions may be best addressed to the bodies themselves.

Civil Service Sports Facilities

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current cost to the public purse of providing all forms of sports facilities for civil servants in England and Wales.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Government contribute to the cost of sport and recreation in the civil service mainly through a grant-in-aid the Civil Service Sports Council. In 1993–94, the grant-in-aid was £1·33 million. In addition, Departments and executive agencies may make reasonable provision for amenities and recreational facilities for the use of all staff; information about the cost of this provision is not held centrally.

CERN Large Hadron Collider

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his letter DD/94/P/618 of 13 July, what response he has had from France about commitment to the CERN large hadron collider; and what collaboration he had from the United States of America and the Japanese.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: France have now made a formal offer of an additional contribution towards the cost of the large hadron collider, in recognition of her status as a CERN host country. This offer and the way forward is now being given careful consideration by the UK as well as our other partners in CERN. We hope to hold further discussions in the near future.

Contacts with our colleagues in the USA and Japan have continued throughout the discussions on the LHC. We have made it clear that a project of this magnitude must proceed on the basis of a fair and sustainable financial framework. They will be familiar with, and will welcome, the efforts which we, with our CERN partners, are making to establish tight cost control of the project.

Women in Science

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made of his development unit on women in science.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Office of Science and Technology is currently recruiting staff for the development unit. The unit will begin its work as soon as possible.

Civil Service Reform

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set out the terms of reference and powers of the efficiency unit as a result of proposals in the White Paper, "Continuity and Change", how it will be accountable to Parliament; and how it will interact with the National Audit Office and the Committee of Public Accounts.

Mr. David Hunt: The Efficiency Unit supports the Prime Minister's adviser on efficiency, Sir Peter Levene, who is also my adviser on competition and purchasing. It forms part of the Office of Public Service and Science, for whose activities I am accountable. Its relationship with the National Audit Office and the Committee of Public Accounts is no different from that of other parts of my Departments. Its terms of reference and responsibilities are published in the 1994 report of the Cabinet Office — Chapter 5 of Cm 2518—and its role in relation to efficiency plans is in the White Paper itself — paragraph 3·21 of Cm 2627.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what will be the role of the Government accountancy service and Government information service if proposals to delegate below the senior civil service structure contained in the White Paper, "Continuity and Change", are implemented.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Under the proposals on delegation set out in the White Paper, "The Civil Service: Continuity and Change", the five centrally managed groups — the Government Accountancy Service, the Government Information Service, the Government Legal Service, the Government Economic Service and the Government Statistical Service — would continue to provide a cental service to the professional specialists in each group. The exact services — and degree of centralisation — will vary from group to group, as they do now, but may include recruitment, training, career development and the organisation of postings.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether all departmental and agency staff below grade 5 will still be regarded as Crown servants if proposals contained in the White Paper, "Continuity and Change", are implemented.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Yes. The White Paper "*The Civil Service: Continuity and Change*" contains no proposals which will affect the status of departmental staff as Crown servants, whatever their grade.

Private Sector Forum

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of meetings he or his officials have held with the Private Sector Forum; and whether minutes of those meetings will be publicly available.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to my letter of 26 August to him, which included a record of the Private Sector Forum of 8 July. I have also placed a copy of the record note in the Library. Only one meeting of the

Private Sector Forum has been held. Details of any future meetings will be made public.

Permanent Secretaries' Handbook

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if Ministers may read the permanent secretaries' handbook.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes.

EU Science and Technology Assembly

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contribution was made by the United Kingdom to the first plenary session of the Science and Technology Assembly held in Brussels on 6 September; and if he will place in the Library copies of any reports made available of the EU Science and Technology Assembly.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The European Science and Technology Assembly consists of approximately 100 leading European scientists and engineers, appointed by the Commission in a personal capacity, to provide it with opinions and assessments on science and technology matters. The members of the assembly do not represent the member states from which they come. The assembly will present its opinions to the Commission and, when these are made available to member states, the Government will place them in the Libraries of both Houses.

DEFENCE

RAF Stations

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force stations have been closed in the last five years; how many he expects will be closed during the next five years; and what proportion of the number of stations open in 1989 will open in 1999.

Mr. Soames: Twenty Royal Air Force stations, both in the United Kingdom and overseas, have been closed since the beginning of 1989. As a result of recent announcements, including the "Defence Costs Study", it is proposed that a further 14 stations should close in the next five years. Estate requirements are continually reviewed, however, and it is therefore not possible to forecast accurately what proportion of stations which were open in 1989 will remain open in 1999. These figures do not include USAF bases, or small parented or administered sites.

Non-pilot Aircrew Training

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-pilot aircrew were trained by the Royal Air Force in each of the last five years; and how many he expects to be trained in each of the next five years.

Mr. Soames: The number of non-pilot aircrew trained by the Royal Air Force in each of the last five years was as follows:

Year	*Navigator*	*Air Electronics Operator*	*Air Engineer*	*Air Loadmaster*	*Air Signaller (Radio Calibration)*
1989–90	89	31	22	37	5
1990–91	79	44	28	29	5
1991–92	43	31	21	14	4
1992–93	46	33	28	26	6
1993–94	40	33	8	21	1
Total	297	172	107	127	21

The number of non-pilot aircrew expected to be trained by the Royal Air Force in each of the next five years is as follows:

Year	*Navigator*	*Air Electronics Operator*	*Air Engineer*	*Air Loadmaster*	*Air Signaller (Radio Calibration)*
94–95	46	14	6	11	2
95–96	41	19	6	13	2
96–97	44	25	13	30	2
97–98	41	25	13	30	4
98–99	43	25	13	32	3
TOTAL	215	108	51	116	13

Nuclear Warheads

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence from which date his Department has kept records of requests made to British Nuclear Fuels or its predecessor division within the Atomic Energy Authority for the production of fissile material for use in warheads.

Mr. Freeman: Readily available records of such requests date back to 1971.

Naval Recruitment

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost of advertising for recruits to the Royal Navy by way of advertisement in the teenagers' magazine "Fast Forward" was in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994; and how many times the advertisement will appear in this or comparable magazines during the forthcoming year.

Mr Soames: Expenditure on Royal Navy recruitment advertising in the magazine "Fast Forward" was £23,506 in financial year 1992–93 and £28,377 in 1993–94. While no further advertisements are planned for the "Fast Forward" publication this year, it is intended to place around 50 advertisements in a range of comparable magazines.

Creche Facilities

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what creche facilities he plans to provide in *(a)* the armed forces and *(b)* civilian offices in his Department; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Soames: Responsibility for the provision of child care facilities is delegated to individual budget holders. It is my Department's policy however, to increase the provision of child care facilities for service personnel and civilian staff were possible, and budget holders are encouraged to set up new child care facilities where there is sufficient demand, and where they can be justified on value-for-money grounds.

At present we have seven workplace nurseries operating nationwide, available both to civilian and service personnel, with plans for a further five.

Additional child care facilities, in the form of creches and playschemes, are available to service and civilian personnel and their dependants on bases in the United Kingdom and overseas as a result of local voluntary initiatives.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps *(a)* he has taken and *(b)* he proposes to take to ensure that naval vessels from other countries in United Kingdom waters are aware of the operational and safety arrangements in relation to United Kingdom fishing boats, including rules regarding minimum separation, notification and broadcast warnings and information.

Mr. Soames: Foreign naval vessels operating in United Kingdom waters are required to observe the international regulations for the prevention of collision at sea. These regulations apply to all surface vessels, both military and non-military, including fishing vessels.

The conduct of dived foreign submarines in United Kingdom waters is governed by the code of practice, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The code, among other provisions, stipulates minimum separation distances. Briefing on the provisions of the code is signalled to foreign submarines before they enter United Kingdom waters. Submarines programmed to participate in a major exercise are given further oral or written briefing before the exercise commences.

In addition to operational safety measures, fishermen also receive advance notification of dived movements, including those of foreign submarines, in all regularly used submarine exercise areas around the United Kingdom coast. Notification is by means of the SUBFACTS broadcast scheme and, before major exercises, via a notice to fishermen.

Pregnant Service Women

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken under article 7 of the equal treatment directive to prevent witnesses, who have been giving evidence during court cases relating to women employed in the armed forces who have become pregnant, from being victimised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Victimisation and other forms of harassment are not tolerated within the armed forces. We are not aware that any service personnel who have acted as witnesses at industrial tribunal hearings have complained of victimisation, but action would be taken where incidents were reported.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria were used to decide whether or not those women dismissed by reason of pregnancy could be re-enlisted in each of the services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: In accordance with the normal rules, acceptance for re-entry into the services depends on the availability of a suitable vacancy and an applicant's previous employment record. If re-entry is within five years of leaving, the previous rank and seniority would normally be retained.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Economic and Commercial Information

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is the duty of Her Majesty's economic and commercial representatives abroad to transmit to the competent departments economic information on trade flows, prices, employment and other aspects of competitiveness as soon as possible after it has been released by the Governments to which they are accredited.

Mr. Goodlad: British embassies and high commissions are required to report on economic developments in the countries they cover. The frequency with which a particular post reports and the type of reporting it provides is governed by factors including the size and staffing of the post, which itself reflects United Kingdom's economic and commercial interests, and by the amount and quality of information available. Posts in the United Kingdom's main overseas markets would normally report information on trade flows, prices and employment at least once a month.

Visas

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, following the European Court of Justice's Surinder Singh judgment in July 1992, he will refund fees to those persons who would have been eligible for gratis visas had the European Court of Justice ruling existed at the time the fees were paid.

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to the answer on 29 June 1994, 578-79]:* The answer should have read:

> Yes. My Department will consider written applications for a refund of fees from those non-European Union nationals who paid a fee before July 1992 for the settlement visa granted them to enter the United Kingdom with their British citizen spouse who had been exercising substantive rights under the Treaty of Rome, by either working, looking for work, being self-employed or managing a business, in another member state of the European Union. The amount which may

be refunded will be between £7 and £100 and will be made up of the value of the fee plus an ex gratia sum in recognition of the time since the fee was paid. Applicants will be asked to provide evidence to support their claim.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fund-raising activities for the Conservative Party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Baldry: Between 1 January and 30 June 1994, Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office made 69 overseas visits in their official capacity. Fund-raising activities for the Conservative party are not part of our official duties.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government intend to make at the third preparatory committee meeting in Geneva on 11 to 16 September, for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty review and external conference in April next year; what support will be made available to non-governmental organisations wishing to attend the prepcom as observers; and if he will place in the Library copies of any non-confidential documents distributed at the preparatory committee meeting in September.

Mr. David Davis: At the third preparatory committee meeting we continued to work to ensure that outstanding procedural and administrative matters relating to the 1995 conference could be settled. The preparatory committee decided at its second session that representatives of non-governmental organisations should be allowed, on request, to attend the meetings of the committee other than those designated closed meetings. In accordance with this decision, 52 NGOs attended the meetings of the committee and time was set aside during the week for NGOs to brief delegates on their views. Copies of the NPT secretariat's progress report and the statement delivered by the Presidency of the European Union have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Cyprus

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what restrictions are being placed on British tourists in entering the Turkish occupied part of Cyprus; and what representatives he has made.

Mr David Davis: There were four days in July when the crossing point in Nicosia was closed by demonstrations following the decision of the European Court of Justice on trade between the European Union and northern Cyprus. It has remained open since.

Burma

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Burma.

Mr. Goodlad: The situation in Burma remains of great concern. There has been no significant progress towards democratic reform and human rights abuses continue.

We are encouraged, however, by the meeting on 20 September between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the ruling state law and order restoration council. We hope that this first meeting signals the start of serious discussions leading to real democratic reform in Burma and the early and unconditional release of ASSK and other political prisoners.

Nigeria

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the number of Nigerians arrested but not tried since the general election last year.

Mr. Baldry: We do not have precise information on the large number of Nigerians detained without trial since the annulment of the presidential election last year. We believe that few detainees are currently being held, but those detained include well–known figures such as Chief Abiola and leaders of the National Democratic Coalition. With our European Union partners, we have appealed strongly to the Nigerian Government to respect the fundamental human rights of all their citizens.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Nigeria.

Mr. Baldry: We are extremely concerned about the current situation in Nigeria. An early return to democratic civilian rule is essential for the political stability and economic prosperity of that country. We continue to follow developments closely with our European Union partners, and will maintain the measures that we announced with our European Union partners in 1993.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Shell about its record of environmental exploitation in the Ogoni rivers area of Nigeria; and what response he has had.

Mr. Baldry: No such representations have been made.

Malawi

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Malawi.

Mr. Baldry: Malawi's first multi-party elections were held on 17 May as part of a peaceful transition process, bringing President Muluzi's United Democratic Front to power. My right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Minister for Overseas Development have both met the President since his election. The new Government face formidable social and economic problems, but have made a firm commitment to poverty alleviation, which is a key focus of our aid programme in Malawi.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government of Sudan's forces have been making incursions into north-west Kenya.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not aware of any incursions by Sudanese Government forces into north-west Kenya.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received concerning the supply by the Government of Sudan of arms to southern factions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We believe that the Sudanese People's Liberation Army factions obtain their arms from a variety of sources. We have seen reports concerning the supply of arms by the Government of Sudan to one faction, but have no clear evidence to confirm this.

Both the main factions have clashed with Government forces as well as each other, in recent months.

Palestine

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will respond positively to the request by Yasser Arafat that the United States of America and European countries should station international observers in the former occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Council of the European Union, in its joint action in support of the middle east peace process adopted on 19 April, stated that the European Union would, at the request of the parties, participate in a temporary international presence in the occupied territories, as called for in Security Council resolution 904. No such request has yet been received.

Austria

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's relationship with Austria; what ministerial visits have taken place there in the past 12 months; what bilateral trade initiatives and contracts the United Kingdom has with that country; and how many official Austrian visits have been made to the United Kingdom in the past year.

Mr. David Davis: The United Kingdom enjoys very good relations with Austria.

Since October 1993 my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have paid ministerial visits to Austria.

Sectors in which the Department of Industry has planned trade initiatives include clothing, processed food, security equipment, medical equipment and the whole area of public purchasing.

Austria is the United Kingdom's 25th largest market and our visible exports to Austria in 1993 amounted to £912 million, a 14·7 per cent. increase over 1992. UK exports rose by 16 per cent. during the first six months of 1994 and are set to exceed £1 billion over the year. The UK is Austria's ninth largest supplier. In 1993 Austrian exports to the UK totalled £971 million, but on the evidence of the first six months of this year the UK is enjoying a surplus on its trade with Austria for the first time in over 20 years.

Since October 1993 the following Austrian Ministers have visited the United Kingdom: Mrs. Rauch-Kallat, Minister for the Environment; Dr. Franz Vranitzky, Federal Chancellor. Other Austrian official visits to the UK have comprised Dr. Franz Ceska, Secretary-General of the Federation of Austrian Industrialists; Dr. Bernhard Gorg, Head of Vienna OVP Parliamentary Group; Dr. Heinrich Neisser, Leader of the Austrian OVP.

Slovakia

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's relationship with Slovakia; what ministerial visits have taken place there in the past 12 months; what bilateral trade initiatives and contracts the United Kingdom has with that country; and how many official Slovakian visits have been made to the United Kingdom in the past year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom maintains close relations with Slovakia. Since September 1993, six British Ministers have visited the country. During the same period, the Slovak Foreign Minister, two other Ministers and the Slovak Speaker have visited Britain. The Slovak President attended the D-day ceremonies in Britain in June this year.

Trade is increasing, totalling about £70 million for the first eight months of this year. The Department of Trade and Industry is actively encouraging British companies to look at opportunities in Slovakia.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Goodlad: Once, on 30 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *778–79*.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with his Japanese counterpart or officials of the Japanese Government, in regard to nuclear proliferation controls and the clandestine plutonium trade, during his visit to Japan in September.

Mr. David Davis: These subjects were not discussed during my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's visit to Japan. Both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear smuggling are of serious concern to Her Majesty's Government, however, we are considering them with others in a number of international forums including the G7.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he raised the proliferation implications of Japan's import of nuclear reprocessing technology from the United States of America during the 1980s during his visit to Japan in September.

Mr. David Davis: No, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs did not raise this matter.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings or other communications he has had with his EU counterparts since 1 August to discuss the measures to combat smuggling of plutonium and other nuclear materials.

Mr. David Davis: This matter was discussed at an informal meeting of European Union Foreign Ministers at Usedom on 10 and 11 September and again at the Foreign Affairs Council on 3 and 4 October. It was agreed that proposals would be prepared for the European Council at Essen in December.

UN General Assembly

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the agreed agenda for the 49th General Assembly of the United Nations that opened in New York on 20 September.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Copies of the agenda for the United Nations General Assembly have been sent to the Library.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals the United Kingdom put to the 49th general assembly of the United Nations in New York; what proposals put forward by other nations were supported by the United Kingdom; and if he will place copies of the United Kingdom submission, and submissions from other countries supported by the United Kingdom, in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Copies of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's speech to the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday 28 September have been put in the Library. Speeches by Heads of State and Foreign Ministers will be placed in the Library. Other relevant UN documents will be placed in the Library when they become available.

Biological Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation his Department had at the meeting of the United Nations biological weapons convention held in Geneva on 19 to 30 September; what proposals were put forward by Her Majesty's Government; and whether any resource or financial commitment was made by the United Kingdom in support of the verification measures.

Mr. David Davis: The United Kingdom's delegation to the bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons convention special conference was led by the leader of the United Kingdom permanent delegation to the conference on disarmament. He was supported by officials and experts from the FCO, MOD, DTI and the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down.

Following a UK initiative, the EU submitted a proposal to the conference for the establishment of a follow-up group to prepare, by the time of the 1996 BTWC fourth review conference, a legally binding verification protocol, focusing on declarations and inspections. The conference eventually agreed to establish a group to do further work on a verification regime, albeit with a less specific mandate and time scale than we would have wished.

The costs of this group's work will be shared among states parties to the BTWC. The costs of any eventual verification regime are likely to be borne by states parties to the regime.

Taiwan

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has taken in pursuit of admitting the Republic of China to a seat on and membership of the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The question of possible Taiwanese membership of the UN was raised again this year in the General Committee, but it was decided not to include it in this year's UNGA agenda. The core of the problem is the relationship between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. Any resolution of it will depend on an understanding reached between them.

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of the European Parliament each year since 1989–90; and what amount is included in the draft Budget for 1995.

Mr. David Davis: The outturn for expenditure by the European Parliament each year from 1989–93 in ecu and sterling was:

	ecu	*£*
1989	381,146,291	256,043,458
1990	429,706,145	306,932,961
1991	488,691,650	342,125,210
1992	579,968,058	425,820,894
1993	624,592,678	486,253,544

The amount in the 1994, as adopted is 665, 910, 000 or £502, 839, 236.

The amount in the 1995 draft budget is 693, 321, 000 or £544, 549, 953.

Conversion rates for years prior to 1994 are:

Year	*£*
1989	1 = 1·4886
1990	1 = 1·4000
1991	1 = 1·4284
1992	1 = 1·3620
1993	1 = 1·2845

1994 figures are converted at the rate of £1=1·3243, which is the rate set for UK VAT and fourth resource contributions to the 1994 Community budget.

1995 figures are converted at the rate of £1=1·2732, the rate notified in the *Official Journal* as prevailing on the last working day of last month — 30 September 1994.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the current allowances payable to Members of the European Parliament.

Mr. David Davis: Applicable as of 1 January 1994 the following are payable:

Telephone and fax — unlimited use from offices in Strasbourg.

Travel allowances — Within the Union these are calculated by a flat rate of 0·76 ecu or £0·57 for every km up to 400 km and 0·38 ecu or £0·29 for every km thereafter. Outside the Union, MEPs are reimbursed the actual cost of the return air fare by the most direct route; first class travel is allowed only for journeys exceeding nine hours. MEPs receive a daily allowance of 103·0 ecu or £77·78 while on official business.

Subsistence - for meetings outside the Union, MEPs receive one half of the normal allowance, plus the reimbursement of the actual cost of hotel room and breakfast.

General expenses - 2,830·0 ecu or £2,136·98 per month.

Office and Secretarial assistance - 7,737·0 ecu or £5,842·33 per month.

Economic and Social Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed and what decisions taken, and which were taken by vote, at the Economic and Social Council meeting in Brussels on 14 and 15 September.

Mr. David Davis: The Committee discussed and adopted a range of opinions on proposals for legislation and Council decisions on which it had been consulted, as well as several own–initiative opinions. Details have been provided in a document which has been made available in the Library of the House.

European Legislation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make arrangements for the texts of the dated and signed explanatory memoranda from Ministers concerning each proposal for draft legislation and other documents placed before the Council of Ministers of the European Community currently deposited in the Vote Office of Parliament to be printed and published at regular intervals.

Mr. David Davis: Explanatory memoranda are currently lodged at four depository libraries in the United Kingdom and are accessible through public libraries. Interested parties may obtain from Departments the information contained in individuals EMs on draft Community proposals which concern them. Memoranda often cover fast–moving issues, and remain useful only for a limited period. Against this background, we consider that the costs of publishing EMs at regular intervals would be disproportionate to the likely benefits.

India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent approaches have been made to the Indian Government regarding allegations of human rights violations in that country.

Mr. Baldry: We frequently raise our concerns about the human rights situation in India. The Prime Minister raised the issue in March with the Indian Prime Minister and the Secretary of State in July with the Indian Foreign Minister.

Mr. Tejinder Singh

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has now taken up the case of Tejinder Singh with the authorities in Delhi; and if he will make a statement on progress.

Mr. Baldry: Our High Commission in New Delhi asked the Indian authorities for further information on the case of Tejinder Singh in August. They have not yet received a response, but will continue to pursue.

Henderson Island

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his letter of 28 July to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what further research and consultation with the Pitcairn islanders he has undertaken on Henderson Island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Further research has been carried out by the governor's office in Wellington. On the basis of this we are now drafting a discussion document, in consultation with interested non-governmental offices. This will be presented to the Pitcairn islanders when a British official next visits Pitcairn, and can be discussed face to face.

European Union (Citizens' Duties)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of the obligation or duties of citizens of the European Union as defined in article 8A of the treaty on European Union, if he will state *(a)* the criteria and *(b)* the court which determines when they are not being complied with and the legal basis of any penalty.

Mr. David Davis: Article 8a of the treaty of Rome does not impose any duties or obligations on the citizens of the Union.

Article 8 does talk of citizens being subject to "duties imposed" by the treaty. However, neither the Maastricht treaty nor the previous treaties impose any duties on individuals, other than a general duty to comply with Community law.

It is in the first instance for the domestic courts to determine whether an individual has complied with Community law. Any penalty will normally be determined by domestic law.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Council Tax Benefit

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to amend regulation 37 of the Council Tax Benefit (General) Regulations 1992 which calculates notional income from invested capital in the light of the reduction of interest rates since the regulation was introduced in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: The formula is not intended to represent any rate of return from capital invested and is not linked in any way to interest rates. It does not, therefore, alter in line with any fluctuations in these rates. Rather it is a means of ensuring that help is targeted on those who need it most. Base rates at the time the regulation was introduced were 8 per cent., and although they rose to a peak of 15 per cent. in October 1989, where they remained for over a year before falling to today's level of 5·75 per cent., the formula has remained the same.

We keep the capital rules under review, but there are no current plans for change.

Income Support

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy that the payment of water and sewerage charges as a separate payment on top of basic weekly benefit should be reintroduced for those receiving income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: No. One of the Government's aims in introducing the reformed social security scheme in April 1988, was to leave customers free to manage their own affairs in the light of their own circumstances and preferences. Water and sewerage charges should be treated in a similar manner to other items of expenditure in the family budget.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what happens to interest earned on maintenance payments held by the Child Support Agency;

(2) what plans he has to *(a)* pass on interest earned on maintenance payments held by the Child Support Agency to the parent with care or *(b)* deduct it from the payments made by the parent without care responsibility;

(3) what interest rate is payable on maintenance payments held by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency does not receive interest from the bank in respect of clients' funds temporarily held by the agency. Instead the agency's bank charges are abated. The administrative costs of attributing amounts of interest to individuals would be disproportionate to the typically small amounts of money involved. Clients of the agency benefit from the lower bank charges and the economy of effort through the consequent reduction in the agency's administrative costs, which is reflected in the level of the fees charged.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the guidelines which the Child Support Agency uses to determine compensation claims in respect of cases where customers are claiming loss through maladministration.

Mr. Burt: We shall be making public the criteria under which payments for redress may be considered, as we do already for other agencies within the Department. As is normal practice throughout government, the precise terms of the guidance is specifically exempt from the provisions of the code of practice on Government information under exemption 7—part II, paragraph 7·10 of the guidance on interpretation—which covers Her Majesty's Treasury general guidelines on extra-statutory payments in Government accounting.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the ground of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Hague: Five.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretay of State for Social Security how many individuals who were in receipt of invalidity benefit prior to retirement have become ineligible for the higher pensioner rate of income support; and what is the estimated cost of extending eligibility to this group.

Mr. Roger Evans: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals over retirement age receive the higher pensioner premium of income support.

Mr. Evans: In November 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, the total number of claimants over retirement age whose income support entitlement included the higher pensioner premium was 768,000.

Source:

Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry November 1993 (Based on a 5 per cent. sample).

Housing Benefit

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide *(a)* a breakdown of the number of housing benefit claimants split into rent rebate and rent allowance categories and the total amounts paid under each heading, *(b)* the numbers and amounts of housing benefit back-dated payments regulation 72(15) and the amount paid as a percentage of each local authority's housing benefit expenditure, *(c)* the numbers, amounts and percentage of amount in relation to total housing benefit expenditure in relation to discretionary payments regulation 69(8) and *(d)* the numbers and amounts of housing benefit overpayment and the amount as a percentage of the authorities overall housing benefit expenditure for each district and islands council in Scotland for each available year since 1991–92.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information has been placed in the Library.

Information Technology

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his letter of 20 July, POS (4) 3019/11 to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, when he expects to complete his examination of potential applications for information technology in the automation of benefit payments; and what study he has made of related attempts by individuals to obtain benefit by fraudulent means.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Department of Social Security and Post Office Counters Ltd. invited, on 17 August 1994, expressions of interest from potential suppliers of systems for the automation of benefit payments. Ninety-two expressions of interest have been received. Suppliers will shortly be asked to submit an outline proposal, which will inform the next stage of examination. It is hoped to conclude the selection of suppliers and technology by the end of 1995.

Improvement of the payment system is part of the Benefits Agency's on-going review of its claims and payment systems to ensure that benefit goes only to those who are genuinely entitled. Our strategy for fighting fraud is based on the principles of prevention, detection and deterrence.

Refugees

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated annual cost of social security benefits paid to refugees and those applying to be considered as refugees.

Mr. Roger Evans: The full information is not available in the form requested. Available information is that in May 1993 there were 37,000 asylum seekers on income support. Some were also receiving housing benefit and/or council tax benefit.

It is estimated that annual expenditure on these benefits is in excess of £200 million per year.

Details of recipients of other benefits are not broken down to show refugee status.

Pensioners' Incomes

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest information held about pensioners' income; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[pursuant to his reply, 19 July 1994, columns 201-204]:* Table 3 contained some incorrect figures. A revised table follows.

ANNEX B

Proportion of pensioner units with occupational pension and the average amount for those in receipt

	Percentage Units with Occupational Pension			*Average Amount for those in Receipt (£ per week, 1992 prices)*			*Percentage growth in average amount since 1979*
	1974	*1979*	*1992*	*1974*	*1979*	*1992*	*1992*
(a) All Persioner Units							
Pensioner Couples	53	65	72	51·30	52·80	92·20	75
Single Pensioners	24	32	53	37·20	35·00	52·90	51
All Pensioner Units	34	43	60	44·80	44·40	71·80	62
(b) Recently Retired Pensioner Units							
Pensioner Couples	53	68	73	56·20	62·10	100·30	62
Single Pensioners	24	37	53	46·40	37·70	71·70	90
All Pensioner Units	43	55	65	54·30	55·30	91·90	66

Notes

1. The Estimates of the percentage of pensioner units in receipt of occupational pension income are based upon data from the Family Expenditure Survey and the GAD Survey of Occupational Pension Schemes. Due to this use of additional information, it is not possible to derive the overall average occupational receipt from the estimates in this table.

3. Recently retired pensioner units are defined as: single women aged 60 - 64; single men aged 65 - 69; and couples in which the husband is aged 65 - 69.

4. All average amounts are means.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to secure an improvement in co-ordination between all those organisations involved in the delivery of training to young people.

Mr. Paice: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my hon. Friend, the former Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 19th July 1994, *Official Report*, Column *127–28*.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to ensure that young people with special training needs will be able to take full advantage of the modern apprenticeship scheme.

Mr. Paice: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend, the former Under-Secretary of State to the hon. member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 20 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *224–25*.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were on Government training programmes within the Greater London area at the latest appropriate date.

Mr. Paice: The number of trainees on youth training and training for work in London is not available broken down by gender. The total numbers in training and a breakdown of entrants/leavers by gender are given in the following tables:

Training Schemes in London

Number in Training at June 1994	
Youth Training (Inc. Youth Credit)	18,400
Training for Work	17,700

Source:
Training Enterprise Council Operating Agreement (Annex J)

Entrants/leavers by sex in 1993–94 (per cent.)

	Male	*Female*
Youth Training (Inc. Youth Credit) Leavers	59	41
Training for Work Starters	58	42

Source:

YT Leavers

TfW Starts

European Union Retraining Funds

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his plans for spending European Union funds available to the United Kingdom for retraining workers in industries undergoing structural change.

Miss Widdecombe: The resources available to the United Kingdom under objective 3 and 4 of the European Community's structural funds will be devoted in the period 1994–96 exclusively to schemes to help the unemployed. The Government are currently preparing a plan for transmission to the Commission which will aim at cost-effective use of structural funds money available under the ADAPT Community initiative.

Sex Equality Branch

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people work in the sex equality branch; what is their remit; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Thirty-six people work in the sex equality branch, which is responsible for furthering the Employment Department's aim to promote sex equality at work and wider opportunities for women in the workplace and beyond.

Time-limited Contracts

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the United Kingdom were in *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time employment, (i) with or (ii) without time-limited contracts or the equivalent in the years (1) 1984 and (2) 1992.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information from the spring 1992 labour force survey is given in the following table. Comparable estimates for 1984 are not available.

Employees working full/part-time on fixed term contracts
United Kingdom - spring 1992

	Full-time '000s	*Part-time '000s*	*All employees*[1] *'000s*
On fixed contracts	383	198	581
Not on fixed contract	16,249	5,063	21,316
All employees	16,632	5,261	21,897

[1] Includes small number who did not state full or part-time

Source:

Labour Force Survey - not seasonally adjusted

Non-vocational Qualifications

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary's letter to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West of 12 September, what consultations he has had with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in relation to the appointment of independent auditors to monitor the quality of non-vocational qualifications awarded to training providers' clients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: Discussions have taken place between officials and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications about the role and number of additional staff to monitor the quality of national vocational qualifications. Detailed proposals are awaited.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of those achieving *(a)* NVQ 1, *(b)* NVQ 2 and *(c)* NVQ 3 who are working are women.

Mr. Paice: Estimates from the labour force survey in spring 1994 for the proportion of those in employment holding NVQ/SVQ in Great Britain who are women are shown in the following table:

Highest level held	*Per cent.*
NVQ/SVQ level 1	60
NVQ/SVQ level 2	58
NVQ/SVQ level 3	39

People in employment include employees, self-employed, those on Government employment and training programmes and those doing unpaid family work.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of those achieving and failing *(a)* NVQ 1, *(b)* NVW 2 and *(c)* NVQ 3 are women.

Mr. Paice: Estimates from the labour force survey in spring 1994 for the proportion of those holding NVQ/SVQs in Great Britain who are women are shown in the following table:

Highest level held	*Per cent.*
NVQ/SVQ level 1	58
NVQ/SVQ level 2	56
NVQ/SVQ level 3	39

Candidates are only submitted for certification when assessment shows them to be competent. There are no failures.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the budget agreed with each TEC for 1994–95 broken down by programme area.

Mr. Paice: The budgets made available by the Department to each training and enterprise council, by programme area, are shown in the following table:

TEC Budgets 1994–95

	Youth training	*WRFE*	*Career guidance year 9–10*	*Careers libraries*	*Training for work*
South East					
Hampshire	15,106,666	3,642,947	1,285,523	54,703	10,832,502
Heart of England	5,694,866	915,245	482,976	23,368	3,919,846
Isle of Wight	1,605,572	311,161	102,659	7,435	1,477,441
Kent	16,400,753	2,956,296	1,395,445	60,014	12,451,952
Milton Keynes & N. Bucks	5,528,127	406,133	226,435	6,373	2,824,335
Surrey	4,823,602	1,916,586	—	40,098	5,064,749
Sussex	10,696,850	2,359,789	1,113,362	310,698	10,563,542
Thames Valley Enterprise	15,440,460	2,818,723	1,080,602	42,515	8,684,611
London					
AZTEC	3,784,135	1,421,967	336,313	21,708	6,498,797
CENTEC	6,570,634	1,409,694	401,175	23,735	14,414,841
CILNTEC	6,936,267	1,427,046	208,417	13,057	12,571,342
London East	12,854,780	3,197,839	919,191	38,176	20,518,363
North London	4,125,403	1,966,948	534,074	23,677	12,424,582
North West London	2,882,196	1,733,128	305,290	13,107	6,271,138
SOLOTEC	6,779,580	1,914,471	1,011,578	33,535	7,752,474
South Thames	10,175,785	2,942,646	799,186	31,114	22,628,482
West London	7,392,430	2,261,287	649,254	26,943	7,016,948
Eastern					
Bedfordshire	5,937,048	1,090,068	498,517	15,980	5,506,553
CAMBSTEC	3,114,720	653,402	362,558	15,687	2,601,570
Essex	16,577,365	2,996,500	1,268,953	51,818	11,294,151
Greater Peterborough	5,072,899	833,507	220,523	11,548	4,774,504
Hertfordshire	11,447,223	1,954,253	780,328	47,672	7,398,366
Norfolk & Waveney	10,942,005	1,718,777	725,116	29,610	10,813,090
Suffolk	12,447,882	786,804	440,331	17,464	4,162,161
South West					
Avon	12,049,031	1,720,115	716,833	38,043	14,209,852
Devon & Cornwall	18,717,697	3,546,981	1,216,000	52,436	22,286,966
Dorset	6,695,489	1,242,212	524,569	24,258	5,368,272
Gloucestershire	6,619,913	1,043,516	419,832	24,664	4,310,120
Somerset	5,579,887	1,236,498	406,111	20,281	4,867,001
Wiltshire	5,535,863	1,340,500	468,085	23,018	4,669,597
West Midlands					
Birmingham	13,084,266	2,478,393	—	31,591	20,365,575
Central England	4,093,850	968,608	324,760	13,161	4,998,145
Coventry & Warwickshire	10,722,649	1,837,131	622,261	28,695	11,854,454
Dudley	4,623,153	787,689	—	9,214	5,099,161
HAWTEC	6,482,333	848,419	227,283	18,955	4,245,428
Sandwell	5,786,077	665,278	—	10,532	5,898,597
Shropshire	5,967,341	891,798	342,429	19,745	4,743,949
Staffordshire	15,655,714	2,064,249	826,267	34,486	10,611,997
Walsall	3,615,258	538,316	—	8,425	3,707,430
Wolverhampton	4,246,005	680,444	—	7,896	5,165,870

TEC Budgets 1994–95

	Employer investment in people	*Childcare*	*Skillchoice*	*National development*	*Learning for work*	*Management fee*
South East						
Hampshire	1,243,061	172,500	842,140	64,300	192,108	2,077,936
Heart of England	680,000	119,501	—	66,457	98,952	1,327,290
Isle of Wight	364,986	66,000	—	—	3,248	608,998
Kent	1,017,976	226,400	—	3,000	351,188	2,439,069
Milton Keynes & N. Bucks	533,864	56,375	—	51,500	30,352	872,665
Surrey	1,212,808	187,641	—	—	14,784	1,456,040
Sussex	1,109,203	95,500	—	—	123,424	2,028,019
Thames Valley Enterprise	1,203,051	177,475	—	—	124,880	2,330,138

	Employer investment in people	*Childcare*	*Skillchoice*	*National development*	*Learning for work*	*Management fee*
London						
AZTEC	729,166	137,638	883,045	—	114,013	—
CENTEC	2,432,027	115,638	—	28,770	220,808	2,745,161
CILNTEC	1,219,104	34,734	—	20,000	121,856	2,224,928
London East	1,293,154	220,995	—	—	249,312	3,406,009
North London	1,147,758	181,399	—	44,870	80,248	2,009,080
North West London	575,566	282,636	—	18,817	103,488	1,361,688
SOLOTEC	747,371	92,964	—	41,750	159,925	2,185,167
South Thames	1,440,673	158,576	—	68,388	269,248	3,287,564
West London	915,181	—	—	18,650	174,720	1,937,756
Eastern						
Bedfordshire	529,456	193,850	—	7,500	38,752	1,068,176
CAMBSTEC	760,611	133,844	1,721,547	20,467	42,952	807,398
Essex	788,751	152,417	—	29,600	153,328	2,822,392
Greater Peterborough	570,620	174,295	—	—	29,746	963,931
Hertfordshire	818,811	212,721	2,787,511	13,500	290,192	1,846,040
Norfolk & Waveney	872,627	242,000	—	—	22,232	1,643,377
Suffolk	812,000	149,000	—	3,016	61,920	1,253,185
South West						
Avon	1,340,368	229,223	—	9,000	109,265	2,413,442
Devon & Cornwall	2,164,913	377,120	—	3,066	236,768	3,668,211
Dorset	1,353,675	149,644	802,183	34,384	85,800	1,584,730
Gloucestershire	686,649	137,209	—	—	69,776	1,328,726
Somerset	899,000	118,620	—	16,000	51,128	1,327,713
Wiltshire	578,472	149,988	548,420	36,472	67,275	1,330,118
West Midlands						
Birmingham	818,946	242,456	1,389,580	115,355	104,944	2,930,874
Central England	562,823	193,968	—	—	92,848	1,103,920
Coventry & Warwickshire	979,215	169,722	1,489,250	46,596	143,976	1,987,244
Dudley	352,753	60,615	—	—	108,584	1,080,844
HAWTEC	562,313	126,274	—	—	43,680	1,059,616
Sandwell	393,437	60,614	—	—	84,392	1,136,818
Shropshire	510,829	113,484	—	—	45,808	1,192,009
Staffordshire	1,123,904	218,212	—	—	125,776	2,405,275
Walsall	345,083	101,233	—	—	59,920	996,184
Wolverhampton	359,917	60,650	—	—	72,576	1,084,411

TEC Budgets 1994–95	*Employer investment in people*	*Childcare*	*Skillchoice*	*National development*	*Learning for work*	*Management fee*
East Midlands						
Greater Nottingham	839,191	130,001	1,135,632	20,202	112,000	1,490,945
Leicester	1,036,285	190,360	0	0	123,424	1,916,704
Lincolnshire	766,035	141,043	0	54,270	69,524	1,619,046
North Derbyshire	524,986	124,040	0	6,556	18,032	984,953
North Nottinghamshire	612,906	130,110	0	15,000	64,456	1,192,082
Northamptonshire	883,184	125,150	0	0	51,576	1,281,577
Southern Derbyshire	995,681	100,001	0	5	78,960	1,332,705
Yorkshire and Humberside						
Barnsley and Doncaster	532,103	0	0	0	78,064	1,917,873
Bradford and District	604,117	134,324	0	0	83,048	1,597,894
Calderdale and Kirklees	454,073	171,945	0	5,500	82,712	1,672,607
Humberside	1,495,341	238,378	0	15,846	63,728	2,727,821
Leeds	900,585	167,295	0	63,186	120,680	1,960,057
North Yorkshire	577,514	163,541	0	0	17,319	1,483,406
Rotherham	369,274	83,294	0	0	51,296	1,187,019
Sheffield	1,105,619	118,771	0	24,380	119,396	2,025,143
Wakefield	429,374	78,152	0	37,200	43,740	1,275,379

TEC Budgets 1994–95	*Employer investment in people*	*Childcare*	*Skillchoice*	*National development*	*Learning for work*	*Management fee*
North West						
Bolton and Bury	553,950	86,294	0	4,999	63,056	1,139,882
Cumbria	470,223	106,179	0	0	56,840	1,513,550
Eltec (East Lancs)	699,000	134,110	0	43,709	98,784	1,332,800
Lawtec (Lancs West)	1,305,490	199,721	0	6,000	51,968	2,208,975
Manchester	1,630,472	274,632	0	38,000	247,016	2,438,329
Metrotec Ltd (Wigan)	378,000	76,480	0	36,000	49,448	889,060
Normidtec	432,641	106,675	0	22,000	15,176	1,379,342
Oldham	207,794	60,133	0	0	36,344	799,032
Rochdale	465,776	56,933	0	0	34,608	769,853
South and East Cheshire	858,225	71,673	1,093,920	0	32,648	850,358
Stockport (High Peak)	485,850	90,600	0	29,375	14,336	972,809
Merseyside						
Cewtec	740,000	141,924	740,850	128,646	94,976	1,720,181
Merseyside	1,543,505	187,400	0	15,000	147,896	3,726,912
Qualitec	133,437	57,973	0	15,000	0	836,599
North East						
County Durham	616,200	191,277	0	34,965	86,800	2,509,461
Northumberland	369,774	75,234	603,170	16,500	23,744	1,364,519
Sunderland City	381,830	108,893	0	21,000	0	1,617,717
Teesside	679,430	199,366	0	21,113	128,296	2,864,408
Tyneside	1,027,580	249,631	1,315,000	70,405	179,536	3,088,835

TEC Budgets 1994–95	*Youth training*	*WRFE*	*Careers guidance year 9–10*	*Careers libraries*	*Training for work*
East Midlands					
Greater Nottingham	8,873,421	1,474,963	411,567	22,931	7,909,[illegible]95
Leicester	11,707,244	1,640,342	617,895	35,689	8,000,9[illegible]
Lincolnshire	10,097,316	1,268,470	411,022	20,184	11,310,036
North Derbyshire	4,780,228	762,416	225,382	13,298	4,465,685
North Nottinghamshire	8,049,829	782,200	274,378	17,010	6,864,832
Northamptonshire	6,747,909	1,219,041	443,687	24,372	3,677,035
Southern Derbyshire	7,926,205	1,207,082	338,073	20,875	6,680,602
Yorkshire and Humberside					
Barnsley and Doncaster	11,231,677	151,497	422,328	16,720	13,226,355
Bradford and District	8,156,103	807,899	447,381	27,524	7,348,956
Calderdale and Kirklees	9,137,810	1,334,893	511,804	19,550	9,920,249
Humberside	14,788,882	1,719,268	740,899	23,400	15,469,065
Leeds	6,833,800	1,371,922	569,069	33,186	10,388,387
North Yorkshire	7,008,192	1,580,987	639,136	28,540	6,460,703
Rotherham	4,724,170	493,455	254,103	6,995	5,202,021
Sheffield	8,073,007	1,409,272	428,101	14,410	12,028,692
Wakefield	4,309,289	635,542	275,587	14,649	5,622,084
North West					
Bolton and Bury	6,596,854	1,075,679	386,000	12,999	5,392,104
Cumbria	9,754,227	801,549	408,900	21,257	5,997,170
Eltec (East Lancs)	9,411,718	1,670,762	457,721	18,927	7,074,335
Lawtec (Lancs West)	12,153,753	2,498,438	686,561	28,247	11,619,943
Manchester	15,688,340	2,695,706	868,043	34,781	16,458,591
Metrotec Ltd (Wigan)	5,226,318	761,240	287,048	8,682	6,699,333
Normidtec	7,025,151	1,004,151	402,308	15,435	5,504,926
Oldham	4,353,242	424,580	219,378	6,477	3,513,678
Rochdale	3,821,248	557,783	187,330	5,688	4,436,458
South and East Cheshire	6,944,187	705,981	285,674	9,199	4,005,311
Stockport (High Peak)	5,129,690	695,422	306,999	10,614	3,779,547
Merseyside					
Cewtec	8,497,001	1,036,676	521,360	18,001	9,214,910
Merseyside	20,298,196	2,302,656	861,320	32,200	24,171,147
Qualitec	4,270,192	483,121	162,150	5,523	3,456,984

TEC Budgets 1994–95	*Youth training*	*WRFE*	*Careers guidance year 9–10*	*Careers libraries*	*Training for work*
North East					
County Durham	11,257,776	1,091,126	449,115	24,170	12,962,112
Northumberland	6,151,631	431,564	0	13,604	6,084,092
Sunderland City	6,487,963	764,731	0	15,239	10,626,801
Teesside	12,468,630	1,060,337	461,038	29,164	16,590,623
Tyneside	17,516,871	1,541,416	639,084	31,183	19,530,190

Social Affairs Council

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what matters were raised at the recent EC Social Affairs Council; and what were the conclusions.

Mr. Portillo: I attended the Social Affairs Council on 22 September in Brussels, accompanied by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Employment.

As a follow-up to some aspects of the Commission's white paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, the Council agreed a report on tackling unemployment intended as a contribution to discussion at the Essen European Council. The report focuses on four themes: training; flexibility of working time; long-term unemployment and value for money from public spending on unemployment. It will complement work by Finance Ministers and others following up the white paper in preparation for the Essen European Council.

The Council was unable to reach an agreement on the draft directive on parental leave. I noted the United Kingdom's consistent opposition to the proposal over more than a decade, and our view that it was not an appropriate area for Community action. The current United Kingdom arrangements for up to 40 weeks' maternity leave for mothers with a right to return to work were recognised as generous and I said that now was not an appropriate time to add to the burdens placed on business and to put jobs at risk. Commissioner Flynn indicated that he would now initiate discussions with the social partners under the agreement of the Eleven.

There were orientation debates on the draft directive on the posting of workers and on the draft directive on part-time and temporary work. The Council discussed a number of specific questions posed in advance by the Presidency. There were no clear conclusions and several member states, including the United Kingdom, expressed their difficulties with the proposals.

In discussion on the draft directive on the reversal of the burden of proof in sex discrimination cases, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Employment made it clear that the directive was unacceptable to the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom's system of industrial tribunals operated very effectively in such cases. In addition, the directive ran counter to a key principle of United Kingdom law and was unacceptable on subsidiarity grounds. The Commission said that in the light of the United Kingdom's fundamental objections it would review how best to proceed.

Commissioner Flynn gave a brief presentation of the Commission's white paper on the future of European social policy. The German Presidency has indicated that there will be a substantive discussion at the next Social Affairs Council in December.

Other member states adopted the directive on european works councils under the agreement of the Eleven. In accordance with the terms of the social protocol to the Maastricht treaty, the provisions of the directive will have no legal effect within the United Kingdom. Employees based in the United Kingdom will not count towards the threshold which determines whether the directive applies to multinational companies. Companies will remain free to decide for themselves what arrangements are best for consulting their United Kingdom employees.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what matters were discussed, what decisions taken, and which were decided by vote, at the Social Affairs Council in Brussels on 22 September.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel today (Sir M. Marshall). There were no formal votes, but the other 11 member states adopted the directive on European works councils.

Gas Fitters

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what minimum standards of qualification apply to operators entering premises for the purposes of repairs or fitting any gas appliance or pipe; what changes have been made since 1984; and what change he plans.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984 require anyone who works with gas fittings supplied with gas through pipes to be competent. The Health and Safety Commission's approved code of practice "Standards of training in safe gas installation" of 1987 fleshes out the concept of competence as a combination of knowledge, practical skill and experience.

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 require that all gas installation businesses working with fittings supplied with gas through pipes must be a member of a class of persons approved by the Health and Safety Executive.

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1994 which come into force on 31 October this year, consolidate the 1984 and 1990 regulations into a singe regulatory package. From 1 April 1995, the regulations will extend the requirement to be a member of a class of persons approved by HSE to those working with gas fittings not supplied through pipes—for example, gas supplied from tanks and cylinders.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Paice: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. The Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high-quality business support across the country.

The Department funds training and enterprise councils to improve the performance of small businesses by increasing their understanding of the business case for training their people. TECs are increasingly linking this support to the achievement of the investors in people standard. Materials are available to help small firms achieve the standard.

A year ago there were 200 organisations with fewer than 200 employees which had reached the investors in people standard—this included just over 100 with fewer than 50 employees. The most recent information shows that there are 694 organisations with fewer than 200 employees recognised as investors in people—of which 406 have under 50 employees. There are also over 7,200 organisations with fewer than 200 employees which have made a formal commitment to achieving the standard: over 4,600 of these have fewer than 50 employees.

The small firms training loans scheme was launched on 16 June 1994. Three thousand loans are forecast this year. The White Paper on competitiveness announced a new measure to build, over a three-year period from April 1995, a cadre of 24,000 key workers in small firms with up-to-date skills to train others in their firms and to help spread the training culture more widely.

Funds for the business start-up scheme have been transferred to the single regeneration budget in 1994–95. It is expected that some 25,000 people will be helped in 1994–95. Around 34,000 people were awarded an allowance in England in 1993–94. The most recent survey of scheme entrants 18 months after start-up shows that approximately 71 per cent. were still operating their business.

Subject Access Requests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many subject access requests were received by his Department in the last year; what estimate he has of the percentage of those requests which were enforced subject access requests; and if he will make a statement concerning his policy towards enforced subject access.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of subject access requests received by the Department, in the year to 30 September 1994, was 79.

Applicants are not required to give their reasons for disclosure so it is not possible to estimate the percentage of requests which were enforced subject access requests.

It is the Employment Department's policy to answer all subject access requests in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Nitric Acid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what volumes of nitric acid are currently licensed for storage by British Nuclear Fuels plc at Sellafield.

Mr. Oppenheim: There is no requirement for the volumes of nitric acid stored at Sellafield to be specified as part of the nuclear site licence.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of unemployment in the construction industry in *(a)* the Liverpool, Riverside constituency and *(b)* Merseyside at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested is not available.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fund–raising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Miss Widdecombe: Ministers have made nine overseas visits in their official capacity in the period between 1 January and 30 June 1994. None of these visits involved fund–raising for the Conservative party.

Race Relations Employment Advisory Service

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which representative ethnic minority organisations his Department consulted before it included the Race Relations Employment Advisory Service in the Department's market-testing programme.

Mr. Oppenheim: There was no need for the Department to consult ethnic minority organisations before including the Race Relations Employment Advisory Service in the market testing programme. The RREAS is a self-contained organisation which offers advice and guidance on racial equality in employment directly to employers in the private and public sectors. The service has no formal links with ethnic minority organisations. There is no reason why any changes in its administration or management should impact on the work of such organisations.

Trade Union Membership

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of employees in *(a)* coal mining, *(b)* water supply, *(c)* textiles, *(d)* rail transport, *(e)* local government, *(f)* the fire service, *(g)* the police, *(h)* the courts, *(i)* defence, *(j)* security, *(k)* schools and (1) higher education belonged to a trade union in each year from 1989 to 1991.

Mr. Oppenheim: The number and percentage of employees who were trade union members in 1989, 1990 and 1991 is given in the following table. Further information is available from the *Employment Gazette,* June 1994.

Information is not available for some of the industries specified by the hon. Member. However, where possible, figures for industries which most closely approximate to those requested have been supplied instead.

Membership of trade unions among employees in selected industries in Great Britain - 1989, 1990 and 1991

	1989		*1990*		*1991*	
Industry	*Trade union membership (000s)*	*Trade union density (per cent.) (a)*	*Trade union membership (000s)*	*Trade union density (per cent.) (a)*	*Trade union membership (000s)*	*Trade union density (per cent.) (a)*
All employees	8,491	39	8,375	38	8,117	37
Coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels	120	90	112	92	91	90
Water supply	54	82	53	79	55	74
Textiles	84	43	77	37	59	36
Railways	107	94	102	92	91	91
National and local government	538	66	537	64	568	63
Fire Services	49	91	55	91	53	92
Police	116	57	137	63	139	66
Justice	41	65	51	66	48	60
National defence	63	24	71	27	62	24
School education (b)	752	63	760	62	609	60
Higher education (b)	150	56	177	56	248	56

(a) Proportion in a category who are members of a trade union or staff association. Those who did not report their membership status are regarded as non-union members.

(b) Figures for each year during this period are not directly comparable in the education sector because of changes in the funding status and hence categorisation of employees in the new universities.

Source

Labour Force Surveys, 1989, 1990 and 1991

Structural Fund

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements have been made to ensure that structural fund resources are being made available now to national and local agencies under *(a)* objective 2 and *(b)* objective 3.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Energy today.

Penningtons and Pinnacle PR Companies

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding the recruitment activities of Penningtons and Pinnacle PR companies in the North of England; and if he will undertake an investigation into those activities.

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Department was made aware in July 1994 of articles in local newspapers about Penningtons and Pinnacle PR. The Employment Service was informed and asked all jobcentres if they had received any complaints have been received.

In addition, the Employment Department's head of information wrote to Penningtons on 20 July 1994 seeking more information. There has been no response.

WALES

Sheep

13. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the current population of sheep in the Principality *(a)* at the latest available date, *(b)* 10 years ago and *(c)* 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is estimated that there were 11,100,000 sheep in 1994 compared with 9,000,000 in 1984 and 6,700,000 in 1974.

Traffic Congestion

15. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on road traffic reductions; and if he will make a statement on what measures he proposes to reduce road traffic and congestion.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Several, and our policies are set out in "Roads in Wales: 1994 Review" published in July.

Unemployment

16. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the change in the level of unemployment since December 1992.

Mr. Redwood: At September 1994, seasonally adjusted unemployment in Wales stood at 117,800. This represents a fall of 15,400 or 11.6 per cent. since December 1992.

Old Industrial Areas

17. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his plans for the regeneration of old industrial areas of Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I am using the full range of my Department's responsibilities in conjunction with local government and the development agencies to promote the successful regeneration of old industrial areas of Wales.

Incomes

18. Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average income per capita in Wales as a percentage of the United Kingdom average; and what were the equivalent figures in 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The most comprehensive measure of income is gross domestic product. The latest available data are for 1992, when GDP per head in Wales was 86·1 per cent. of the United Kingdom figure. In 1979, it was 86·2 per cent. However, since 1985, GDP per capita in Wales has grown faster than in any part of the United Kingdom.

Coal Industry

19. Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the coal industry in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Arrangements for the transfer of British Coal's operations in Wales to the private sector are currently under way. I am confident that this will secure a healthy long-term future for the industry.

Government Efficiency

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of government in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office has secured legislation to reorganise the structure of local government, and imposed tighter controls on the management of the executive public bodies in Wales. Within the Welsh Office a wide range of measures are being taken to improve efficiency, including market testing and the rationalisation of accommodation. The Welsh Office's programme of market testing will continue to contribute to improving economy and efficiency.

Milk Quota

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from the farming unions, landowners' organisations and the professional bodies in relation to delays in processing of milk quota transactions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have received representations from the National Farmers Union about delays in processing milk quota transactions.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made in setting up improvements in computer systems for handling milk quota movements and leasing and transfer applications; what is the average length of time currently taken to process *(a)* a quota leasing transaction and *(b)* a permanent quota transfer application; and what consultation he has had with the Intervention Board and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors regarding the delayed processing of quota transactions.

Mr. Redwood: This is a matter for the Intervention Board executive agency.

The current backlog was caused by delays in the transfer of up-to-date information from the milk marketing boards to the Intervention Board. These have now been resolved and I understand that the Intervention Board expects to clear the backlog by the end of October. Thereafter they aim to turn both leasing and transfer confirmations round in two weeks.

My officials have been in regular touch with the Intervention Board and have been present at discussions, which also included representatives of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, on a variety of matters concerning the operation of the milk quota system.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation he has had with the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce concerning delays in processing of milk quota transfers.

Mr. Redwood: My officials are in touch regularly with the Intervention Board on all matters relating to its operation of the milk quota system.

Community Health Council

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) on how many occasions in the past 10 years has any proposed member of a community health council, who is a former employee of the NHS been debarred from membership of that council on grounds related to previous dismissal from the NHS; if such procedures to debar appointment to the council are made by his Department autonomously, or on application from the relevant health authority or family health service authority; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on how many occasions suspended or sacked previous employees of a health authority have been refused membership of community health councils for the same area; if he will list the persons involved; whether representations were made *(a)* on their behalf and *(b)* against their appointment; if so, by whom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have no record of this information. Appointments to membership of community health councils are governed by the Community Health Councils Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No 304), as amended by the Community Health Councils (Amendment) Regulations 1990 (SI 1990 No 1375).

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list applications for the funding of severance pay, and early retirement from grant-maintained status schools in Wales in 1993–94.

Mr. Redwood: Details of the individuals involved are confidential. During the 1993–94 financial year severance pay was approved in respect of two teachers and early retirement for three.

Mid-Glamorgan Family Health Service Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to appoint the new chairman of the Mid-Glamorgan family health service authority.

Mr. Redwood: I expect to make an announcement shortly.

Trainee Teachers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the Curriculum and Assessment Council for Wales in relation to monitoring in schools and colleges for trainee teachers.

Mr. Redwood: None. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales has responsibility for the funding and assessment of quality of initial teacher training courses provided by higher education institutions in Wales. Its powers were extended by the Education Act 1994 to allow it to fund initial training provided by schools and to assess the quality of that training. I have written to the chairman of the HEFCW with some broad guidance on the council's remit in this area. The council is required under the 1994 Act, to have regard to evidence from Her Majesty's chief inspectors of schools in Wales about the quality of training provision. The council is also required to have regard to other assessments of quality as appear appropriate or to which it is directed by me.

The Curriculum and Assessment Council for Wales has no statutory responsibility in the assessment of quality of initial training.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the budget agreed with each TEC in Wales for 1994–1995 broken down by programme area.

Mr. Richards: The budgets made available to each training and enterprise council in Wales, by programme area, are shown on the following table.

TEC Budgets 1994–95

	Gwent	*Mid Glamorgan*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Wales*	*Powys*	*North East Wales*	*Targed*	*Total*
Youth Training	5·939	7·389	4·101	9·888	1·659	3·335	5·330	37·641
Credits (Transitional)	—	0·767	0·250	1·000	—	0·663	—	2·680
Credits (Development)	—	—	0·250	—	—	—	0·550	0·800
YT/Credits (Total)	5·939	8·156	4·601	10·888	1·659	3·998	5·880	41·121
Work Related FE	1·192	1·170	0·850	2·127	0·317	0·631	0·986	7·273
Education/Business Links	0·194	0·230	0·188	0·406	0·142	0.166	0·201	1·527
Careers Information	0·010	0·010	0·010	0·017	0·005	0·009	0·011	0·072
Education/Business Total	0·204	0·240	0·198	0·423	0·147	0·175	0·212	1·599
Training for Work (Fees)	4·787	5·116	3·403	6·153	0·850	1·660	3·269	25·238
Learning for Work (Fees)	0·099	0·130	0·100	0·138	0·014	0·050	0·077	0·608
Skill Choice	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·700	0·700
Business/Enterprise[*]	1·231	1·440	1·111	2·658	0·438	1·04[illegible]	1·329	9·250
Local Initiative Fund	0·413	0·390	0·249	0·392	0·175	0·20[illegible]	0·211	2·028
TEC Challenge	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·120	0·120
Total	1·643	1·830	1·360	3·050	0·612	1·243	1·660	11·398
Out of School Childcare	0·135	0·140	0·135	0·133	0·093	0·084	0·084	0·805
TEC Admin Costs	1·483	1·610	1·312	2·281	0·533	1·097	1·170	9·485
TEC Total	10·596	13·146	8·455	18·902	3·362	7·228	10·692	72·381

[*] Excludes funding for coal mitigation measures and modern engineering apprenticeships as contracted figures have not yet been agreed.

Welsh Health International

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, the Health Promotion Authority for Wales and the Welsh development agency concerning the future of the Welsh Health Development International.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Housing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the proposal for a housing association ombudsman for Wales was rejected; what consultations took place prior to its rejection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I concluded that the small number and the nature of complaints coming forward in Wales did not justify such an ombudsman service. Housing for Wales had already taken a lead in resolving tenants' complaints. That decision was communicated to Housing for Wales on 6 April 1994.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of Tai Cymru in relation to the working party set up jointly with the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations with respect to guidance on rent setting; what provisions he has made to ensure equivalence between secure and assured tenants housing associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation he has had with the chairman of Tai

Cymru in relation to the guidelines for housing association rental levels, where rent assessment committees set the rent above the assured rent levels.

Mr. Redwood: None. Housing for Wales guidance to associations, however, is that where the rent assessment committee sets a rent above that which the housing association wishes to charge the association need not move to a higher rent determined by a committee, even though that would be the assured rent.

Grant Thornton Inquiry

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the date of *(a)* completion and *(b)* publication of the Grant Thornton inquiry into the Welsh Development Agency land assembly arrangement for Tesco plc.

Mr. Redwood: None.

M4

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will improve junction 46 on the M4 to permit eastbound traffic to exit at the junction and westbound traffic to gain access at the junction.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has no plans to improve junction 46 on the M4.

Botanical Gardens

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the consultant's report into the cost benefit analysis of the Welsh national botanical gardens and any papers comparing alternative locations for the garden.

Mr. Redwood: My Department has commissioned consultants to consider the feasibility of establishing a national botanic garden for Wales. Their report is expected before the end of the year and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority in relation to the future of the National Blood Transfusion Service in Wales and its chain of command and departmental health authority reporting structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. At my request, the Welsh Health Common Services Authority and the National Blood Transfusion Service (Wales) are undertaking a review of future management arrangements of the NBTS(W). A report of the review will be submitted to my officials in due course.

Cardiff Royal Infirmary

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he received the consultants' report on the implementation of fire prevention works at Cardiff royal infirmary from South Glamorgan health authority; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: I have not yet seen a copy of the report, which was commissioned by South Glamorgan health authority. The director of the Welsh Office Health Department has seen a copy in the course of discussions with senior staff of the health authority. Any inquiries about the report should be directed to South Glamorgan health authority. I would expect it to be published shortly.

Patients

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to issue new guidelines in relation to the permissible circumstances for switching from private patient status to NHS or vice versa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The guidance on private practice in NHS hospitals, which includes matters to do with the patient's right to change status, is currently being reviewed. It will be revised where necessary to ensure that it is clear and up to date.

Highways Directorate

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to complete his options review of agency status for the highways directorate of his Department.

Mr. Redwood: I am currently considering the future status of the highways directorate of my Department and will make an announcement in due course.

Incentive Prescribing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales that representations he has received in relation to the setting up of pilot projects in incentive prescribing in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Specific proposals for prescribing incentive schemes have been received from seven family health services authorities. Four have been approved, two have been referred back to the FHSAs concerned and one is under consideration.

Health Promotion

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with health authorities and local authorities in relation to health promotion and the future of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales and its funding and functions.

Mr. Redwood: I have arranged a full review of national health promotion in Wales as part of the regular re-examination of public bodies. This will focus in particular on the role, responsibilities and future funding of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales. The views of a cross-section of interest including health authorities and local authorities have been sought and will be considered. The review will be concluded by the end of this year.

Welsh Economic Council

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the date of, and the agenda for, the next meeting of the Welsh Economic Council and place copies of the supporting documentation in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: The next meeting of the Welsh Economic Council will be held on Monday 25 July.

The agenda for the meeting comprises two topics for discussion: communications, and business and the environment.

I will ask the Welsh Economic Council if any of the supporting documents may be placed in the Library of the House.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to place in the Library copies of all speeches he, or other Ministers in his Department, make on matters for which he has departmental responsibility in the period 21 July to 16 October.

Mr. Redwood: Arrangements will be made for copies of speeches made by Ministers in my Department in a public forum, which make policy statements, to be placed in the Library of the House.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State (1) how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years because *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants; and

(3) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood: *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Howard: None.

Charities

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what charities and voluntary organisations the Government appoints, or has power to approve or veto the appointment of, trustees or board members or senior executives.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: This information is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

St. Helena

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to recommend to Parliament the right of entry for the people of the island of St. Helena into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We have no plans to do so.

Mother and Baby Units

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the 1994 social services inspection report on prison mother and baby units in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Videos

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department is funding on the effects of video viewing on the behaviour of young offenders; and when its results will be available for publication.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. learned Friend is currently considering a research proposal. It is too early yet to say when the results will be available if he decides to fund the project.

Civil Defence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation exercises his Department has carried out as to the future structure of local or other statutory authorities having competence in the field of civil defence or emergency planning.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Guidance on the requirement for civil defence planning was given to the Local Government Commission. In addition, we have recently consulted local authorities on possible arrangements for the delivery of emergency planning after local government reorganisation.

Police Forces

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of (i) men and (ii) women at each level in the police forces in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Maclean: At the end of August 1994 there were 49 chief officers in the police service covering England and Wales, all of whom were men. Tables showing the distribution of men and women in all the other ranks in each force, including those on central service and with regional crime squads, have been placed in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals on the control of nuclear materials smuggling were put forward by the United Kingdom; and what proposals from other EU member states were agreed to by the United Kingdom at the Home Office and Justice Ministers Council meeting in Brussels on 7 and 8 September.

Mr. Howard: The United Kingdom representatives played a full part in the informal Justice and Home Affairs

Council of 7 September and in the ministerial conference non drugs and organised crime between the European Union and the countries of central and eastern Europe in Berlin on 8 September. The conference unanimously agreed a declaration which called for the following matters to be examined relating to the theft and illegal trade of radioactive and nuclear material: the preparation of a joint comprehensive assessment of the situation; co-operation regarding the protection and safeguarding of nuclear stocks; setting up rapid reporting channels; mutual assistance of prosecuting authorities; intensification of border controls; penalties provided for, and regulations on the forfeiture of illicit proceeds from, such crimes.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in respect of each London borough for the financial year 1993–94, the amount paid by each to the Metropolitan police, the appropriate sum per head for each inhabitant, the increase or decrease relative to the sum paid in 1983–84, discounted at the appropriate RPI, together with equivalent hours for Greater London as a whole, excepting the City of London, and the proportion of such payments to all income received.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the table.

Authority	*Precept Payable in 1993–94* £	*Precept/head of population* £	*1993–94 precept discounted to 1983–84 prices* £	*1983–84 precept* £	*Increase/ decrease compared with 1983–84* £
Barking & Dagenham	5,958,975	38·84	3,677,707	2,936,430	+25·2
Barnet	15,446,177	51·11	9,532,933	6,613,880	+44·1
Bexley	10,380,790	47·29	6,406,724	3,407,586	+88·0
Brent	10,967,589	42·13	6,768,879	5,518,940	+22·6
Bromley	16,125,370	55·04	9,952,112	5,507,880	+80·7
Camden	11,230,818	53·75	6,534,418	12,276,600	–46·8
Croydon	15,163,989	47·39	9,378,217	7,520,800	+24·7
Ealing	12,939,433	47·01	7,985,844	6,138,300	+30·1
Enfield	12,266,646	46·91	7,570,619	5,364,100	+41·1
Greenwich	9,882,660	40·84	5,746,501	3,483,900	+64·9
Hackney	8,398,260	40·60	4,883,362	3,981,600	+22·6
Hammersmith & Fulham	9,802,406	57·41	5,699,835	4,047,960	+40·8
Haringey	9,842,688	48·68	6,076,623	3,915,240	+55·2
Harrow	9,925,730	49·63	6,125,873	3,782,520	+62·0
Havering	10,453,195	45·55	6,451,410	4,169,620	+54·7
Hillingdon	11,416,499	49·29	7,045,933	6,525,400	+ 8·0
Hounslow	9,724,205	50·28	6,001,498	5,386,220	+11·4
Islington	9,177,882	46·33	5,336,691	5,695,900	– 6·3
Kensington & Chelsea	11,956,815	71·32	6,952,566	7,631,400	– 8·9
Kingston-upon-Thames	7,229,710	54·36	4,461,968	3,096,800	+44·1
Lambeth	12,889,597	43·64	7,494,954	6,337,380	+18·3
Lewisham	11,553,750	43·71	6,718,195	3,716,160	+80·8
Merton	8,597,056	51·48	5,305,855	3,318,000	+59·9
Newham	7,741,028	37·40	4,777,539	3,852,198	+24·0
Redbridge	10,469,086	44·99	6,461,217	4,003,720	+61·4
Richmond-upon-Thames	9,785,162	59·76	6,039,119	3,492,748	+72·9
Southwark	10,378,324	39·60	5,975,247	6,271,020	– 4·7
Sutton	8,573,235	49·86	5,291,153	3,207,400	+65·0
Tower Hamlets	7,569,022	39·36	4,401,183	4,910,640	–10·4
Waltham Forest	8,751,619	40·24	5,401,246	3,351,180	+61·2
Wandsworth	14,527,012	47·87	8,447,067	4,612,020	+83·1
City of Westminster	15,580,451	73·20	9,059,613	34,175,400	–73·5

Notes

1 The average precept per head of population in London Boroughs in 1993–94 was £48·14;

2 The total precept received from London Boroughs in 1993–94 was £328,153,964, equivalent to £207,960,100 at 1983–4 prices. This represents a real terms increase of 10·5 per cent. over the actual precept for 1983–4 (£188,1248,942);

3 Precept income from London Boroughs in 1993–4 represented 17·7 per cent. of total income, compared with 23·6 per cent. in 1983–4.

Mental Health

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners with identified mental illness are awaiting to move to medium secure units;

(2) what is the average delay time for those prisoners waiting for a medium secure bed; and if he will give a breakdown by number and category the reasons for transfer delays.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Ian McCartney, dated 17 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the transfer of mentally disordered offenders, and the delays surrounding such transfers.

The most up-to-date information on the number of transfers held centrally is for 27 June 1994. On that day there were 174 mentally disordered prisoners awaiting transfer to NHS psychiatric facilities of all types—local psychiatric hospitals, medium secure units and Special Hospitals. Of these approximately forty per cent. would have been awaiting transfer to a medium secure unit.

I regret that the detailed information you request on the delays surrounding transfers is not collected centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

PC Rhys Trigg

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give his reasons for reinstating PC Rhys Trigg after his dismissal by the Police Commissioner.

Mr. Maclean: Mr. Trigg exercised his right, under section 37 of the Police Act 1964 as substituted by section 103 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, to appeal against the decision by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to uphold the finding and punishment imposed by a disciplinary board that he was guilty of a disciplinary offence of abuse of authority and dismissed.

In accordance with paragraph 3 of schedule 5 to the Police Act 1964 as so substituted, a tribunal was set up to inquire into the case and report to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. The tribunal had a full rehearing of the evidence and witnesses which were heard by the disciplinary board. The tribunal was unanimous in finding that Mr. Trigg was not guilty of the offence and recommended that the appeal should be allowed and Mr. Trigg reinstated. My right hon. Friend accepted this recommendation.

Civil Defence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the total expenditure for 1993–94 on emergency planning for *(a)* fire and civil defence authorities, *(b)* county councils, *(c)* district and borough councils, *(d)* industry acting on the Government's behalf including nationalised and privatised bodies and *(e)* other statutory bodies.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information sought is not available centrally. Civil defence grant is made available to local authorities as a contribution towards their total expenditure.

Civil Defence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision his Department will make for emergency planning in the event of the establishment of unitary local authorities.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Local authorities in England and Wales, together with the principal associations representing them, have been consulted on the delivery of emergency planning following the outcome of the local government review. We are considering those responses and hope to make an announcement later this year.

"Today"

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the occasions when he has contributed to the BBC Radio 4 "Today" programme since August 1993, stating the date and topic of each of his contributions.

Mr. Howard: No records are kept on such matters.

Medical Research

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures currently exist in law to deal with persons who deliberately disrupt medical research; and what assessment he has made of the current adequacy of these measures.

Mr. Maclean: The Government attach great importance to the continuation of medical research, subject to the strict controls set out in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, and are committed to ensuring an environment in which such research can flourish. I am satisfied that existing provisions of the criminal law give the police and the courts a wide range of powers for dealing with the activities of persons who deliberately disrupt medical research. I am, however, keeping the position under review, in consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what cash resources were made available to education authorities in London from section 11 grants devoted to the teaching of English as a second language in the last financial year for which these grants were paid; and what plans Her Majesty's Government have to sustain such teaching by other means in 1995-96.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The table shows the level of section 11 grants payable in respect of local education authorities' expenditure in 1993-94 on approved projects concerned entirely or primarily with teaching English as a second language in schools, or at pre-school level.

The projects continue to attract such funding in the current financial year. Since 1 April 1994, grant has been paid to the first group of authorities from the new single regeneration budget for which the Department of the Environment has lead responsibility, while authorities in the second group have continued to receive grant from the Home Office under section 11. Over 40 per cent. of the relevant projects were originally approved until 31 March 1997, and we have made it clear that existing commitments will be honoured.

As to new additional funding from 1995-96, such activity was within the scope of the bidding guidance for the single regeneration budget published in April, and applications have also been invited for section 11 grant.

Authority	£
Brent	1,456,511
Greenwich	1,572,728
Hackney	3,466,412
Hammersmith & Fulham	582,028
Haringey	2,630,865
Islington	1,593,722
Kensington & Chelsea	1,060,465
Lambeth	1,062,702
Lewisham	1,823,386
Newham	1,964,612
Southwark	2,037,848
Tower Hamlets	7,228,566
Wandsworth	1,762,389

Authority	£
Barking & Dagenham	285,412
Barnet	866,982
Bexley	144,987
Camden	1,432,780
Croydon	1,108,480
Ealing	3,359,869
Enfield	1,324,482
Harrow	726,718
Havering	50,636
Hillingdon	303,153
Hounslow	1,576,105
Kingston-upon-Thames	123,861
Merton	636,479
Redbridge	1,084,599
Richmond	69,014
Sutton	37,447
Waltham Forest	1,552,590
Westminster	1,774,619

Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what publicity his Department has undertaken in respect of Her Majesty's Government's report on human rights in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We have announced in reply to questions in both Houses that we submitted the United Kingdom's fourth periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Polictical Rights to the United Nations on 7 October and that copies of the report were that day placed in the Library. In accordance with the policy that the report should be freely available outside Parliament for those who wish to receive a copy; on 8 October we sent copies to those non-governmental organisations with a particular, established interest in the report, and we have since supplied copies on request.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he submitted to the United Nations the British Government's report on human rights in the United Kingdom required under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The United Kingdom's fourth periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was submitted to the United Nations on 7 October 1994. On the same day copies of the report were placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Equine Population

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated current equine population of Northern Ireland; for what principal purposes horses, ponies, donkeys and mules are used in the Province; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: It is estimated that there is a current equine population of 25,000 animals in Northern Ireland. Horses are used mainly for hunting, show jumping, eventing and racing; ponies are used for leisure activities; donkeys are kept mainly as pets; there is no record of any mules kept in Northern Ireland.

Health and Social Services Trusts

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria are used in making appointments to the boards of Northern Ireland health and social services trusts; and whether a list of suitable appointees exists.

Mr. Ancram: Non-executive directors of health and social services trusts, including chairmen, are appointed to act in a personal rather than a representative capacity. Although there are no specific qualifications, those appointed are likely to have some or all of the following attributes:

to have interest and concern for health and social services;

to possess a specialist skill or knowledge;

to have experience of the voluntary sector, preferably including operational matters;

to live or work in the area to be served by the trust;

to bring a sense of independence and objectivity to the deliberations of the trust;

to have an understanding of management structure and performance;

to be willing to give the necessary time commitment to the post—a minimum of up to 1·5 days a months for non-executive directors and up to 2·5 days a week for chairman.

In addition, the Department seeks to achieve equality of representation in terms of gender and community background and encourage more young people to participate.

There is a central databased containing background details of all those who have expressed interested in public appointments, while Baroness Denton holds receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how potential appointees to Northern Ireland health and social services trusts may indicate to those responsible for making such appointments their willingness to become board members.

Mr. Ancram: It is open to any member of the public to make it known that he or she is interested in being considered for apointment to an HSS trust. Anyone so interested should write to the Department of Health and Social Services or directly to the HSS trust in question. Local community organisations are also encouraged to nominate.

Ms. Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider creating a register of interests of the board members of Northern Ireland health and social services trusts.

Mr. Ancram: In line with developments in the rest of the United Kingdom my noble Friend Baroness Denton has decided that HPSS bodies must establish and maintain a publicly available register of interests for chairmen and board members. Guidance will be published shortly in the form of codes of practice on conduct and accountability which will require significant interests to be published in the organisation's annual report.

Ms. Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Norther Ireland if he will list the name of each board member of the Northern Ireland health and social services trust with *(a)* the occupation of non-executive directors, *(b)* the levels of the remuneration paid to non-executive directors and *(c)* the date of appointment of each director and the length of term of office in each case.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested in respect of the 13 HSS trusts in Northern Ireland has been placed in the Library.

Trainee Doctors

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from what central source funding is made available for flexible training schemes for trainee doctors wishing to pursue a career in general practice; how many places each year are made available on such schemes; how many who have completed their pre-registration year and have been selected for general practice training are on a waiting list; what proportion of these are women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Funding for flexible training of trainee doctors wishing to pursue a career in general practice is provided by the Department of Health and Social Services through the Central Services Agency. The number of places available for flexible training is not fixed. There is no waiting list. There are currently 27 females and 19 males in vocational training for general practice of whom one person, a female, is currently in flexible training.

The Department are committed to encouraging flexible training and funds initiatives particularly in specialities with female under-representation. The Northern Ireland Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education ensures that all trainees are aware of the option for flexible training.

Dystonia

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many cases of dystonia have been diagnosed in the Southern health board area;

(2) how many cases of dystonia have been diagnosed in the Northern health board area;

(3) how many cases of dystonia have been diagnosed in the Western health board;

(4) how many cases of dystonia have been diagnosed in the Eastern health board area.

Mr. Ancram: This information is not collected.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if dystonia is recognised as a specific disease in relation to social security benefits.

Mr. Ancram: The only social security benefits which are paid in respect of specified diseases are industrial injuries benefits, which provide preferential benefits for employed earners disabled by accidents and prescribed diseases arising out of employment. Dystonia is not prescribed for the purpose of industrial injuries benefits. All other benefits paid in respect of sickness or disablement do not depend on a specific condition but rather on the effects to which that condition gives rise.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what research is currently being carried out on dystonia in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: No research into the condition of dystonia is being directly funded by the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland at present. The Department has not received any applications for support for research into dystonia in recent years.

Making Belfast Work

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list expenditure by wards in Belfast under the Making Belfast Work initiative from its inception.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information is not currently available and could be collected only at disproportionate cost. However, work is on-going on a project monitoring database which will allow such requests to be dealt with in future.

Sex Discrimination

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all councils which have sex discrimination cases lodged against them.

Mr. Tim Smith: The following councils currently have sex discrimination cases lodged against them before the industrial tribunals:

Belfast City Council
Ards Borough Council
Armagh District Council.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have lodged sex discrimination claims against local government employers in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Since 1 January 1989, 35 people have lodged sex discrimination claims against local government employers before the industrial tribunals.

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what review has been made since 30 August of the different cost benefits of *(a)* the proposed Scotland-Northern Ireland electricity interconnector and *(b)* a revised interconvector between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: None. These are matters for the parties concerned—NIE plc, Scottish Power plc and the Electricity Supply Board in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the cost of reinstating the electricity interconnector between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The decision to restore the electricity interconnector between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland is a matter for NIE plc and the electricity supply board. I am told that the cost is of the order of £1·2 million.

Foyle Fisheries Commission

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are employed by the Foyle Fisheries Commission on *(a)* a part-time basis and *(b)* a full-time basis; and how many in each category are perceived to be (i) protestants and (ii) catholics.

Mr. Ancram: The Foyle Fisheries Commission employs four persons on a part-time basis and 23 persons on a full-time basis. Of the part-time employees two are perceived to be Protestant and two are perceived to be Catholics. Of the full-time staff 13 are perceived to be Protestants and 10 are perceived to be Catholics.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many licensed *(a)* red meat and *(b)* poultry abattoirs there were in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ancram: The information is given in the table.

Licensed Abattoirs in Northern Ireland 1990–994

Number in operation at:	*Red meat*	*Poultry meat*
1 January 1990	23	11
1 January 1991	20	11
1 January 1992	20	12
1 January 1993	19	10
1 January 1994	16	10

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the prevalence and use of mobile abattoirs.

Mr. Ancram: There are no mobile abattoirs in Northern Ireland.

Livestock Imports

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* adult cattle, *(b)* calves, *(c)* sheep/lambs, *(d)* pigs and *(e)* other livestock were imported into Northern Ireland in each year since 1985.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is given in the table.

Recorded imports of livestock into Northern Ireland 1985-1993 (including shipments from Great Britain)

	Adult cattle	*Calves*	*Sheep and lambs*	*Pigs*	*Other [1]livestock*
1985	191,873	2,190	67,274	59,237	1,829,300
1986	202,708	330	57,186	63,955	2,573,730
1987	145,551	133	70,074	61,829	2,454,222
1988	170,706	583	55,337	45,955	942,620
1989	111,788	639	75,834	52,516	949,201
1990	113,400	512	53,012	53,251	1,702,045
1991	82,505	280	50,503	78,142	1,837,359
1992	64,790	748	113,957	100,391	1,145,495
1993	50,119	1,656	[2]2,370	[2]67,777	[2]785,831

[1] Includes poultry and horses.

[2] The statistics for imports of sheep, pigs and other livestock in 1993 are incomplete. With the implementation of the Single Market and the consequent closure of border posts full statistics on imports, especially from the Republic of Ireland, are not available for 1993.

Illegal Netting

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patrols for the control of illegal netting were carried out on Lough Neagh in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992, *(c)* 1993 and *(d)* to date in 1994.

Mr. Ancram: The number of patrols carried out by the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland for the control of illegal netting on Lough Neagh is set out in the table:

Year	*Number of patrols*
1991	116
1992	123
1993	167
1994[1]	171

[1] up to 30 September.

TRANSPORT

Newcastle Bypass

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received and from whom, about the extension of noise insulation protection to further properties since the opening of *(a)* the A1 western bypass in Newcastle and *(b)* the Woolsington bypass;

(2) what amount of compensation has been paid to Newcastle city council for its properties affected by the Woolsington bypass scheme; and what sum of compensation has been paid in total to all other property owners in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne affected by the scheme;

(3) how many properties have been granted noise insulation protection in respect of *(a)* the A1 western bypass in the city of Newcastle and *(b)* the Woolsington bypass; how many such properties in each case were in the ownership of Newcastle city council; and what was the cost of such noise insulation protection on each scheme.

(4) what amount of compensation has been paid to Newcastle city council for its properties affected by the Newcastle western bypass scheme; and what amount of compensation has been paid in total to all other property owners in the city of Newcastle affected by the scheme.

Mr. Watts: As these are operational matters for the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 17 October 1994:

You tabled a number of questions about noise insulation protection and compensation for properties affected by the Newcastle Western Bypass and Woolsington Bypass schemes.

As this is an operational matter relating to the Highways Agency I have been asked to reply.

I will answer your questions in the order raised:—

On the Newcastle Western Bypass 1,105 properties were granted noise insulation protection, 525 of which were local authority owned at a total cost of £547,000. No properties were granted noise insulation costs on the Woolsington Bypass.

No compensation was paid to Newcastle Council for properties affected by Woolsington bypass scheme. The total sum paid to other property owners is £370,000.

On the Newcastle Western Bypass scheme 80 appeals were received from owner/occupiers of which 20 were successful. No appeals were received for the Woolsington Bypass scheme.

Newcastle City Council were paid £520,000 in compensation for its properties affected by the Newcastle Western Bypass. Payments to other property owners amounts to £4·93 million.

Taxe Uniforme

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the French Minister of Transport the desirability of abolishing the taxe uniforme imposed on British ferry passengers landing in France.

Mr. Norris: I understand that the taxe uniforme is charged on all ferry companies using certain French ports. We are seeking further information to see whether this tax breaches Community law and will then consider whether to raise the matter with the French authorities.

Street Vendors (Licences)

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will institute a licensing regime to legitimise street vendors of cold drinks, flowers, newspapers and other items for *(a)* 400 yd of the Westway to the east and west of its junction with Old Oak Common lane and *(b)* at other selected junctions on the A40 Westway.

Mr. Norris: This question raises an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. John Butcher, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your question about instituting a licensing regime to legitimise street vendors on the A40 Westway at the junction with Old Oak Common Lane and other selected junctions.

The Highways Agency as the responsible highway authority for trunk roads such as the A40 does not have the powers to institute a licensing regime. These rest with the local authorities in London who have powers under section 24(1) of the London Local Authorities Act 1990 to designate a street as a licence street where vendors may apply for street trading licences. However the local authority must obtain the consent of my Agency before designating any part of a trunk road or issuing an individual licence under section 25(5) of the 1990 Act.

My Agency would not normally consider giving consent for the types of trading activities described which take place on the carriageway of the A40 to the east of Old Oak Common Lane, or at other locations because these unlicenced street vendors can be a distraction and potential safety hazard to motorists. They also might encourage motorists to park in unsafe positions on the trunk road whilst purchasing their products.

We monitor all such situations and where problems are identified we ask the Metropolitan Police to take action to have street traders removed and the local authorities to use their powers under section 34 of the 1990 Act to prosecute them.

Vehicle Emissions

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the extent of non-compliance with vehicle construction and use regulations in respect of motor vehicle emissions.

Mr. Norris: An assessment to the year ending 31 March 1994 of the vehicles failing to comply with the in-use emissions requirements of the construction and use regulations is given in the table. For light duty vehicles, the assessment is based on returns from MOT test stations—2 per cent. sample—and for public service and heavy goods vehicles, from annual test statistics.

Vehicle	*Number tested*	*Number failing emissions test*
Cars, other passenger vehicles up to 12 seats and light goods vehicle up to 3T	21,244,344	1,636,739 (7·7 per cent.)
Private passenger vehicles over 12 seats	23,510	531 (2·26 per cent.)
Light goods vehicles over 3T and up to 3·5T	214,255	13,989 (6·53 per cent.)
Public Service Vehicles	86,254	2,328 (2·7 per cent.)
Heavy Goods Vehicles	576,121	13,827 (2·4 per cent.)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints about excessively smokey vehicles have been referred to the vehicle inspectorate in the last five years.

Mr. Norris: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Vehicle Inspectorate under its chief executive, Ron Oliver. He has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Ms Joan Walley, dated 20 July 1994:

SMOKEY VEHICLES

You recently asked a parliamentary question about the number of complaints the Department of Transport had received concerning smoky vehicles. Because the Vehicle Inspectorate (VI) has operational responsibility for this matter I have been asked to reply.

VI coordinate the Smokey Vehicle Hotline. This service allows members of the public, and other interested bodies, to report vehicles seen producing excessive smoke. The scheme was set up in 1991 and since then 8,259 complaints have been received. A breakdown of the total is given below:

Year	*Number*
1991–92	1,484
1992–93	2,481
1993–94	2,888
1994–95[1]	1,407
Total	8[illegible]

[1] To date

I hope this answers your question but if you have any further queries about this, or other operational matters relating to VI, please write to me.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in how many cases operator licences have been (i) raised or (ii) withdrawn because of complaints about excessive smoke in the last five years.

Mr. Norris: Such information is not available.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for legislation to require local authorities to carry out spot checks of polluting vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no such plans. We are concentrating our efforts on improving current enforcement techniques through better targeting and publicity, and through increased public awareness. I made an announcement about this on 11 October and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Nitric Acid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safety criteria have been adopted by his Department to cover the international transport to and from the United Kingdom of radioactively contaminated nitric acid; what prohibitions exist on the transport of such materials by air; and what information has been received by his Department in regard to the import of nitric acid into the United Kingdom by *(a)* air and *(b)* sea transportation, respectively.

Mr. Norris: The international rules for the safe transport of dangerous goods by sea and air are set out in the international maritime dangerous goods code and the convention of international civil aviation respectively. In addition, the transport of radioactive materials within, to and from the United Kingdom must comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency standards. These international codes and conventions, plus the multi-modal provisions of the UN recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods, are reflected in the appropriate United Kingdom domestic legislation. My Department is not aware of any recent radioactive nitric acid imports by sea or air.

Vehicle Tax and Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average percentage increase in *(a)* vehicle tax and *(b)* vehicle insurance between August 1992 and May 1994.

Mr. Norris: The average percentage increase in vehicle excise duty, also known as vehicle tax, between August 1992 and May 1994 was 18 per cent.

Although the Government do not monitor particular motor insurance premium levels there is an element in the RPI which accounts for vehicle insurance. That shows that the average percentage increase in vehicle insurance between August 1992 and May 1994 was 17 per cent.

Road Surfaces

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research is currently being carried out into whisper concrete.

Mr. Watts: This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Laurie Haynes to Mr. Richard Page, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning research into "whisper concrete".

Whisper concrete is a new method for applying the texture to concrete roads. It was developed in Europe and involves exposing the aggregate in the surface to create a random texture capable of providing adequate skid resistance. Trials are underway on the M18 near Thorne and the A564 Foston Hatton Hilton Bypass. These are necessary because of the need to establish the practicality of constructing whisper concrete capable of meeting our skid resistance requirements which are higher than those in countries using whisper concrete.

The Transport Research Laboratory is involved in research to monitor trials and to advise the Highways Agency on the construction and performance of this new surface.

Buses

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he is taking to reduce the pollution caused by old and badly-serviced buses and coaches;

(2) how many of the buses currently operating on British roads reach acceptable levels in terms of exhaust emissions.

Mr. Norris: All public service vehicles are subject to annual roadworthiness tests which, since September 1992, have included metered checks for diesel smoke. The number of PSVs failing the annual test in 1993-94 was 2,328 out of 86,254 or 2·7 per cent. of the total.

PSVs are also subject to regular roadside checks for both emissions and safety purposes. During 1993-94, 24,521 PSVs were inspected at the roadside in addition to checks at operators' premises. The overall failure rate for the two types of checks was 1·05 per cent. A further 5,165 emissions—only roadside checks resulted in a failure rate of 2·8 per cent.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage bus operators to introduce modern, less polluting buses.

Mr. Norris: We have allocated over £20 million since 1992 for specific local authority bus priority measures. These include a low floor bus demonstration project and the conversion of buses to run on compressed natural gas and liquid petroleum gas.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the age profile of the buses on British roads.

Mr. Norris: The requested information is given in the following table:

	Vehicles		
Year of first registration	*Other buses/coaches*	*Minibuses*	*Total*
Pre 1978	11,608	2,192	13,800
1978	3,357	521	3,878
1979	3,970	1,271	5,241
1980	4,592	2,113	6,705
1981	3,606	1,839	5,445
1982	3,224	2,546	5,770
1983	3,444	4,326	7,770
1984	3,274	5,021	8,295
1985	2,502	6,037	8,539
1986	2,631	7,527	10,158
1987	2,618	8,464	11,082

Year of first registration	*Vehicles* *Other buses/coaches*	*Minibuses*	*Total*
1988	3,189	9,267	12,456
1989	3,242	10,230	13,472
1990	2,897	8,702	11,599
1991	2,124	6,675	8,799
1992	2,324	6,221	8,545
1993	2,656	6,023	8,679
1994 (January, February, March)	688	1,734	2,422
All	61,946	90,709	152,655

The table shows vehicles licensed at the end of March 1994, and recorded by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency as having bus or coach body type, regardless of taxation group.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the transport supplementary grant bid for authorities within each English region for each of the past five years against the final transport supplementary grant settlement agreed for each region; and if he will express the settlement as a percentage of the bid for each year and for each region.

Mr. Norris: The figures in the following table represent gross expenditure accepted for transport supplementary grant in the years specified for local authorities in each region. Resources are distributed to individual local authorities on the basis of the bids contained in their annual transport policies and programme submissions. TSG is paid at a rate of 50 per cent. of accepted expenditure, after adjustment for underspending in previous years.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much transport supplementary grant was paid out in total to each English region for each of the past five years; and if he will express this for each year in total and for each region in terms of transport supplementary grant per capita and transport supplementary grant per kilometre of road.

Mr. Norris: The figures are shown in the following table.

Region	*1990–91* *TSG £100*	*Per capita £*	*Per/km of road £*	*1992–92* *TSG £000*	*Per capita £*	*Per/km of road £*	*1992–93* *TSG £000*	*Per capita £*	*Per/km of road £*
South East	40,033	5·19	0·98	72,397	9·39	1·77	70,921	9·20	1·73
South West	23,845	5·03	0·51	28,437	3·69	0·69	27,866	3·61	0·68
West Midlands	23,026	4·36	0·79	35,175	4·56	0·86	46,108	5·98	1·13
North West	31,833	5·85	1·13	39,532	5·13	0·97	50,005	6·48	1·22
Merseyside	5,406	3·74	1·28	10,070	1·31	0·25	15,766	2·04	0·38
North East	12,067	4·63	0·79	15,425	2·00	0·38	17,210	2·23	0·42
Yorkshire and Humberside	23,238	4·65	0·82	29,179	3·78	0·71	42,060	5·45	1.03
East Midlands	9,966	2·45	0·36	18,060	2·34	0·44	19,779	2·56	0·48
Eastern	23,094	4·46	0·65	28,829	3·74	0·70	29,352	3·81	0·72
London	40,617	5·88	3·13	40,686	5·28	0·99	50,933	6·60	1·24
ENGLAND	233,125	4·82	0·87	317,790	41·21	7·76	370,000	47·98	9·03

Region	*1993–94* *TSG £000*	*Per capita £*	*Per/km of road £*	*1994–95* *TSG £000*	*Per capita £*	*Per/km of road £*
South East	77,718	10·08	1·90	74,184	9·62	1·81
South West	32,278	4·19	0·79	25,251	3·27	0·62
West Midlands	61,856	8·02	1·51	52,958	6·87	1·29
North West	49,858	6·46	1·22	42,367	5·49	1·03
Merseyside	15,098	1·96	0·37	7,782	1·01	0·19
North East	24,347	3·16	0·59	17,282	2·24	0·42
Yorkshire and Humberside	54,584	7·08	1·33	36,571	4·74	0·89
East Midlands	21,509	2·79	0·53	12,462	1·62	0·30
Eastern	35,283	4·58	0·86	25·411	3·29	0·62
London	58,310	7·56	1·42	35·165	4·56	0·86
ENGLAND	430,841	55·87	10·52	329,433	42·72	8·04

Rail Electrification

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what date has been set for the completion of electrification of the West London line between Clapham and Willesden Junction; and if he will now initiate a study of the benefits arising from running a frequent urban electric ring-rail service from North Woolwich to Woolwich Arsenal via these junctions.

Mr. Norris: The West London line electrification scheme was completed in July 1993. However, this scheme did not include one short stretch of line between Mitre Bridge and Willesden Junction which will form part of the north London works, due to be electrified late next year.

Studies into the feasibility of new rail services, such as a ring-rail service, are a commercial matter for British Rail train operating units and Railtrack.

Motor Cars

Mr. Spearing: To ask the secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* driven-miles and *(b)* passenger miles, respectively, travelled in motor cars in each year since 1983.

Mr. Norris: A table follows.

Vehicle- and passenger-miles: cars and taxis[1]: 1983–1993

	billions	
Year	[1]Vehicle-miles	[2]Passenger-miles
1983	144	242
1984	152	255
1985	156	260
1986	164	274
1987	177	295
1988	190	316
1989	206	343
1990	209	347
1991	208	346
1992	209	347
1993	209	347

[1] Vehicle-miles derived from the national road traffic survey. Data for cars only cannot be separated from the series for cars and taxis.

[2] Passenger-miles derived from vehicle-miles and occupancy rates (persons per vehicle) from the national travel survey. In 1993 the occupancy rate for cars and taxis was 1·66.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport with reference to paragraph 5.7.1. of his publication "Channel Tunnel Rail Links" and European Passenger Services in Competition Overview publish on 31 August, if he will state the likely planned line speed between any stations of non-international passenger trains.

Mr. Watts: Neither the acceleration rate not the speed of non-international passenger trains on the channel tunnel rail link has yet been determined.

M25

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report the Highways Agency on the options for increasing the capacity of the M25 between junctions 10 and 12.

Mr. Watts: I understand from the Highways Agency that it needs more time to complete its work on the possible options for the scheme. A further announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Sir George Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated time before the brushed concrete surface between junctions 8 and 10 of the M25 is in need of major maintenance or replacement.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Sir George Gardiner, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the estimated time before the brushed concrete surface between Junctions 8 and 10 of the M25 is in need of major maintenance or of replacement.

The existing concrete surface is in good condition. We do not expect it to require resurfacing for at least 10 years or strengthening for at least 20 years.

Sustainable Development Strategy

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken to implement the programme announced by the Prime Minister in January for a sustainable development strategy in respect of the relative costs and benefits of various modes of transport within a free or a managed market.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the launch of the sustainable development strategy in January we have made good progress in developing a framework within which people can exercise their transport choices in ways that are consistent with our overall environmental goals. A number of measures have been taken which will contribute to such a framework including:

publishing jointly with the Department of the Environment a new planning policy guidance note on transport (PPG 13),

agreeing a new set of standards for emissions from new passenger cars for introduction in January 1997,

publishing guidance to encourage local authorities to devise balanced and coherent transport strategies for their areas,

establishing the Highways Agency,

conducting a review of the roads programme,

recently announced initiatives on vehicle emissions covering roadside checks and tighter MOT limits from January 1996.

In determining each of these measures we have put particular weight on the need to take account of relevant costs and benefits.

IRA Bomb

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport where was the British Transport police officer who located in London an IRA bomb device on 22 August; and how far from a London Underground or British Rail property he was.

Mr. Watts: The British Transport police officer was checking litter bins in Regent street, approximately 25 m from the nearest entrance to Oxford Circus underground station.

Trunk Telephone Lines

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency concerning the sub-contracting of the sale of M prefix personalised number plates to a telephone-sales company and the consequent blocking of trunk telephone lines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I have discussed this issue with the DVLA's chief executive. The agency is working closely with the telesales company to ensure the delivery of a satisfactory and efficient service for customers. It will be reviewing the provision of services for the release of N registrations next year. Over 28,000 calls were dealt with in the first week of this year's launch resulting in the sale of 7,600 numbers. No trunk telephone lines were blocked during this period.

Birmingham Relief Road

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the net present value of the Birmingham northern relief road according top the cost benefit analysis evaluation of the scheme.

Mr. Watts: This question relates to matters which are the responsibility of the Highways Agency; the chief executive is writing to the hon. Member.

Letter form Lawrie Haynes to Dr. Tony Wright, dated 17 October 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the net present value of the Birmingham Northern Relief Road according to the COBA evaluation of the scheme.

As part of the evidence to the current public inquiry, the Department has indicated that the scheme has a net present value of £195 million.

Scottish Air Traffic Control Centre

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress towards financing and construction of the Scottish air traffic control centre II.

Mr. Norris: Within the next few months, the Civil Aviation Authority expects to be in a position to invite tenders from the private sector for the design, building, maintenance and financing of the centre. The target date for completion of the centre is 2000.

Landscape Advisory Committee

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to restore the Landscape Advisory Committee.

Mr. Watts: No.

Bull Bars

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the results of research into the effects on pedestrians of bull bars fixed to the fronts of vehicles.

Mr. Norris: Current research is concentrating on identifying accidents involving vehicles with bull bars to determine whether they are causing increased injuries. The results of this exercise are not expected until early next year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for television recordings of tests of vehicle injury bars striking models of child pedestrians.

Mr. Norris: A video of impact tests on a bull bar using an instrumented child-size headform was made by the Transport Research Laboratory and shown on BBC breakfast television on 16 June 1994.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to fund Transport Research Laboratory research into the dangers of bull bars.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The Department has already funded impact tests at the Transport Research Laboratory using an instrumented child-size headform and other instrumented impactors on a bull bar. Some have shown that the severity of an impact on a bull bar appears significantly more severe than on a flexible bonnet. The Department has also taken steps to identify accidents where a pedestrian has been struck by a vehicle fitted with a bull bar. We shall be letting a contract to determine, on the basis of this data, whether bull bars are causing increased injuries.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Norris: Nine.

Highways

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate a study of the extent to which all county, borough and district highway authorities are able to co-ordinate and control highway excavations for purposes other than emergencies; and if he will list those bodies authorised to do so without local authorities' prior consent.

Mr. Norris: I see no need for a specific study of this kind. The Department keeps in close touch with the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities about the operation of the street works provisions of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, and we stand ready to strengthen any of the regulations and codes of practice issued under the Act where there is a case for doing so. Undertakers execute street works by virtue either of a statutory right or of a licence granted under the Act and do not need prior consent from the street authority. For most non-emergency street works there is, however, a requirement for undertakers to give the street authority a specified period of notice.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information amongst visually impaired people.

Mr. Norris: The cost of providing public information in separate audio tape, Braille and other formats for visually impaired people is not readily available. The budgets for certain departmental publications and for mobility unit information cover the cost of producing these materials.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Norris: The following departmental publications are currently available on audiotape:

Door To Door—A Guide to Transport for People with Disabilities

How to Use a Puffin Crossing

The Mobility Unit Annual Review

One departmental publication is available in Braille:

The Use of Tactile Surface and Dropped Kerbs at Pedestrian Crossing Points—DU Circular 1/91.

In addition, the Department's mobility unit can make available on request some printed material on audiotape or in braille.

The availability of these publications in special format is made known, directly and via the media, to organisations representing visually impaired people and to inquirers.

Coaches

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses to the consultation paper on the proposal to ban coaches from the third lane of motorways have been received by his Department *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against the proposal; and when a decision will be made.

Mr. Norris: The Department received 74 responses to this consultation paper. Of these, 13 were in favour and 61 against the proposal. Of those opposed to the proposal, 40 were coach operators or representative organisations. A decision will be taken in the near future.

Freight Terminal

Ms. Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a detailed statement on the future use of Ripple lane sidings and freight terminal both in terms of existing networks serving the channel tunnel and in respect of the proposed channel tunnel rail link; if he will make it his policy that no intermodal freight facilities will be located in the Barking areas; and if he will conduct a study of the traffic congestion, noise and pollution already experienced in the area.

Mr. Watts: It is the Government's intention to encourage freight to use rail haulage for as much of its journey as possible. We are concerned about the potential problems which would result from railheading intermodal freight in east London. Therefore, we shall not authorise works which would allow large-gauge intermodal traffic to transfer to road here, unless there is infrastructure in place to allow such traffic to travel beyond the London area by rail. It is a commercial matter for the railway operators involved what use to make of the existing facility at Ripple lane.

Through its work on developing the A13 improvement schemes, my Department fully appreciates traffic conditions in the area. The full environmental effects of the major improvement scheme at the Movers lane junction have already been studied, including noise, air and water quality, landscape and natural habitats. The environmental impact of the schemes east of Heathway were studied in a similar manner. No additional studies are planned.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the present salary and grade of the directing board members of the Vehicle Inspectorate.

Mr. Norris: The current directing board, excluding non-executive members is the chief executive, grade 4, a grade 5 director and a grade 6 director. Their salaries, exclusive of bonuses, are respectively £52,286, £45,981, and £39,949.

Tanker (Shetland)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has received a response to its request to the Singapore authorities to investigate the circumstances whereby a Singapore-registered tanker entered the area to be avoided off Shetland on 30 January and was observed approximately 1 km south off Sumburgh Head; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The Singapore authorities have now concluded their investigations. The Master of the North Pacific has been given a serious warning for his actions.

Ship Reporting

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the present working arrangements for surveyors in respect of the ship reporting system; what assessments he has made of the effect of these arrangements on his proposed mandatory ship reporting system; and if he will make arrangements for there to be surveyors at work 24 hours per day and seven days per week when the mandatory system is introduced.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Reports from the Coastguard Agency and other sources forwarded to the Marine Safety Agency are investigated during normal working hours.

These arrangements are under review in the light of developments on mandatory ship-reporting systems, both internationally at IMO and within the European Union, and also recommendations made in Lord Donaldson's report, "Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas".

Viaduct Replacement Contract

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what country the company was based which was awarded the A38 Marsh Mills viaducts replacement contract; what were the circumstances which resulted in this company being awarded the contract; what was the cost of the contract; if the competition was open to companies from all European countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Since April, responsibility for managing, maintaining and improving the national road network in England now lies with the Highways Agency. As the information requested by my hon. Friend relates to these responsibilities, I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question on the contract for the A38 Marsh Mills replacement viaducts.

This design and build contract was won by Hochtief UK Ltd of Melksham, Wiltshire, it is a subsidiary company of Hochtief AG whose head office is in Essen, Germany. The contract was awarded in March this year in the sum of £12,229,225 on the basis of the most economically advantageous bid received. The competition involved four contractors which were selected from 22 firms and joint ventures which responded to an advertisement placed in the Office Journal of the European Communities. All highways contracts with an estimated value of £1 million or more are so advertised and all contractors, whether based in the EU or beyond, are welcome to apply to be selected to tender.

Airports

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken to estimate the impact on the local motorway and road networks of the development of Redhill aerodrome into an international airport.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* At the Redhill aerodrome planning inquiry, the Department's traffic evidence was based on traffic assessments it had commissioned for the proposed M23 widening, supplemented by traffic survey data supplied by the applicant in support of his proposals. The assessments, which were checked by independent consultants employed specifically for the purpose, showed that the impact on the M23 would not be significant. Surrey county council made an assessment of the likely impact on local roads which revealed a potential problem on the A22 at M25 junction 6.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the impact of air traffic movements at Gatwick airport if similar movements at Redhill aerodrome rise above six per hour.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The impact on Gatwick air traffic movements as a consequence of development of use of Redhill arose in evidence from a number of parties at the recent public inquiry into development of Redhill aerodrome. I have no other information than that put forward at the inquiry and contained in the RUCATSE report.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Successive Secretaries of State for Transport have each appointed a political adviser who has left the Department at the same time as the Secretary of State who appointed him or her. Over the last five years, appointments and departures have been as follows:

	Joined	*Left*
1990	—	1
1991	1	—
1992	1	1
1993	—	—
1994 (to date)	—	1

Road Surfaces

Sir George Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the oral statement of the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr Key) of 4 July, *Official Report,* column *1269,* and his answer of 7 March, *Official Report,* column *1,* what is the cost per mile for the total reconstruction using *(a)* porous asphalt road surface material, *(b)* a hot rolled asphalt surface and *(c)* a typical concrete surface for (i) single carriageway roads, (ii) two-lane dual carriageway roads, (iii) three-lane dual carriageway roads and (iv) four-lane dual carriageway roads.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 21 July 94]:* This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Sir George Gardiner, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts MP, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning the cost per mile of reconstructing roads.

The earlier statement as recorded within Hansard, for 7 March column 1 reflected the cost of providing porous asphalt surface or a concrete surface. Because the concrete surface also forms the main road structure, the two costs are not directly comparable. This ws confirmed by the Minister for Roads and Traffic during the 14 July Adjourment Debate on M25 (Noise Pollution).

Costs of reconstructing roads vary enormously between contracts and are influenced by geographical location, depth of reconstruction, complexity of traffic management and associated works such as drainage. There are also differences which reflect market conditions. It is our experience that these factors are such that the costs of flexible construction with conventional rolled asphalt and concrete are comparable. The costs given within the table below are broadly indicative bearing in mind the limited experience in the use of porous asphalt.

To avoid confusion and for comparative purposes, the costs have been calculated on the basis of the road pavement structure only. Other costs are broadly similar between options.

	Approximate £ thousand cost/mile	
	Flexible pavement with porous asphalt	*Flexible pavement with hot rolled asphalt/Typical concrete*
Single carriageway	520	450
2-lane dua carriageway		
all purpose	1,050	900
motorway	1,280	1,100
3-lane dual carriageway		
all purpose	1,470	1,260
motorway	1,600	1,380
4-lane dual carriageway		
all purpose	—	—
motorway	2,040	1,750

Batheaston Bypass

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (i) if tree surgery and felling, carried out on the site of the Swainswick/Batheaston bypass, has been carried out within regulations and guidelines issued by his Department; and if he will publish the regulations together with details of action taken to enforce them;

(2) if he will order an inquiry into the circumstances relating to the injuries sustained by Mr. Martin Ellis on Thursday 5 July at the site of the Batheaston bypass.

Mr. Watts *[holding answers 21 July 1994]:* These questions are operational matters for the Highways Agency. The chief executive is writing to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Don Foster, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads Mr. John Watts has asked me to write to you in reply to your two Parliamentary Questions about an accident and the work of the tree surgeons at the Batheaston/Swainswick Bypass construction site.

I do not consider that an enquiry into the accident is necessary. It is clear that the injuries sustained by the trespasser were a direct result of his own actions. We have made statements to the Avon and Somerset Constabulary and if they consider further investigation to be necessary, we shall assist in whatever way we can.

The specialist tree surgeons working at the construction site are employed not by the Highways Agency but by our contractors, Amey Construction Limited. The tree surgeons work to their own code of conduct within the Health and Safety Regulations. Like all our other contractors and sub-contractors, the tree surgeons carry their own insurance and are required to indemnify the Highways Agency claims for compensation by third parties.

In addition, special advisers with expert knowledge in particular sectors have been appointed from time to time. Over the last five years, appointments and departures have been as follows:

	Joined	*Left*
1990	1	1
1991	—	—
1992	2	—
1993	2	3
1994 (to date)	—	1

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answers 20 July 1994]:* There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what measures have now been implemented by *(a)* the Driving Standards Agency, *(b)* the Vehicle Inspectorate, *(c)* the Transport Research Laboratory, *(d)* the Coastguard Agency and *(e)* the Marine Safety Agency to comply with his request of 9 May for increased productivity;

(2) how many jobs he expects will be lost within *(a)* the Driving Standards Agency, *(b)* the Vehicle Inspectorate, *(c)* the Transport Research Laboratory, *(d)* the Coastguard Agency and *(e)* the Marine Safety Agency as a result of his policy announcement of 9 May for these bodies to achieve increases in their productivity over the next two years;

(3) whether *(a)* the Driving Standards Agency, *(b)* the Vehicle Inspectorate, *(c)* the Transport Research Laboratory, *(d)* the Coastguard Agency and *(e)* the Marine Safety Agency are currently planning or considering further job losses amongst their staff.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answers 20 July 1994]:* Consultations about the proposals prepared in response to my announcement of 9 May have started. In most cases it is too early to judge the implications for jobs. However, the Vehicle Inspectorate announced proposals on 19 July which would save some 470 posts. In addition, the Transport Research Laboratory announced on 16 June that, in the light of an expected decline in demand for its services, it was initiating a programme of job reductions in 1994–95 which would reduce its staffing by 140.

Productivity Increases

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which bodies under the operational control of his Department are expected to implement the productivity increases announced by him on 9 May.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* My 9 May announcement applied to the Department of Transport, including its executive agencies. It did not apply to any nationalised industry, non-departmental public body or other body funded or supported by the Department.

Dr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the size of the operational budgets of *(a)* the Driving Standards Agency, *(b)* the Vehicle Inspectorate, *(c)* the Transport Research Laboratory, *(d)* the Coastguard Agency and *(e)* the Marine Safety Agency over the last two years; and if he will give figures for the size of these agencies' budgets in each of the next two financial years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Figures for 1993–94, where applicable, and for 1994–95 are below. Budgets have not yet been set for the next two financial years.

	1993–94 £ million	*1994–95 £ million*
Driving Standards Agency	51	50
Vehicle Inspectorate	51	50
Transport Research Laboratory	34	29
Coastguard Agency	(a)	50
Marine Safety Agency	(a)	31

(a) Agency formed on 1 April 1994

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the powers and duties of Railtrack; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Railtrack is bound by the terms of its network operator's licence, which is available for inspection on the register maintained by the Rail Regulator under section 72 of the Railways Act, and by the memorandum and articles of association of the company as well as by the objectives set for its chairman by the Secretary of State. These documents have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each meeting he has had with the chairman of Railtrack since 15 June, giving its date, time and location.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since 15 June, my predecessor had meetings with the chairman of Railtrack on 20, 27 and 30 June and on 7 July and I have had meetings on 25 July, 4 August and 6 September at various times either at the Department of Transport or elsewhere.

Cones Hotline

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many road signs advertising the cones hotline have been distributed *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the east midlands;

(2) what is the cost of producing and distributing the signs advertising the cones hotline number *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the east midlands.

(3) what is the total cost of the cones hotline since its inception *(a)* in the east midlands and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* As these are now operating matters for the Highways Agency, the chief executive has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from Laurie Haynes to Mr Paddy Tipping, dated 20 July 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for Transport for information on the Cones Hotline. As this is now an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I am replying to your questions.

1. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many road signs advertising the Cons Hotline have been distributed *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the East Midlands.

Separately identifiable figures for the total number of road signs installed are not available. Signs are erected by contractors or their traffic management sub-contractors as part of the contract arrangement. Neither the Department nor the Agency are responsible for the day to day management of signs.

2. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is the cost of producing and distributing the signs advertising the Cones Hotline number *(a)* nationally *(b)* in the East Midlands.

Separately identifiable costs of signs are not available. Their provision is included in the overall contract costs.

3. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is the total cost of he Cones Hotline since its inception *(a)* in the East Midlands and *(b)* nationally.

Since the beginning of the current financial year the cost of the dedicated telephone line has been about £450 per month, including call charges. The Hotline previously operated on the Department's general switchboard. There have been no other separately identifiable costs, either in previous years or in the current year, because the Hotline has operated within running cost structures agreed before its inception. No staff are employed exclusively on Hotline activity and there are no budgets allocated specifically to the provision of the Hotline service.

I hope this information is helpful.

Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for a traffic survey to be carried out of heavy traffic using Queen's drive, Liverpool, to travel to the north docks and to take samples of exhaust emissions along the route.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* Queen's drive, Liverpool is not a trunk road, so responsibility for traffic surveys lies with the local highway authority, Liverpool city council.

Department of Transport vehicle examiners make a visual assessment of emissions at the roadside as part of wider roadworthiness inspections. There are two locations close to Queen's drive where examiners already carry out spot checks on vehicles, which will include a check of emissions.

Staff Statistics

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of *(a)* fixed-term appointment, *(b)* casual and *(c)* agency staff employed in each of the offices of his Department and executive agencies in the London travel-to-work area.

Mr. Norris: I refer to my earlier answer, of 5 July *Official Report*, columns *150–56*, on this subject. We do not retain a central record of agency staff.

Pregnant Workers Directive

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the *Official Report* of 14 June, column *511*, what is the date by which he expects his Department to have proposals for implementing the health and safety provisions of EC directive 92/85; and if the trade unions will be consulted over these proposals.

Mr. Norris: The Department intends to comply fully with EC Directive 92/85 by conducting risk assessment inspections under the Management of Health and Safety at Work (Amendment) Regulations 1994, which come into effect on 19 October 1994.

The trade unions have been informed of this.

Hartland MRSC

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of closure of Hartland MRSC including travelling, subsistence and bridging loans.

Mr. Norris: The total cost of closure of Hartland MRSC including travelling, subsistence and bridging loans is not available from existing records.

Road Schemes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, columns *632–34*, if he will list each scheme for which an environmental impact assessment has been started.

Mr. Watts: This question relates to the operational matters of the Highway Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your further Parliamentary Question about environmental assessments.

As I mentioned in my letter of 29 June, an environmental assessment is carried out for each scheme in the national road programme. Assessments have been completed, are under way, or will be undertaken for all the schemes listed on pages 18–21 of the recent Trunk Roads in England 1994 Review. I attach an extract.

Details of assessment requirements at each stage of a progressive approach as schemes develop can be found in Volume 11 of the Highways Agency's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

Table 4. National trunk road programme schemes in preparation as at 31 January 1994

Title	*Route*	*Standard*	*Order of total cost £ million*[2]	Length (miles)	Last stage
Priority 1					
Western Orbital Route, Hereford & Worcester, Staffordshire		D3–D4	[1]Privately Financed	38·0	PR
Birmingham Northern Relief Road, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Walsall MB, Birmingham MB		—	[1]Privately Financed	30·0	
Lofthouse Interchange Diversion, Leeds MB	M1–M62	D2–D4	31·3	4·2	OP
J31–32 Widening, Rotherham MB	M1	D4	4·7	1·5	
J25–28 Widening, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire	M1	D4	150·9	15·0	
J23A–25 Widening, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire	M1	D4	93·9	7·0	
J21A–23A Widening (Phase 1), Leicestershire	M1	D3	35·0	14·0	
J10–15 Widening, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire	M1	D4	365·3	31·0	PC
J6A–10 Widening, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire	M1	D4	77·3	11·0	PC
J1–4 Widening, Kent	M2	D3–D4	170·3	9·0	PC
J3–4B Widening, LB's Hillingdon, Hounslow[3]	M4	S–D4	35·4	4·0	PC
J4B–8–9 Widening, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire	M4	D3	242·0	14·0	
J8–9–10 Widening, Berkshire	M4	D4	37·5	7·5	
J16–20 Widening, Cheshire	M6	D4	216·8	20·5	PR
J11–16 Widening, Staffordshire	M6	D4	317·5	34·4	PC
J8–9 Widening, Essex	M11	D3	61·7	15·0	
J5 North Facing Slip Road Imp, Essex	M11	S	7·4	0·5	OP
J3–5 Widening, Kent	M20	D4	31·2	6·1	OP
J8–9 Widening, Surrey	M23	D4	51·0	7·0	OP
J12–15 Links Roads, Surrey, Berkshire	M25	D3	164·3	7·5	PR
Terminal 5 Spur (Heathrow), Surrey, LB Hillingdon[3]	M25	D2	23·4	1·0	PC
J15–16 Links Roads, Buckinghamshire	M25	D2	66·7	4·7	PC
Controlled Motorway M25 Pilot Scheme[3]	M25	—	6·6	—	
Manchester Outer Ring Road Resigning, Salford MB, Stockport MB, Tameside MB, Bury MB, Manchester MB[3]	M60	—	4·4	—	
East–M606 Link Road, Kirklees MB	M62	D2	14·8	0·4	
J12–14 Widening Westbound, Bury MB	M62	D4	10·0	2·8	PC
J6–9 Widening, MB Salford, MB Trafford	M63	D4	51·7	4·6	PR
Denton–Middleton Contracts 1 & 3, Tameside MB, Manchester MB, Oldham MB, Bury MB, Rochdale MB	M66	D2–D3–D4	214·4	9·4	OM
Leeming–Scotch Corner. N. Yorkshire	A1(M)	D3	53·9	11·0	PR
Wetherby–Walshford. N. Yorkshire. Leeds MB	A1(M)	D3	30·2	3·3	OP
Hook Moor–Bramham. Leeds MB, N. Yorkshire	A1(M)	D4	79·4	4·4	OP
Ferrybridge–Hook Moor, Wakefield MB, Leeds MB, N. Yorkshire[1]	A1(M)	D3	108·6	10·2	PR
Alconbury–Peterborough Contract 2. Cambridgeshire	A1(M)	D3–D4	82·7	7·0	OM
Willowburn–Denwick Imp. Northumberland[3]	A1	D2	4·2	1·9	PR
Henlys–Waggoners Corner Imp. LB Houndslow	A4	—	9·9	—	
Kegworth Bypass, Leicestershire	A6	D2	11·2	1·2	
Rothwell–Desborough Bypass, Northamptonshire	A6	S	8·5	3·6	PI
Rushden & Higham Ferrers Bypass, Northamptonshire	A6	S–D2	8·7	3·5	OM
Stetham Bypass, Cambridgeshire	A10	S	2·8	2·3	
Landbeach Bypass, Cambridgeshire	A10	S	6·8	3·8	
Hackney Wick–M11 Link Contract 1, LB's Hackney, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Newham	A12	D2–S3	29·0	0·9	OM
Movers Lane Junction Imp. LB Barking & Dagenham	A13	D3	36·8	0·8	PR
Junction Imp. LB Newham	A13–A117	D3	26·3	1·2	OP
Prince Regent Lane Junction Imp. LB Newham	A13–A112	D3	37·0	1·1	OP
Ironbridge–Canning Town Imp. LB Newham	A13	D3	55·5	0·7	OP
Coulsdon Inner Relief Road, LB Croydon	A23	D2	32·8	1·0	OP
Salisbury Bypass, Wiltshire	A36	D2	62·3	11·3	OP
Derby Ring Road A61 GSJ, Derbyshire[4]	A38	D2	9·2	0·8	
Derby Ring Road A52–A5111 GSJ, Derbyshire[4]	A38	D2	16·7	1·6	
Gypsy Corner Imp. LB Hounslow	A40	D2–D3	32·4	0·9	OM
Moulton–Broughton Imp. Northamptonshire	A43	D2	13·3	7·2	PR
Silverstone Bypass, Northamptonshire	A43	D2	15·5	4·9	OM
M40–B4031 Imp. Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire	A43	D2	12·0	3·8	OP
Oak Lane Junction Imp. Coventry MB[4]	A45	—	3·0	—	
Tollbar End Imp. Coventry MB[4]	A45–A46	D2	11·4	0·4	
Newark–Widmerpool Imp. Nottinghamshire	A46	D2	50·7	17·3	PR
Alcester–Stratford Imp. Warwickshire	A46	D2	11·9	3·8	PR
A41–A54 Imp. Cheshire	A51	D2	9·2	5·0	
Mottram–Tintwistle Bypass, Tameside MB, Derbyshire	A57–A628	S–D2	23·0	3·8	PR
Castle Street Hull Imp, Humberside	A63	D2	18·2	1·0	PR
Melton GSJ Humberside	A63	D2	5·0	0·6	PR
Stainburn & Great Clifton Bypass, Cumbria	A66	S	6·6	2·5	OP
Catford Town Cenre Imp, LB Lewisham	A205	D2	12·6	0·4	OM

Title	*Route*	*Standard*	*Order of total cost £ million*[*]	Length (miles)	Last stage
New Romney Bypass, Kent	A259	S	8·1	2·6	OP
Sparkford–Ilchester Imp, Somerset	A303	D2	8·9	3·4	OP
Ilminster Bypass Imp, Somerset[3]	A303	D2	16·8	6·4	PC
Kingskerswell Bypass, Devon	A380	D3	46·0	3·9	PR
Bounds Green–Green Lanes Imp, LB Enfield	A406	D2–D3	131·8	2·2	OP
Golders Green Road Junction Imp, LB Barnet	A406	D3	22·4	0·6	OM
Blunsdon Bypass, Wiltshire	A419	D2	12·4	1·5	PC
Poynton Bypass, Cheshire	A523	D2	35·2	5·9	PR
Ledsham–M53 Imp, Cheshire	A550	D2	16·8	2·7	PR
Deeside Park–Ledsham Imp, Cheshire	A550	D2	29·9	3·6	OP
Ormskirk Bypass, Lancashire	A570	D2	21·7	5·5	PC
Parton–Lillyhall Imp, Cumbria	A595	D2	15·0	4·7	PC
Shipley Eastern Bypass, Bradford MB	A650	D2–D3	19·3	1·3	PR
Hedon Road Imp, Humberside	A1033	D2	35·1	4·2	OP
M56–A550 Imp, Cheshire[4]	A5117	D2	13·5	5·0	
PR Signing Project[3]		—	12·5	—	
M1–A1 Link Road, Leeds MB		D3	117·1	10·5	OP
Priority 2					
J31–32 Widening D4+ Rotherham MB	M1	D2	20·2	1·5	
J28–31 Widening, Derbyshire, Rotherham MB	M1	D4	176·7	36·0	
J21–21A Widening Phase 2, Leicestershire	M1	D4	69·6	2·8	OP
J15–19 Widening (Including A45 Weedon, Flore & Upper Heyford Bypass). Northamptonshire, Leicestershire	M1	D4	227·7	22·0	
J2–3 Widening, Surrey	M3	D4	52·7	6·8	PC
J3–4 Widening, Surrey	M3	D4	35·2	4·3	OP
J10–12 Widening, Berkshire	M4	D4	122·9	10·5	
J1 & 2 Imp. Sandwell MB	M5	—	6·1	—	
J17–21 Widening Stage 1, Avon	M5	D3	17·7	5·7	
J29–30 Imp. Devon[3]	M5	D3	23·9	1·4	
J9 & 10 Imp, Walsall MB	M6	—	12·0	—	
J14 Imp. Cambridgeshire[3]	M11	S–D4	28·2	3·4	
J5–7 Widening, Kent, Surrey	M25	D4	101·1	11·0	
J10–12 Widening D4+, Surrey	M25	D3	123·9	7·5	
J19–23 Widening, Hertfordshire	M25	D4	86·5	12·5	PR
J23–26 Widening, Essex, Hertfordshire	M25	D4	81·1	11·0	
J26–28 Widening, Essex	M25	D4	104·0	12·0	
J30–31 Imp, Essex	M25	—	43·5	—	
J11–12 Widening, Hampshire[3]	M27	D4	44·6	3·3	
J3–4 Widening & J4 Imp, Buckinghamshire	M40	D4	77·6	6·3	PC
J1–7 Widening, Warwickshire, Hereford & Worcester	M42	D4	221·6	31·3	
J18–21 Widening, Rochdale MB	M62	D4	116·4	8·0	PC
J12–18 Relief Road, Salford MB, Bury MB[3]	M62	D3	301·1	11·0	PC
J6–7 Widening Knowsley MB	M62	D3–D4	4·7	3·3	
J6 Imp, Knowsley MB	M62	—	13·4	—	
M4–A4 Link Houslow, LB Ealing, LB Hounslow[4]	M62	S–D4	24·0	1·4	
Dishforth–Lemming, N. Yorkshire	A1(M)	D3	68·8	14·0	PR
Wetherby Bypass, Leeds MB[3]	A1(M)	D3	20·1	2·5	
Bramham–Wetherby, Leeds MB[3]	A1(M)	D3	5·5	4·0	PC
Redhouse–Ferrybridge, Doncaster MB, Wakefield MB, N. Yorkshire	A1(M)	D3	54·0	9·1	PR
Tuxford–Blyth, Nottinghamshire[3]	A1(M)	D3	94·5	14·0	
Stamford Bypass, Cambridgeshire, Leicestershire[3]	A1(M)	D3	38·6	4·0	
Peterborough–Stamford, Cambridgeshire	A1(M)	D3	81·5	9·9	
Baldock–Alconbury, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire	A1(M)	D2–D3	173·0	27·0	
J6–8 Widening, Hertfordshire	A1(M)	D3	57·6	9·0	PC
J1–4 Widening, Hertfordshire	A1(M)	D3–D4	134·0	7·9	
Stockport North/South Bypass, Stockport MB	A6(M)	D3	109·8	5·6	OM
Manchester Airport Link West, Trafford MB	A6(M)–M56	D2	34·6	3·2	PC
Bar Hill–M1–A1 Link, Cambridgeshire	A14(M)	D2–D3	120·5	18·0	
M6–M56 Imp, Cheshire	A556(M)	D3	64·5	6·5	
Morpeth–Lanehead Imp, Northumberland[3]	A1	D2	16·8	7·1	
Gateshead Western Bypass, Gateshead MB	A1	D3	94·8	6·7	PR
Kidbrooke Park Road Interchange Imp, LB Greenwich	A2	D2	14·1	0·7	PC
Dartford Imp, Kent	A2–A282	D4–D2	26·1	3·0	PR
Lydden–Dover Imp, Kent	A2	D2	16·6	6·0	
Hindhead Imp, Surrey	A3	D2	62·0	4·1	PR
Wolfshead–Weirbrook Imp, Shropshire	A5	D2	8·2	2·4	
Nesscliffe Bypass, Shropshire	A5	D2	10·6	2·6	PC
Weeford Fazeley Imp, Staffordshire	A5	D2	14·2	3·1	PC
Dunstable Eastern Bypass, Befordshire	A5	D2	45·5	5·6	PR

Title	*Route*	*Standard*	*Order of total cost £ million*[1]	Length (miles)	Last stage
Great Glen Bypass, Leicestershire	A6	D2	14·3	3·6	OM
Kibworth Bypass, Leicestershire	A6	D2	11·6	2·8	PC
Clapham Bypass, Bedfordshire	A6	D2	21·1	3·1	OM
Bedford Western Bypass A6–A428 Link, Bedfordshire	A6	D2	4·2	0·5	PC
Wadesmill High Cross–Colliers End Bypass, Hertfordshire	A10	D2	17·7	6·7	OM
M25–Hoddesdon Imp, Hertfordshire	A10	D3	86·4	2·9	
Attleborough Bypass, Norfolk	A11	D2	9·7	3·0	PR
Fiveways–Thetford Imp, Norfolk, Suffolk	A11	D2	52·1	9·0	
Wrentham Bypass, Suffolk	A12	S	3·0	2·2	
Blythburgh Bypass, Suffolk	A12	S	4·4	1·9	
Yoxford Bypass, Suffolk	A12	S	4·3	3·4	
Wickham Market–Saxmundham Imp, Suffolk	A12	D2	17·7	5·3	PR
Martlesham–Wickham Market Imp, Suffolk	A12	D2	11·3	3·8	
Hatfield Peverel–Marks Tey Imp, Essex	A12	D3	67·9	10·9	
Chelmsford Bypass Widening, Essex	A12	D2	54·5	8·5	
M25 J28–Chelmsford Imp, Essex[4]	A12	D3	50·9	9·3	
M25–Lakeside Widening (S278), Essex[3]	A13	S	4·9	0·8	
M11–A10 Widening, Cambridgeshire	A14	D3	25·0	3·3	
Thrapston–Brampton Grade Separation, Cambridgeshire[4]	A14	D2	7·4	12·7	
Tonbridge Bypass–Pembury Bypass Dualling, Kent	A21	D3	15·8	2·2	OP
Kippings Cross–Lamberhurst Imp, Kent	A21	D2	21·1	3·0	PR
Lamberhurst Bypass, Kent	A21	D2	8·3	1·9	OP
Handcross–Warninglid Imp, W. Sussex	A23	D3	8·2	2·0	PR
Lewes–Polegate Imp, E. Sussex	A27	D2	63·5	10·6	PR
Worthing–Lancing Imp, W. Sussex	A27	D2–D3	106·9	6·0	OP
Arundel Bypass, W. Sussex	A27	D2	17·9	3·4	PR
Marsh Honiton & A35 Honiton Eastern Bypass, Devon	A30–A303	D2	36·6	8·1	OP
Bodmin–Indian Queens Imp, Cornwall	A30	D2	27·4	6·8	
Temple–Higher Carblake Imp, Cornwall	A30	D2	7·5	2·7	
Zelah–Chiverton Imp, Cornwall	A30	D2	13·5	4·0	
St Erth–Newtown Imp, Cornwall	A30	D2	13·9	3·8	PC
Ringwood–Ashley Heath Imp, Hampshire, Dorset	A31	D3	22·7	1·2	
Sturt Lane, Red Post Imp, Dorset[3]	A31	D2	3·0	1·4	PR
Stinsford–Cockoo Lane Imp, Dorset	A35	D2	3·5	1·2	PC
Winterbourne Abbas Bypass, Dorset	A35	D2	11·0	2·8	
Chideock–Morcombelake Bypass, Dorset	A35	D2	22·5	5·1	OP
Beckington–East Of Bath Imp, Avon	A36	D2	88·4	11·8	PC
Codford–Heytesbury Imp, Wiltshire	A36	D2	8·4	2·3	OP
Wylye–Codford Imp, Wiltshire	A36	D2	5·4	2·0	
Saltash–Trerulefoot Imp, Cornwall	A38	D2	50·5	7·3	PC
Liskeard–Bodmin Imp, Cornwall	A38	D2	38·3	10·0	PR
Witney Bypass–Sturt Farm Imp, Oxfordshire	A40	D2	4·6	1·5	OP
Witney Bypass–Cassington Dualling, Oxfordshire	A40	D2	23·6	5·3	OP
Western Circus Junction Imp, LB Ealing	A40	D2	38·2	0·9	OM
Aston Clinton Bypass, Buckinghamshire	A41	D2	15·2	4·0	OM
Geddington Bypass, Northamptonshire	A43	D2	18·9	5·9	PR
Whitfield Turn–Brackley Hatch Imp, Northamptonshire	A43	D2	9·3	2·7	OP
Quarries Cross GSJ, Suffolk	A45	D2	3·5	2·5	
Rookery Crossroads GSJ, Suffolk	A45	D2	3·4	2·2	
Leamington Turn Junction Imp, Warwickshire	A45–A445	D2	4·1	0·8	OP
Newark–Lincoln Imp, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire	A46	D2	21·6	8·0	PI
Pennsylvania–M4 Tormarton Imp, Avon	A46	D2	11·8	2·5	OP
Upper Swainswick–Pennsylvania Imp, Avon	A46	D2	13·6	4·0	OP
Acle Straight Imp, Norfolk	A47	D2	17·6	7·0	
Blofield–Acle Imp, Norfolk	A47	D2	5·0	2·1	PR
North Tuddenham–Easton Imp, Norfolk	A47	D2	14·6	5·0	
Little Fransham Bypass, Norfolk	A47	S	7·7	3·0	
Middleton & East Winch Bypass, Norfolk	A47	S	14·7	3·3	
Wisbech Bypass A1101 Junction Imp, Norfolk	A47	D2	4·0	2·5	
Hardwick Roundabout Flyover, Norfolk	A47	D2	7·2	0·8	
Tilney–Kings Lynn Imp, & A47–A17 GSJ, Norfolk	A47	D2	8·2	2·5	
Thorney Bypass, Cambridgeshire	A47	S–D2	11·1	2·7	PR
Calveley–Tiverton Bypass, Cheshire	A49–A51	D2	20·1	5·0	
Woofferton Bypass, Shropshire	A49	D2	9·5	2·3	PC
Hereford Bypass, Hereford & Worcester	A49	S–D2	40·1	8·5	CONF
Duddon & Clotton Bypass, Cheshire	A51	S	7·3	3·4	PC
Saxondale–Grantham Imp, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire	A52	D2	41·3	12·6	PR
Radcliffe-on-Trent Bypass, Nottinghamshire	A52	D2	18·0	4·3	PC
Bank Hall Diversion, Lancashire	A59	D2	7·6	1·2	PC
Selby Bypass, N. Yorkshire	A63	S	21·1	6·1	OM
Hellifield & Long Preston Bypass, N. Yorkshire	A65	S	15·5	4·4	OM

Title	*Route*	*Standard*	*Order of total cost £ million*[2]	Length (miles)	Last stage
Coniston Cold Bypass, N. Yorkshire	A65	S	5·1	2·3	PC
Gargrave Bypass, N. Yorkshire	A65	S	11·0	3·4	OM
Manor Park Bends Imp, Bradford MB	A65	D2	8·1	1·6	OM
Temple Sowerby Bypass & Imp at Winderwath, Cumbria	A66	D2	11·7	2·9	PC
Warwick Bridge Bypass, Cumbria	A69	D2	12·6	2·5	
Blackwall 3rd Crossing, LB Tower Hamlets, LB Greenwich	A102	D2	137·4	2·6	PR
Braintree–Marks Tey Imp, Essex	A120	D2–D3	44·7	9·6	
M25–Rayleigh Weir Imp, Essex	A127	D3	105·9	14·0	
Long Stratton Bypass, Norfolk	A140	S	7·0	3·4	
Stonham Bypass, Suffolk	A140	S	7·4	4·0	
Burnt Ash Hill Junction Imp, LB Lewisham[3]	A205–A2212	S	4·0	0·6	
Iwade–Queenborough Imp, Kent	A249	D2	76·2	2·5	
Dymchurch–M20 J11 Imp, Kent	A259	D2	15·7	3·5	OP
St· Mary's Bay & Dymchurch Bypass, Kent	A259	D2	21·6	5·2	OP
Rye Bypass, E. Sussex	A259	S–D2	30·2	3·8	PR
Winchelsea Bypass, E. Sussex	A259	D2	13·3	3·1	PR
Guestling Thorn & Icklesham Bypass, E. Sussex	A259	D2	14·3	3·4	PC
Hastings Eastern Bypass, E. Sussex	A259	S	21·8	3·8	PR
Bexhill & Hastings Western Bypass, E. Sussex	A259	D2	61·7	9·4	PR
Pevensey–Bexhill Imp, E. Sussex	A259	D2	8·3	2·5	PR
Amesbury–Berwick Down Imp. Wiltshire	A303	D2	40·0	6·5	PC
Wylye–Stockton Wood Imp, Wiltshire	A303	D2	4·4	2·5	PR
Chicklade Bottom–Mere Imp, Wiltshire	A303	D2	15·4	8·0	PC
Ilminster–Marsh Imp, Somerset	A303	D2	20·1	6·3	PR
Black Dam GSJ, Hampshire	A339	D2	7·6	1·0	
Popes Lane–Western Avenue Imp, LB Ealing	A406	D2–D3	82·4	2·2	OP
Nettleton–Crickley Hill Imp, Gloucestershire	A417	D2	19·1	4·0	
North Of Stratton–Nettleton Imp, Gloucestershire	A417	D2	12·7	5·7	OP
Cirencester & Stratton Bypass, Gloucestershire	A419–A417	D2	24·1	6·2	OP
Latton Bypass, Wiltshire	A419	D2	15·6	3·4	OP
Bedford–M1 J13 Imp, Bedfordshire[4]	A421	D2	24·0	6·6	
Caxton Common–Hardwick (S278), Cambridgeshire[3]	A428	D2	5·0	14·4	
Great Barford Bypass, Bedfordshire	A428	D2	18·5	4·7	PR
Norse Road Link, Bedfordshire	A428	D2	12·2	1·0	OP
Studley Bypass, Warwickshire, Hereford & Worcester	A435	D2	43·5	7·9	OM
Clifton Lane Imp, Nottinghamshire	A453	D2	34·6	3·4	PR
Clifton–M1 Imp, Nottinghamshire	A453	D2	15·0	4·2	OP
City Road & Stoke Road Junctions Imp, Staffordshire	A500	D2	16·4	1·0	PC
Basford–Hough–Shavington Bypass, Cheshire	A500	D2	18·6	4·7	OM
Poynton–Macclesfield Imp, Cheshire	A523	D2	7·1	2·7	PR
High & Low Newton Bypass, Cumbria	A590	D2	9·4	2·4	OP
Carlisle Southern Bypass, Cumbria	A595	S	13·4	5·9	PC
Duddon Bridge Imp, Cumbria	A595	S	7·6	1·9	
Salters Brook–Stockbridge Imp, Barnsley MB, Sheffield MB	A616–A628	S	11·2	6·9	PC
Tintwistle–Salters Brook Imp, Derbyshire	A628	S	4·4	8·0	
Skipton–Kildwick Imp, N. Yorkshire	A629	D2	8·8	2·6	OP
Hard Ings Road Imp, Bradford MB	A650	D2	2·9	0·4	PR
Bingley Relief Road, Bradford MB	A650	D2	44·2	3·0	OM
Saltaire Relief Road, Bradford MB[3]	A650	D2	170·8	1·9	
Shiptonthorpe Bypass, Humberside	A1079	D2	7·3	1·9	PR
Wigan–Westhoughton Bypass, Bolton MB, Wigan MB	A5225	D2	117·1	10·0	OP
A31–Poole Link Road, Dorset		D2	66·0	6·0	PC
Poole Harbour Crossing, Dorset		S	31·5	1·4	PC

[1] Department Preparation and Supervision costs will be incurred.

[2] Estimated costs excluding VAT and scheme specific risk assessment.

[3] Scheme added to the National Trunk Road Programme since 1 January 1990.

[4] Scheme added to the National Trunk Road Programme during the Review.

Stage Codes

CONF=Trial Planning Conference. PC=Public Consultation Held. PR=Preferred Route Announced. OP=Draft Orders Published. OM=Orders Made.

Highways Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of the recent meeting of the Highways Agency management board in Tewkesbury; and if he will list the reasons for the meeting.

Mr. Watts: The chief executive and a number of senior agency managers held an off-site conference over three days at the beginning of May. Its purpose was to consider, in depth, strategic options for the future and how the agency could best organise itself to deliver the targets which it had been set. The cost was £2,926, including the cost of accommodating management consultants and others who attended for all or part of the discussions.

Tracking Systems

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment the Government have made of the reduction in insurance policy premiums available to those owners of cars fitted with tracking systems.

Mr. Norris: No assessment has been made at this stage.

Dangerous Loads

Mr. Colin Shepherd.: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents involving heavy goods vehicles with insecure loads were reported to police in the last 12 months for which figures are available; how many charges have been preferred; and how many of these resulted in conviction.

Mr. Norris: Information on accidents involving HGVs with insecure loads is not available.

SCOTLAND

Home Improvements

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many times central Government capital spending consent has been refused to Scottish local authorities wishing to carry out home improvement works since November 1993.

Mr. Lang: Local authorities must meet the cost of home improvement works on their own stock and grants to private sector owners from within capital allocations made by the Secretary of State each year. Individual private sector improvement grants are governed by expense limits and if local authorities need to exceed these they must request approval from the Scottish Office Environment Department, explaining the justification for the exception. No requests have been refused since November 1993.

Building Regulations

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will amend the building regulations to bring buildings classed as dwellings into line with all other buildings to enable people with disabilities to have easy access to all new dwellings.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is currently considering amendment of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations to extend access for disabled people to new dwellings and a number of options will be set out in a public consultation paper to be issued in the new year.

Housing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what communication he has had from Mr. Jim Watt of Horizon Housing Association Ltd. about easier access to dwellings for disabled people; and what reply he has sent.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Mr. Watt wrote to me on 8 September 1994 and I replied on 6 October. I am arranging for this correspondence to be copied to the hon. Member and placed in the Library of the House.

Pre-School Play Association

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the follow-up measures he has taken as a result of his officials' meeting on 18 August with the representation of the Scottish Pre-School Play Association.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following the meeting on 18 August between the Scottish Pre-School Play Association and Scottish Office officials, the Secretary of State was able to offer in principle a grant under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 towards the cost of an organisation review. The offer is conditional on Scottish Office approval for the specification for the proposals from consultants to carry it out. These proposals have now been submitted and are being studied closely.

Incentive Prescribing Scheme

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many incentive prescribing schemes he has set up; if he will give the start date and duration of each scheme; how many general practitioners are involved; and what procedure he has set up for an independent evaluation of the schemes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In April 1992, the Secretary of State introduced the indicative prescribing scheme, which allows for incentive prescribing schemes to operate at health board level. To date there have been no successful applications to set up incentive prescribing schemes in Scotland under the terms of the indicative prescribing scheme.

Sight Tests

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many NHS sight tests have been performed in Scotland in each year since 1987.

Mr. Stewart: The number of national health service sight tests paid for by health boards in each of the financial years since 1987 is shown in the table.

NHS sight tests in Scotland

Year	[1]*Number of NHS Sight Tests*
1987–88	1,098,145
1988–89	1,169,610
1989–90	[2]475,479
1990–91	432,885
1991–92	496,598
1992–93	538,684
1993–94	579,682

[1] One person may have more than one sight test in the period.

[2] Since 1 April 1989 free National Health Service sight tests have only been available to children, full time students under 19, those in receipt of Income Support or Family Credit, the registered blind or partially sighted, complex lens users, those who hold an AG2 exemption certificate form the Health Benefits Unit, diagnosed diabetic or glaucoma sufferers, and close relatives aged 40 or over of glaucoma sufferers.

HEALTH

Prescriptions

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made as to the extent to which the system of a fee per item for general practitioner dispensings is conducive to cost-effective prescribing.

Mr. Malone: There is no ready measure of the cost-effectiveness of prescribing. I am aware of evidence that the costs of prescribing by dispensing doctors tend to be higher than those of non-dispensing doctors. I am keeping this matter under review.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what percentage difference generic drugs are more or less likely to be prescribed, based on the ratio of the number of prescriptions for one drug to another comparing prescribing patients to those on dispensing lists.

Mr. Malone: In 1993 the proportions of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and dispensing doctors which were prescribed generically were 49·6 per cent. and 21·6 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what would be the impact on the NHS budget if all prescriptions were to be dispensed by pharmacists;

(2) what is the average total cost and the cost of drugs of a general practitioner-dispensed prescription compared to a pharmacist and what is the percentage change of each category over the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Malone: Information, published by the Prescription Pricing Authority, on comparative drug costs for 1992–93 is as follows:

	Dispensing Doctors £	*Pharmacists* £
Average total cost (excluding Value Added Tax)	7·48	7·68
Net ingredient cost	6·35	6·77

The percentage changes over the previous two years were:

Year-on-year increase percentage pharmacists

	Percentage	
	1992–93 over 1992–92	*1991–92 over 1990–91*
Average total cost (excluding Value Added Tax)	5·6	8·0
Net ingredient cost	7·3	7·5

Year-on-year increase percentage dispensing doctors

	Percentage	
	1992–93 over 1991–92	*1991–92 over 1990–91*
Average total cost (excluding Value Added Tax)	7·0	6·9
Net ingredient cost	8·6	8·1

It is difficult, however, to draw any meaningful inferences from these figures about the relative costs to the national health service of dispensing by community pharmacists and dispensing doctors. There are significant differences between the two systems of payment. Pharmacists only receive payments for their NHS dispensing whereas, in the case of dispensing doctors, such dispensing payments form an integral part of the system whereby the profession as a whole is reimbursed for the actual costs of providing general medical services, including any practice expenses relating to the dispensing function.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the procedures for the appointment of members of community health councils under the proposed change of remit for regional health authorities announced on 21 October 1993.

Mr. Malone: The national health service executive working group, which is examining the detailed implications of the decision to transfer the establishment function for community health councils to the executive, will consider what changes may be required to the Community Health Council Regulations 1985 which govern appointment of members.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the mechanisms for the transfer of land property from regions to health authorities and trusts under the proposed change of remit for the regional health authorities announced on 21 October 1993.

Mr. Sackville: Proposed trusts agree schedules of property required for their operational purposes with district health authorities, facilitated by regional health authorities. When agreement has been reached, the RHA manages the legal process of transferring the property.

The legislation anticipated in "Managing the New NHS" announced in October 1993 is subject to the consent of Parliament, and has not yet been finalised.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the procedures for the advertising and appointment of chief officers of community health councils; and what will be the procedures under the proposed change of remit for regional health authorities announced on 21 October 1993.

Mr. Malone: It is for the regional health authority as the establishing authority to appoint the chief officer of a community health council subject to that person being acceptable to the council. The national health service executive, through its regional offices, will, subject to the agreement of Parliament, take over the establishing function from 1 April 1996. The detailed implications of this change including the future arrangements for appointment of CHCs are being considered by an NHS executive working group which includes members from both the Association of Community Health Councils and the Society of Community Health Councils Staff.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the status of regional general managers of public health under the proposed change of remit of regional health authorities announced on 21 October 1993; if they will be employed as civil servants; and what will be the status of the annual report on public health.

Mr. Malone: It is proposed that, subject to parliamentary approval of changes at regional level, each regional office will include a director of public health, who, as now, will be a doctor qualified in public health medicine. In future, they will be employed as civil servants. Information on the role of these staff is set out in paragraph seven of "Public Health in England", copies of which are available in the Library. As part of the Department of Health, the regional directors of public health will contribute to the Chief Medical Officer's annual report. Copies of the report are also available in the Library.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) to whom the responsibilities of *(a)* the North and *(b)* the South Thames regional health authorities will be transferred in the event of their dissolution;

(2) what plans she has for the future of *(a)* the North and *(b)* the South Thames regional health authorities.

Mr. Malone: The Government's intention to abolish regional health authorities was announced on 21 October 1993. Subject to parliamentary approval, RHAs' functions will be transferred to local health service bodies or to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Legislation to implement these changes will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable allows.

Office of Population Census and Surveys

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, columns *812-13*, what measures she will introduce to ensure that central Government Departments and agencies cannot access data which are not normally provided to them by the OPCS under the present arrangements; and if she will make it her policy that access to the OPCS mainframe will not be extended in the future to include those users currently allowed restricted access.

Mr. Sackville: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys operates under strict codes of confidentiality, details of which are given in its public "Statement of Policies on Confidentiality and Security of Personal Data", a copy of which is available in the Library. These policies will not change.

The security mechanisms employed to implement these policies will prevent users from accessing data which they are not authorised to access.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, columns *812-13*, what specific measures are being implemented in order to prevent unauthorised access to personal information held on OPCS computers by *(a)* Government Departments and agencies, *(b)* authorised users without access to the OPCS mainframe and *(c)* unauthorised users.

Mr. Sackville: As stated in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' "Statement of Policies on Confidentiality and Security of Personal Data", a copy of which is available in the Library, OPCS will not publish details of information technology systems and security measures as this might compromise the confidentiality or security of personal data held by the office.

Independent advice has been sought from security consultants. Security measures are being enhanced following changes in the access arrangements. I am satisfied that this will provide the necessary safeguards against unauthorised access.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, columns *812-13*, what steps she will take to ensure that private companies are not granted access to personal information currently held on OPCS computers; and what estimates have been made of the potential effects of these proposals on the integrity of data collected from individual households.

Mr. Sackville: Authorised private companies, requesting access will be granted access to only aggregated data. The security mechanisms being employed will prevent access to other data.

The new proposals will have no effect on the integrity of data collected from individual households.

Mental Health

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the survey of English mental hospitals initiated by the mental health task force in 1993, and repeated in 1994, will be published to give the latest figures.

Mr. Bowis: The report of the 1994 survey has not yet been submitted to Ministers.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she proposes to improve the planning of mental health services and to develop standards for community mental health care.

Mr. Bowis: District health authorities are responsible for planning mental health services in the light of their assessment of local need. They are also responsible for developing appropriate quality standards for the mental health services which they purchase, and for monitoring compliance with those standards. I issued the revised edition of the mental illness key area handbook on 29 September and tomorrow I shall be issuing the Mental Health Task Force's guide on "Local Systems of Support". My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last week published guidance on inter-agency co-operation.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent the statistics about admissions and discharges for mentally ill people to and from psychiatric hospitals can identify how often an individual patient is admitted and discharged; and whether further information can be provided in future to assist in identifying those who need particular care.

Mr. Bowis: Information available centrally does not identify how often an individual patient is admitted and discharged. The introduction of the care programme approach, supervision registers and a new minimum data set for mental health services will help identify those in need of particular care.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give in respect of each of the persons killed since 1990 by those receiving mental care in the community *(a)* the names, status and age of those killed and killing, *(b)* an outline of the medical and statutory listing of the latter, *(c)* the names of relevant health and local authorities responsible for the offending patient from the time of their initial treatment and *(d)* the bodies producing official reports on each incident, including coroners' or other courts.

Mr. Bowis: Information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has considered making available incentives for health and local authorities and the voluntary sector to set up specialist supported after-care facilities for difficult-to-place patients coming out of hospitals.

Mr. Bowis: Yes, we have not only considered it but we have taken action by the introduction of the mental illness specific grant, which is available to support the development of a range of innovative projects and has been warmly welcomed by both local and health authorities and by the voluntary sector. In 1994-95 the central grant is £36 million supporting total expenditure of £50.5 million. We have recently announced that the grant will continue for at least another three years.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many district health authorities do not provide long-stay, intensive care units for chronically ill patients with long term behavioural problems;

(2) if she will list those district health authorities which use private intensive care facilities for both *(a)* chronically ill patients with long-term behavioural problems and *(b)* acutely ill patients with temporary behavioural problems;

(3) how many district health authorities do not provide psychiatric intensive care units or wards for acutely ill patients with temporary behavioural problems.

Mr. Bowis: Provision for patients with behavioural problems can either be provided as part of district mental health services or via access to highly specialised units. The precise configuration of services, including, where appropriate, use of private sector facilities, is a matter for determination locally.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the lack of medium secure beds, and what plans she has to resolve the problem of transfer delay of patients from special hospitals to medium secure units.

Mr. Bowis: Various people have pointed out that the recommendation for medium secure places made by the Glancy working party in 1974 resulted in not one single purpose-built unit being provided by 1979. By contrast this Government recognise the need to expand medium secure psychiatric services and have made available capital funding of over £45 million for this purpose between 1991–95 to raise the number of such beds from the 600 places which were created between 1979 and 1991 to over 1,150 by 1996. In addition I announced on 7 September that we were allocating an extra £4·4 million revenue funding in the current year to help meet immediate pressures on these services.

Health authorities have been required, since April 1994, to ensure that patients who are ready to leave the special hospitals are placed within six months. The implementation of this is being monitored by the national health service executive and we shall shortly be issuing further guidance on the practical steps needed to minimise delays.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will provide details of the number of people in special hospitals who require long-term medium secure unit bed provision;

(2) what costed and committed plans she has to build long-stay, medium secure units in the NHS; and what capital moneys she plans to allocate specifically for this purpose;

(3) how many people in *(a)* NHS hospitals and *(b)* private sector hospitals who have been in medium secure units for more than two years, and are unlikely to be ready to move to low security units in the near future.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr Robinson) on 14 July at columns *701-702*.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice, guidance or instruction she has made concerning the level of funding by area health authorities of psychiatric medical services within the area of each local authority with responsibility for community cases; what national areas for staffing, beds and secure accommodation apply to such cases; and how are demonstrable variations in need reflected in the relevant funding.

Mr. Bowis: It is for individual health authorities to determine the overall level of funding for health services for mentally ill people living in their district based on their assessment of local needs. Health authorities are also responsible for deciding which parts of the mental health service should receive priority for development within the available resources. Health authorities are allocated funds on the basis of a weighted capitation formula which takes account of factors associated with health need.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Sackville: There were two answers given to parliamentary questions by the Department, in the 1993–94 Session, as recorded on the POLIS database, including a reference to commercial confidentiality.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many national health service trusts have to date given observer status to representatives of the local community health council so that they are permitted to attend national health service trust board meetings; and if she will list these trusts by health authority and region;

(2) what instructions or guidance she has given to national health service trusts in respect of requests by community health councils to be given observer status at national health service trust board meetings.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally. It is for individual trusts to negotiate their own arrangements with community health councils in respect of CHC attendance at trust board meetings. Where CHCs are not invited to trust board meetings, trusts should offer alternative regular liaison opportunities.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) for each hospital trust in West Yorkshire what will be *(a)* the numbers of full-time and part-time nursing staff employed at the creation of the trust and *(b)* the numbers of those staff on temporary contracts at the creation of the trust;

(2) for each hospital trust in West Yorkshire what are *(a)* the numbers of full-time and part-time nursing staff

employed as of 1 April and *(b)* the numbers of trust staff on temporary contracts as of 1 April.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the tables.

Nursing and Midwifery Staff (Excluding Agency) in National Health Service Trusts in West Yorkshire Area at 30 September 1991.

	Full time	*Part time*	*Total*
Whole-time equivalents			
United Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust	1,200	530	1,730
St James University Hospital Trust	1,080	420	1,500
Bradford Hospitals NHS Trust	910	500	1,410

Notes

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten.

2. Whole-Time Equivalents are calculated by aggregating the total number of hours staff in grade are contracted to work and dividing by the standard hours for that grade. In this way, part time staff are converted into an equivalent number of "Whole Time" staff.

Nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) in National Health Service Trusts in west Yorkshire area at 30 September 1992.

	Full time	*Part time*	*Total*
Whole-Time Equivalents			
United Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust	1,230	550	1,780
St James University Hospital Trust	1,100	420	1,520
Bradford Hospital NHS Trust	870	460	1,330
Bradford Community Health NHS Trust	630	190	820
Airedale NHS Trust	740	290	1,040

Notes:

[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest ten.

[2] Whole-Time Equivalents are calculated by aggregating the total number of hours staff in a grade are contracted to work and dividing by the standard hours for that grade. In this way, part time staff are converted into an equivalent number of "Whole Time" Staff

Information is not centrally available on numbers of trust staff holding temporary contracts.

Fundholders

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what specific ways general practitioners' fundholding arrangements take into account of the specialist needs of patients with chronic illness, mental health problems or of those requiring expensive treatments.

Mr. Malone: General practitioner fundholders are responsible for purchasing out-patient services and community health services on behalf of all their patients, including those with chronic illness and mental health problems. Fundholders' budgets enable them to meet the cost of treatment for a patient up to the first £6,000 in any one year. District health authorities are funded to meet the cost of the remaining patient care.

General Social Services Council

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the provision of a General Social Services Council.

Mr. Bowis: Recently we have sought tenders for a project concerned with the definition of possible standards of conduct and practice for those engaged in social services.

Nurse Training

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has had from University Superannuation Scheme Ltd. regarding the transferral of pension arrangements for nursing training staff from her Department and the increase in employer contributions that will arise as a result of this transferral;

(2) what arrangements have been made as a result of the changes to pension/retirement arrangements for nursing training staff to safeguard the rights under the former NHS pension arrangements for *(a)* ill health *(b)* early retirement on grounds other than that of ill health and *(c)* for those with over 20 years' service to have their pension calculated at double rate.

Mr. Malone: Discussions are being held between the relevant pension scheme providers, with a view to establishing a basis on which broadly comparable pension arrangements can be made available to nurse training staff who transfer from colleges of health into the higher education sector.

General Practitioners' Lists

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were removed from general practitioners' lists in the west midlands for the last available year.

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Mr. Bowis) gave the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 20 July at columns *367-68*.

Health Care

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received from the British Medical Association on the environmental and occupational risks of health care; and what response she has made.

Mr. Malone: On 30 June, the British Medical Association sent the Department a copy of its report "The Environmental and Occupational Risks of Health Care". Copies of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply will be placed in the Library.

Child Labour

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received on child labour; and what action she intends to take.

Mr. Bowis: The protection of children at work is the statutory responsibility of local authorities.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are in place, following the inquiry into the future performance and administration of the London ambulance service, for a standing procedure for consultation with staff concerning the operation and administration of the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the management of the London ambulance service.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of occasions in each week of each month from January to August when the response time of emergency ambulances of the London ambulance service exceeded *(a)* 34 minutes and *(b)* 45 minutes; and what steps have been taken by her appointees to the South Thames regional health authority to monitor the causes.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table.

South Thames regional health authority has, through its London ambulance service committee, monitored response times of emergency ambulances exceeding 34 minutes and analysed the underlying causes. The committee has found that the primary causes are the current patterns of crew deployed and shifts which lead to a reduced number of vehicles available at times of peak demand. A further study into these problems has been commissioned. In addition, an extra 240 ambulance staff have been recruited and trained and are now being deployed. South Thames regional health authority will continue to monitor the results of the study to ensure progress is made against patients charter's standards.

Number of calls with response time more than

Week ending	*34 minutes*	*45 minutes*	*No of calls responded to*
9 January 1994	113	30	9,691
16 January 1994	61	17	9,412
23 January 1994	62	12	9,284
30 January 1994	94	24	9,277
6 February 1994	83	21	9,801
13 February 1994	70	17	9,674
20 February 1994	219	94	9,767
27 February 1994	114	38	9,556
6 March 1994	134	34	9,549
13 March 1994	85	24	9,635
20 March 1994	128	35	10,025
27 March 1994	155	55	9,920
3 April 1994	108	26	9,491
10 April 1994	165	68	9,458
17 April 1994	133	37	9,585
24 April 1994	118	27	9,679
1 May 1994	164	51	10,097
8 May 1994	109	41	9,669
15 May 1994	176	39	10,334
22 May 1994	113	22	9,890
29 May 1994	153	54	10,297
5 June 1994	200	63	10,057
12 June 1994	118	31	10,220
19 June 1994	330	131	10,721
26 June 1994	306	113	10,738
3 July 1994	278	94	10,588
10 July 1994	165	51	10,066
17 July 1994	239	72	10,913
24 July 1994	123	32	10,696
31 July 1994	224	72	10,838
7 August 1994	234	92	10,458
14 August 1994	94	22	9,552
21 August 1994	132	33	10,162
28 August 1994	109	32	9,770

Source:

London Ambulance Service internal statistics

Dystonia

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is currently being carried out on dystonia in Britain.

Mr. Malone: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, is conducting some research which may be of relevance to this condition. No current research into dystonia is being carried out by health departments in Britain.

Charities are funding two research projects on dystonia on molecular genetics and on aspects of treatments.

Gastro-enteritis (Malta)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will name the hotel in Malta where occurred the cases of gastro-enteritis, referred to in her answer of 10 December 1992, *Official Report*, column 773.

Mr. Sackville: We are not able to name the hotel in Malta where the cases of gastro-enteritis occurred in December 1991 as this would breach confidentiality.

We have no information to suggest any risk to travellers since that incident and naming the hotel would therefore serve no useful purpose.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the issuing of updated guidelines on the appropriate level of priority of *(a)* the across-the-board BCG vaccination against TB for secondary school children and *(b)* selective vaccination, and on the currency of application of the last previously issued guidelines.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities were advised in a letter from the Department of Health dated 21 August 1990 that, in line with the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, the schools BCG immunisation programme should continue until at least the 1995–96 academic year. The Government are committed to review this policy in that year after consideration of the results of the national survey of notifications of tuberculosis in England and Wales. This survey was conducted by the Public Health Laboratory Service in 1993 and the preliminary results of the survey should be available by the end of this year.

The importance of the BCG schools immunisation programme has been drawn to the attention of all regional health authorities through the regional review process; regions have been asked to consider carefully whether their arrangements to protect against tuberculosis are adequate. Details of the Department's policy on BCG immunisation are contained in the health departments' memorandum "Immunisation against infectious disease", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what consultations she has had with the Director of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, at the Public Health Laboratory Service, Colindale, concerning the national survey into the incidence of TB and the impact on it of the withdrawal or continuance of BCG vaccination programme for secondary school children by health authorities in England and Wales;

(2) when she now expects publication of the national survey into the incidence of TB and the benefits or disbenefits of *(a)* continuing or *(b)* withdrawing across-the-board BCG vaccination of secondary school children; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Officials have been in close touch with the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre during the process of the national survey of notifications of tuberculosis. The preliminary results of the survey should be available by the end of this year, although fuller analysis may be necessary before the implications for BCG immunisation can be considered. The Department will receive a copy of the report and will then be advised on any possible necessary action by the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation which advises the health departments on all matters relating to immunisation.

The Government are committed to review the schools' BCG immunisation programme in 1995, taking into consideration the results of the national survey of notifications of tuberculosis, until which time the present programme will continue.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had in relation to the proposed removal of the national TB reference laboratory from the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff, to Dulwich; what consultations she has had with the Director of the Public Health Laboratory Service, Colindale, concerning the proposal; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received no representations. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has direct responsibility for public health laboratories in Wales.

Ophthalmic Consultants

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what help is available to NHS hospitals to recruit locum ophthalmic consultants in cases where they are experiencing recruitment difficulties.

Mr. Malone: Local managers are responsible for finding solutions to local staffing problems.

General Practitioners

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the funding of flexible training schemes for qualification as a general practitioner; how many places are currently funded by grants from her Department; how many people are on the waiting list who have already completed their pre-registration year; how many women returners have entered their names on to the waiting list; what proposals she has to increase funding; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: No such representations have been received. The only scheme for training in general practice is the vocational training scheme, within which there is scope for trainees to work part time. No figures are available centrally on the numbers taking this option or waiting to do so, or for people wishing to return to training after a break. Full-time and part-time trainees' salaries are wholly funded by the family health services authority for the general practice component of vocational training. The postgraduate dean funds 100 per cent. of the basic salary costs of part-time senior house officers in hospital. There are no proposals to increase funding for part-time trainees.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent by her Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people.

Mr. Sackville: Costs for printing, distributing and publicising availability of material for visually impaired people cannot be identified separately. Total costs for these alternative publications in each of the three years are:

Year	*£'000*
1991–92	40·4
1992–93	89·8
1993–94	146·6

Accidents and Emergencies

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many copies of "Changing Perspectives: Quality Initiatives in Accident and Emergency and Day Care Treatments" were printed; and what was the total cost of printing and distributing the booklet.

Mr. Sackville: Four thousand copies of the document were produced. The total cost for design, printing and distribution amounted to £21,222.

Health Care (Birmingham)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what improvements in the physical and mental health of residents in Birmingham have taken place since she become Secretary of State.

Mr. Sackville: The 1993 public health common data set figures will not be available until March 1995. "The Health of the Nation" White Paper identified a number of areas nationally that needed improving. In common with other parts of the country, Birmingham has been developing and implementing initiatives with these improvements in mind. Just some of these initiatives include an audit of response times for coronary heart disease; £5 million recently invested in cancer research based at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, South Birmingham; £100,000 committed to the smoke-free Birmingham project; development of a joint accident prevention strategy across Birmingham; an audit of all suicides to identify suicide prevention strategies and a large needle exchange scheme which is also collecting data on the profile of drug users within Birmingham.

Smog

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the letter POH/3/4368/64 of the hon. Member for Bolton (Mr. Sackville) of 2 August to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, when she hopes to consider in detail the 1991 smog episode; when the report was put to the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Professor Ross Anderson's study should help understanding of the relationship between air pollution and health. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants has been asked to consider the report of this study, which was carried out for the Department, at its meeting on 21 October.

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much grant has been made to the Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association in the current financial year.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has granted the Association £8,000 in the current financial year.

Hospital Costs

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the non-clinical costs of each hospital or hospital unit.

Mr. Sackville: Data are available on support services expenditure at units, which may include more than one hospital site. It is not possible to identify the non-clinical costs centrally as many of the expenditure categories cover activities which are directly or indirectly in support of clinical activities.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are her plans for international visits over the next six months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I plan to speak at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris in November following its warm endorsement of the achievements of the national health service reforms earlier this year, and to attend the European Union Health Council in December.

Urology Training

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the national health service executive has stopped the development of continuum trainees in urology pending the establishment of a unified training grade.

Mr. Malone: There are already a number of established pilot projects looking at how individual specialties, including urology, might organise a continuum of training. There are no plans to develop more in advance of the introduction of the new unified training grade for junior doctors. The current urology scheme in Northern and Yorkshire region will continue.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many continuum trainees in urology have been appointed.

Mr. Malone: None. All higher specialist trainees, regardless of specialty or participation in regional pilot projects associated with 'continuum' training, are still appointed to the registrar or senior registrar grades in accordance with existing terms and conditions of service.

Embryo Research

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (i) on what date she received the letter issued with the report on the consultation on donated ovarian tissue in embryo research and assisted conception at its launching on 20 July;

(2) on what date she received the report on the consultation on donated ovarian tissue in embryo research and assisted conception from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

Mr. Sackville: The final version of the report was received on 19 July together with a covering letter from the chairman of the authority.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on what date the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority met to discuss its recommendations and conclusions regarding the report on the consultation on donated ovarian tissue in embryo research and assisted conception;

(2) what was the number of days it took the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to draft, proof read, correct, set and print the report on the consultation on donated ovarian tissue in embryo research and assisted conception; and on which date the report was printed.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

Insulin Pen Needles

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received in relation to the ability of *(a)* general practitioners and *(b)* consultants to prescribe insulin pen needles.

Mr. Malone: Representations asking that general practitioners should be able to prescribe insulin pen needles have recently been received from people with diabetes and their relatives, the British Diabetic Association, manufacturers of insulin and pen needles and from hon. Members. No representations have been made about prescribing by consultants.

Blood Donations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had with the director of the National Blood Authority in relation to stocks of blood held; what statistics she has on the average number of days' supply of blood available during each of the past five years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is in regular contact with the National Blood Authority, which is responsible for monitoring and managing the blood supply. From figures available centrally for the last 12 months the average stock figure nationally has been 19,871 units. Based on the experience of nationally held blood stock figures since 1988 the NBA regards 18,000 units as the stock which enables them to comfortably manage demand from hospitals. Blood stock figures for previous years are not available centrally.

Ethnic Health Unit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the geographical coverage of the work of the NHS Ethnic Health Unit; and what provisions she has made to allocate its efforts and resources as between the English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Sackville: The work of the national health service ethnic health unit covers the eight regions of the English

NHS only. Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Disabled People

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many registered disabled are registered as *(a)* visually impaired, *(b)* having impaired hearing and *(c)* needing a wheelchair.

Mr. Bowis: At 31 March 1991 there were 230,000 people on the registers of blind or partially sighted people. At 31 March 1992 there were 137,000 people on the registers of deaf or hard of hearing.

Information on the number of persons on the registers of physically disabled people in England by category of disability at 31 March 1993 was published in "Registers of physically disabled persons (General Classes) (A/F/93/19)", copies of which are available in the Library. The use of a wheelchair in meeting a person's individual needs is a matter for assessment locally.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Cox : To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has for changing her policy with regard to bovine somatotropin.

Mrs. Browning: The Government's position on the future of bovine somatotropin was set out in the consultation letter of 28 April which was deposited in the Library of the House on 9 June. I am now carefully considering the responses which will be taken into account in coming to a United Kingdom view on the future of the EC moratorium later this year.

Borage

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which other EC countries allow borage to be grown on set-aside land; and if she will make a statement about growing borage in similar circumstances in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: Borage can be grown on set-aside land in all member states, provided that it is processed into one of the non-food products defined in the relevant Commission regulation.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the rules concerning the presence of veterinary surgeons acting on behalf of her Ministry attending cattle markets to prevent BSE-infected cattle from being *(a)* sold and *(b)* slaughtered for human consumption; and how these rules have changed since 1988.

Mrs. Browning: Local veterinary inspectors acting on behalf of the Ministry attend a proportion of market days for a variety of reasons, including animal welfare. Where they suspect animals at market of being affected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy they will inform the Ministry's divisional veterinary officer, who will arrange for a visit by a ministry veterinary inspector. Owners and/or auctioneers are required by law to detain such animals for inspection. If after clinical inspection by the ministry veterinary inspector such cattle are suspected of being affected by BSE they will be transported under licence to the farm of origin for further surveillance, and movement restrictions will be served. Alternatively, where the veterinary inspector believes the diagnosis of BSE to be correct, slaughter will take place at the market. Suspect animals unfit to travel back to the farm of origin will also be slaughtered at the market on welfare grounds by the veterinary inspector. He/she will arrange for transportation and disposal of the carcase and submission of the head to a ministry laboratory for examination of brain tissue. All suspects placed under restrictions at the market will be traced to the vendor's premises for the purpose of epidemiological investigation and confirmation of disease.

All cattle going for slaughter are subject to ante mortem inspection by the official veterinary surgeon employed by the local authority at the slaughterhouse where provisions apply in respect of BSE suspects parallel to those in markets.

Under either of these procedures the sale or slaughter for human consumption of BSE suspect animals is prevented. These rules have not changed since 1988.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy have been confirmed in the United Kingdom, since November 1986.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Since the disease was first identified there have been 133,102 confirmed cases of BSE in the United Kingdom to 15 July 1994.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many United Kingdom farms have had at least one confirmed case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, since November 1986.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Up to 15 July 1994, 31,948 farms in the United Kingdom have had at least one case of BSE since the disease was first identified.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of compensation paid to a farmer for the destruction of *(a)* cattle with confirmed cases of BSE and *(b)* cattle with suspected BSE which subsequently prove not be infected; and how this has changed since 1988.

Mrs. Browning: From 8 August 1988 to 14 February 1990 compensation paid to farmers for confirmed cases of BSE was an amount equal to 50 per cent. of either the actual market value of the animal or of 125 per cent. of the average market price for commercial grade Friesian dairy cows and heifers in milk and in calf, whichever was the lower figure. Compensation for unconfirmed cases was an amount equal to 100 per cent. of the actual market value or 125 per cent. of the AMP, whichever was the lower figure.

From 14 February 1990 until 1 April 1994, compensation paid for confirmed cases was an amount equal to 100 per cent. of either the actual market value of the animal or the AMP, whichever was the lower figure. Compensation for unconfirmed cases remained unchanged.

From 1 April 1994, the method of determining the ceiling for compensation was modified to reflect the increasing proportion of older cattle being slaughtered as BSE suspects. The monthly AMP was replaced by the indicative market price, a weighted average of prices of Friesian and Holstein cows, heifers in milk and in calf, and barren dairy cattle, also taking into account the age distribution of cattle slaughtered as BSE suspects in the month. The compensation paid out for confirmed cases is an amount equal to 100 per cent. of either the market value of the animal or the IMP, whichever is the lower figure. Compensation for unconfirmed cases is an amount equal to 100 per cent. of the market value or 125 per cent. of the IMP, whichever is the lower figure.

Source:

BSE compensation order 1994, S.I. 1994 No.673

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which countries have banned imports of British beef and/or beef products as a result of concerns arising from BSE; and on which dates.

Mrs. Browning: The information is as follows:

Country	*Beef Yes/No*	*Beef/Products Yes/No*	*Month/Year*
Algeria	Yes	Yes	January 1990
Argentina	Yes	Yes	August 1991
Bulgaria	Yes	Yes	September 1994
China	Yes	Yes	October 1990
Iran	Yes	Yes	June 1990
Jamaica	Yes	Yes	September 1991
Japan	Yes	Yes	July 1990
Jordan	Yes	Yes	September 1990
Kazakstan	Yes	Yes	August 1993
Libya	Yes	Yes	November 1990
Poland	Yes	Yes	February 1990
Qatar	No	Yes	June 1991
Russia	Yes	Yes	September 1993
Saudi Arabia	Yes	Yes	February 1990
Slovak Republic	Yes	Yes	January 1994
Syria	Yes	Yes	August 1990
Taiwan	Yes	Yes	February 1990
Uae	Yes	Yes	August 1990

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the United Kingdom at the latest available date, in animals born after the ruminant feed ban.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Up to 19 July 1994 there have been 11,648 confirmed cases of BSE in the United Kingdom in cattle born after the ruminant feed bans.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of *(a)* United Kingdom dairy herds, *(b)* United Kingdom beef suckler herds and *(c)* total United Kingdom herds have experienced at least one case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, from November 1986.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The percentage incidence of BSE as requested is as follows:

	Dairy Herds	*Beef Suckler Herds*	*Total Herds*[1]
GB	51·73 per cent.	13·57 per cent.	32·42 per cent.
Northern Ireland	10·57 per cent.	1·53 per cent.	3·12 per cent.

[1] Total herds includes mixed herds and herds of unknown type.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps have been taken to ensure that the beef industry in Northern Ireland is exempt from the controls concerning BSE in the European Union.

Mr. Ancram: I have been asked to reply.

The incidence of BSE in Northern Ireland is such that it is not possible at present to argue that Northern Ireland should be exempt from the European Community controls concerning BSE.

There is evidence in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland of fewer suspect cases of BSE being reported compared with the same time last year and a decline in the number of younger animals in which BSE is confirmed. Any amendment of the existing restrictions on the export of live animals and beef would be a matter for consideration initially by the European Commission, which has been made aware of the improving BSE position throughout the United Kingdom.

Venezuelan Equine Encephalitis

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when she was first made aware of the incidence of Venezuelan equine encephalitis in Mexico; and what evidence she has as to the regional incidence of Venezuelan equine encephalitis in Mexico;

(2) from what date the ban on the importation of horses from Mexico to the United Kingdom and the EU was introduced; what reasons were given for the introduction of the ban; what consideration was given to the implementation of the ban on a regional basis; and when she expects the ban to be reconsidered.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department first learned of the outbreak of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis in Mexico on 3 August 1993 on receipt of the OIE Disease Information Bulletin, volume 6, No. 29 of 30 July 1993. According to the OIE Bulletin, the geographical areas affected by the outbreaks were several districts in the state of Chiapas.

EC animal health rules regarding the importation into the Community of equine animals from third countries, directive 90/426/EC, prohibit the importation of animals from countries or parts thereof which have not been free of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis for at least two years. As from the date the outbreak of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis was confirmed the Mexican veterinary authorities would not have been able to sign the required official health certification confirming, amongst other things, that Mexico had been free of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis for at least two years. Therefore, any importation into the Community of equine animals from Mexico after the initial outbreak would have been contrary to EC law.

On 21 September 1993 the EC Commision adopted Commission decision 93/507/EC formalising the prohibition on imports from Mexico until further notice. In the light of specific animal health guarantees provided by the Mexican veterinary authorities, on 27 July 1994 the EC Commission adopted Commission decision 94/478/EC which permits the re-importation into the Community from the metropolitan area of Monterrey, Mexico of registered horses which have been temporarily exported from the EC.

Whaling

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of whether the recent announcement by Norway to resume commercial whaling in the 1994 season is contrary to the agreement reached at the 1994 International Whaling Commission meeting, that no authorisation was given to any activity contrary to the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Mr. Jack: As Norway lodged an objection to the original decision by the International Whaling Commission in 1982 to establish a moratorium on commercial whaling it is not, under IWC rules, bound by this decision. At this year's IWC meeting, the UK and a number of other countries again urged Norway to reconsider its decision to resume commercial whaling activity and to comply fully with the moratorium. Norway has chosen to ignore these requests. The UK will continue to press the Norwegian Government to think again.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what agreement or settlement on the issue of whaling was contained in Norway's acquis communautaire to join the European Union.

Mr. David Davis: I have been asked to reply.

All EC legislation on whales and trade in whale products will apply to Norway on its accession to the European Union.

Ministerial Visits (Fund-raising)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many overseas visits she and each of her Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many she, or each of her Ministers, participated in fund-raising activities for the Conservative party; and if she will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Jack: Between 1 January and 30 June 1994 MAFF Ministers made a total of 20 overseas visits. Nine visits were to EC Councils of Ministers; the remaining 11 were in support of bilateral relations, enlargement negotiations and trade promotion. None of these visit involved fund-raising activities for the Conservative party. The details are as follows.

Ministerial Visits

Date	Venue	
Minister		
24 January	Brussels	Agriculture Council
21-22 February	Brussels	Agriculture Council
28-29 March	Brussels	Agriculture Council
11 April	France	Bilateral with French Agriculture Minister
25-26 April	Luxembourg	Agriculture Council
30-31 May	Brussels	Agriculture Council
20-23 June	Luxembourg	Agriculture Council
Minister of State		
24 January	Brussels	Bilateral with Commissioner Paleokrassas
25 January	Netherlands	NTV Amsterdam
26-28 February	Brussels	Enlargement negotiations
7-9 March	Brussels	Enlargement negotiations
14 March	Germany (Bonn)	Bilateral with German State Secretary (Fisheries)
15-16 March	Brussels	Enlargement negotiations
30 March	Netherlands (The Hague)	Bilateral with Dutch Fisheries Minister
12 April	Luxembourg	Fisheries Council
9-10 June	Luxembourg	Fisheries Council
Parliamentary Secretary (Commons)		
28 February	France	Paris Salon (SIA)
30 May	Brussels	Health Council
Parliamentary Secretary (Lords)		
30 January-1 February	Germany	ISM Cologne
5-17 April	China	Trade promotion including attending AgroExpo, Beijing

Biotechnology

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the implications of the European Commission White Paper, "Growth, Competitiveness, Employment-The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century", for research and development of biotechnology relevant to United Kingdom agriculture and horticulture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: In the Commission's view, the implications of its White Paper on "Growth, Competitiveness and Employment" for research are that it should be focused on the most promising areas of development, among which it identifies new unsubsidised outlets for agricultural raw materials, and that there should be greater co-ordination at a European level. The Commission also wishes to develop improved means for using scientific advice in the preparation of regulations.

The potential of biotechnology to have an impact on the competitiveness of United Kingdom agriculture and horticulture has long been recognised by the Ministry and is reflected in its research expenditure plans. MAFF expenditure on biotechnology has grown to some £20 million per year. Its research programmes address both the development of biotechnologies for agricultural and horticultural application and assessment of associated risks, particularly in deliberate release of modified organisms, to ensure that safety regulations are scientifically based. Recent initiatives include a £1·5 million programme on crop molecular genetics and a new £1 million programme on non-food agriculture which the Minister announced in July.

The Ministry will continue to liaise with other Government Departments and the research councils, notably BBSRC, which fund research and development on biotechnology of relevance to agriculture and horticulture, so as to ensure a coherent approach to realising the potential referred to in the White Paper. Likewise, the United Kingdom will participate fully in the European Union's fourth framework programme which includes 552 mecu or £434 million for biotechnology research and development.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the less-favoured areas in England are designated as environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Thirty per cent. of the 1,897,800 hectares designated as less-favoured areas in England lies within the boundaries of currently designated English environmentally sensitive areas.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what matters were discussed, what decisions taken, and which decisions were taken by vote, at the EU Fisheries Council on 28 September in Brussels.

Mr. Jack: I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of EU Fisheries Ministers in Brussels on 28 September with my hon. Friends the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office, and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office. No votes were taken at this Council.

The Council discussed the Commission's proposals for future rules of access for all EU fleets to western waters after 1 January 1996. These would provide for the integration of Spanish and Portuguese fishing into the common fisheries policy.

I said that these proposals were not acceptable. They were far too complex, imposing excessive administrative burdens on fishermen, contrary to the commitment at the June Council to reduce bureaucracy. Moreover, they could be operated only at quite excessive cost. They lacked credibility and would be unenforceable. I explained in detail to the Council the united position taken by the British fishing industry in rejecting the proposals. I emphasised the need for an adequate replacement for the Irish box when that expires on 31 December 1995.

The great majority of other member states also felt that the Commission's proposals were not the right way forward.

The Council agreed that a different approach was needed, which should be as simple as possible to administer and control. All member states were asked to make suggestions for alternative ideas so that the November Council could have a developed alternative approach to consider.

The Commission's paper on the state of the Community fisheries market was also considered by the Council. It was agreed that there was a need to tackle problems of structures and marketing at various levels. Many measures are already in place but the Commission will be coming forward with appropriate further measures in the light of the discussion. I emphasised the importance of the European fishing industry making greater efforts to focus on the needs of the market.

The Council also considered the Commission's discussion paper and draft proposals for setting medium term management objectives and strategies for certain fisheries. Most member states recognised the value of taking decisions on fish TACs and quotas in the context of a longer term view of the prospects for stocks. However, more work is needed at technical level before the Council can reach conclusions.

The Commission's proposals to phase out drift netting for most species over four years was also discussed. I took the opportunity to register the United Kingdom's concern about the disturbances in this summer's tuna fishery. No decision was taken on the Commission's proposals, and the discussion showed that there was no consensus on them. There was, however, a clear need to examine the scientific justification for what the Commission had proposed, since this seemed to be deficient, and the Union's scientific, technical and economic committee will undertake this.

The Council also discussed the EU/Morocco agreement, the acquisition of arctic cod, a forthcoming conference on Mediterranean fisheries, the state of the salmon market, a possible increase in the autonomous tariff quota for cod entering the EU and the regime for tuna for the EU canning industry. In addition, the Council adopted a statement urging an orderly conclusion to the fisheries dispute in the Barents sea.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what matters were discussed, what decisions taken, and what votes were taken, at the Agriculture Council in Brussels on 19 to 20 September.

Mr. Jack: The Agriculture Council on 19–20 September, at which the United Kingdom was represented by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food discussed the welfare of animals in transit, agricultural structures policy and reforms of the wine and fruit and vegetables régimes. There were also brief discussions under any other business of a French memorandum on the future of European agriculture, inspection costs in the plant health sector and transport aid for Greek fruit and vegetable producers. No decisions were made nor votes taken.

Intervention

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her latest estimate of the total tonnage of each commodity held in intervention stocks in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter is delegated to the intervention board executive agency and I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. gentleman direct.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Mr. Gavin Strang, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about current intervention stocks in the United Kingdom, as the matter is within my operational responsibility.

The disposable stocks in intervention at 16 July were:

	Tonnes
Beef:	47,173
Cereals:	
Barley	1,291,193
Feedwheat	38,396
Common Wheat	3,290
Rye	—
Total Cereals	1,332,879
Butter:	5,389
Skimmed Milk Powder:	6,406

Labelling

Ms Lynne: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to discuss with consumer groups the labelling of fresh produce with a list of the chemicals that were used in their production for information of consumers.

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* None at present.

In its review of food labelling published in 1991, the Food Advisory Committee considered that labelling of all such produce with a general statement relating to all treatments used in their production might be potentially confusing for consumers, especially as residues may not be present in a product so labelled. The committee did suggest an indication of substances deliberately added as post-harvest treatments, but the European Commission has commissioned a study on the labelling of produce treated with pesticides. Since food labelling issues have to be decided at EC level, we need to await the results of this study.

Farm and Conservation Grants

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the farm and conservation grant scheme comprehended in the past; what it comprehends today; what proportion of the cost of each eligible scheme, in and outside the less-favoured areas was met by the Government before and after variations to the scheme made since its inception; and what, in real and actual terms, has been the expenditure on each element of the scheme for each year both inside and outside the less-favoured areas.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The farm and conservation grant scheme, set up in 1989, covers a wide range of investments. The items eligible for grant and the rates of grant payable since the scheme's inception, both within and outside the less-favoured areas, are set out in the scheme legislation, copies of which are available from the Library of the House. The statutory instruments concerned are:

The Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme 1989 SI No. 128

The Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme 1990 SI No. 1126

The Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme 1991 SI No. 1338

The Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme 1993 SI No. 2901

The Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme 1994 SI No. 1302

The Farm and Conservation Grant Regulations 1989 SI No. 219

The Farm and Conservation Grant (Amendment) Regulations 1990 SI No. 1125

The Farm and Conservation Grant Regulations 1991 SI No. 1630

The Farm and Conservation Grant (Amendment) Regulations 1992 SI No. 3174

The Farm and Conservation Grant (Amendment) Regulations 1993 SI No. 2900

The table shows in cash terms expenditure on each element of the scheme for each year both inside and outside the less-favoured areas since the scheme's inception. A similar table showing expenditure in real terms is not readily available.

Farm and Conservation Grant (89 & 91) Schemes Expenditure from start of Scheme to end March 94 by Financial Year in England Grant Paid in £ million

	1989–90			*1990–91*			*1991–92*			*1992–93*			*1993–94*		
Investment Category	*LFA*	*Non LFA*	*All Rates*	*LFA*	*Non LFA*	*All Rates*	*LFA*	*Non LFA*	*All Rates*	*LFA*	*Non LFA*	*All Rates*	*LFA*	*Non LFA*	*All Rates*
Traditional Buildings	0·038	0·158	0·196	0·196	0·916	1·112	0·337	1·184	1·521	0·36	1·007	1·367	0·41	1·127	1·537
Land Improvement	0·017	0·029	0·046	0·16	0·07	0·23	0·254	0·059	0·313	0·319	0·055	0·374	0·326	0·051	0·377
Horticulture	0	0·011	0·011	0	0·975	0·975	0·008	1·702	1·71	0·002	1·459	1·461	0·026	2·513	2·539
Conservation	0·302	0·188	0·49	1·149	0·803	1·952	1·731	1·4	3·131	2·325	1·724	4·049	2·616	2·199	4·815
Waste Handling	0·524	4·729	5·253	2·435	16·143	18·578	3·073	19·737	22·81	3·751	17·131	20·882	3·076	15·808	18·884
Diversification	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·006	0·006	0·029	0·245	0·274	0·021	0·338	0·359
Others	0·001	0·003	0·004	0·013	0·037	0·05	0·013	0·033	0·046	0·031	0·037	0·068	0·012	0·023	0·035
Total All	0·882	5·118	6·00	3·953	18·944	22·897	5·416	24·121	29·537	6·817	21·658	28·475	6·487	22·059	28·546

Agricultural Wages

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is her latest estimate of the total number of persons whose pay and conditions are covered by the Agricultural Wages Order 1994, for each region and county of England;

(2) what is her latest estimate of the total number of persons whose pay and conditions are covered by the Agricultural Wages Order 1994.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The Agricultural Wages Order 1994 covers both England and Wales. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is replying separately in respect of the workers covered by the order in Wales. Based on the June agricultural and horticultural census, it is estimated that the numbers of workers in England covered by the Agricultural Wages Order 1994 was 171,732 as at June 1993. Estimates for each region and county in England, excluding workers on minor holdings, are given in the following table.

Estimated number of workers covered by the Agricultural Wages Board for each county in England as at June 1993[1]

	Number
Cleveland	358
Cumbria	3,115
Durham	1,301
Northumberland	2,248
Tyne and Wear	264
North Region	7,286
Humberside	5,020
N/Yorks (N'Allerton)	7,550
N/Yorks (Beverley)	1,899
North Yorkshire	9,449
South Yorkshire	1,146
West Yorkshire	2,085
Yorks/Humberside Region	17,700
Derbyshire	2,388
Leicestershire	2,388
Lincolnshire	10,908
Northamptonshire	1,882
Nottinghamshire	2,498
East Midlands Region	20,064
Cambridgeshire	5,071
Norfolk	10,067
Suffolk	6,625
East Anglia Region	21,763
Bedfordshire	1,397
Berkshire	1,066
Buckinghamshire	1,685
East Sussex	2,709
Essex	5,979
Greater London (E)	284
Greater London (SE)	611
Greater London	895
Hampshire	5,281
Hertfordshire	1,556
Isle of Wight	629
Kent	13,112
Oxfordshire	2,592
Surrey	2,708
West Sussex	5,068
South East Region	44,677
Avon	2,810
Cornwall	4,502
Isles of Scilly	56
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	4,558
Devon	6,556
Dorset	3,152
Gloucestershire	3,108
Somerset	5,371
Wiltshire	3,244
South West Region	28,799
Hereford & Worcester	8,145
Shropshire	4,485
Staffordshire	3,706
Warwickshire	2,347
West Midlands	486
West Midlands Region	19,169
Cheshire	3,884
Greater Manchester	1,119
Lancashire	5,447
Merseyside	649
North West Region	11,099

[1] The data in this table relate to main holdings only, ie. excludes data on minor holdings. The number of workers covered by the Agricultural Wages Board comprises the following categories: regular hired workers and seasonal and casual workers.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) of 14 July, *Official Report,* column *715,* if she will publish the evidence that employers in a number of sectors of the industry are now questioning the value of keeping the present arrangements for statutory wage determination across the agriculture sector.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Comments received as part of last year's consultation exercise on the future operation of the Agricultural Wages Board have already been made available for scrutiny in the Ministry. We have written to those offering comments since the end of the consultation period and—in cases where consent has been given—we have made these available in the same way.

Less-Favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will provide a breakdown of all the additional financial support available to farmers from her Department and other bodies in the less-favoured areas for 1993–94; and what was the uptake of each scheme.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Additional financial support available to farmers in less-favoured areas in 1993–94 from my Department and the uptake in 1993–94 are listed in the table below. I am not aware of any schemes administered by other bodies specifically targeted to farmers in less-favoured areas

Scheme	*Number of payments*
Hill livestock compensatory allowances	[1]19,542
Sheep annual premium scheme	11,000
Farm and conservation grant scheme	4,284

Notes

All figures relate to number of payments in England.

[1] This figure incorporates a carry over claims for 1992–93.

Advisory Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list those of her Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult prior to legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Jack *[pursuant to the answer, 29 June 1994, c.553]:* The reply should have read:

> "Prior to legislation proposals, the Government are required to consult the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, the Committee on Agricultural Valuation, and the Veterinary Products Committee. The Government are not required to publish their responses"

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average percentage change in EC common agricultural prices between August 1992 and May 1994.

Mr. Jack: It is not possible to calculate an average percentage change in prices under the common agricultural policy which is weighted to reflect accurately the importance of particular commodities. The table, based on information contained in the notes placed in the Library of this House following the 1992 and 1993 price fixing agreements, shows the changes in intervention or equivalent prices in ecu/tonne, of agricultural commodities over the period cited.

Table showing changes in Intervention Prices: August 1992–May 1994

	Intervention prices (ecu/tonne)		
	August 92	*May 94*	*Percentage Change*
Wheat	163·49	115·49	–29·36
Barley	155·33	115·49	–25·65
Maize	163·49	115·49	–29·36
Durum wheat	220·87	115·49	–47·71
Rice	313·65	309·60	–1·29
Butter	2927·80	2803·30	–4·25
Beef	3430·00	3216·40	–6·23
Pigmeat[1]	1897·00	1872·00	–1·32
Sheepmeat[1]	4229·50	4174·52	–1·30
Sugar	542·20	523·30	–3·49
Dried Fodder[2]	178·61	178·53	-0·04
Cauliflowers[3]	115·20	106·60	–7·47
Tomatoes[3]	93·60	107·00	14·32
Apples[3]	143·30	133·10	–7·12
Pears[3]	142·00	145·40	2·39
Peaches[3]	208·10	200·60	–18·46
Oranges[3]	208·10	214·90	3·27
Mandarins[3]	227·50	233·40	2·59
Lemons[3]	226·60	239·90	5·87
Grapes[3]	207·40	230·20	10·99
Apricots[3]	237·40	234·40	–1·26
Aubergines[3]	71·10	70·40	–0·98
Nectarines[3]	269·50	226·90	–15·81
Satsumas[3]	124·30	135·40	8·93
Clementines[3]	180·80	184·00	1·77
Olive Oil	2023·70	1947·96	–3·74
Tobacco[4]	3096·14	1898·64	–38·68
Silkworms[5]	111·81	111·76	–0·04
Cotton[2]	1027·90	1014·62	–1·29
Table wine[6]	35·44	34·65	-2·23

[1] Basic price

[2] Guide price

[3] Withdrawal price

[4] Average normal price

[5] Ecu/box

[6] Average guide price/hl

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her latest estimate of the total cost of the common agricultural policy, including the agricultural monetary reserve, as a proportion of the total EU budget.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The CAP, including the agricultural monetary reserve, comprises about 54 per cent. of the total EU budget for 1994. On present forecasts it will not be necessary to draw on the monetary reserve.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her latest estimate of the total cost of the common agricultural policy in 1994 *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding the monetary reserve.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The Commission's latest estimate of EC expenditure on the CAP in 1994 is 35·7 billion ecu. This estimate is well within the agricultural guideline and there is unlikely to be any need to draw on the monetary reserve.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her latest estimate of the total cost of the common agricultural policy in 1994 to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The Exchequer cost of common agricultural policy expenditure in the United Kingdom in the current financial year is estimated to be just over £2·7 billion. The United Kingdom also contributes to the cost of the CAP in other member states through our net contributions to the EC Budget.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Small and Medium Firms

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what advice his Liverpool office gives to small and medium-sized enterprises who wish to apply for objective [illegible] funding on finding a public sector partner; and how he reconciles this advice with the European Union's policy [illegible] whether private sector companies can receive objective funding directly;

(2) what is his Department's policy on allowing small and medium-sized enterprises benefiting from objective 1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Assistance available to small and medium Merseyside businesses includes help with premises, access to finance, strategic planning, training, technology transfer, industrial quality and design, marketing and joint venture arrangements. There are already a number of such business support schemes; the structural funds will be used to expand their availability, intensity and quality. They will also be used to bring forward new schemes, where there is a clear market need and value for money can be demonstrated. Structural funds grants will be paid to bodies administering the schemes, not direct to companies.

The single programming document adopted by the European Commission states

> "Private Sector firms may apply directly to the programme (ie to the SPD Secretariat, in the Government Office) for structural funds support".

Such applicants will be directed to the bodies which actually administer the schemes, including the training and enterprise councils business links—when operational—Chambers of Commerce, business associations and local authorities; for, as the single programming document continues,

"This will be appraised and administered through bodies designated by the Programme Monitoring Committee".

Of course applications may also be made to the administering bodies direct.

Policyholders Protection Act

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what disbursements have been made under the Policyholders Protection Act 1975 to *(a)* non-United Kingdom citizens or *(b)* non-United Kingdom residents in each of the last five years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In the current calendar year the Policyholders Protection Board has made payments amounting to US$86·8 million to policyholders based overseas. The board does not keep records on policyholders' citizenship. Figures for the previous four calendar years were negligible.

Thorn EMI

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to reach a decision resulting from his competition policy review of the sale of Thorn EMI's defence division to Thomson-CSF; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No such proposal is currently being considered by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Post Office (Mount Pleasant Depot)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the cost to the Post Office caused by the construction company V.A.T. Watkins going into receivership; and what is the projected cost of the new Mount Pleasant Depot.

Mr. Eggar: The implications for Royal Mail of the contractor V.A.T. Watkins Ltd. going into receivership are still the subject of resolution between Royal Mail's consultants and the receiver. The costs of the construction work at Mount Pleasant are the subject of a number of separate commercially confidential contracts between Royal Mail and the various suppliers, one of which was V.A.T. Watkins Ltd.

Civil Aircraft Marketing Panel

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the members of the marketing panel that advises on future civil aircraft issues, together with the principal occupation of each member.

Mr. Eggar: The current industrial and academic members of the market panel of the aviation committee and their occupations are as follows:-

Mr. Philip Bolt
Market Evaluation Manager
British Aerospace (Airbus Limited)
Mr. Richard P. Botwood
Director General and Secretary
Chartered Institute of Transport
Mr. Stephen Charters
Market Research Manager
Civil Engine Group
Rolls Royce PLC
Mr. Sam Cherry
Manager of Corporate Marketing
Short Brothers PLC
Mr. Howard Davies
Secretary General
British Air Transport Association (BATA)
Mr. Graham Forbes
Chief Executive
General Aviation Manufacturers and Traders Association (GAMTA)
Mr. John Friedberger
Chief Executive
British Helicopter Advisory Bureau (BHAB)
Professor Keith Hayward
International Relations and Politics Department
Staffordshire University
Mr. Peter Ibbetson
Director and Head of Aerospace
Nat West Markets
Mr. Nicolas May
Project and Business Executive
Westland Aerospace Limited
Mr. Anthony Starforth
Vice President-Marketing
Avro International Aerospace

Money Laundering

Mr. Cousins.: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements are in place to ensure co-ordination between his Department's companies and investigation branches and other regulatory bodies and agencies concerned with the control of money laundering; and how many cases have been referred to *(a)* non-Government statutory body or *(b)* a non-Government professional disciplinary body.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The structure set up to enable supervisory authorities to report information on money laundering, following the coming into force of the Criminal Justice Act 1993, provides that the National Criminal Intelligence section at Scotland Yard should be the first reporting point. This is a non-operational unit of the police, having a central intelligence gathering function, which is answerable to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary through the police department of the Home Office. Having received such information the NCIS then informs the local police force of any reporting of any suspected money laundering in its area of jurisdiction and it is that force which will investigate the matter further.

The combined effect of the Act and the regulations under it is to lift certain restrictions on disclosure which exist by virtue of, for example, statute and which might otherwise prevent such reporting. A regular liaison facility has been set up between NCIS and the supervisory authority which also includes various DTI divisions and, for example, those regulating insurance and financial services. Such facilities are designed to assist not only the reporting of suspected money laundering as above but disclosure of any such information on positive money laundering which might implicate a regulated person and throw doubt on his or her continued fitness for the job. Such information can be passed to regulators through a range of statutory gateways if it is required for the exercise of the functions of the recipient regulator. Such information is confidential and it is not our policy to reveal details of it, nor of any recipients of it.

EU Funding

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if local authorities in objective 2 regions in the United Kingdom will be fully involved in the process of negotiations of EU support for their respective regions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how the principle of local determination and discretion will be upheld in the current round of negotiations concerning the objective 2 plans and programmes within the United Kingdom;

Mr. Eggar: The negotiations are between the Government and the Commission, but the designated local partners, including local authorities, will be consulted throughout. There is a maximum of local discretion consistent with European law and Government policy, but it is not an overriding principle.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which national measures he intends to co-finance from the European regional development fund and the European social fund under the 1994–96 objective 2 and objective 3 programmes; and what was the level of national support for these measures in each year since 1990–91.

Mr. Eggar: The following national programmes are intended to be supported by the ERDF under objective 2 and the ESF under objectives 2 and 3. Expenditure on them since 1990–91 has been as follows. The ESF has contributed to these programmes; the ERDF has so far contributed only to SPUR.

	1990–91	*1991–92*	*1992–3*	*1993–4*
	£ million			
ERDF: Objective 2				
Managing in the 90s	1·8	2·2	3·2	3·7
Small Firms Award for Research and Technology (SMART)	9·4	12·0	12·1	12·9
Support for Products under Research (SPUR)	—	0·3	5·9	8·7
Teaching Company Scheme	11·2	10·2	10·0	11·5
Business Link Innovation and Technology Counsellors	—	—	—	—
Pump-priming support for Business Links	—	—	—	0·9
Enterprise activities organised by Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs)	—	—	—	32·3
Diagnostic and Consultancy Scheme	—	—	—	—
ESF: Objectives 2 and 3				
Training for work	—	—	—	892·4
Youth Training	823·4	853·2	757·1	766·6
Restart	10·5	10·6	10·9	11·3
Jobplan	—	—	—	32·1
YTCredits	—	—	—	—
Skillseekers	—	—	—	—
Modern Apprenticeships	—	—	—	—

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made with the approval of the objective one plan for Merseyside; and what principles agreed in those negotiations are directly transferable to objective two negotiations relating to *(a)* measures, *(b)* working arrangements, *(c)* use of technical assistance, *(d)* targeting of resources and *(e)* other matters.

Mr. Eggar: The Commission adopted single programming documents for the three United Kingdom objective 1 areas, including Merseyside, on 29 July.

Each of the 13 British objective two single programming documents is now being negotiated on the basis of the Government's plan for the area concerned. It is not possible to forecast how many of the points in any of the objective 1 documents may be included also in the objective 2 ones.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements have been made to ensure that structural fund resources are being made available now to national and local agencies under *(a)* objective 2 and *(b)* objective 3.

Mr. Eggar: Structural funds grants are made in accordance with the terms of single programming documents —SPDs—or community support frameworks—CSFs—which are adopted by the Commission in agreement with the member state concerned. The previous CSFs, for all member states, expired at the end of 1993; allocations of grants from 1994, and the corresponding payments, are therefore dependent on the adoption of new SPDs or CSFs.

Throughout Europe, the adoption of new SPDs and CSFs has been delayed. The 1994–96 objective three SPD for the United Kingdom was however adopted on 5 August. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has already begun paying first advances of grant to projects approved under its terms.

No 1994–96 objective two SPDs or CSFs have yet been adopted for any member state. Negotiations are due to be concluded next month; project approvals, and the first payments, will proceed after adoption.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of resource will be made available by the United Kingdom Government for business support measures which will be co-financed by the European structural funds in 1994, 1995 and 1996 in *(a)* objective two areas and *(b)* non-objective two areas.

Mr. Eggar: Following are extracts from the financial tables of the United Kingdom objective one single programming documents for 1994–1999:

	ERDF Contribution	*National Public Contribution*	*Central Government Contribution*
	Million ecu (1994 prices)		
Northern Ireland			
Aids to industry	37·11		8·84
Merseyside			
Incentives for local business development	76·0	[1]72·0	
Highlands and Islands			
Financial support for development of new ventures and SMEs; capital investment and marketing appropriate to SMEs	23·0	[2]23·0	
Financial support for research and development	6·0	[2]6·0	
Improve access to business information, financial services and market intelligence	7·0	[2]7·0	

For Merseyside and the Highlands and Islands, the Government contribution is not separately specified.

Separate figures for the years 1994, 1995 and 1996 are not available.

The allocations in Objective 2 and 5 *(b)* areas of the United Kingdom will depend on the terms of the SPDs for these areas, which have not yet been adopted.

[1] Including Local Authorities, TECs, Business Links, Merseyside Development Corporation, British Coal Enterprise, Inner City Task Forces

[2] Including Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the role of the European investment bank and European Coal and Steel Community in policy and regional development; and what arrangements are to be put in hand for their administration within the United Kingdom for the period from 1994 to 1996.

Mr. Eggar: The roles of the European Investment Bank—EIB—and the European Coal and Steel Community— ECSC—are specified in the treaties of Rome and Paris respectively: see in particular article 130 of the treaty of Rome and article 56 of the treaty of Paris.

Applications for EIB loans can be made at any time; there are no special arrangements for the period 1994–96. The EIB, which has an office in London, deals direct with applications for loans of over £10 million and will provide a list of financial intermediaries who deal with smaller applications.

Applications for ECSC regional loans of more than £6 million should be made to the European Commission, in Luxembourg; applications for smaller loans may be made to Bank of Scotland, Barclays bank, Clydesdale bank, Investors in Industry (3i), Midland bank, Natwest bank, Royal bank of Scotland, TSB Scotland or the Welsh Development Agency. In view of the impending expiry of the treaty of Paris, applications will not be accepted after 31 December 1996.

For the whole European Community the loans are administered, from offices in Luxembourg, by the EIB and the Commission respectively. Both publish annual reports. There is no separate administration in the United Kingdom. However, the Government offices in the English regions are glad to advise intending applicants.

Regional Challenge

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what consultations he has undertaken to date to ascertain the views of national and local agencies in his proposals for regional challenge;

(2) what representations he has received to support his regional challenge proposals for objective 2 areas.

Mr. Eggar: I have received various representations. Guidelines for regional challenge applicants are currently being drafted, and consultations about them will open this month.

Small and Medium Firms

Mr. Fisher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many firms in Britain employed *(a)* one or two people, *(b)* three to nine people, *(c)* 10 to 19 people, *(d)* 20 to 49 people, *(e)* 50 to 99 people and *(f)* over 99 people in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Estimates of the number of businesses in different size classes have been produced for five of the last 15 years, for the United Kingdom. The exact size classes requested are not available. Comparable estimates for these five years are given in the table.

Number of firms (thousands) in the United Kingdom by employment size class

				Number of employees			
Year	*1–2*	*3–10*	*11–19*	*20–49*	*50–99*	*over 99*	*Total*
1979[1]	1,099	498	109	46	16	24	1,791
1980–1985				Not Available			
1986[1]	1,595	713	84	56	16	17	2,481
1987–1988				Not Available			
1989[2]	1,852	825	104	68	23	17	2,888
1990[2]	1,826	804	103	62	21	19	2,834
1991[2]	1,735	761	97	65	20	19	2,697

Source:

[1] Employment Gazette, February 1992,

[2] The NatWest Review of Small Business Trends, Volume 3/Number 1/June 1993.

Lloyd's

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent information he had about the extent of Lloyd's losses in the United States market.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Lloyd's returns to the DTI are prepared on a global basis and they contain no figures for losses in the USA. Detailed figures covering certain classes of non-marine business denominated in US dollars are however provided to the Department. These show that Lloyd's made a significant proportion of their overall losses on these categories of business on policies written before 1986.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will now set up an inquiry into the management and regulation of Lloyd's insurance market.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Welsh Consumer Council

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish for each of the last available five years the total budget of the Welsh Consumer Council, together with the outturn spending for those years; and if he will make a statement on the limits placed on spending decisions authorised by the chief executive.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The total income and expenditure figures [1] of the Welsh Consumer Council in each of the previous five years, taken from the National Consumer Council annual reports, are:

Year	*£ Sterling*
Income for Year	
1989–90	183,921
1990–91	209,431
1991–92	237,428
1992–93	249,869
1993–94	290,845
Expenditure for Year	
1989–90	184,383
1990–91	212,929
1991–92	240,499
1992–93	238,198
1993–94	271,627

[1] Figures show only direct expenditure incurred by the Welsh Consumer Council which receives its share of Government grant-in-aid from the NCC. Central costs, such as staff salaries, are borne by the NCC. Where expenditure exceeds income this is funded either by reduced expenditure elsewhere in the NCC's budget or by any accumulated surplus permitted under the grant-in-aid conditions.

It is for the Welsh Consumer Council to decide upon suitable spending limits, although the director of the National Consumer Council, as accounting officer is responsible to the Department for ensuring expenditure is properly authorised and that expenditure is contained within the agreed allocation.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Henderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what additional criteria are now taken into account by his Department in deciding the disbursement of regional selective assistance.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Belgium (Illegal Subsidies)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department has made to the European Commission in respect of the repayment of illegal subsidies to Belgium by the Belgian company Beaulieu and its subsidiary Fabelta; and what level of repayment has been made to date.

Mr. Needham: The Government have raised the question of the repayment of the aid paid illegally to Fabelta on a number of occasions with the European Commission since the ruling of the European Court of Justice in February 1990 that the aid should be repaid and has pressed them to secure compliance. Following the judgment in the Gent commercial court against the company the Belgian Government should now be taking steps to recover all the aid.

SASEA

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reports he has received from the Swiss or French Government's, police or judiciary in relation to the Swiss company SASEA and its United Kingdom subsidiaries; what actions he has taken as a result; what complaints he has received in relation to the collapse of the Mountleigh company; if he will order an investigation; and what is his policy in relation to the level of losses at a company which will automatically incur an investigation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am not aware that any approaches have been made to Her Majesty's Government regarding SASEA and its United Kingdom subsidiaries.

It is not my Department's policy to discuss complaints received in relation to individual companies. If the hon. Member has information to suggest that there is good reason for a Companies Act investigation, my officials will consider it if he forwards it in the usual manner. Monetary loss is only one aspect of the test of good reason, there are no thresholds as such.

International Signal and Control Technology Ltd

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will name the individuals who signed the accounts of International Signal and Control Technology Ltd in 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There is no company registered with that name on the public record held at Companies House.

Manufactured Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of import penetration of foreign manufactures in the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom shares of main manufacturing countries exports of manufactures in 1970 and at the latest available date; and what was the increase in the terms of trade for finished manufactures since the second half of 1973 and the corresponding increase in relative unit values for exports of manufactures.

Mr. Needham: The information on import penetration is available only to June 1989 and is published in table

12.2 of the CSO's annual abstract of statistic', a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. The information on import penetration for 1970 is published in CSO's "Economic Trends" August 1977, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House, but is not comparable with the 1989 data. Comparable information for 1970 could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

The terms of trade for finished manufactures, can be readily derived from information held on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed via the Library of the House.

Information on United Kingdom shares of MMC exports of manufactures, and relative unit values for manufactures—back in 1975—can be accessed from the Central Statistical Office database via the Library of the House.

Import-saving and Export Industries

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the change to output and employment in the import-saving and export industries, since 1990; and if he will publish a table showing the peak output in each of the principal import-competing and export industries since 1988, the subsequent low, and the latest figure.

Mr. Needham: The principal import and export competing industries can be defined as those industries where total United Kingdom overseas trade—imports plus exports—exceeded £5 billion in 1992. On this basis six industries are identified.

	Percentage change		*Index of production (1990=100)*				
SIC (80) Activity Heading Brief Description	*Index of Production (Q2 94 compared with Q2 90)*	*Employment (Q2 94 compared with Q2 90)*	*Peak output since 1988*	*(Quarter,Year)*	*Subsequent low*	*(Quarter,Year)*	*Q2 1994*
2512 Basic general organic chemicals	26	–52	125	(Q2 1994)	—	—	125
3302 Electronic data processing equipment	58	–19	171	(Q2 1994)	—	—	171
3453 Active components and electronic sub-assemblies	24	–41	125	(Q2 1994)	—	—	125
3510 Motor vehicles and their engines	–7	–18	113	(Q1 1989)	85	(Q3 1991)	95
3530 Motor vehicle parts	13	–16	110	(Q2 1994)	—	—	110
3640 Aerospace equipment manufacturing and repairing	–22	–29	105	(Q4 1990)	76	(Q2 1994)	76

Source:
CSO - Index of Production, DTI, using data from Employment Department & Northern Ireland Office.

Domestic Electricity Charges

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in average electricity bills for domestic customers since *(a)* January 1987 and *(b)* August 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is as follows:

Domestic electricity prices

Index numbers: 1990–100

Year	*Current prices*	*Real prices (deflated using the GDP (market prices) deflator)*
1986–87	82·3	103·4
1987–88	81·8	97·6
1988–89	88·0	98·4
1989–90	94·0	98·4
1990–91	102·1	100·6
1991–92	112·8	104·6
1992–93	116·4	103·8
1993–94	114·5	99·0
Q1 1994–95	121·0	103·5

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change since privatisation of electricity generators distributors in *(a)* their labour and labour unit costs, *(b)* the unit cost of energy consumed or electricity received and *(c)* the margin of profit and rate of return on capital; and what is the percentage difference between the return on capital on the basis of historic costs and that in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is a matter for the companies concerned. The Director General of Electricity Supply has recently investigated aspects of performance in the electricity industry, and published two reports "Decision on a Monopolies and Mergers Commission Reference" and "The Distribution Price Control: Proposals". I have arranged for copies of these reports to be placed in the Library of the House.

Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table bringing up-to-date the share of the home market held by imports of selected products in 1964 together with all the other comparisons of competitiveness shown in paragraphs 63(b) and 63(c) in the report of the National Economic Development Council inquiry into competitiveness entitled "Imported Manufactures", presented to the

Council in August 1965 and subsequently published by HMSO; and if he will include this estimate of the increase in the terms of trade since 1964 in the case of trade with *(a)* the EEC and *(b)* non-EEC countries, together with the increase in relative export unit values.

Mr. Eggar: Information to update the share held by imports of home markets sectors is not currently available. The terms of trade indices for United Kingdom trade *(a)* with EC countries and *(b)* with non-EC countries can be derived for years since 1988 from data in table A19 of the monthly review of external trade statistics—MRETS— which is available in the Library of the House. For earlier years, the series is available only for United Kingdom trade in total, from the Central Statistical offices; central shared database, access to which is available in the Library of the House. Relative export unit value indices, for manufactured exports in comparison with those of principal competitors, are published for recent years in table D5 of MRETS; comparable data are not available for 1964.

Consumer Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the reasons for the change in levels of United Kingdom output and employment in the United Kingdom consumer goods industries since 1990 and of the contribution made to this by imports; and if he will publish a table showing the change in the volume of imports, exports and home demand for consumer goods in the first quarter of 1994 compared with 1990, together with the numbers employed and his estimate of the net effect of the increase in imports on employment.

Mr. Eggar: It is not possible to split employment in the manufacturing industries into that which is specifically for the production of consumer goods. My Department does not make specific estimates of the impact of trade on output and employment.

The change in the volume of imports and exports in the first quarter of 1994 compared with 1990 is available from data published in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and on the Central Statistical Office database, which are available in the Library of the House. The equivalent change for output can be taken from the index of production which is also on the Central Statistical Office database. The trade data is based on a different classification from the output data and therefore it is not possible to construct a series showing home demand for consumer goods.

Welsh

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Consumer Council concerning the suspension of the chief executive of that council.

Mr. Ian Taylor: This was a management matter for the Welsh Consumer Council and the National Consumer Council. Whilst the councils kept my Department informed it was not an issue in which the Department would intervene.

Mail Services

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much income Post Office Counters generated from its contract with the Royal Mail in 1993–94 and in each of the five preceding years.

Mr. Eggar: Post Office Counters Ltd. income from its contract with Royal Mail was as follows:

Year	*Million £*
1993–94	221
1992–93	212
1991–92	212
1990-91	191

Figures for 1989-90 and 1988–89 are not available on a comparable basis.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of mail handled by the Royal Mail *(a)* in 1993–94 and *(b)* in each of the five years preceding that year was classified as *(a)* business mail and *(b)* domestic mail.

Mr. Eggar: Information relating to Royal Mail's traffic volumes by business sector is commercially confidential.

Mail Services

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the gross annual income of the Royal Mail was derived from handling mail *(a)* in 1993–94 and *(b)* in each of the five years preceding that year.

Mr. Eggar: The proportion of gross annual external income derived from handling mail was as follows:

Year	*Per cent.*
1993–94	97·9
1992–93	97·9
1991–92	97·9
1990–91	98·8
1989–90	97·8
1988–89	97·7

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the total annual income of Post Office Counters was generated from income derived from its contract with the Royal Mail *(a)* in 1993–94 and *(b)* in each of five years preceding that year; and what is the estimated percentage of income for 1994–95.

Mr. Eggar: The percentage of Post Office Counters Ltd. total annual income generated from its contract with Royal Mail was as follows:

Year	*Per cent.*
1993–94	20
1992–93	20
1991–92	21
1990–91	20

The figures for 1989–90 and 1988–89 are not available on a comparable basis. Forecasts of income are commercially confidential.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the gross annual income of the Royal Mail was derived from handling mail with a postage cost of less than £1 *(a)* in 1993–94 and *(b)* in each of the five years preceding that year.

Mr. Eggar: Royal Mail's income from individual market segments is commercially confidential.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fundraising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Heseltine: Between 1 January and 30 June 1994 Ministers in my Department made 33 overseas visits in their official capacity. Fundraising activities for the Conservative party are not part of our official duties.

Mining Subsidence

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) whether he will conduct a review of the costs incurred by householders whose properties are affected by mining subsidence in obtaining structural engineering reports;

(2) if he will conduct a review of the problems of household insurance for householders whose properties are affected by mining subsidence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I see no grounds for such a review. The Association of British Insurers has recently assured me that there is definitely no industry bar on writing subsidence cover in coal mining areas. The industry's general principles are that existing contracts will be offered for renewal at expiry, subject to the usual underwriting criteria on any cover renewal including features such as claims in the year, new material features etc, but such decisions are matters for the individual insurer in the light of its own criteria.

British Nuclear Fuels

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade at which precise place British Nuclear Fuels take title to the Purex radioactive nitric under contract for import from the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the contracting parties.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if British Nuclear Fuels plc or the predecessor fuel division of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has co-processed reactor grade plutonium from electricity board Magnox reactors with plutonium in spent fuel from the Calder Hall or Chapel Cross reactors.

Mr. Eggar: Co-processing at Sellafield of spent fuel from Calder Hall and Chapelcross, and from the reactors of the electricity generating boards ceased in 1986. Since then, such materials have been reprocessed separately.

Euratom Agreement

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received from the European Commission under the provisions of article 228 of the treaty on European Union in regard to the letter of 17 June from the United States Department of State to the Commission on the extension of the 1960 United States Euratom co-operation agreement.

Mr. Needham: The negotiations on a new nuclear co-operation agreement with the United States are being conducted pursuant to article 101 of the European Atomic Energy Community treaty and are unconnected with article 228 of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the treaty on European Union. My Department has received from the Commission a copy of the letter of 17 June from the US Secretary of State which forms part of the continuing negotiations between the Commission and the United States. A further negotiating meeting was held on 3 October.

Regional Sourcing

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that the regional sourcing proposals about which his Department is currently consulting do not undermine the position of existing businesses in the sourcing sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The regional supply network offices are encouraged to make use of existing businesses in the sourcing sector to assist in delivery of their services where they consider this appropriate. In addition, each office will be required to carry out a feasibility study on charging for its services before the end of its first year of operation.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent meetings his Department has had with representatives of manufacturing contacts; and what was the purpose of those meetings.

Mr. Eggar: My Department maintains a regular dialogue with a large number of manufacturing contacts to discuss a wide range of issues.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he has given to proposals from manufacturing contacts for the provision of an alternative service to his regional sourcing proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The service will be delivered through regional partnerships of existing business support organisations. They have been encouraged to consider ways in which they might co-operate with other bodies, including manufacturing contacts, in the provision of product sourcing services.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what charges will be made by those involved in his regional sourcing proposals to companies availing themselves of those services.

Mr. Eggar: I am currently awaiting detailed proposals from the prospective regional supply network offices, including their initial views on any charging policy. It is likely that it will not generally be appropriate for the offices to make charges initially. Each office will however be required to undertake a review of the feasibility of charging before the end of its first year of operation.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print;

(2) how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information amongst visually impaired people.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Green Paper on the Future of Postal Services is available on audio tape; Braille copies of the press notice and summary version issued when the Green Paper was published are also available. The cost to the Department of producing these alternative formats was £963.

Publicity has been given to the availability of these alternative formats through a press notice and Talking Newspaper Enterprises Ltd., which arranged publicity through a number of publications directed at the visually impaired.

Construction Industry

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the Latham report on the construction industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have welcomed the Latham report as making an important contribution to improving the competitiveness of the British construction industry.

Jordan

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clark) of 18 July, *Official Report*, column 22, what is the total sum now outstanding in the ECGD's accounts together with rolled-up interest in respect of defence sales to Jordan.

Mr. Needham: The amount of £255 million given in the reply to the hon. Member for Monklands, West is the estimated sum due to ECGD in respect of defence sales under the three rescheduling agreements. This figure comprises the rescheduled amounts of principal and contractual interest, plus an estimated amount of rolled up interest, accruing under the first two agreements, which is capitalised and will be payable on deferred terms under the third agreement.

Astra

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now reconsider his decision to exclude Mr. Stephan Adolph Kock from the disqualification proceedings concerning the directors of Astra board between 1986 to 1991.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under section 8 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 the Secretary of State may apply for the disqualification of directors if it appears from a report made by inspectors that it is in the public interest to do so. I have been advised that the report justifies proceedings only against those directors against who summons have been issued.

Overseas Investment

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the value of British investment overseas over the past 15 years; and what has been the value of inward investment into the United Kingdom over the same period.

Mr. Eggar: The figures refer to flows of direct investment into, and out of, the United Kingdom. This information is for the years 1978 to 1992, the latest available. Data for total cross-border investment transactions are available from the publication "The Pink Book—United Kingdom Balance of Payments", CSO, 1990 and 1994.

Year	[1]Flows of inward direct net investment to United Kingdom £ million	[1]Flows of outward direct net investment from United Kingdom £ million
1978	1,261	2,710
1979	1,740	3,035
1980	2,541	3,391
1981	980	4,671
1982	1,137	2,122
1983	2,063	3,498
1984	[2,3]–246	5,813
1985	4,416	8,625
1986	5,645	11,798
1987	8,986	19,159
1988	11,562	20,915
1989	17,405	21,491
1990	17,155	10,108
1991	8,418	9,304
1992	9,231	10,139

Notes

[1] Direct investment refers to investment that adds to, or deducts from or acquires, a lasting interest in an enterprise operating in an economy other than that of the investor, the investor's purpose being to have an effective voice in the management of the enterprise (taken here to be equivalent to a 20 per cent. holding or more in the foreign enterprise). Direct net investment is net of disinvestment and includes unremitted profits.

Other investments in which the investor does not have an effective voice in the management of the enterprise are mainly portfolio investments and these are not covered here. Cross-border investment in property (which is regarded as direct investment in national accounts) is not covered here, but is shown in the balance of payments.

[2] Prior to 1984 transactions of oil companies were excluded.

[3] A minus sign indicates net disinvestment (ie decrease in amount due to overseas countries)

Source:

CSO Business Monitor MA4 Overseas Transactions, 1987 and 1992.

Trunk Telephone System

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultation he has had with the Director General of Office of Telecommunications concerning the disturbance to the national trunk telephone system on 4 July, covered by telephone calls made to the tele-sales facility for the sale of M prefix personalised number plates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Issues relating to telecommunications services of this kind in the United Kingdom are a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications. I am aware that the hon. Member has raised his concerns with the Director General who has written to him in reply. I understand that safeguards put in place by BT to deal with the tele-sales facility in question prevented any threat of network failure.

Companies House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultation he has had with *(a)* trade and commercial organisations and *(b)* relevant trade unions in relation to the status and future functions and integrity of Companies House.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced on 19 July, *Official Report*, column *179*, that as part of the latest stage of the current review of Companies House's agency status, consultants are exploring the views of a range of trade and commercial organisations on the possibility of contracting out most of the services of Companies House.

I met relevant trade unions on 21 September and have invited them to meet me again before a final decision is taken.

Data Protection

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the Director-General of the Office of Electricity Supply and the data protection registrar in relation to the disclosure by public electricity suppliers of consumer information to third parties, including debt collection companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In his 10th annual report earlier this year, the data protection registrar highlighted the issue of the use of customer information collected by regional electricity companies. I understand that the Office of Electricity Regulation is presently in discussion with the registrar on this issue.

Filing Fees

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultation he has had with *(a)* the Registrar of Companies and *(b)* the Association of British Chambers of Commerce in relation to prospective cuts in the level of statutory filing fees at Companies House.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The fees are based on costs incurred by Companies House, and their level on recommendations made to me by the Registrar of Companies.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date statutory filing fees at Companies House were reduced; what consultation he has had with *his opposite number in the Commission of the European Union* in relation to the level of charges for statutory filing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The new lower fees apply with effect from 1 October 1994. The details and transitional arrangements are set out in the Companies (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994 No. 2217), and the European Economic Interest Grouping (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994 No. 2327). No consultations have taken place with the European Commission.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the gross percentage year-on-year change in the level of statutory filing fees at Companies House and its net change after deduction of retail price index inflation for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The main filing fees are for the registration of a new company, the change of name of an existing company, and a company's annual return. There were no changes in these fees in the years between 1975 and 1990, or between 1991 and 1994. Comparisons for each year separately are not therefore appropriate. Fee levels and date changes were introduced as follows.

Date of change	*Incorporation* £	*Name Change* £	*Annual Return* £
October 1994	20	20	18
July 1991	50	50	32
July 1990	50	40	25
June 1975	50	40	20

The RPI increase in the ten years to September 1994, the latest month for which data is available, was 61 per cent. This compares with fee changes as follows.

	Incorporation Per cent.	*Name Change Per cent.*	*Annual Return Per cent.*
Nominal change October 1994/1984	–60	–50	–10
RPI adjusted change	–75	–69	–44

Patent Office

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received in relation to the public sector guaranteed status of the Patent Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I have received and am reviewing representations from a range of interested parties on the current status of the Patent Office. No decision has yet been taken on the future of the Patent Office.

National Consumer Council

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much grant was given to the National Consumer council for each year since 1987.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The following table gives the grant-in-aid paid in each year since 1987 to the National Consumer Council:

Year	*Grant (£)*
1987–88	1,800,651
1988–89	1,843,097
1989–90	1,991,334
1990–91	2,225,599
1991–92	2,559,129
1992–93	2,929,827
1993–94	3,138,741

Note:

Figures include DTI contribution to NCC staff pension fund.

Source

National Consumer Council Annual Reports 1987/88–1993/94.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the grants given to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux for each year since 1987.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The following table gives the grant-in-aid paid in each year since 1987 to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux:

Year	*Grant (£)*
1987–88	8,028,000
1988–89	8,405,962
1989–90	8,999,971
1990–91	10,346,000
1991–92	11,085,000
1992–93	11,699,000
1993–94	12,252,700

Source:
National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux Annual Reports 1987–88–1993–94

London Underground

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that a company which both assembles in the United Kingdom and sources most of its components from the United Kingdom is given favourable consideration as the supplier of new rolling stock for London Underground's Northern Line.

Mr. Eggar: A "buy British regardless" policy would not serve the long-term competitiveness of firms in the United Kingdom and would be contrary to Community purchasing rules. I am pleased to note, however, that there is a strong United Kingdom presence amongst the bidders.

Atomic Energy Division

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the success rate of the Atomic Energy division in achieving project milestones on or ahead of time in *(a)* 1992–93 and *(b)* 1993–94; and if he will make a statement on the factors underlying this.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The proportion of project milestones in Atomic Energy Division's decommissioning and waste management programmes—DRAWMOPS and DRAWMS—which were achieved on or ahead of time was 56 per cent. in 1992–93 and 66 per cent. in 1993–94. The target for 1994–95 is 76 per cent.

The figures show a steady improvement in performance resulting from management improvements by the UKAEA's DRAWMOPS directorate and by Atomic Energy Division, including improved programme definition and more effective programme monitoring.

Nuclear Emergencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the relevant staff of *(a)* the Electricity and Nuclear Fuels division and *(b)* the Atomic Energy division have been trained to enable them to respond to an emergency at a civil nuclear site; and if he will set out the factors underlying this.

Mr. Charles Wardle: By the close of 1993–94, 95 per cent. of new staff of Atomic Energy Division had been trained, during their first nine months in post, to enable them to respond to an emergency at a civil nuclear site. This was achieved through participation in exercises. In addition, 90 per cent. of the staff of this division had, again by close of 1993–94, received further training by participating in more than one exercise. Due to organisational changes, training now covers relevant staff of both Electricity and Nuclear Fuels Division and Atomic Energy Division. Future statistics will be on the basis of both these divisions. The training is intended to ensure that the relevant Department of Trade and Industry staff are trained and able to respond in the most unlikely event of a civil nuclear emergency.

Biological Weapons Convention

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representation his Department had at the meeting held in Geneva on 19 to 30 September on the implementation of the biological weapons convention.

Mr. Heseltine: A special conference of the bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons convention was held in Geneva on 19–30 September to consider a possible verification regime for the convention. Because of the potential importance of this question for the biotechnology industry, an official of my Department formed part of the United Kingdom delegation which was led by the head of the Untied Kingdom disarmament delegation in Geneva.

Trade and Development Report

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evaluation he has made of the Trade and Development report 1994 produced by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in September; and whether he plans to make any response to the UNCTAD secretariat in respect of criticisms made of European Union trade policies in the report.

Mr. Ian Taylor: UNCTAD's 1994 trade and development report did not specifically address European trade policies. It did assert that industrialised countries should adopt more expansionist economic policies in order to stimulate global demand. In general we agree, but this approach needs to be in the context of consistent policies to reduce inflationary pressures in industrialised economies. This point was made during a recent meeting of the UNCTAD Trade Development Board in Geneva.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how his Department was represented at the annual meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency held in Vienna on 19 to 23 September; what proposals were put forward to the conference by the United Kingdom delegation; what proposals from other nations' delegations were accepted by the United Kingdom; and if he will put copies of documents submitted in the Library.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The United Kingdom delegation was led by the new United Kingdom governor to the IAEA, Mr Meadway, head of the DTI's Export Control and Non-Proliferation Division. In his statement on behalf of the United Kingdom, Mr Meadway reiterated Her Majesty's Government's full support for the objectives and principal activities of the agency, in particular in the areas of safeguards and nuclear safety. To this end the

United Kingdom was among the first to sign the nuclear safety convention which opened for signature during the conference.

The United Kingdom delegation took a full and active part during the conference making statements in support of measures to strengthen the agency's main activities and assisting the German delegation, on behalf of the European Community, in putting forward a resolution on the recent seizures of smuggled fissionable material.

A copy of the document produced by the IAEA containing resolutions and other decisions of the General Conference will be placed in the Library of the House when it becomes available.

Environmental Software

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what initiatives his Department has taken to promote environmental software to industry.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Department has provided grant support to the following projects relating to environmental software:

Project	*Scheme*
(i) The development of a software system for real-time monitoring and evaluation of discharges and emissions from industrial plant.	EUREKA - EUROENVIRON
(ii) The development of software to assist in the development, forward planning and management of river basins.	EUREKA - EUROENVIRON
(iii) The development of software to assist in the day-to-day management of river systems.	EUREKA - EUROENVIRON
(iv) The development of a software system to provide training for industrial management on environmental issues. The project includes a conference and exhibition with demonstrations in London on 25 October 1994 of environmental software.	DTI's Environmental Management Options Scheme (DEMOS)

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced the joint DTI/DoE environmental technology best practice programme on 7 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *149.* The programme was launched on 29 June 1994. The programme will, where appropriate, promote environmental software as part of its function of disseminating information on best practice in environmental technology and techniques.

EU Industry Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what matters were discussed, what decisions taken, and which were decided by vote, at the EU Industry Council in Brussels on 28 September.

Mr. Eggar: I attended the Industry Council in the morning of 28 September. This Council was followed in the afternoon by a joint Industry and Telecommunications Council which was attended by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology.

The Industry Council heard a report from the Commission on progress towards restructuring the Community's steel industry. The Commission said that although the market for steel had improved, capacity reductions were still essential and hoped that the final total would be close to the target of 19 million tonnes of reductions. The Commission proposed that if the steel industry failed to make progress on capacity reductions then the flanking measures aimed at alleviating the effects of restructuring should be ended. The Council agreed that a decision would be reached at the November Industry Council on this issue. The Commission also gave an oral monitoring report on the article 95 state aid decisions agreed in December 1993. I stressed that strict control of state aids is the key to successful restructuring of the industry.

The Council adopted a resolution calling on the Commission to follow up its integrated programme for small and medium-sized enterprised —SMEs— and stressing the need to improve the administrative and legal environment for SMEs. The resolution calls on the Commission to establish fora in which member states can share experience of national measures in favour of SMEs and to set up a committee to identify administrative and legal provisions which hamper the competitiveness of small firms.

On biotechnology, most member states agreed on the need for a regulatory framework more favourable to industrial investment and competitiveness, while at the same time maintaining appropriate safeguards. The Council welcomed the Commission's proposal for amending directive 90/219 and its intention to review directive 90/220 and encouraged the Commission to bring forward for discussion proposals for action in other areas.

The Council took note of the Commission's communication on an industrial competitiveness policy for the EU. A draft resolution is currently under discussion with a view to adoption at the November Industry Council.

The afternoon's joint Industry and Telecommunications Council was convened specifically to discuss the report of the Bangemann group on development of the Information Society in Europe and the Commission Communications issued in response to that report.

The joint Council adopted conclusions on the Commission Communication and noted the Commission's intention to submit proposals for the development of the Information Society. In particular, the Council noted the Commission's undertaking to present, by 1 November 1994, the first part of the Green Paper on liberalisation of the EU telecommunications infrastructure and the second part by 1 January 1995. The Council also noted that the Commission was taking account of social and cultural activities and invited the Commission to assess the economic and social implications of its proposals.

The Commission reported briefly on preparations for the G7 conference on information super-highways, to be held in February 1995, and informed the Council of progress in following up the November 1991 Council resolution on electronics, information and communications technologies.

There were no votes taken at either Council.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the United Kingdom signed the convention on nuclear safety opened for signature in Vienna on 20 September; what estimate he has made of the likely cost to the United Kingdom each year to implement the convention; and if he will make a statement on how he intends to keep Parliament informed of the United Kingdom compliance with the reporting rules contained in the convention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The United Kingdom signed the convention on Nuclear Safety at the general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna on 20 September. The convention will enter into force once it has been both signed and ratified by 22 states, including 17 states with at least one civil nuclear power plant. Arrangements for the reporting and reviewing process outlined in the convention will be decided by the contracting parties at a preparatory conference to be held within six months of the convention's entry into force. Until then, no firm estimate can be made of the likely annual costs to the United Kingdom of implementation of the convention. Nevertheless, the Government do not expect that they will be substantial; most are likely to be administrative costs associated with the peer review process. Once the mechanisms for reporting and reviewing are in place, I shall ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for keeping Parliament informed.

Non-Fossil Fuel Levy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the non-fossil fuel levy paid by regional electricity companies on supplies in the year ended March was paid to *(a)* the nuclear industry, *(b)* the non-fossil fuel obligation-I, *(c)* the non-fossil fuel obligation-II, and *(d)* any other recipients; what was the total size of the non-fossil fuel levy in 1993–94; and what it is expected to be in 1994–95.

Mr. Eggar: Payments from the fossil fuel levy to nuclear and renewable generators in 1993–94 were as follows:

	£ million	*Percentage*
Nuclear generators	1,166	94·5
Renewable generators (1990 Order)	30	2·4
Renewable generators (1991 Order)	38	3·1
Total levy payments	1,234	100

Source:
Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency Ltd.

It is too early to know the level of receipts form the fossil fuel levy in respect of 1994–95, or the allocation of those receipts between nuclear and renewable generators.

Plug and Socket Harmonisation

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the effect on UK manufacturing and future of trade of proposed electrical plug and socket harmonisation.

Mr. Eggar: No formal proposal has been made. To be prepared for such a proposal, however, the Government commissioned a report by the Building Services Research and Information Association on the "Cost and Benefits in the UK of Plug and Socket Harmonisation in Europe". Copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Scuttled Barge (Hall Sands)

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which company owned the barge which was scuttled off Hall Sands in 1993; and what is its current status.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Department understands that the barge had been acquired by Mr. G. A. Lawrence before it arrived off Hallsands and that the salvage of its remains has been undertaken on his behalf.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 18 October 1994

TRANSPORT

Coastguards

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the last five years the locations of any coastguard stations which have been closed.

Mr. Norris: In the last five years the following coastguard rescue centres have been closed: Peterhead in 1989 and Ramsey in 1989.

A13

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what additional works would be necessary to accommodate on the Ironbridge spanning the River Lea, on the A13 at Canning Town, the eight traffic lines of the adjacent Canning Town flyover at its slip roads.

Mr. Norris: As this is an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Nigel Spearing, dated 17 October 1994:

Steven Norris, the Minister for Transport in London, has asked me to write to you about your question in the House on the A13 Ironbridge at Canning Town and the additional work which would be necessary for the bridge to accommodate eight lanes.

The existing bridge is not wide enough to carry eight lanes to current standards. There is no satisfactory way of modifying the existing structure to provide the necessary width. New bridges on each side of the existing structure were, therefore, included in the published proposals for the A13 Ironbridge to Canning Town Improvement and these were examined at the public inquiry in June this year. It is now for the Secretaries of State for the Environment and Transport jointly to decide whether the proposals should proceed.

Construction Site Security

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision his Department has made in its 1994–95 budget for increased site security on its construction projects.

Mr. Watts: This question relates to the operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. John Spellar, dated 17 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the provision made in 1994–95 budgets for increased site security on construction sites.

We have made no specific provision within the Agency budget for this year for any possible increased security measures that may be necessary at our road construction sites. This of course, does not mean that we fail to recognise that there have been and will continue to be problems arising out of certain actions by anti-road protestors. We accept that some sites may pose difficulties. For instance in the case of the proposed Newbury Bypass we advised tenderers that they should allow a provisional sum of £1 million for security precautions when submitting their bids.

We shall of course advise tenderers of the need for any special security provisions at other sites where we consider this to be necessary.

Roll-on-roll-off Vessels

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken to review the regulations concerning the adequacy of the attachments between the main hulls and opening bow doors of roll-on-roll off vessels, other than those part of or related to their hinge or lifting mechanisms; and under what current International Maritime Organisation requirements such doors and their fittings are constructed.

Mr. Norris: An urgent precautionary examination of the operating, locking and securing mechanism of all bow doors on roll-on-roll-off passenger ferries is being carried out. If that evaluation or any other evidence shows that the requirements are inadequate then a review of the regulations will be undertaken. Regulations 10, 20, and 23–2 of chapter II-1 of the international convention on the safety of life at sea 1974, and regulation 1 of the international convention on load lines 1966, apply to bow doors.

M25

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take action to ascertain the proportion of private cars moving on the M25, at *(a)* normal and *(b)* peak flows where overall costs are met, in whole or in part, by means other than the taxable income of their owners or drivers.

Mr. Watts: This information is not available from the Department's travel survey data in the form requested. Relevant statistical information on company assistance with travel is available from both the 1991 London area travel survey and the national travel survey. In both cases, however, information is collected from household surveys and is generally used in the form of percentages of persons or households receiving such assistance.

The LATS survey results enable the identification of company car trips using the M25 during the course of the trip, but only for cars owned by London residents, who account for a third of car driver trips using the M25. This cannot be converted into proportion of M25 traffic flows. There are no current plans to collect this information.

Impact Bans

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the research conducted by the Transport Research Laboratory into the effectiveness of side-impact bars in motor vehicles.

Nr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The Transport Research Laboratory presented papers on its extensive work on side impact at several conferences between 1987 and 1989. None related specifically to side impact bars but a very stiff-sided car was tested and was not found to be the best solution. I will arrange for copies to be sent to the hon. Member.

Airports

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy in respect of maximising the underused capacity of Stansted airport.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The Government wish to see best use made of Stansted's capacity by airlines able and willing to use the airport. There are substantial traffic rights for flights to and from Stansted, but decisions on which services to provide must be a question for airlines based on their own commercial judgment. The Government recently announced that they were opening up Stansted further to transatlantic flights by United Kingdom and United States airlines to any point in the US.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make available the consultation document entitled "Civil Enclave at RAF Northolt" and other related statements relating to the facilities and possible wider civil use of RAF Northolt to the inspector who is conducting the inquiry into the application by the British Airports Authority for an additional terminal at Heathrow;

(2) if he will publish the consultation document entitled "Civil Enclave at RAF Northolt";

(3) to whom the consultation document entitled "Civil Enclave at RAF Northolt" has been circulated and made available.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* The consultation document on a civil enclave at RAF Northolt was circulated to business aviation interests who expressed an interest in use of RAF Northolt, and to business aviation organisations. It was made available to all other interested parties for information and a copy of the document was placed in the House Library. The consultation period ended on 19 August.

If the inspector at the terminal 5 inquiry considers it relevant, my Department will naturally provide a copy of the consultation document.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) pursuant to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, column 256, if the Minister's letter on the subject to the chief executive of Manchester airport of 14 July was drafted before the parliamentary reply; what representations there have been from Manchester airport about the Minister's letter; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he now expects to respond to the third report of the Transport Committee HC (1993–94) 47 in regard to liberalising access to Manchester airport and other airports outside the south-east of England; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what further representations his Department has had from the chief executive of Manchester airport in regard to liberalising access to the airport; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* I have written to the right hon. Member.

Agency Staff

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are currently employed by *(a)* the Driving Standards Agency, *(b)* the Vehicle Inspectorate, *(c)* the Transport Research Laboratory, *(d)* the Coastguard Agency and *(e)* the Marine Safety Agency; and how many jobs have been lost in each of those agencies in each year since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Figures for manpower in each year since the agency concerned was set up are shown in table A1.2.2 of "Transport Report 1994".

European Transport Network

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in relation to paragraph 13 of his departmental explanatory memorandum to the proposal COM (94) 106 of the Commission of the European Economic Community for a system for trans-European transport networks under which article of the treaties, under which voting rules, and in which Council of Ministers decision will be made as to the level of financial support for particular parts of the designated networks.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* Financial support for projects on the trans-European transport network may be provided under a number of existing Community instruments, including the structural and cohesion funds, where appropriate, and via the European Investment bank and European investment fund, as well as from national Government and private sector sources. Specific provision for the funding of projects of common interest on the network was made in article 129c of the treaty on European union. Under this provision the Commission has put forward a draft financing regulation covering projects in the telecommunications and energy sectors as well as transport. This is now under consideration in the Council. As currently proposed, voting in the Committee of Member States to be established by the regulation, and where necessary in the Council, would be by qualified majority.

Road Signs

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department is currently taking to survey (i) road directional signs and (ii) other road signs in relation to their condition and clarity on *(a)* motorways, *(b)* other trunk roads and *(c)* other roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Watts: As this is now an operational matter for the Highways Agency, the chief executive will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Peter Pike, dated 18 October 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for information on the maintenance of road signs. As this is now an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I am replying to your question.

The routine inspection and maintenance of traffic signs on the motorway and trunk road network are undertaken by the Highways Agency's agent authorities - mainly county councils - acting on its behalf. Standards are set by Codes of Practice issued by the Department and the Agency.

The Highways Agency has produced a Road User's Charter which specifically states that road signs will be cleaned and maintained in order to be clear and visible at all times. Levels of performance by our agents in applying the standards are therefore monitored against the objectives of the Charter and the terms of the formal agency agreements.

For other roads the responsibility rests directly with the local highways authorities. Neither the Department nor the Agency has any powers to instruct them how to maintain their road signs but they are encouraged to keep signs in good order and clear, especially in winter.

I hope this information is helpful.

Road Construction (Safety)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *479*, what is the average costs assessed by his Department of *(a)* building one mile of new dual carriageway trunk road, *(b)* building one mile of new single carriageway trunk road, *(c)* equipping one mile of dual carriageway trunk road with safety barriers, *(d)* equipping one mile of single carriageway trunk road with safety barriers, *(e)* equipping one mile of dual carriageway trunk road with lighting, *(e)* equipping one mile single carriageway trunk road with lighting, *(g)* a single case of serious injury requiring temporary hospitalisation caused by a road accident, *(h)* a single case of serious injury requiring permanent hospitalisation caused by a road accident and (i) a single case of death caused by a road accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Eric Illsley, dated 18 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning road construction and accident costs.

The road construction cost information is shown below at 1993 prices

Road Type	*Average Building cost*	*Safety Fencing*	*Lighting*
2 lane dual all purpose	£5·5 million	£44,000	£86,000
Single carriageway	£2·2 million	£10,000	£50,000

The cost of building a road varies from site to site and is dependent on the standard of provision. The above figures are average costs per mile including safety fencing and lighting but do not include the cost of design or VAT. The total length of safety fencing provided varies from scheme to scheme, depending on the type of barrier, type of scheme and obstacles crossed; the costs given are based on average cost of providing safety fencing in the past.

The information on the cost of injuries is not available in the format you requested; however, there are standard monetary values for use in valuing the savings of accidents and these cover fatal, serious and slight injuries. A fatal injury is defined as one which results in a death within 30 days of a road accident. A serious injury is one which results in the person involved being detained as an "in-patient" or sustaining fractures, crushings etc. requiring medical treatment, including those causing death after 30 days of a road accident. A slight injury is defined as one which is other than those classified as fatal or serious.

The values for these injuries at 1992 prices are given below:

Injuries	
Fatal	£715,330
Serious	£74,480
Slight	£6,080

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those sites of special scientific interest which fall within section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in respect of which he has informed the Nature Conservation Agency of road building proposals.

Mr. Watts: This question relates to the operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms. Joan Walley, dated 18 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the list of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in respect of which the Nature Conservation agency has been informed of road building proposals.

The statutory body with responsibility for SSSIs is English Nature. They are consulted during the development of all schemes in the Trunk Road Programme and all trunk road improvement schemes which may affect a SSI. English Nature have been informed that the SSIs on the list at Annex A may be affected by the announced preferred route.

A1

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times repairs and works have been carried out on that section of the A1 known as the Doncaster bypass during the last 10 years; and on which dates disruption to traffic flows was necessitated.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency and I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Robert Banks, dated 18 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts, has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about road works during the last 10 years on the Doncaster Bypass. This is an operational matter for which the Highways Agency is responsible.

I have taken the Doncaster Bypass to be the 17 mile motorway stretch of the A1 between Blyth and Redhouse which was built about 30 years ago and has been undergoing phased reconstruction since 1987 to ensure that it remains safe to carry the large volumes of traffic which use it and, in some places, to deal with the effects of mining subsidence.

The stages in this reconstruction work were planned to maximise the life of the carriageway while limiting the length under repair at any one time so as to minimise disruption to traffic flows. The stages have been as follows:

J34–J35 (Blyth to Wadworth)

1985–86—southern section, southbound carriageway resurfaced to extend its life;

June—October 1990: southern section, northbound carriageway reconstructed;

December 1991—April 1992: central section reconstructed and

June 1992—November 1992: northern section reconstructed.

J35 (Wadworth)

June—August 1991 short section reconstructed near the intersection.

J35–36 (Wadworth to Warmsworth)

October 1990—May 1991: reconstructed.

J36—37 (Warmsworth)—Marr)

June—November 1989: southern section reconstructed;

June—October 1994 northern section reconstructed. This contract was completed three weeks early on 15 October.

J37–J38 (Marr—Redhouse)

December 1987—May 1988: reconstructed

May—August 1990: repairs to Leys Hill Bridge.

Two further contracts will be needed later this financial year to complete the programme of reconstruction and repair on the Doncaster Bypass. These are:

J34–J35: southern section, southbound carriageway reconstruction (starting February 1995); and

J36–J37: reconstruction of Albert Road Bridge (starting December 1994).

In the second case, all traffic lanes will be kept open by using the hard shoulder.

In all cases these essential maintenance and repair works have been planned and carried out to minimise disruption to traffic flow. We also publicise schemes in advance so that road users can plan their journeys to avoid any likely delays, especially at peak times. For your information, I enclose a copy of our current leaflet about road works in Yorkshire and Humberside.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Gas Standards

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has *(a)* to modify or amend the Gas Acts that require gas undertakings to maintain a specified standard of service and safety and *(b)* to make changes to the standards themselves.

Mr. Eggar: The Government intend, subject to the availability of parliamentary time, to introduce legislation to provide the basis for the new regulatory system for gas supply to come into operation by April 1996.

We envisage requiring all gas suppliers to adhere to certain core standards of service. These would include codes of practice for providing special services for older and disabled customers, debt and disconnection procedures and the provision of energy efficiency advice. Safety procedures are separately regulated by the Health and Safety Commission.

Shipyards

Dr. Godman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the designated shipyards which are able to seek financial assistance by way of the European Community's seventh directive and the shipbuilding intervention fund;

(2) if he will list the United Kingdom shipyards which have received financial assistance by way of the European Community's seventh directive on the shipbuilding intervention fund since 1 January 1993; what were the amounts paid to each yard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: To be eligible for shipbuilding intervention fund assistance, a yard must be a merchant shipbuilder and have built merchant ships of 100 gross registered tonnes or more during the three years prior to the date of an application. There is no designated list of eligible yards, but certain yards designated as warship yards and sold by British Shipbuilders prior to 1987 are excluded from assistance. DTI Ministers obtained the European Commission's approval exceptionally for intervention funding for the Swan Hunter warship yard for the construction of commercial vessels.

To provide the names of those shipyards which have received assistance, and the amounts paid to them, would breach the Department's commercial confidentiality rules.

Shipbuilding intervention fund payments to United Kingdom merchant shipyards since 1 January 1993 amount to nearly £22 million.

West of England Development Agency

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of support he has offered the West of England development agency.

Mr. Eggar: I am pleased to announce that in addition to the grants for the regional development organisations announced on 17 March and 17 April, I offered on 26 August £100,000 of grant in aid to the new West of England development agency for its overseas inward investment activities, covering the west of England—Avon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire. The grant in aid is linked to the performance of specific inward investment promotion activities on behalf of the Invest in Britain bureau.

The West of England development agency is an initiative by the West of England Partnership to establish for the first time an inward investment agency for the West of England. The centre is being set up with support from county economic partnerships of Avon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, covering local authorities, training and enterprise councils, chambers of commerce, the Confederation of British Industry, the Trade Union Congress and the private sector, and my Department. Its aims are to attract inward investment on behalf of the five counties and to promote the west of England to enhance economic prosperity throughout the region.

Radiocommunications Agency

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set his Department's radiocommunications agency for 1994–95.

Mr. Heseltine: The targets I have set my Department's radiocommunications agency for 1994–95 appear on pages 13 and 14 of its annual reports and accounts for 1993–94, which were laid before the House yesterday.

Accounts Services Agency

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set his Department's accounts services agency for 1994–95.

Mr. Heseltine: On 11 February 1994, *Official Report*, columns *505-6*, my hon. Friend, the Minister for Industry and Energy announced that the services provided to the Department by its accounts services agency were to be contracted out. To ensure that it has a range of targets to focus on whilst this process is being completed, I have set it the following targets for 1994–95. They also appear in the agency's annual report and accounts for 1993–94 which were laid before the House on 13 July 1994 (HC523):

To continue to recover its full costs from income for customer work;

To fulfil its operational commitments without calling on the Department to provide a net cash requirement in vote terms;

To achieve a 4 per cent. unit cost reduction over last year based on a mix of services that are provided. The percentage reduction achieved by 30 September to be at least two per cent.;

To make 97 per cent. of all payments within three working days of receipt of the authorisation to pay;

To bank all cheques within 36 hours of receipt by the agency, with at least 75 per cent. of cheques being banked within eight hours of receipt.

At the end of each month to ensure that all notified transactions are properly recorded on the Department's financial management information system by the start of the fifth working day of the following month; that operating statements are produced and despatched by the start of the sixth working day of the following month.

In addition, I expect the chief executive of the agency to continue to reply within 10 working days to all letters from Members of Parliament delegated to him for reply.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Domestic Violence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the projects aimed at preventing domestic violence to be funded by the Home Office programme development unit over the next three years; and the amount of funding to be given in each case.

Mr. Maclean: Domestic violence projects currently receiving funding from the programme development unit are listed. The unit's programme for 1995–98 has not been decided.

Current projects	*3-year grant*
Leeds Inter-Agency Project, to November 95	£277,000
Islington Domestic Violence Matters, to September 95	£330,000
Lewisham SAVE Elder Abuse, to December 95	£106,000
Keighley Youth Education Project, to August 95	£36,000

Electricity Generation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the amount of natural gas and imported coal respectively, expressed in units of volume or weight, and heat used in the United Kingdom in 1983 for the generation of electricity together with the amounts in 1993; and what is the estimate in respect of the difference in heat units used and the consequent loss of direct and indirect employment.

Mr Eggar *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* The amounts of imported coal and natural gas used to generate electricity in the UK are as follows:

	Imported Coal[1]		*Natural Gas*	
	Thousand tonnes	*Thousand tonnes of oil equivalent*[2]	*Million therms*	*Thousand tonnes of oil equivalent*[2]
1983	471	270	83	210
1993	4,652	2,780	3,021	7,610

[1] These figures include an estimate of coal imported by autogenerators.

[2] A tonne of oil equivalent is defined as 10^7 kilocalories or 397 therms.

Estimates of the employment effects of fuel switching by the electricity industry between 1983 and 1993 are not available. The March 1993 White Paper, "The Prospects for Coal: Conclusions of the Government's Coal Review" noted, in paragraph 5.14:

> "Over time, as the economy adjusts and redundant workers find new employment, the loss of jobs from pit closures would be broadly matched by compensating developments elsewhere. New jobs might be in different industries, and to some extent in different areas, but overall employment would return broadly to its previous level".

DEFENCE

Service Women (Pregnancies)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the sums of financial compensation paid to former members of the armed services who were judged by industrial tribunals to have been dismissed unfairly because of their pregnancies; and what was the commissioned or non-commissioned status of those women who have received these sums of money.

Mr. Soames: Up to 4 October, 121 payments totalling £3,300,000 have been made to seven officers—average £43,665—and 114 other ranks—average £25,577—as a result of industrial tribunal decisions on compensation for dismissal on the ground of pregnancy. However, tribunal awards represent only a small proportion of the 2,745 pregnancy claims which have so far been settled at an overall average of about £10,000—all ranks.

The appeals lodged previously by my Department have resulted in the issue of helpful guidance by the Employment Appeals Tribunal. The indications are that tribunals are now making lower levels of award.

Clothing and Textile Authority

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the Defence Clothing and Textile Authority.

Mr. Soames: The Defence Clothing and Textile Authority, comprising some 540 staff, is currently located at seven main sites across the country. Following an examination of the business structure of the DCTA and investment appraisal, it has been concluded that collocation on a single site will allow the introduction of new business methods. The resulting efficiencies should lead to a streamlined structure and savings of up to 117 posts.

I have therefore decided to accept, as the basis for consultation with the trades unions and other interested parties, the recommendation that staff from the existing sites be collocated on one site at Caversfield, Bicester, currently part of the RAF Bicester site. Final decisions will be taken only in the light of representations made during the consultation period. A copy of the consultative document is being placed in the Library of the House.

HEALTH

Blood Donations

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* voluntary and *(b)* paid blood donations were made in each year since 1990; and how many in each category were used as (i) blood and (ii) plasma.

Mr. Sackville: This country is self-sufficient in blood obtained from our voluntary, unpaid donors and we do not obtain supplies from other sources. The last year for which complete information is available centrally about the number and usage of voluntary donations is 1993. Complete information is not available centrally for earlier years.

In 1993 there were a total of 2,312,000 donations of whole blood and 120,000 plasmapheresis donations.

An individual donation may be put to a number of uses as a number of components may be derived from it. In 1993 the figures for the use of donations were:

Whole blood—106,000;
Red cell components—1,959,000;
Platelets—842,000;
Fresh frozen plasma—266,000.

In addition, some 486,000 litres of plasma were recovered from whole blood donations and 60,000 litres of plasma from plasmapheresis donations.

Employment (Children)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of whether current laws affecting the employment of children are detrimental to their education or wider social development.

Mr. Bowis: I believe the existing legislative framework provides sufficient protection to children who work but if the hon. Lady has evidence to the contrary I hope that she will write to us about any example of this.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Gummer: Publications currently available from my Department in large format print, audio tape and Braille are:

Council Tax

A guide to the new tax for local government
Valuation and banding
Liability, discounts and exemptions
How to appeal
The transitional reduction scheme

Where publications are made available in these formats, every effort is made by my Department to ensure that the relevant agencies and voluntary bodies are involved.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information amongst visually impaired people.

Mr. Gummer: For the period referred to the Department spent a total of £68,224 including VAT and all levies, on the production and distribution of public information in formats suitable for use by the visually impaired. A breakdown for each financial year is not available. This figure includes any costs associated with publicising the availability of this information through the appropriate agencies and voluntary bodies.

Elephants

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent information assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the international ban on trade in elephant products, including ivory, in reducing poaching in Africa.

Sir Paul Beresford: There is general agreement that elephant poaching declined significantly in a number of African countries following the 1989 decision to ban international trade in elephant products and that the ban made an important contribution to this decline, though it was not the only factor.

The latest position appears to be less encouraging. Poaching of the rhinoceros has continued and, in some places, grown in intensity during the same period even though there is a ban on international trade in rhino products. A study being carried out in nine African elephant range states, covering all the African regions, by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources African elephant specialist group and TRAFFIC International should give the most up-to-date assessment on illegal killing of elephants. A report is expected shortly.

Construction Industry

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the Latham report on the construction industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I refer to hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) on 17 October, *Official Report*, column *19*.

Market Franchise Rights

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what proposals for provisions in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill he is bringing forward on market franchise rights.

Mr. Curry: Following the decision to withdraw the then clauses 22, 23 and 24 on market franchise rights from the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Industry expressed the hope that the Government would be able to come forward at a later stage with fresh proposals on the deregulation of market franchise rights, which enjoyed a widespread measure of support among interested parties.

The Government remain of the view that the common law on market franchise rights is antiquated. Interested parties do not dispute that the law needs revision, but say that any review would need to be more considered.

In view, however, of the very short time remaining for consideration of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill in Parliament, the Government are not intending to make changes to existing law in the context of the current Bill.

TREASURY

Financial Services

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes to the memorandum of understanding between the United Kingdom and United States authorities in financial services have taken place following the transfer of some Government financial services functions from the Department of Trade and Industry to Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr. Nelson: The signatories to the memorandum of understanding between the United States Securities and Exchange Commission and Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Department of Trade and Industry and Securities and Investments Board considered that a revision to the procedures on communication between the United Kingdom and United States authorities was required. It was not, however, necessary to amend the MoU to accomplish this. Instead, an undertaking was made by all parties to the MoU on 29 April 1994 that the necessary procedural changes would be made and that the parties to the MoU intend to co-operate fully under the MoU.

Copies of the memorandum of understanding have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Overseas Assets

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the stock of United Kingdom net overseas assets and the interest and dividend income from those assets for each year since 1979; and if he will explain any sudden or large variation in these figures.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* Figures for the stock of United Kingdom net overseas assets and the interest and dividend income from those assets are published in the CSO publication, "The Pink Book 1994", available through HMSO. They are also available from the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. The net figures are the difference between two very large numbers, each of which can be measured only imperfectly and are subject to a number of variations. Several factors contribute to these variations, including exchange rate fluctuations, changes in prices, interest rate movements, and domestic and overseas profitability.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* her policies and *(b)* her Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if she will publish the performance indicators by which her Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if she will set out her targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Jack: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high quality business support across the country.

This Department has continued to contribute significantly to the process. For example:

i) the new marketing development scheme, providing £10 million over the next three years, will assist the marketing effort of all those in the food chain including individual farmers or collaborative groups.

ii) MAFF's market task force engages in a number of initiatives offering marketing help to business: the processing and marketing grant, with its requirement that farmers must share in the economic benefits, was reopened for applications on 18 October; the task force also runs seminars to stimulate marketing thinking in individual sectors and stands ready to discuss ideas for developing the marketing performance of anyone's business;

iii) a MAFF guide, "Success With a Small Food Business", has been issued to help small food producers to set up and develop their businesses;

iv) MAFF, through "Food From Britain", continues to provide advice and assistance to groups of speciality food producers. "Food From Britain" also provides export advice and assistance for the food industry, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises;

v) "The Continental Challenge", a major initiative we ran in January this year, highlighted opportunities for United Kingdom suppliers to exploit continental retail outlets. A wide range of companies participated and "Food From Britain" has been maintaining the momentum generated.

vi) I chaired a seminar with representatives of the fishing industry to discuss the problems of supply and demand in the market. We have also encouraged complementary initiatives by the Sea Fish Industry Authority to improve the marketing of fish, which would be of considerable benefit to the many small firms in the industry. These have included their conference on "Catching for the Market" and the subsequent establishment of a task force;

vii) an amendment to The Corn Returns Act 1882 is proposed which will exempt businesses purchasing small annual tonnages of British cereals direct from growers from the duty of having to make a return;

viii) an organic aid scheme was launched in England on 1 July to encourage conversion to organic farming methods. This is likely to be of interest to many small farmers. The rates of aid are structured so as to assist the small producer by giving an extra £30 per hectare per year for the first five hectares.

ix) meetings with panels of small businessmen continued to be held to enable Ministers to hear at first hand the views of small businessmen on the regulatory burden.

All the schemes operated by this Department are closely monitored. New schemes will be announced as they emerge. Reports on particular schemes are published from time to time.

Live Animals (Imports)

Mr. Burden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *446*, what action she is taking to ensure that the laws governing the import of live animals are rigorously adhered to.

Mrs. Browning: Local authorities are responsible for enforcing animal health and welfare legislation in Great Britain in respect of imported animals. In addition, the state veterinary service is conducting a significant number of checks on imported animals at their final destinations and continues to monitor imports at south and east coast ports on a regular basis.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people.

Mr. Jack: As part of its wider "Foodsense" campaign, MAFF has spent £23,000 since 1993 on producing information in alternative formats for visually impaired people. Availability has been publicised through the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether the members of the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee are required to declare their commercial and non-commercial interests;

(2) if she will publish the commercial and non-commercial interests of the members of the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 17 May *Official Report*, column *446*, for what reason members of the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee are not required to provide details of consultancies held; and how this practice differs from that applied to other advisory committees for which she is responsible.

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 19 July 1994]*: Members of the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee are appointed for their relevant experience and scientific expertise in this very specialised field. Appointments are made in accordance with the information set out in "Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NCPBs): A Guide to Departments". Members are not required to declare their commercial and non-commercial interests as this is a scientific advisory committee with no trading or financial objectives. However, in the interests of open Government the members of SEAC have been asked for this information and the interests declared are listed in the following table:

Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee

Member	*Commercial interests*		*Non commercial interests*	
	Name of company	*Nature of interest*	*Name of company*	*Nature of interest*
Dr. D. A. J. Tyrrell, Chairmam	Reckitt and Colman	Consultant	None	None
	Smith Kline Beecham	PEP Shareholder		
	Procter and Gamble	Editorial work		
Dr. R. G. Will, Deputy Chairman	None	None	Department of Health	Grant Holder
			Scottish Home and Health Dept.	Grant Holder
Prof. I. Allen	None	None	Multiple Sclerosis Society	Grant Holder
Prof. F. Brown	None	None	None	None
Dr. W. D. Hueston	None	None	None	None
Dr. R. H. Kimberlin	Petfood Industry (world-wide)	Adviser	European Commission	Adviser
	Pharmaceutical Industry (world-wide)	Adviser	Meat and Livestock Commission	Adviser
			United Nations (Food and Agriculture) Dept.	Adviser
			Office International des Epizooties	Adviser
			National Governments in Europe, Americas and Australasia	Adviser
			World Health Organisation	Adviser
Mr. D. B. Pepper	Veterinary Pharmaceutical Industry	Freelance consultant	None	None
	Veterinary Defence Society Ltd.	Claims Consultant		
Dr. W. A. Watson				

Set-aside

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent in each European Union country in £ sterling, and what was the take-up in hectares, in 1993 on *(a)* the set-aside part of the arable area payments scheme or its equivalent and *(b)* set-aside measures introduced prior to the common agricultural policy reform of May 1992; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[pursuant to the reply, 4 July 1994, c. 29-30]:* I wish to clarify the figures given for expenditure on the five-year set-aside scheme. First, the payment figures, which were the latest available at the time of reply, relate to payments made between October and December 1993 and do not necessarily reflect payments made on all land set-aside under the scheme during 1993, as payments are made at different periods in different member states. Secondly, the payment figures given for five-year set-aside represent the element of member states' total payments which is funded by the EU. This is approximately 60 per cent. of total payments. Figures for total payments are not available. In the case of the arable area payments scheme, the majority of payments in all member states were made by the end of December and are 100 per cent. EU funded, so the figures given more closely reflect total expenditure. The updated figures show EU-funded expenditure under both schemes up to April 1994.

Arable Area Payments Scheme

Member State	*Area Set Aside ('000 ha)*	*Payments* [1]*('000 ecu)*	*Sterling Equivalent (rounded) (£'000)*
Belgium	19	6,399	4,880
Denmark	205	57,483	43,833
Fed Rep of Germany	1,063	321,394	245,077
Greece	17	2,683	2,046
Spain	909	135,908	103,636
France	1,589	517,023	394,253
Republic of Ireland	24	—	—
Italy	207	39,973	30,481
Luxembourg	2	395	301
Netherlands	8	2,754	2,100
Portugal	78	6,435	4,907
United Kingdom	556	169,948	129,593
Total	4,674	1,260,395	961,107

[1] Ecu/hectare payment rates are based on historical regional yields and are different in each member states.

Five Year Set-Aside Scheme

Member State	*Area Set Aside ('000 ha)*	*Payments ('000 ecu)*	*Sterling Equivalent (rounded) (£'000)*
Belgium	1	195	149
Denmark	7	-2	-1·5
Fed Rep of Germany	415	83,043	63,324
Greece	1	—	—
Spain	95	6,534	4,982
France	214	9,876	7,531
Republic of Ireland	2	210	160
Italy	639	171,169	130,524
Luxembourg	—	15	11
Netherlands	15	3,133	2,389
Portugal	—	—	—
United Kingdom	133	19,721	15,038
Total	1,522	293,895	224,107

Note:

Sterling equivalents are calculated at the same exchange rate as applied when the previous answer was given (£1—1·3114 ecu) for case of comparison, since then however the exchange rate has changed to £1=1·306 ecu.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Shannon-Erne Waterway

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expenses were incurred for security purposes during official opening of the Shannon-Erne waterway on 23 May in the presence of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Foreign Affairs Minister from the Irish Republic.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Invalidity Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many women aged between 60 and 65 years have had the suspension of their invalidity benefit lifted on the grounds of hardship since the Government challenged the decision made by a social security commissioner in the case of Mrs. Graham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive Mr. Alex Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Alex Wylie to Dr. Norman A. Godman, dated 17 October 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your parliamentary question on the number of women aged between 60 and 65 who have had the suspension of their invalidity benefit lifted on hardship grounds as a result of the Graham case.

In Northern Ireland the suspension was lifted in a total of eight cases.

Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been expended in each of the last five years on *(a)* extensions to the water mains reticulation system, *(b)* improvements to the existing system, *(c)* new sewage treatment plants and *(d)* improvements to existing sewage treatment plants; what are the sums available for each such purpose in the current year; what are his projections for the next two years.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information is as follows:

	(a) Extensions to Water Mains £000's	*(b)* Improvements to Existing System £000's	*(c)* New Sewage Treatment Plants £000's	*(d)* Improvements to Existing Sewage Treatment Plants £000's
1989–90[1]	—	—	—	—
1990–91	2,508	547	[2]3,873	
1991–92	2,208	561	[2]5,974	
1992–93	2,055	639	[2]8,855	
1993–94	2,245	462	[2]14,657	
1994–95(Estimate)	2,312	476	14,850	917
1995–96 (Estimate)	2,393	493	6,000	8,414
1996–97 (Estimate)	2,453	505	13,400	10,981

Notes

[1] Prior to 1990 expenditure records were kept in a format which would allow the requested information for 1989–90 to be provided only at disproportionate cost.

[2] Prior to 1993–94 expenditure on sewage treatment was not separated/aggregated for new plants and replacements or improvements to existing plants. Disaggreagated information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Audit Review Group

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make available copies of the follow-up report of the audit review group.

Sir John Wheeler: I have arranged for copies of the report to be placed in the Library.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Drugs Misuse

Mr. Spring: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to publish the results of the review of the Government's strategy for tackling the misuse of drugs.

Mr. Newton: With my right hon. and learned Friend and Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health and for Education, and my hon. Friend the Paymaster General, I intend to publish tomorrow a Green Paper entitled, "Tackling Drugs Together". Copies will be available in the Vote Office from 10.30 a.m.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Commonwealth Development Corporation has been authorised to operate in additional countries.

Mr. Baldry: Following a request from the corporation, approval has been given for the CDC to operate in El Salvador. In accordance with strategic targets agreed in the recent quinquennial review, CDC will aim to give priority to projects in the private sector.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if clients of the Child Support Agency have access to all the information kept on them.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 18 October 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about clients' access to personal information held by the Child Support Agency.

Clients have access to all automatically processed information kept on them, subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 1984. Access to information held clerically by the Agency is governed by the Department of Social Security's Protection of Personal Information code. As a general policy, this provides that under normal circumstances the Agency will disclose factual, basic and non-sensitive information to clients or their representatives, and any documents completed by the clients themselves.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the Child Support Agency keeps credit ratings on clients.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 18 October 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on whether the Child Support Agency keeps credit ratings on its clients.

The Agency does not keep credit ratings on any of its clients.

Independent Tribunal Service (Scotland)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons are employed by the Independent Tribunal Service in Scotland; and what is the current Scottish caseload for *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance and industrial injury appeal cases.

Mr. Hague: I am informed by the president of the Independent Tribunal Service, his honour judge Bassingthwaighte, that he employs 103 administration and six judicial staff full time in Scotland. In addition, there are 450 tribunal chairmen and members paid on a sessional basis. It is not possible to provide separate caseload figures for disability living allowance and attendance allowance. However, I am informed that at 30 September 1994 the caseload for the two benefits combined was 2,365 and for industrial injuries was 800.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the annual rent of the hemicycle building rented by the European Parliament in Brussels; how often the Parliament met there in 1993; and how often it will meet there in 1994.

Mr. David Davis: The European Parliament does not rent the hemicycle, which is part of a building in the Espace Leopold complex. In 1992, the European Parliament signed a contract for a long lease on a complex of three buildings to be constructed, with an option to purchase. The total estimated investment cost under the contract is approximately 1 billion ecu—£775 million,—before amortisation. The lease on each building is to run 27 years from the date of its handover. For the first 20 years of the lease on each building, Parliament has to pay, in 20 equal annuities and by half-yearly instalments, the amount necessary to amortise the final investment cost over that period. For the final seven years of each lease, the European Parliament will pay 1 ecu per year. The annual budget payment for the building containing the hemicycle is 13·9 mecu—£10·5 million.

The European Parliament met there three times in 1993, and will meet there four times in 1994.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the rental of the new building being rented in Strasbourg by the European Parliament.

Mr. David Davis: The European Parliament signed a contract with the city of Strasbourg authorities on 31 March 1994 for a new complex on a similar basis with option to purchase to the Espace Leopold complex in Brussels. The annual cost is estimated at 46 mecu—£34·7 million—which is planned to start fully in 1998.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people;

(2) if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Baldry: Considerable efforts are directed to making travel advice and other information available to the public on the telephone. It is not possible separately to identify the cost of those services specifically targeted at visually impaired people.

Cyprus

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest estimate of the number of non-Cypriots resident in *(a)* the Greek southern sector of Cyprus and *(b)* the Turkish northern sector of Cyprus.

Mr. David Davis: The latest figures supplied by the Statistics Office of the Republic of Cyprus show the non-Cypriot population of the Government-controlled area to be 21,500. There are no reliable figures available for the number of non-Cypriots resident in the northern part of Cyprus.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom is still a guarantor power for the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. David Davis: Yes.

Russia

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning defence industrial production in Russia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Russian defence industrial production has fallen sharply in recent years. We estimate that production of light armoured fighting vehicles dropped from some 4,500 in 1989 to 300 in 1993. Production of tanks is estimated to have dropped from 1,700 in 1989 to 200 last year; of fighters and bombers from 525 to 110; and of missiles from 130 to 40. I have placed a more detailed breakdown, with figures for the intervening years, in the Library.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sports Council (Lottery Funds)

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy that the distribution of lottery funds by the new United Kingdom Sports Council will not be limited to applications which promote the pursuit of excellence.

Mr. Sproat: We have proposed that the new English Sports Council will target its grant-in-aid more effectively in direct support to the governing bodies of sport and on services in support of sporting excellence. The purposes, on or connected with sport, to which the present Great Britain Sports Council, and, in time, its English successor, may apply national lottery funds under the National Lottery Act 1993 are unaffected by these proposals. We do not propose that the United Kingdom Sports Council should be national lottery distributor but it will offer expert advice on applications of United Kingdom importance.

Sport (Participation)

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he now expects local authorities to promote mass participation in sport.

Mr. Sproat: I would expect local authorities to continue to encourage sporting and recreational opportunities for the public at large as they always have done.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what extra resources will be allocated to local authorities to enable them to develop alternative mechanisms following the disbandment of the regional councils for sport and recreation.

Mr. Sproat: Our proposal is that the present formal linkage between the regional councils for sport and recreation and the regional offices of the Sports Council should cease and we shall no longer make appointments to the regional councils. Local authorities will want to decide for the future, with other regional interests, how to develop and deliver wider regional leisure strategies and how any such future machinery should be funded.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department has declined to answer three parliamentary questions during the 1993–94 session on the ground of commercial confidentiality.

Tourism

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what initiatives the English tourist board has planned on sustainable tourism; and how many of these are likely to be implemented.

Mr. Dorrell: The English tourist board participates in various on-going local visitor management initiatives in different types of location across the country. Many of these received pump-priming funding from the English tourist board and are continuing with the support of local funding partners. One example of these is the Wiltshire project which seeks to spread the economic benefits of tourism across the county more evenly and ease pressure on locations like Avebury and Stonehenge. The new visitor opportunities in Wiltshire will be tailored to its special landscape and character.

In addition the English tourist board regularly meets and collaborates with bodies such as Countryside Commission and the Rural Development Commission. It has supported the production of a range of publications designed to encourage good environmental practice and policies within the tourism industry. The English tourist board was one of the sponsors of the document, "Getting it Right: a guide to visitor management in historic towns", published earlier this year by the English Historic Towns Forum.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people;

(2) which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage keeps under review the need to make information available to blind and partially sighted people.

In 1992, the Department made available Braille copies of the popular version of the BBC consultation document issued by the Department. This was produced free of charge in response to inquiries.

No publications are currently available in Braille, large type or tape.

Cross-media Ownership

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his predecessor's answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, column 24, when he hopes to announce the outcome of the review of the rules covering cross-media ownership of the press, including any legislative implications.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* An announcement about the outcome will be made once the Government have determined the best way forward.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

EMPLOYMENT

Mining Closures

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on measures that his Department is taking to offer job opportunities to those areas where there have been mining closures.

Mr. Paice: The Department has made available £75 million and introduced a range of employment measures to help people in areas affected by pit closures. Over 40,000 people have been helped by the Employment Service and over 12,000 have started on special training and enterprise council programmes.

Apprenticeship Scheme

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on progress in the introduction of the new apprenticeship scheme.

Mr. Paice: Excellent progress is being made. Seventeen prototypes have been approved and 627 young people have started toward the expected number of 1,850.

Council of Employment Ministers

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what issues were discussed at the last meeting of the Council of Employment Ministers.

Mr. Portillo: The United Kingdom resisted a proposal to impose compulsory paternity leave on employers; and ensured that the works councils directive will not apply to companies in Britain, thus leaving them free to determine what system of consultation best suits their circumstances.

Women

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* mothers and *(b)* other women are now in work; what were the figures 10 and 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The spring 1994 labour force survey shows the 4 million mothers and 6·8 million other women of working age with dependent children are in employment. In spring 1984 the equivalent figures were 3·1 million and 6·1 million respectively. The participation of women in the labour force in the United Kingdom is the highest of any major EU country.

Wages Councils

21. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has made of the effect on earnings of the abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Oppenheim: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice).

Lone Mothers

22. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of lone mothers with dependent children were in work in 1979; and what percentage are currently in work.

Miss Widdecombe: In spring 1981, the earliest date available, the labour force survey showed that 45 per cent. of lone mothers of working age with dependent children were in employment. The current figure, for spring 1994, is 39 per cent. During the period 1981–1994 the numbers of lone mothers in employment increased from 350,000 to 440,000.

Age Discrimination

23. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Government will introduce legislation to deal with age discrimination in employment.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government have no intention of introducing legislation on age discrimination; it would be ineffective as it has been in other countries and would increase the burdens on business. The Government firmly believe that the way forward is through persuasion.

Labour Statistics

24. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest employment figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: The summer 1994 labour force survey shows just over 25 million people in employment in Great Britain. The highest proportion of any major European Union country.

Minimum Wage

25. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the nature and level of representations he has received from opposition parties on the implications of a minimum wage policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Government are well aware that if the policies of the opposition parties on minimum wages were ever implemented they would destroy many thousands of jobs.

Trade Union Legislation

26. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from individual trade unionists arguing for the repeal of all trade union legislation introduced since 1979.

Mr. Oppenheim: None.

Long-term Unemployment

27. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of long-term unemployed.

Mr. Oppenheim: In July 1994 there were 1,004,271 claimants unemployed for over one year; down 41,300 since April. These figures are on the unadjusted basis.

Government Policy

28. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the Government's policy in respect of full employment.

Mr. Portillo: The Government pursue policies designed to achieve high levels of employment and low inflation.

Associated Octel

29. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Health and Safety Executive report on the fire at Associated Octel on 1 February.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Health and Safety Executive has completed its investigation and on 6 September announced its decision to prosecute Associated Octel under sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. HSE will publish a report of its findings, once legal proceedings have been completed.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made for the work of the Health and Safety Executive on safety in nuclear power stations.

Mr. Oppenheim: None, as general matters of nuclear safety are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade.

However, the Department does have responsibility for the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 (IRR85). An analysis of data collected under these regulations was published by the Health and Safety Executive in October 1993. Over the period 1986–1991 it showed a 50 per cent. reduction in the average occupational exposure of workers to radiation at nuclear power stations.

Scottish Cricket Clubs

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permit applications were granted and how many were rejected in respect of the employment by Scottish cricket clubs over the past seven years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information about the number of work permits applications granted and rejected for employment by Scottish cricket clubs is not available.

Labour Costs

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence he has regarding the link between non-wage labour costs and job creation.

Mr. Portillo: In Britain the Government are careful not to impose heavy costs on business. The United Kingdom has a higher proportion of its people in work than any other major European Union country and Britain has attracted one-third of all inward investment in the European Union.

SCOTLAND

Police Service

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inquiries have been made into the police service's operation and structure in Scotland since 1990; and at what cost.

Mr. Lang: The inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards, which reported in June 1993, included rank structure within its terms of reference. The Scottish Office contributed £97,000 to the cost of the inquiry. The force structure of the Scottish police service was considered as part of the consultation exercise which invited views on the future shape of local government. The service is also under continual review by H. M. inspectorate of constabulary.

Trainee Doctors

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland from what central source funding is made available for flexible training schemes for trainee doctors wishing to pursue a career in general practice; how many places each year are made available on such schemes; how many who have completed their pre-registration year and have been selected for general practice training are on a waiting list; what proportion of these are women; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Funding is supplied by the NHS management executive in Scotland for vocational training in general practice, including flexible training. The number of places available for flexible training is not fixed. Doctors wishing to train on a flexible basis should register with their postgraduate dean or director. There is no waiting list of doctors selected for vocational training. The management executive encourages NHS employers to offer flexible training to doctors and dentists who have well-founded reasons for working on a part-time or other flexible basis.

Death Certificates

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many death certificates in 1993 had *(a)* hypothermia, *(b)* pneumonia or *(c)* other cold-related illnesses as one of the contributory causes of death; and what were the figures for each of the four previous years in each case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures requested for hypothermia and pneumonia are given in the table.

Many diseases which contribute to mortality are related in some way to cold conditions. There is no generally accepted list of such conditions. It is not possible therefore to give a meaningful answer to part *(c)* of the question.

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia or pneumonia on the death certificate, 1989–1993.

	Hypothermia (ICD 778.3, 780.8, 780.9 E901.0, E901.8 and E901.9)	*Pneumonia (ICD 480–486)*
1989	152	14,377
1990	137	12,901
1991	101	12,291
1992	117	12,050
1993	141	13,457

Prisoners

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions since 1 January prisoners have been held *(a)* two to a cell designed for one and *(b)* three to a cell designed for one; and if he will list those prisons which experienced these measures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 18 October 1994:

Lord James Douglas Hamilton has asked me to reply to your question about the number of occasions on which double and triple occupancy of cells designed for one occurred.

Occupancy of single cells by more than one prisoner can arise due to factors other than high prisoner numbers, for example to allow refurbishment to improve prisoner accommodation (including the installation of in-cell toilets and electrical power). In some instances single cells are in double occupancy at the request of prisoners themselves who for their own reasons prefer to share.

During the period from 1 January to 31 August, 12 (out of the total of 21) Scottish prison establishments experienced a degree of doubling up of prisoners, and in the case of four establishments, certain periods of triple occupancy occurred. The table attached lists the establishments and details the average periods involved in each case.

Establishments where multiple occupancy of cells occurred

		Double occupancy		*Triple occupancy*	
	Design capacity	*Nos. of cells involved*	*Period (ie months unless otherwise stated)*	*Nos. of cells involved*	*Period (ie months unless otherwise stated)*
HMP Aberdeen	142	45	7	—	—
HMP Barlinnie	939	247	8	—	—
HMP Cornton Vale	213	6	8	9	1
HMP Dumfries	139	11	6	—	—
HMP Edinburgh	508	153	8	5	8
HMP Friarton	56	24	8	—	—
HMYOI Glenochil	175	9	13 days	—	—
HMP Greenock	172	75	8	2	2 days
HMP Inverness	79	54	8	—	—
HMP Longriggend	177	36	3	—	—
HMP Perth	426	60	8	10	3
HMYOI Polmont	414	30	8	—	—

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average cost per month of keeping someone in prison in 1993–94.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman A. Godman, dated 18 October 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your question about the average cost per month of keeping someone in prison in 1993–94.

The cost of maintaining an individual at Her Majesty's prisons in Scotland in 1993–94, calculated as total net expenditure (excluding capital) divided by daily average prisoner numbers, was £2,138 per month.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give a breakdown by age of *(a)* all female prisoners and *(b)* all male prisoners at the latest available date;

(2) how many *(a)* female and *(b)* male fine defaulters were received into prisons in each of the past four years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of these questions relate to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman A. Godman, dated 18 October 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Questions about the breakdown by age and sex of the current prison population and about the number of female and male fine defaulters received into prisons in the last four years.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the present prison population. Young offenders are generally aged under 21, but a small number may be aged 21 or 22. No further disaggregation is available since details of exact age are collected only on the statistical returns relating to receptions.

Table 1: Average daily prison population in Scottish penal establishments, Wednesday 5 October 1994

	Adult	*Young offenders*	*Total*
Male	4,436	1,061	5,497
Female	171	19	190
Total	4,607	1,080	5,687

Table 2 below shows the number of fine defaulter receptions recorded in the past four years. Some of these receptions will relate to prisoners who are serving existing sentences in respect of other offences. Where a person has several custodial sentences imposed on him by one court in one day, however, this is counted as one reception.

Table 2: Fine defaulter receptions to Scottish penal establishments

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Male	6,455	7,295	7,792	8,878
Female	380	614	547	738
Total	6,835	7,909	8,339	9,616

Prisons (Drugs)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to reduce *(a)* the demand for drugs and *(b)* the supply of drugs in prison; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 18 October 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your question about the action being taken to reduce the demand for and supply of drugs in prison.

Prisons in Scotland follow a common approach in dealing with the problems of prisoners who misuse drugs. The main elements of that approach which aims to reflect as far as possible the range of measures available in the community are:

medical examination on admission to identify current drug users;

continuation of substitute prescribing for very short-term and remand prisoners in appropriate cases;

provision of appropriate medication to alleviate symptoms of withdrawal;

counselling and practical advice on drug-free lifestyles and harm minimisation;

liaison with community based agencies prior to release;

work with families;

education for non-drug using prisoners on drugs misuse.

Drug misuse is not tolerated within prison and a high priority is attached to the exclusion of all illicit drugs. Nevertheless, total exclusion is extremely difficult to achieve without the introduction of unacceptably stringent control measures, particularly in relation to visit arrangements, which would themselves create significant problems, not least for prisoners' families and those prisoners for whom the maintenance of family relationships are a high priority. The range of suitable security measures in place include closed circuit television surveillance, strip searching of prisoners on suspicion following visits, lockers for visitors' hand baggage and the use of a drug-detection dog unit.

Sheriff Courts

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received concerning the appointment of lay representatives to each sheriff court user advisory committee; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Membership of sheriff court advisory committees is a matter for the sheriffs principal concerned.

Social Housing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for more investment in social housing based on need.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Substantial resources of nearly three quarter of a billion pounds have been made available to local authorities, new town development corporations and Scottish Homes in 1994–95 for investment in housing. These allocations are generally not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for local authorities, new town development corporations and Scottish Homes to obtain value for money from targeting these resources on the provision of social rented housing in accordance with their assessment of local housing needs and priorities.

Grant-maintained Schools

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current annual budgets of each grant-maintained school; what are the capital and revenue allocations made by him to each grant-maintained school during *(a)* each of the past three years and *(b)* so far during the current financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Dornoch Academy, Sutherland, was established on 1 April 1994 as Scotland's first self-governing school. For the financial year to 31 March 1995, it has budgets of £399,181 for recurrent revenue expenditure and £16,000 for capital expenditure. The recurrent expenditure budget amount may be adjusted shortly to reflect the level of comparable expenditure by the Education Department of Highland regional council and any changes in the circumstances of the school which would have an effect on the determination of its annual grant, such as a fluctuation in pupil numbers during the financial year.

Clinical Waste

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the methods of the incineration of clinical waste at hospitals in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1989 a major study of all Scottish NHS clinical waste hospital incinerators and the source and quantity of all NHS clinical waste arisings was undertaken.

The study allowed strategic planning to be undertaken to cope with the introduction of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Since that original report, other studies for the north, east and west of Scotland have been undertaken and used to assist NHS trusts to work as consortiums to achieve the most economic and safest way to treat and dispose of their clinical waste. Some NHS trusts because of local circumstances, have already installed new incinerators to meet the full technical standards required by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, whilst others are at tender stage.

Among those currently tendering are NHS trusts in the following health board areas: Greater Glasgow, Lothian, Forth Valley, Tayside, Grampian, Highland, Orkney and Shetland.

Trusts in the following areas—Argyll and Clyde, Dumfries and Galloway, Ayrshire and Arran, Fife, Lanarkshire, Borders and Western Isles—now either have clinical waste plant to the required standard or are sharing facilities among themselves.

European Regional Assistance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the distribution of objective 2 funds to *(a)* Inverclyde and *(b)* Strathclyde; if he will list those projects which have received or are to receive such financial assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Western Scotland as a whole was awarded a total of some £348·2 million of objective 2 funding between 1988 and 1993. In addition, the RENAVAL and RECHAR community initiatives were worth some £19·5 million.

Under the objective 2 programmes, 651 projects throughout the area were granted assistance from the European regional development fund amounting to some £292·7 million. A total of 555 projects were granted assistance from the European social fund amounting to some £55·5 million. Precise figures on expenditure are not held at district level.

Details of individual projects and their sponsors are available from the Strathclyde European Partnership office in Glasgow. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a copy of their information pack.

Housing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of housing is unfit in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The most recent estimates of the number of dwellings below the tolerable standard and the housing stock in each district are contained in table 13 of "Statistical Bulletin" HSG/1994/7, which is available in the Library.

NHS Consultants

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many whole-time equivalent NHS consultants were employed per capita in each of the health board areas in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest five year information available centrally is shown in the following table:

Hospital and Community Medical and Dental Consultants; by health board: at 30 September 1989–1993

					Whole time equivalent/wte rate				
	[1]Scotland	*Argyll and Clyde*	*Ayrshire and Arran*	*Borders*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Forth Valley*	*Grampian*	*Greater Glasgow*
1989									
Number of Consultants	2,160·8	132·1	109·5	32·4	54·3	94·0	88·0	200·0	594·2
Rates per 100,000 pop	42·4	29·9	29·2	31·5	36·8	27·3	32·4	39·7	63·7
1990									
Number of Consultants	2,228·6	136·5	118·5	34·4	52·7	96·1	91·6	217·7	616·7
Rates per 100,000 pop	43·7	31·0	31·6	33·2	35·5	27·8	33·7	43·0	66·5
1991									
Number of Consultants	2,230·5	134·3	120·2	34·4	54·8	99·0	91·1	218·8	611·2
Rates per 100,000 pop	43·7	30·8	31·9	33·0	37·1	28·6	33·4	42·5	66·3
1992									
Number of Consultants	2,265·3	139·4	122·8	34·4	56·8	102·0	92·1	224·4	613·1
Rates per 100,000 pop	44·4	31·9	32·6	33·0	38·5	29·2	33·7	43·5	66·5
1993									
Number of Consultants	2,286·4	143·0	123·2	36·5	56·9	101·5	91·5	225·9	613·8
Rates per 100,000 pop	44·7	32·9	32·7	34·8	38·4	29·0	33·5	43·2	66·8

[1] Scotland excludes consultants based at the CSA and the State Hospital.

[2] Comparison of boards does not take account of staff employed in one board area who provides a service to another, the cost of which will probably be cross-charged.

Hospital and Community Medical and Dental Consultants; by health board: at 30 September 1989–1993

					Whole time equivalent/wte rate				
	Highland	*Lanarkshire*	*Lothian*	*Orkney*	*Shetland*	*Tayside*	*Western Isles*	*CSA*	*State Hospital*
1989									
Number of Consultants	80·7	165·3	405·1	1·0	2·0	196·8	5·4	27·3	—
Rates per 100,000 pop	42·0	29·4	54·5	5·2	9·0	50·1	17·6	—	—
1990									
Number of Consultants	81·6	167·1	410·9	1·0	2·0	194·4	7·4	27·5	—
Rates per 100,000 pop	39·9	29·7	54·8	5·1	9·0	49·3	24·1	—	—
1991									
No. of Consultants	82·9	169·1	400·6	1·0	3·1	202·6	7·4	29·3	3·7
Rates per 100,000 pop	40·6	30·1	53·4	5·1	13·8	51·7	25·2	—	—
1992									
Number of Consultants	87·9	175·2	399·9	1·0	3·0	205·4	7·9	29·1	3·2
Rates per 100,000 pop	4[illegible]	31·2	53·2	5·1	13·3	52·3	26·9	—	—
1993									
Number of Consultants	88·0	172·4	407·7	1·0	4·1	212·5	8·4	28·6	3·6
Rates per 100,000 pop	42·7	30·7	54·3	5·1	18·3	53·9	28·5	—	—

[1] Comparison of boards does not take account of staff employed in one board area who provides a service to another, the cost of which will probably be cross-charged.

Schools

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many proposals from regional and island authorities to close or reorganise schools have been awaiting a decision from him for *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months and *(e)* more than 12 months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of primary school classes in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole being taught by one teacher have 20 or fewer pupils.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At September 1993 the percentage of all education authority primary school classes with 20 or fewer pupils was 11·8 per cent. in Inverclyde, 15·4 per cent. in Strathclyde and 18·1 per cent in Scotland. Separate information on classes being taught by one teacher is not held centrally.

Patient's Choice

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what degree of patient's choice as to place of treatment was available *(a)* before and *(b)* after April 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tables 1 and 2 show the areas of residence and hospitals from which people were discharged in 1990–91 and 1993–94. The tables show that most people choose to be treated locally although general practitioners are free to refer people to the hospital of their choice.

A wider choice of place of treatment for some specialties is also now available. Some treatments available only in major cities in 1991 are now available locally.

Table 1—NHSiS—Scottish resident discharges from non-psychiatric and non-obstetric specialties, by hospital: year ended 31 March 1991

	Health Board of Residence						
Hospital of Treatment	*A&C*	*Ayr*	*Bor*	*D&G*	*Fife*	*FV*	*Gram*
Aberdeen City Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	415
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	74
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	3	8	1	—	8	1	26,982
Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aboyne Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	19
Adamson Hospital	—	—	—	—	787	1	—
Annan Hospital	—	—	—	68	—	—	—
Arbroath Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arduthie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	57
Arran War Memorial Hospital	—	167	—	—	—	—	—
Ashludie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Astley Ainslie Hospital	1	—	4	3	5	—	1
Ayr County Hospital	1	1,997	—	3	—	—	—
Ayrshire Central and Maternity Hospital	1	446	—	—	—	—	—
Balfour Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ballochmyle Hospital	3	7,133	—	126	—	—	—
Bangour General Hospital	5	4	98	15	544	67	7
Bannockburn Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	4	—
Beatson Oncology Centre	1,208	442	3	39	27	912	1
Belford Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Belhaven Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Belvidere Hospital	359	297	14	12	1	66	—
Biggart Hospital	—	280	—	—	—	—	—
Birdston Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blawarthill Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bo'ness Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	22	—
Bon Secours Private Hospital	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bonnybridge Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	3	—
Borders General Hospital	1	1	5,664	1	1	—	—
Bridge of Earn Hospital	2	—	—	—	125	4	1
Bridge of Weir Hospital	143	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brooksby House Hospital	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Broomhill Hospital	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Caithness General Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Calton Hospital	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cameron Hospital, Windygates	—	—	—	—	124	—	—
Campbell Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	23
Campbeltown Cottage Hospital	46	—	—	—	—	—	—
Canniesburn Hospital	990	402	2	40	14	349	2
Castle Douglas Hospital	—	—	—	54	—	—	—
Chalmers Hospital	1	2	5	1	11	—	2
Chalmers Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	257
Cleland Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Coathill Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Coldstream Cottage Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Corstorphine Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
County Hospital Stornoway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cowglen Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Craigtoun Hospital	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Cresswell Maternity Hospital	—	—	—	225	—	—	—
Crieff Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crosshouse Hospital	19	13,131	1	5	—	—	2

Hospital of Treatment	*Health Board of Residence*						
	A&C	*Ayr*	*Bor*	*D&G*	*Fife*	*FV*	*Gram*
Daliburgh Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dalintart Hospital	111	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dalrymple Hospital	—	1	—	166	—	—	—
Darnley Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Davidson Cottage Hospital	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Dr. Gray's Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	2,929
Drumchapel Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Drumlanrig Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Duke Street Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumbarton Joint Hospital	58	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	—	4	4	8,446	—	1	—
Dunaros Hospital	19	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dunbar Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dundee Limb Fitting Centre	—	—	—	—	23	—	1
Dundee Royal Infirmary	1	—	3	1	771	16	25
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	—	1	—	—	5,255	8	2
Dunfermline Maternity Hospital	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Dunoon and District General Hospital	464	2	—	—	—	—	—
Duntocher Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Fortune Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Eastbank Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Eastern General Hospital	1	—	20	1	12	7	—
Edenhall Hospital	—	—	5	2	8	4	9
Edinburgh City Hospital	10	12	679	13	324	30	11
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary	59	40	734	63	712	187	14
Edington Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Erskine Hospital	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	2	1	—	1	212	9,065	—
Fleming Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
Forfar Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Forth Park Hospital	—	—	—	—	983	—	—
Fraserburgh Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	60
Garrick Hospital	—	8	—	606	—	—	—
Gartnavel General Hospital	1,461	186	1	31	4	227	3
Gesto Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gilbert Bain Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	1,460	670	4	299	42	386	48
Glencoe Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glenrothes Hospital	—	—	—	—	188	—	—
Hairmyres Hospital	24	131	1	—	—	1	8
Heathfield Hospital, Ayr	2	2,037	—	16	1	—	—
Helensburgh Victoria Infirmary	41	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillside Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Holmhead Hospital	—	101	—	—	—	—	—
Homeopathic Hospital, Glasgow	63	25	—	4	21	19	38
Hunter Hospital	—	—	—	—	5	—	—
Huntly Jubilee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	189
Ian Charles Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insch and District War Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	6,783	928	—	—	—	—	—
Invergordon County Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inverurie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	56
Irvine Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Johnstone Hospital	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kello Hospital	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Kildean Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	3	—
Kings Cross Hospital	—	—	—	—	27	—	5
Kirkcudbright Hospital	—	—	—	39	—	—	—
Kirklandside Hospital, Kilmarnock	—	144	—	—	—	—	—
Knightswood Hospital	118	10	—	—	—	7	—
Knoll Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Lady Home Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lady Margaret Hospital, Millport	—	68	—	—	—	—	—
Law Hospital	9	1	39	2	—	8	—
Lawson Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leanchoil Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	58
Lenzie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lewis Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Liberton Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lightburn Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Loanhead Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lochgreen Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	144	—
Lochmaben Hospital	—	—	—	1	—	—	—

Hospital of Treatment	*Health Board of Residence* *A&C*	*Ayr*	*Bor*	*D&G*	*Fife*	*FV*	*Gram*
Lochmaddy Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lockhart Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Longmore Hospital	1	2	175	1	97	17	4
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maidencraig House	—	—	—	—	—	—	165
Maud Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	7
Mckelvie Hospital	42	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mearnskirk General Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Meigle Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Argyll Hospital	15	—	—	—	—	—	—
Migdale Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Milesmark Hospital	—	—	—	—	646	—	—
Moffat Hospital	—	—	—	72	—	—	—
Monklands District General Hospital	10	3	2	—	2	14	1
Montfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Montrose Royal Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Morningfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	1	—	4
Nairn Town and County Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlea Hospital	—	—	—	—	6	—	—
Newton Stewart Hospital	—	1	—	119	—	—	—
Nicolson Mackenzie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	7
Ninewells Hospital	18	19	6	6	1,716	43	132
Nithbank Hospital	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Northern General Hospital	—	—	13	2	47	34	—
Oban County Hospital	300	—	—	—	—	—	—
Perth Royal Infirmary	—	—	—	1	389	53	1
Peterhead Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	43
Philipshill Hospital	52	28	—	7	—	10	—
Portree Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Princess Margaret Rose Hospital	5	15	101	60	123	95	24
Queen Margaret Hospital	—	—	—	—	936	—	—
Raigmore Hospital	10	2	1	—	1	1	532
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	424	—	—
Ravenscraig Hospital	78	2	—	—	—	—	—
Rhsc Drumchapel	7	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roadmeetings Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roodlands General Hospital	—	—	30	—	—	1	—
Ross Hall Hospital	99	11	—	—	—	—	—
Ross Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rothesay Victoria Hospital	275	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rothesay Victoria Hospital Annexe	16	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roxburghe House	—	—	—	—	—	—	137
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital	4	—	—	—	9	1	3,825
Royal Alexandra Hospital	11,474	272	1	1	3	—	—
Royal Northern Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Samaritan Hospital	106	55	—	1	—	18	1
Royal Victoria Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Ruchill Hospital	14	6	—	—	—	12	—
RHSC, Edinburgh	1	3	232	8	358	35	39
RHSC, Glasgow	1,365	415	3	118	21	324	13
Sauchie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	106	—
Seafield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	33
Seafield Sick Childrens Hospital	1	1,255	1	37	—	—	—
Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion	—	2	—	4	8	3	—
Sister Margaret Cottage Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Southern General Hospital	3,221	414	3	108	8	102	7
Spynie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	53
St. Andrews Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	726	—	—
St. Brendan's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. Columba's Hospice	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. John's Hospital At Howden	1	—	7	2	9	106	—
St. Margaret's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. Mary's Hospital	28	1	—	—	—	—	—
St. Michaels Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. Vincent's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stephen Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
Stirling Royal Infirmary	8	1	—	—	100	11,746	1
Stobhill Hospital	204	81	2	17	3	210	2
Stonehouse Hospital	4	2	—	—	—	—	—
Stracathro Hospital	—	6	—	—	9	1	1,114
Strathblane Childrens Home Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Hospital of Treatment	Health Board of Residence A&C	Ayr	Bor	D&G	Fife	FV	Gram
Thomas Hope Hospital	—	—	—	70	—	—	—
Thomson House	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thornhill Hospital	—	—	—	39	—	—	—
Tippethill Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tor-na-dee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Turner Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
Turriff Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	16
Udston Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ugie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Vale of Leven District General Hospital	4,368	2	—	—	—	49	1
Victoria Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	5	—	—	—	13,392	1	1
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	513	75	—	11	1	10	2
West Highland Hospital	1,133	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wester Moffat Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western General Hospital, Edinburgh	18	24	503	308	1,563	313	12
Western Infirmary, Glasgow	2,250	806	2	86	24	475	19
Whitehills Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Witchburn Hospital	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Woodcot Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Woodend General Hospital	—	—	—	—	1	—	3,775
All Hospitals (220)	39,148	32,185	8,372	11,362	30,861	25,322	41,312

Notes

Source: SMR1.

Ref: Unit2/94459.

Date: 11 October 1994.

Table 1—NHSiS—Scottish resident discharges from non-psychiatric and non-obstetric specialties, by hospital: year ended 31 March 1991

Hospital of Treatment	GG	High	Lan	Loth	Ork	Shet	Tay	WI
Aberdeen City Hospital	—	2	—	—	15	34	3	—
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital	—	1	—	—	1	2	—	—
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	1	337	—	9	455	593	101	21
Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	—
Aboyne Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Adamson Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Annan Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arbroath Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	128	—
Arduthie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arran War Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ashludie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	293	—
Astley Ainslie Hospital	—	—	2	95	—	—	1	—
Ayr County Hospital	2	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Ayrshire Central and Maternity Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Balfour Hospital	—	—	—	1	750	—	—	—
Ballochmyle Hospital	6	—	6	1	—	—	—	—
Bangour General Hospital	9	51	37	2,559	—	—	17	2
Bannockburn Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Beatson Oncology Centre	1,989	26	378	20	—	—	15	22
Belford Hospital	—	830	—	—	—	—	—	—
Belhaven Hospital	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	—
Belvidere Hospital	2,080	—	1,198	—	—	—	—	9
Biggart Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Birdston Hospital	25	—	4	—	—	—	—	—
Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	103	—
Blawarthill Hospital	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bo'ness Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bon Secours Private Hospital	18	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Bonnybridge Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Borders General Hospital	1	1	2	67	—	—	—	—
Bridge of Earn Hospital	4	—	—	5	—	1	1,658	—
Bridge of Weir Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brooksby House Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Broomhill Hospital	135	—	7	—	—	—	—	—
Caithness General Hospital	—	1,448	—	—	—	—	—	—
Calton Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cameron Hospital, Windygates	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Campbell Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Campbeltown Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Hospital of Treatment	*GG*	*High*	*Lan*	*Loth*	*Ork*	*Shet*	*Tay*	*WI*
Canniesburn Hospital	2,565	33	633	21	—	—	14	19
Castle Douglas Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chalmers Hospital	1	2	2	1,043	—	—	—	—
Chalmers Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cleland Hospital	4	—	7	—	—	—	—	—
Coathill Hospital	—	—	40	—	—	—	—	—
Coldstream Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Corstorphine Hospital	—	—	—	451	—	—	—	—
County Hospital Stornoway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	213
Cowglen Hospital	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Craigtoun Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cresswell Maternity Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crieff Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	38	—
Crosshouse Hospital	20	—	6	6	—	—	—	—
Daliburgh Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	72
Dalintart Hospital	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dalrymple Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Darnley Hospital	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Davidson Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dr. Gray's Hospital	1	13	—	1	—	2	—	—
Drumchapel Hospital	108	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Drumlanrig Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Duke Street Hospital	17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumbarton Joint Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	—	1	41	4	—	—	—	—
Dunaros Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dunbar Hospital	—	39	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dundee Limb Fitting Centre	—	—	—	—	—	—	67	—
Dundee Royal Infirmary	13	15	2	13	3	—	5,881	2
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	1	1	—	14	—	—	26	—
Dunfermline Maternity Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dunoon and District General Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Duntocher Hospital	200	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Fortune Hospital	—	—	—	89	—	—	—	—
Eastbank Hospital	—	—	—	—	74	—	—	—
Eastern General Hospital	1	—	4	3,934	—	—	1	—
Edenhall Hospital	2	3	1	173	—	1	8	2
Edinburgh City Hospital	34	24	32	5,011	1	—	76	4
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary	75	107	152	15,274	—	4	89	21
Edington Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	17	—	—	—	—
Erskine Hospital	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	11	3	44	70	—	—	4	—
Fleming Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Forfar Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	401	—
Forth Park Hospital	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	—
Fraserburgh Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Garrick Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gartnavel General Hospital	9,311	16	355	15	—	—	13	62
Gesto Hospital	—	35	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gilbert Bain Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	1,274	—	—
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	16,323	55	4,011	35	1	5	191	135
Glencoe Hospital	—	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glenrothes Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hairmyres Hospital	358	2	7,038	7	—	—	2	1
Heathfield Hospital, Ayr	4	—	1	3	—	—	7	—
Helensburgh Victoria Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillside Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—
Holmhead Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Homeopathic Hospital, Glasgow	197	10	56	47	1	—	17	4
Hunter Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Huntly Jubilee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ian Charles Hospital	—	59	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insch and District War Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	8	—	4	1	—	—	1	—
Invergordon County Hospital	—	150	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inverurie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Irvine Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	16	—
Johnstone Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kello Hospital	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	—
Kildean Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kings Cross Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	731	—
Kirkcudbright Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kirklandside Hospital, Kilmarnock	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Hospital of Treatment	*GG*	*High*	*Lan*	*Loth*	*Ork*	*Shet*	*Tay*	*WI*
Knightswood Hospital	492	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Knoll Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lady Home Hospital	—	—	31	—	—	—	—	—
Lady Margaret Hospital, Millport	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Law Hospital	32	—	10,652	10	—	—	—	—
Lawson Memorial Hospital	—	375	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leanchoil Hospital	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lenzie Hospital	37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lewis Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,181
Liberton Hospital	—	—	—	204	—	—	—	—
Lightburn Hospital	87	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Loanhead Hospital	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Lochgreen Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lochmaben Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lochmaddy Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	18
Lockhart Hospital	—	—	214	1	—	—	—	—
Longmore Hospital	—	3	3	1,684	—	—	5	2
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital	—	699	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maidencraig House	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maud Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mckelvie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mearnskirk General Hospital	158	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Meigle Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	98	—
Mid Argyll Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Migdale Hospital	—	16	—	—	—	—	—	—
Milesmark Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moffat Hospital	—	—	7	—	—	—	—	—
Monklands District General Hospital	201	5	9,904	7	—	—	1	—
Montfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	183	—	—
Montrose Royal Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Morningfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nairn Town and County Hospital	—	20	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlea Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newton Stewart Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nicolson Mackenzie Hospital	—	121	—	—	—	—	—	3
Ninewells Hospital	43	38	21	28	1	1	14,241	4
Nithbank Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northern General Hospital	—	—	4	466	—	—	1	1
Oban County Hospital	—	14	—	—	—	—	—	—
Perth Royal Infirmary	2	—	1	1	1	—	5,496	—
Peterhead Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Philipshill Hospital	1,222	—	92	6	—	—	2	5
Portree Hospital	—	44	—	—	—	—	1	—
Princess Margaret Rose Hospital	8	36	41	4,024	2	3	29	4
Queen Margaret Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Raigmore Hospital	—	12,240	—	8	—	5	10	664
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ravenscraig Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rhsc Drumchapel	68	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roadmeetings Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Roodlands General Hospital	—	—	—	1,372	—	—	—	—
Ross Hall Hospital	24	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Ross Memorial Hospital	—	359	—	—	—	—	—	1
Rothesay Victoria Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rothesay Victoria Hospital Annexe	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roxburghe House	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital	2	55	—	5	89	144	7	2
Royal Alexandra Hospital	131	—	14	—	—	—	1	—
Royal Northern Infirmary	—	62	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Samaritan Hospital	2,677	4	468	—	—	—	7	7
Royal Victoria Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	197	—
Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh	—	—	—	242	—	—	—	—
Ruchill Hospital	1,799	1	111	1	—	—	1	—
RHSC, Edinburgh	3	65	31	3,181	3	3	82	—
RHSC, Glasgow	5,270	78	1,898	37	—	—	28	43
Sauchie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Seafield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Seafield Sick Childrens Hospital	3	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion	1	—	2	91	—	—	—	—
Sister Margaret Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southern General Hospital	8,013	31	616	8	—	1	16	64
Spynie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. Andrews Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—

Hospital of Treatment	*GG*	*High*	*Lan*	*Loth*	*Ork*	*Shet*	*Tay*	*WI*
St. Brendan's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
St. Columba's Hospice	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
St. John's Hospital At Howden	1	—	126	7,480	—	—	1	—
St. Margaret's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	40	—
St. Mary's Hospital	185	—	97	—	—	—	—	—
St. Michaels Hospital	—	—	—	27	—	—	—	—
St. Vincent's Hospital	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stephen Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stirling Royal Infirmary	24	—	32	22	—	1	192	7
Stobhill Hospital	11,631	20	1,705	26	—	—	6	12
Stonehouse Hospital	32	—	5,644	2	—	—	1	—
Stracathro Hospital	1	7	—	2	82	85	2,731	—
Strathblane Childrens Home Hospital	36	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde Hospital	—	—	10	—	—	—	—	—
Thomas Hope Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thomson House	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thornhill Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tippethill Hospital	—	—	—	48	—	—	—	—
Tor-na-dee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Turner Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Turriff Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Udston Hospital	—	—	17	—	—	—	—	—
Ugie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Vale of Leven District General Hospital	76	1	4	1	—	—	—	—
Victoria Cottage Hospital	5	—	88	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	1	1	—	11	—	—	13	—
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	8,700	2	337	1	—	—	5	3
West Highland Hospital	—	7	—	—	—	—	—	1
Wester Moffat Hospital	—	—	21	—	—	—	—	—
Western General Hospital, Edinburgh	32	201	48	12,426	1	—	164	3
Western Infirmary, Glasgow	9,837	65	447	54	—	—	17	88
Whitehills Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	—
Witchburn Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Woodcot Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Woodend General Hospital	—	16	—	—	68	102	18	7
All Hospitals (220)	84,412	17,862	46,771	60,504	1,548	2,444	33,354	2,710

Notes
Source: SMR1.
Ref: Unit2/94459.
Date: 11 October 1994.

Table 2—NHSis—Scottish resident discharges from non-psychiatric and non-obstetric specialities, by hospital; year ended 31 March 1994

	Health Board of Residence						
Hospital of Treatment	*A&C*	*Ayr*	*Bor*	*D&G*	*Fife*	*FV*	*Gram*
Aberdeen City Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	564
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	6	1	2	6	25	7	30,525
Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aboyne Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	46
Adamson Hospital	—	—	—	—	1,611	—	—
Annan Hospital	—	—	—	82	—	—	—
Arbroath Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arduthie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	51
Arran View Nursing Home	—	6	—	—	—	—	—
Arran War Memorial Hospital	—	376	—	—	—	—	—
Ashludie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Astley Ainslie Hospital	1	1	2	1	3	8	1
Ayrshire Central and Maternity Hospital	—	426	—	1	—	—	—
Balfour Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ballochmyle Hospital	9	7,260	—	44	—	—	—
Bangour Village Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bannockburn Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	10	—
Beatson Oncology Centre	1,897	590	23	108	13	1,031	20
Belford Hospital	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Belhaven Hospital	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Belvidere Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Biggart Hospital	—	254	—	—	—	—	—
Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blawarthill Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Hospital of Treatment	*Health Board of Residence* *A&C*	*Ayr*	*Bor*	*D&G*	*Fife*	*FV*	*Gram*
Bon Secours Private Hospital	32	27	—	4	—	12	—
Bonnybridge Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	24	—
Borders General Hospital	—	—	8,095	19	1	—	—
Brechin Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bridge of Earn Hospital	—	—	—	1	23	—	—
Bridge of Weir Hospital	212	1	—	—	—	—	—
Broomhill Hospital	5	—	—	—	—	5	—
Caithness General Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cameron Hospital, Windygates	—	—	—	—	138	—	—
Campbell Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	21
Campbeltown Hospital	122	—	—	—	—	—	—
Canniesburn Hospital	1,081	384	1	55	8	254	8
Castle Douglas Hospital	—	—	—	47	—	—	—
Chalmers Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chalmers Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	203
Cleland Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Coathill Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Coldstream Cottage Hospital	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Corstorphine Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cowglen Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crieff Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crosshouse Hospital	10	18,816	9	112	1	—	1
Daliburgh Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dalintart Hospital	64	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dalrymple Hospital	—	—	—	108	—	—	—
Darnley Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Davidson Cottage Hospital	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Dr Gray's Hospital	—	—	—	—	1	—	3,632
Drumchapel Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Duke Street Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumbarton Joint Hospital	63	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	3	11	4	11,605	1	1	—
Dunaros Hospital	26	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dunbar Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dundee Dental Hospital	—	—	—	—	76	1	8
Dundee Limb Fitting Centre	—	—	—	—	41	—	—
Dundee Royal Infirmary	4	2	—	—	1,170	20	41
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	1	—	—	—	560	—	—
Dunoon and District General Hospital	409	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Fortune Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Eastbank Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Eastern General Hospital	—	—	20	—	25	11	1
Edenhall Hospital	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Edinburgh City Hospital	7	15	916	31	347	61	20
Edinburgh Dental Hospital	1	3	27	—	53	15	—
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary	19	21	606	47	672	215	14
Edington Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Erskine Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	2	—	—	—	258	10,409	—
Fleming Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	21
Forfar Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Forth Park Hospital	—	—	—	—	12	—	—
Fourhills Nursing Home	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fraserburgh Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	35
Garrick Hospital	—	13	—	1,014	—	—	—
Gartnavel General Hospital	795	89	—	26	4	149	2
Gesto Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gilbert Bain Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Glasgow Dental Hospital and School	50	8	—	—	—	—	—
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	1,730	615	6	347	44	386	52
Glen O'Dee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	25
Glencoe Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glenrothes Hospital	—	—	—	—	132	—	—
Greenfield Park Nursing Home	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hairmyres Hospital	37	219	—	—	—	3	1
Helensburgh Victoria Infirmary	81	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillside Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Holmhead Hospital	—	93	—	—	—	—	—
Homeopathic Hospital, Glasgow	59	36	9	17	13	28	21
Huntly Jubilee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	232
Ian Charles Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insch and District War Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	8,077	1,135	—	—	1	1	1

	Health Board of Residence						
Hospital of Treatment	*A&C*	*Ayr*	*Bor*	*D&G*	*Fife*	*FV*	*Gram*
Invergordon County Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inverurie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	77
Irvine Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islay Hospital	9	—	—	—	—	—	—
Johnstone Hospital	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kello Hospital	—	—	11	—	—	—	—
Kildean Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Kincardine O Neil War Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	74
Kings Cross Hospital	—	—	—	—	76	2	8
Kirkcudbright Hospital	—	—	—	44	—	—	—
Kirklandside Hospital, Kilmarnock	—	189	—	—	—	—	—
Knightswood Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lady Home Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lady Margaret Hospital, Millport	—	71	—	—	—	—	—
Law Hospital	5	1	28	3	—	14	2
Lawson Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leanchoil Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	39
Lenzie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Liberton Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lightburn Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Little Cairnie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lochgreen Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	99	—
Lochmaben Hospital	—	—	—	12	—	—	—
Lochmaddy Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Lockhart Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lynebank Hospital	—	—	—	—	45	—	—
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maidencraig House	—	—	—	—	—	—	150
Maud Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	23
McKelvie Hospital	46	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mearnskirk General Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Meigle Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Merchiston Hospital	10	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Argyll Hospital	20	—	—	—	—	—	—
Migdale Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Milesmark Hospital	—	—	—	—	172	—	—
Moffat Hospital	—	—	—	48	—	—	—
Monklands District General Hospital	11	9	1	—	2	32	1
Montfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Montrose Royal Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Morningfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	25
Nairn Town and Country Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlea Hospital	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Newton Stewart Hospital	—	—	—	75	—	—	—
Nicolson Mackenzie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ninewells Hospital	26	18	7	5	2,137	53	147
Northern General Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oban County Hospital	416	—	—	—	—	—	—
Perth Royal Infirmary	6	1	1	—	463	57	2
Peterhead Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	62
Portree Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Princess Margaret Rose Hospital	2	17	87	49	99	83	27
Queen Margaret Hospital	3	2	—	—	9,995	12	—
Raigmore Hospital	3	—	1	—	1	—	820
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	411	—	—
Ravenscraig Hospital	95	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roadmeetings Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roodlands General Hospital	—	—	16	1	3	—	—
Ross Hall Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ross Memorial Hospital	2	—	—	—	—	—	5
Rothesay Victoria Hospital	268	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rothesay Victoria Hospital Annexe	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roxburghe House	—	—	—	—	—	—	139
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital	—	—	—	—	1	—	3,841
Royal Alexandra Hospital	126,765	369	2	2	1	3	—
Royal Northern Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Samaritan Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Victoria Hospital	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ruchill Hospital	4	—	—	—	—	2	—
RHSC, Edinburgh	2	—	272	11	477	39	40
RHSC, Glasgow	1,277	371	5	135	20	160	15
Sauchie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	77	—

			Health Board of Residence				
Hospital of Treatment	*A&C*	*Ayr*	*Bor*	*D&G*	*Fife*	*FV*	*Gram*
Seafield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	56
Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion	1	2	3	—	16	5	—
Sister Margaret Cottage Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Southern General Hospital	2,851	414	5	168	19	143	20
Southfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Spynie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	96
St Andrew's Hospice	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St Andrews Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	990	—	—
St Brendan's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St John's Hospital At Howden	59	25	167	47	818	287	99
St Margaret's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St Mary's Hospital	22	—	—	—	—	1	—
St Michaels Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stephen Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	24
Stirling Royal Infirmary	16	1	2	1	130	14,594	2
Stobhill Hospital	363	114	5	30	3	203	4
Stonehouse Hospital	2	4	2	—	1	2	—
Stracathro Hospital	3	—	—	—	19	1	619
Strathblane Childrens Home Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	1	—
Stratyclyde Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
The Ayr Hospital	7	7,982	—	79	—	—	2
Thomas Hope Hospital	—	—	5	96	—	—	—
Thornhill Hospital	—	—	—	35	—	—	—
Tippethill Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tor-na-dee Hospital	—	—	—	—	1	—	33
Turner Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	79
Turriff Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	24
Udston Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ugie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Vale of Leven District General Hospital	5,377	1	—	—	1	91	1
Victoria Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria Geriatric Unit, Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	1	—	1	—	14,860	4	—
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	505	79	—	21	5	20	—
West Highland Hospital	1,551	—	—	—	—	1	—
Wester Moffat Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western General Hospital, Edinburgh	125	66	1,108	506	2,424	612	44
Western Infirmary, Glasgow	3,148	978	5	81	27	665	7
Western Isles Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Whitehills Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Woodcot Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Woodend General Hospital	1	—	—	—	3	1	3,798
All Hospitals (213)	47,821	41,117	11,462	15,125	38,455	29,916	45,967

Table 2—NHSiS—Scottish resident discharges from non-psychiatric and non-obstetric specialities, by hospital; year ended 31 March 1994

Hospital of Treatment	*GG*	*High*	*Lan*	*Loth*	*Ork*	*Shet*	*Tay*	*WI*
Aberdeen City Hospital	—	5	—	—	34	44	1	—
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	4	429	6	6	490	726	294	26
Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	—
Aboyne Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Adamson Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	—
Annan Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arbroath Infirmary	—	—	—	1	—	—	182	—
Arduthie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arran View Nursing Home	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arran War Memorial Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ashludie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	162	—
Astley Ainslie Hospital	—	—	1	128	—	1	1	1
Ayrshire Central and Maternity Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Balfour Hospital	—	1	—	—	907	—	—	—
Ballochmyle Hospital	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Bangour Village Hospital	—	—	—	12	—	—	—	—
Bannockburn Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Beatson Oncology Centre	3,498	37	1,481	2	—	1	63	42
Belford Hospital	—	1,173	—	1	—	—	—	1
Belhaven Hospital	—	—	—	59	—	—	—	—

Hospital of Treatment	*GG*	*High*	*Lan*	*Loth*	*Ork*	*Shet*	*Tay*	*WI*
Belvidere Hospital	27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Biggart Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	51	—
Blawarthill Hospital	16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bon Secours Private Hospital	172	—	80	—	—	—	—	—
Bonnybridge Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Borders General Hospital	1	2	7	72	—	—	—	1
Brechin Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	—
Bridge of Earn Hospital	1	—	1	1	—	—	362	—
Bridge of Weir Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Broomhill Hospital	149	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Caithness General Hospital	—	1,701	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cameron Hospital, Windygates	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Campbell Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Campbeltown Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Canniesburn Hospital	3,016	15	744	7	1	1	7	25
Castle Douglas Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chalmers Hospital	-	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Chalmers Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cleland Hospital	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	—
Coathill Hospital	—	—	26	—	—	—	—	—
Coldstream Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Corstorphine Hospital	—	—	—	5	—	—	—	—
Cowglen Hospital	15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crieff Cottage Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	50	—
Crosshouse Hospital	22	4	12	2	—	—	1	—
Daliburgh Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	124
Dalintart Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dalrymple Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Darnley Hospital	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Davidson Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dr Gray's Hospital	—	23	—	—	1	—	—	—
Drumchapel Hospital	188	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Duke Street Hospital	30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumbarton Joint Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	4	—	53	3	—	—	1	—
Dunaros Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dunbar Hospital	—	47	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dundee Dental Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	806	—
Dundee Limb Fitting Centre	—	—	—	—	—	—	86	—
Dundee Royal Infirmary	15	12	6	6	—	—	7,677	2
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Dunoon and District General Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Fortune Hospital	—	—	—	8	—	—	—	—
Eastbank Hospital	—	—	—	—	91	—	—	—
Eastern General Hospital	—	—	8	4,763	—	—	3	—
Edenhall Hospital	—	—	1	117	—	—	—	—
Edinburgh City Hospital	19	12	34	6,965	1	—	148	4
Edinburgh Dental Hospital	2	1	15	4,220	—	—	6	—
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary	35	100	95	17,067	1	2	89	10
Edington Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	—
Erskine Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	4	1	70	83	—	—	7	—
Fleming Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Forfar Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	58	—
Forth Park Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fourhills Nursing Home	101	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fraserburgh Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Garrick Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gartnavel General Hospital	5,998	11	250	4	1	—	5	20
Gesto Hospital	—	32	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gilbert Bain Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	1,453	—	—
Glasgow Dental Hospital and School	334	—	113	2	—	—	—	—
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	16,757	89	4,704	98	1	2	182	95
Glen O'Dee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glencoe Hospital	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glenrothes Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greenfield Park Nursing Home	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hairmyres Hospital	338	1	8,741	7	—	—	—	—
Helensburgh Victoria Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillside Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—
Holmhead Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Homeopathic Hospital, Glasgow	245	21	79	46	2	4	22	7

Hospital of Treatment	*GG*	*High*	*Lan*	*Loth*	*Ork*	*Shet*	*Tay*	*WI*
Huntly Jubilee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ian Charles Hospital	—	42	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insch and District War Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	13	—	1	2	—	—	1	—
Invergordon County Hospital	—	132	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inverurie Hospital	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Irvine Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	18	—
Islay Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Johnstone Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kello Hospital	—	—	29	—	—	—	—	—
Kildean Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kincardine O Neil War Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kings Cross Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	888	1
Kirkcudbright Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kirklandside Hospital, Kilmarnock	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Knightswood Hospital	60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lady Home Hospital	—	—	27	—	—	—	—	—
Lady Margaret Hospital, Millport	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Law Hospital	32	2	13,534	14	—	—	3	—
Lawson Memorial Hospital	—	813	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leanchoil Hospital	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lenzie Hospital	26	—	5	—	—	—	—	—
Liberton Hospital	—	—	—	453	—	—	—	—
Lightburn Hospital	17	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Little Cairnie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—
Lochgreen Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lochmaben Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lochmaddy Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	40
Lockhart Hospital	—	—	207	—	—	—	—	—
Lynebank Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital	—	723	—	1	—	—	1	—
Maidencraig House	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maud Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
McKelvie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mearnskirk General Hospital	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Meigle Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	66	—
Merchiston Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Argyll Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Migdale Hospital	—	70	—	—	—	—	—	—
Milesmark Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Moffat Hospital	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Monklands District General Hospital	200	—	10,787	8	—	1	3	—
Montfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	150	—	—
Montrose Royal Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	—
Morningfield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nairn Town and Country Hospital	—	35	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlea Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newton Stewart Hospital	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nicolson Mackenzie Hospital	—	13	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ninewells Hospital	44	74	22	53	1	—	15,365	10
Northern General Hospital	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Oban County Hospital	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Perth Royal Infirmary	5	1	—	10	—	—	7,844	—
Peterhead Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Portree Hospital	—	34	—	—	—	—	—	—
Princess Margaret Rose Hospital	11	27	40	3,722	3	2	41	—
Queen Margaret Hospital	3	—	—	11	—	—	37	—
Raigmore Hospital	4	13,821	—	7	1	3	6	685
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ravenscraig Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roadmeetings Hospital	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Roodlands General Hospital	—	—	—	1,824	—	—	2	—
Ross Hall Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ross Memorial Hospital	—	217	—	—	—	—	—	11
Rothesay Victoria Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rothesay Victoria Hospital Annexe	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roxburghe House	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital	—	44	—	1	85	160	21	4
Royal Alexandra Hospital	227	1	32	4	—	—	1	1
Royal Northern Infirmary	—	189	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Samaritan Hospital	24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Victoria Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	232	—
Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh	—	—	—	518	—	—	—	—

Hospital of Treatment	*GG*	*High*	*Lan*	*Loth*	*Ork*	*Shet*	*Tay*	*WI*
Ruchill Hospital	196	—	10	—	—	—	—	—
RHSC, Edinburgh	10	72	36	3,757	1	4	100	5
RHSC, Glasgow	4,941	71	1,657	17	3	2	11	27
Sauchie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Seafield Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion	2	2	5	519	—	—	1	—
Sister Margaret Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southern General Hospital	11,427	35	786	27	—	2	18	74
Southfield Hospital	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Spynie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St Andrew's Hospice	2	—	20	—	—	—	—	—
St Andrews Memorial Hospital	1	—	—	—	—	—	4	—
St Brendan's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
St John's Hospital At Howden	142	121	382	12,044	—	4	120	—
St Margaret's Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	50	—
St Mary's Hospital	205	—	129	—	—	—	—	—
St Michaels Hospital	—	—	—	23	—	—	—	—
Stephen Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stirling Royal Infirmary	17	4	57	33	—	—	219	2
Stobhill Hospital	15,319	9	2,175	14	—	1	7	14
Stonehouse Hospital	87	—	7,839	—	—	—	—	—
Stracathro Hospital	—	2	—	2	—	—	3,363	—
Strathblane Childrens Home Hospital	123	—	27	—	—	—	—	—
Stratyclyde Hospital	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—
The Ayr Hospital	5	4	3	6	—	—	2	—
Thomas Hope Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thornhill Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tippethill Hospital	—	—	—	31	—	—	—	—
Tor-na-dee Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Turner Memorial Hospital	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Turriff Cottage Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Udston Hospital	—	—	37	—	—	—	—	—
Ugie Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Vale of Leven District General Hospital	148	3	5	—	—	—	—	2
Victoria Cottage Hospital	1	—	81	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria Geriatric Unit, Glasgow	42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	1	2	—	23	—	—	53	—
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	14,746	6	865	6	—	1	1	2
West Highland Hospital	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wester Moffat Hospital	—	—	16	—	—	—	—	—
Western General Hospital, Edinburgh	247	358	207	22,648	3	—	388	17
Western Infirmary, Glasgow	17,254	69	799	35	—	—	36	120
Western Isles Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,712
Whitehills Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Woodcot Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Woodend General Hospital	2	15	—	—	240	143	16	—
All Hospitals (213)	96,598	20,742	56,366	79,543	1,867	2,707	39,248	3,087

Charity Regulations

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to initiate a review of *(a)* charity regulations and *(b)* the role of the Scottish Charities Office; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has no plans at present to initiate a review of Scottish charity regulations.

The current legislative provisions relating to charities in Scotland are based on the 1989 policy statement "Charities in Scotland: A Framework for Supervision". The existing structure followed extensive consultation, which included the voluntary sector. Some regulations were brought into force only in 1993 and are in advance of equivalents proposed for England and Wales.

The role of the Scottish Charities Office includes the investigation of misconduct or mismanagement in the administration of charities. The office, which began work in July 1992, has conducted investigations in cases where evidence of misconduct and mismanagement has been uncovered and has initiated court proceedings leading to the suspension of trustees and orders of court protecting charity property. Some recent examples, which have been reported widely in the media, indicate that the regulatory regime in Scotland and the Scottish Charities Office are effective against misconduct or mismanagement in the administration of charities. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has no plans to review its role at present.

Psychiatric Patients

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has in relation to the needs of long-stay psychiatric patients; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's policy is that the care provided to people with mental health problems should match their needs and should be provided to them in homely settings in local communities, rather than in institutions. The Secretary of State has, therefore, established a programme of bridging finance, totalling approximately £15 million per annum, to facilitate the transfer from institutional to community care. Health boards, local authorities and housing agencies are working together, with the involvement where appropriate of the Scottish Office, to plan the transition in detail. Resources will transfer from health boards to local authorities, reflecting changes in lead responsibilities for providing care to certain clients. The detailed implementation of this approach is for local negotiation between the agencies concerned.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in response to his plans to transfer 600 long-stay mental health places into the community in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State has received representations this year on all aspects of care in the community only three of which specifically related to the number of transfers.

Every discharge will continue to be considered on the basis of clinical judgment based on individual assessments of needs and how these needs could best be provided. The scale and pace of transfers are properly matters of local negotiation between the agencies concerned.

The figure of 600 transfers is the current estimate of transfers that could reasonably be funded each year with support from the £15 million available annually under the bridging finance scheme.

Urban Programme

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the projects in Inverclyde which are to receive financial assistance under the urban programme; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Projects in Inverclyde approved for urban programme funding are set out in the table. A closing date of 30 November 1994 has been set for local authorities to submit to the Scottish Office applications for the next round of approvals.

Sponsored by Strathclyde Regional Council
Bow Farm Home Support Service
Greenock East Credit Union
Inverclyde Women's Aid
Larkfield Youth Cafe
St Kenneth's Day Care Centre
Bow Farm Community Caravan Project
Local Communications Project
Threshold Printing Project
Kelburn/Woodhall Community Resource Centre
Inverclyde Home Safety Group
Gibshill/Weir Street Caravan Project
Greenock Employment Action Group Special Needs Initiative
Larkfield Ladybird Pre-5 Centre
Craigend Resource Centre
Inverclyde Community Development Trust
Light Trust/Link Group Community Nursery
Strone/Maukinhill Youth Worker
SW Greenock Creche
Greenock High School Supported Study
Link-In Creche Workers East Greenock
Caravan Project—Strone/Maukinhill
Elderly/Disabled Resource Centre Port Glasgow
Community Support Unit
Community Caravan Kelburn/Woodhall
Apex Pre-Employment Training/Counselling

Sponsored by Inverclyde District Council
Strone/Maukinhill Neighbourhood Centre
Grieve Road Community Hall
Lady Octavia Centre

Drugs Task Force

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the report of the Scottish drugs task force will be published.

Mr. Lang: The report of the drugs task force led by my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State will be published tomorrow. Copies of the report, entitled "Drugs in Scotland: Meeting The Challenge" will be placed in the Library. The wide-ranging review carried out by the task force and the many recommendations contained in its report point the way ahead for a more effective and better co-ordinated response to the drug misuse problem in Scotland. I am very grateful to the members of the task force for the contributions they have made.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 19 October 1994

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Entry Clearance Charges

Mr. Pike : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken to refund all those wrongly charged for entry clearance where it has been established by EC law that this should have been done free of charge.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 17 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *48*.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Cardiff Magistrates Court

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received from the Chief Constable of the South Wales police in relation to the procedure for guarding of prisoners at Cardiff magistrates court by *(a)* police officers and *(b)* private security officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Legal Education and Conduct

Mr. Mans: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct intends to publish its third annual report.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct has today published its third annual report, and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HEALTH

Ambulance Response Times

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish figures for the performance of the London ambulance service in each month from July 1992 to September 1994, showing the percentage of calls responded to within 14 minutes and the target specified in the patients charter.

Mr. Sackville: The percentage of 999 calls which received a response within 14 minutes of the call being answered is shown in the table:

Month	*Per cent. Response within 14 minutes*
1992	
July	No reliable figures available
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	59
1993	
January	64
February	65
March	63
April	68
May	67
June	60
July	62
August	65
September	64
October	58
November	57
December	57
1994	
January	65
February	63
March	63
April	65
May	66
June	62
July	62
August	66
September	68

Source:

London Ambulance Service quarterly and monthly reports to South Thames regional health authority. (The quarterly reports are also circulated to all London Members of Parliament.)

The patients charter target response time for emergency calls in urban areas is 95 per cent. responded to within 14 minutes.

Asthma

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in each standard age group died from asthma attacks in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is available in the Library—in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys series DH2 under *ICD 493.

*International Classification of Diseases.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the mortality rates for asthma for each year since 1972 among *(a)* the whole population and *(b)* under 14-year-olds.

Mr. Sackville: The readily available information is shown in the table.

Death rates from asthma (ICD* 493), England and Wales, 1972–1992

Deaths per 100,000 population

	All ages	*under 15*
1972	2·57	0·44
1973	2·44	0.46
1974	2·20	0·36
1975	2·39	0·32
1976	2·11	0·35
1977	2·19	0·48

Deaths per 100,000 population

	All ages	*under 15*
1978	2·32	0·40
1979	2·98	0·35
1980	2·98	0·39
1981	3·23	0·48
1982	3·18	0·44
1983	3·31	0·43
1984	3·54	0·40
1985	3·94	0·34
1986	3·97	0·27
1987	3·77	0·41
1988	3·97	0·40
1989	3·86	0·26
1990	3·65	0·39
1991	3·69	0·33
1992	3·49	0·20

*International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many responses he has received following his consultative document on the future of the Post Office; and if he will publish the results of the consultation.

Mr. Eggar: At the end of the consultation period we had received some 13,400 responses to the Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services". We will make public the results of the consultation at the appropriate point.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to make an announcement on the future of the nuclear industry following the nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: The public consultation period for the review ended on 30 September. Many complex issues have to be considered and an announcement will be made once that consideration is completed.

Coal

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many companies have made a bid for British Coal's coal interests; how many have bid for each regional package; and if he will name these companies.

Mr. Eggar: There were 18 bidders for the five regional coal companies and the care and maintenance collieries. Details of the bids and bidders are commercially confidential but we have announced the names of the preferred bidders.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to announce the preferred buyers for each of British Coal's regional packages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The preferred bidders for the five regional coal companies and certain of the care and maintenance collieries were announced on Wednesday 14 October. They are:

RJB Mining plc for Central North, Central South and North East Regional Coal Companies and Thorne and Ellington Care and Maintenance Collieries;

Celtic Energy Limited for South Wales;

Mining (Scotland) Limited for Scotland;

Coal Investments plc for Annesley Bentinck Colliery; and

Tower Employee Buyout Team for Tower Colliery

HOME DEPARTMENT

Tail Docking

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been undertaken for the illegal docking of dogs' tails; and how many were successful.

Mr. Maclean: Prosecutions for the illegal docking of dogs' tails will be recorded either under Statutory Instrument 1991 No. 1412, The Veterinary Surgeons 1966 (Schedule 3 amendment) Order 1991, or the Protection of Animals Act 1911.

Information held centrally shows no record of prosecutions under the above-mentioned statutory instrument.

However, it should be noted that the statistics of court proceedings are based on returns made by the police to the Home Office and although these include offences where there has been no police involvement, such as those prosecutions instigated by Government Departments and private organisations—in this case possibly the RSPCA—and individuals, the reporting of these types of offence is known to be incomplete.

The court proceedings data regarding offences committed under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 does not identify the type of cruelty or species involved.

Animal Sanctuaries

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what legislation currently governs the welfare of animals at animal sanctuaries.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The welfare of animals in sanctuaries is governed by the general animal welfare provisions of the Protection of Animals Act 1911.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many crimes were recorded by each police force in England and Wales within each category of crime in the year ended June;

(2) how many incidents of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and of theft from a motor vehicle were recorded by each police force in England and Wales in the year ended June;

(3) how many of the burglaries recorded by each police force in England and Wales in the year ended June were in a dwelling; and how many were in another building.

Mr Maclean: The information requested is contained in the following tables:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area and offence group—12 months to June 1994

	Number of offences								
England and Wales Police force area	*All offences*	*Violence against the person*	*Sexual offences*	*Robbery*	*Burglary*	*Theft and handling stolen goods*	*Fraud and forgery*	*Criminal damage*	*Other*
Avon and Somerset	169,690	6,314	1,143	1,923	37,635	95,174	4,590	22,039	872
Bedfordshire	55,611	1,888	413	558	14,386	28,780	2,083	7,185	318
Cambridgeshire	61,312	3,046	432	275	13,610	34,502	1,600	7,395	452
Cheshire	77,427	3,122	554	314	20,506	36,461	2,776	12,408	1,286
Cleveland	79,385	2,250	250	414	18,432	41,593	1,377	14,747	322
Cumbria	42,521	1,985	239	84	9,901	20,938	1,157	7,837	380
Derbyshire	87,924	3,948	456	422	25,299	39,319	1,711	16,020	749
Devon and Cornwall	114,124	4,328	1,006	417	32,053	57,148	3,687	14,129	1,356
Dorset	53,153	1,829	404	146	8,900	30,474	3,397	7,111	892
Durham	66,032	2,557	494	149	12,984	34,514	2,619	12,021	694
Essex	108,779	4,443	636	402	25,999	56,052	2,828	17,530	889
Gloucestershire	63,117	2,044	872	313	17,277	32,988	2,730	6,358	535
Greater Manchester	345,138	9,939	1,277	5,667	91,621	161,946	9,415	62,808	2,465
Hampshire	142,470	5,559	1,343	552	30,882	75,461	4,544	22,670	1,459
Hertfordshire	54,268	1,939	308	238	12,592	28,118	1,428	9,276	369
Humberside	139,006	4,944	733	559	46,029	63,617	2,965	19,674	485
Kent	157,083	6,733	1,038	613	28,626	87,235	3,986	27,116	1,736
Lancashire	128,434	3,190	464	502	27,218	65,709	3,347	26,969	1,035
Leicestershire	98,949	4,053	567	950	25,327	49,670	3,455	14,420	507
Lincolnshire	49,951	2,274	348	150	12,294	23,934	1,228	9,056	667
City of London	5,069	170	19	40	670	3,436	446	209	79
Merseyside	138,663	7,434	778	2,269	32,797	65,635	4,380	23,681	1,689
Metropolitan Police District	883,741	44,257	7,181	25,152	162,337	427,698	33,206	175,450	8,460
Norfolk	59,754	2,155	390	181	15,979	30,941	1,611	7,932	565
Northamptonshire	58,892	2,389	341	333	17,183	27,895	1,729	8,582	440
Northumbria	210,444	6,446	721	1,260	60,999	85,444	2,932	51,626	1,016
North Yorkshire	59,723	2,137	270	168	16,451	30,385	1,203	8,593	516
Nottinghamshire	156,362	7,584	1,147	1,166	38,314	75,010	4,152	28,193	796
South Yorkshire	156,541	4,856	654	996	52,644	69,756	2,558	23,880	1,197
Staffordshire	96,005	5,952	573	414	28,953	42,286	2,242	15,157	428
Suffolk	41,574	2,104	386	113	8,400	21,494	1,695	6,659	723
Surrey	49,478	2,514	419	165	11,271	25,695	2,142	6,758	514
Sussex	106,262	3,270	742	529	24,231	54,280	2,984	18,971	1,255
Thames Valley	191,748	5,118	839	975	39,273	106,526	6,950	30,491	1,576
Warwickshire	43,970	1,506	319	133	11,826	22,349	1,208	6,303	326
West Mercia	82,848	3,478	455	274	16,985	45,413	1,527	14,158	558
West Midlands	323,267	11,022	1,444	6,375	95,272	146,175	8,775	52,297	1,907
West Yorkshire	297,108	9,419	1,602	2,918	90,993	138,426	5,870	45,333	2,547
Wiltshire	39,159	2,657	384	149	8,641	19,500	1,214	6,123	491
Dyfed-Powys	22,817	2,115	270	41	3,924	10,491	704	4,831	441
Gwent	40,873	2,507	299	99	7,227	21,716	1,192	7,258	575
North Wales	44,687	2,887	576	115	10,567	21,293	1,049	7,750	450
South Wales	162,020	5,990	556	467	37,998	77,405	4,045	34,333	1,226
England and Wales	5,365,379	214,352	33,342	58,980	1,304,506	2,632,882	154,737	921,337	45,243

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime recorded by the police by police force area—12 months to June 1994

	Number ofoffences	
England and Wales Police force area	*Theft of a vehicle*	*Theft from a vehicle*
Avon and Somerset	23,144	35,207
Bedfordshire	8,147	10,911
Cambridgeshire	6,276	10,274
Cheshire	8,320	12,209
Cleveland	12,412	9,883
Cumbria	2,887	7,949
Derbyshire	8,855	15,247
Devon and Cornwall	7,507	22,049
Dorset	3,500	9,636
Durham	8,720	9,448
Essex	9,268	18,628
Gloucestershire	4,948	14,167
Greater Manchester	52,217	50,999
Hampshire	9,341	27,827
Hertfordshire	5,462	12,411
Humberside	15,477	19,979
Kent	17,107	26,125
Lancashire	12,115	21,820
Leicestershire	11,205	17,467
Lincolnshire	3,303	6,075
City of London	120	533
Merseyside	15,260	17,007
Metropolitan Police District	72,526	138,747
Norfolk	3,932	11,559

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime recorded by the police by police force area—12 months to June 1994

England and Wales Police force area	Number ofoffences Theft of a vehicle	Theft from a vehicle
Northamptonshire	7,818	9,842
Northumbria	26,857	24,453
North Yorkshire	5,042	9,793
Nottinghamshire	16,032	19,822
South Yorkshire	21,764	23,847
Staffordshire	10,227	16,048
Suffolk	2,164	5,625
Surrey	3,867	9,430
Sussex	7,015	18,831
Thames Valley	21,083	40,701
Warwickshire	5,120	8,615
West Mercia	8,641	14,386
West Midlands	40,147	52,781
West Yorkshire	37,394	47,087
Wiltshire	2,491	6,303
Dyfed-Powys	1,321	2,593
Gwent	3,811	6,740
North Wales	2,826	7,792
South Wales	24,628	26,995
England & Wales	570,297	877,841

Notifiable offences of burglary recorded by the police by police force area — 12 months to June 1994

England and Wales Police force area	Number of Offences Burglary in a dwelling	Burglary in a building other than a dwelling
Avon and Somerset	19,430	18,205
Bedfordshire	6,874	7,512
Cambridgeshire	5,903	7,707
Cheshire	9,820	10,686
Cleveland	11,892	6,540
Cumbria	4,164	5,737
Derbyshire	10,379	14,920
Devon and Cornwall	15,855	16,198
Dorset	5,206	3,694
Durham	7,784	5,200
Essex	8,678	17,321
Gloucestershire	8,384	8,893
Greater Manchester	36,223	35,398
Hampshire	13,756	17,126
Hertfordshire	4,657	7,935
Humberside	20,848	25,181
Kent	17,900	10,726
Lancashire	17,771	9,447
Leicestershire	14,615	10,712
Lincolnshire	6,795	5,499
City of London	35	635
Merseyside	20,607	12,190
Metropolitan Police District	103,966	58,371
Norfolk	6,014	9,965
Northamptonshire	7,577	9,606
Northumbria	31,095	29,904
North Yorkshire	7,140	9,311
Nottinghamshire	23,449	14,865
South Yorkshire	25,890	26,754
Staffordshire	13,793	15,160
Suffolk	3,398	5,002
Surrey	5,005	6,266
Sussex	12,140	12,091
Thames Valley	20,784	18,489
Warwickshire	4,643	7,183
West Mercia	8,382	8,603
West Midlands	50,701	44,571
West Yorkshire	56,912	34,081
Wiltshire	4,238	4,403
Dyfed–Powys	1,385	2,539
Gwent	3,414	3,813
North Wales	3,455	7,112
South Wales	14,980	23,018
England & Wales	695,937	608,569

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were recorded in each borough by the Metropolitan police within each category of crime in the year ended June.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested has been supplied by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and is contained in the following table:

Notifiable Offences Recorded by Offence Group and Local Authority Borough or District Metropolitan Police District: July 1993 to June 1994

Borough/District	Violence against the person	Sexual Offences	Robbery	Burglary and going equipped	Theft and handling stolen goods	Fraud and Forgery	Criminal Damage	Other notifiable offences	Total notifiable offences
Barking	716	153	213	3,419	6,685	508	3,488	80	15,262
Barnet	867	194	347	5,066	11,486	861	5,762	143	24,726
Bexley	733	183	176	2,847	8,723	598	4,380	79	17,719
Brent	1,701	227	1,835	5,681	11,407	1,062	5,959	193	28,065
Bromley	1,252	144	288	5,428	13,528	896	6,545	111	28,192
Camden	1,565	202	1,189	7,261	21,692	1,429	5,707	284	39,329
Croydon	2,022	304	530	5,980	16,156	1,243	7,090	187	33,512
Ealing	1,285	229	775	4,280	13,544	1,215	7,113	180	28,621
Enfield	1,201	192	337	3,870	9,680	794	4,937	121	21,132
Greenwich	1,626	315	436	6,191	14,139	934	7,992	243	31,876
Hackney	1,519	280	2,282	7,028	12,291	1,091	5,030	317	29,838
Hammersmith	1,172	151	846	3,937	12,674	755	4,725	149	24,409
Haringey	1,352	162	1,232	4,598	10,966	887	4,996	157	24,350
Harrow	727	106	282	3,398	6,680	590	3,859	84	15,726
Havering	564	162	115	3,529	9,682	602	3,712	67	18,433
Hillingdon*	958	300	155	3,526	10,624	754	6,021	87	22,425
Hounslow*	1,388	225	342	4,118	10,848	920	5,555	329	23,725

Notifiable Offences Recorded by Offence Group and Local Authority Borough or District Metropolitan Police District: July 1993 to June 1994

Borough/District	*Violence against the person*	*Sexual Offences*	*Robbery*	*Burglary and going equipped*	*Theft and handling stolen goods*	*Fraud and Forgery*	*Criminal Damage*	*Other notifiable offences*	*Total notifiable offences*
Islington	1,872	157	1,090	4,773	13,100	770	5,408	325	27,495
Kensington and Chelsea	1,032	161	907	4,308	17,823	1,021	3,993	172	29,417
Kingston	735	100	157	3,256	8,358	595	3,067	258	16,526
Lambeth	3,093	391	2,824	8,029	17,137	1,519	7,818	484	41,295
Lewisham	1,843	283	1,117	8,000	12,811	913	5,638	231	30,836
Merton	844	129	214	2,941	8,180	974	3,854	72	17,208
Newham	1,752	664	949	6,580	12,815	1,126	5,446	201	29,533
Redbridge	923	154	263	3,950	10,178	1,077	3,871	92	20,508
Richmond	625	83	191	2,785	7,283	389	2,748	154	14,258
Southwark	2,478	418	1,916	7,155	17,780	1,327	8,251	384	39,709
Sutton	920	136	124	3,665	7,512	468	3,268	91	16,184
Tower Hamlets	1,431	196	543	4,947	12,021	788	5,080	268	25,274
Wandsworth	1,567	248	1,099	6,154	15,616	1,340	6,445	731	33,200
Waltham Forest	1,071	118	736	4,017	10,414	860	4,227	86	21,529
Westminster	1,983	275	1,846	7,786	37,838	2,986	5,841	417	58,972
Broxbourne (part)	297	14	30	576	2,369	109	1,053	8	4,456
Elmbridge (part)	103	6	7	415	786	63	320	7	1,707
Epping Forest (part)	303	28	37	734	2,890	172	1,203	35	5,402
Epsom and Ewell	314	65	51	1,097	2,639	21363	1,363	30	5,772
Hertsmere	196	40	38	680	2,771	176	1,351	26	5,278
Reigate and Banstead (part)	119	11	14	472	1,278	120	629	14	2,657
Spelthorne	393	66	48	1,494	3,998	248	1,935	75	8,257
Welwyn Hatfield (part)	2	2	—	13	31	7	11	4	70
Heathrow Airport	26	4	—	39	2,740	305	183	342	3,540
Thames	—	—	—	—	116	0	44	0	160
Central Cheque Squad	—	—	—	—	50	804	16	5	875
MPD Total	44,570	7,278	25,581	164,023	429,339	33,509	175,934	7,224	887,458

* These figures exclude offences reported in those part of the borough which fall within the boundary of Heathrow Airport

Prisons (Drugs)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, column 203, what action his Department will be taking to reduce *(a)* the demand for drugs and *(b)* the supply of drugs in prison.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 July 1994]*: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock dated 19 October:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on the action the Prison Service will be taking to reduce the demand for drugs and the supply of drugs in prisons.

Reducing levels of violence and drug misuse in prisons is one of the Prison Service's seven strategic priorities for 1994–1997. To achieve this we are adopting an integrated strategy which aims to reduce both the supply of and demand for drugs within prisons.

Attempts to reduce the demand for drugs in prisons will centre around programmes for prisoners who misuse drugs. These programmes are available throughout the Prison Service, and are provided by healthcare staff, other Prison Service staff and outside agencies. They include detoxification, counselling, courses for groups of prisoners, access to Narcotics Anonymous, drug awareness training and a small number of more intensive treatment programmes. It is intended to expand the number of intensive programmes.

The Prison Service is also sending a clear message that it is not prepared to tolerate the illicit use of drugs in prisons by measures to reduce their supply. Such measures include effective perimeter security; more effective searches of prisoners and accommodation; use of sniffer dogs and intelligence gathering on the supply of drugs. The provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill 1994 will allow these measures to be supplemented by the use of drug testing.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total sum of money paid out to victims of the Brighton bombing under the criminal injury compensation scheme; and how many individuals received payments;

(2) what estimate he has made of the sum which would have been paid to victims of the Brighton bombing under the proposed tariff scheme for criminal injuries compensation.

Mr. Maclean: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board advises that 34 claims were made in respect of the Brighton bombing in 1984. Further, more detailed, information about those claims—for example how many resulted in a monetary award and the size of any such awards—is not readily available. No estimate can therefore be made of the sums which might have been payable under the tariff scheme in comparable circumstances.

Whitemoor Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made with Sir

John Woodcock's report into the incident at Whitemoor prison; and when he expects to publish the results.

Mr. Howard: I will publish Sir John Woodcock's report as soon as possible.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been deployed at Whitemoor prison from 9 September to the latest date; and from which forces they came.

Mr. Maclean: Since 9 September, between 36 and 76 police officers from Cambridgeshire constabulary and the Metropolitan police have been deployed at Whitemoor prison.

Endangered Species

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* prosecutions were undertaken and *(b)* convictions gained in respect of *(a)* appendix 1, *(b)* appendix 2 and *(c)* appendix 3 of CITES in each year since 1990.

Mr. Maclean: Information held centrally by the Department shows two prosecutions and two convictions in 1990 under sections 3(1) and 3(8) of the Statutory Instrument,"Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations". Information for 1991 to 1993—which is provisional—shows a nil return.

However, it should be noted that the statistics of court proceedings are based on returns made by the police to the Home Office and although these include offences where there has been no police involvement, such as those prosecutions instigated by Government Departments—in this case probably Custom and Excise—and private organisations and individuals, the reporting of these types of offence is known to be incomplete.

Proceedings instigated with reference to the Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species but dealt with under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and any other statute pertaining to endangered species cannot be separately identified.

Civil Defence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the source of funds for each as *(a)* funds within the civil defence vote of his Department, *(b)* funds from other Departments, or non-civil defence funds from his Department and *(c)* other funds not derived from central Government.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Funds for civil defence are voted by Parliament in the annual Appropriation Act. In the same way, Parliament votes funds to other Departments and to the Home Office for non-civil defence purposes.

Information on other funds not derived from central Government that may be used for civil defence purposes is not available centrally.

Immigration

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many instances there were in *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994 where the decision of a chief immigration officer to detain an asylum seeker was overturned by (i) the first seven-day review, (ii) the second seven-day review, (iii) the third seven-day review, (iv) the first monthly review, (v) the second monthly review, (vi) the third monthly review, (vii) the fourth monthly review and (viii) the sixth monthly review;

(2) how many instances there were *(a)* in 1993 and *(b)* in 1994 where a decision of a chief immigration officer to detain an asylum seeker was overturned by an immigration service inspector within 24 hours of that decision.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to allow applicants for asylum to contest the initial decision of a chief immigration officer to detail them before an independent appellate authority before their full application for asylum is heard.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As it stands the law provides, for any detainee who has an appeal outstanding or who has been detailed for more than seven days for further examination having sought entry to the United Kingdom, an opportunity to apply to the independent appellate authorities for bail. The Government have no plans to change these provisions, which apply to asylum seeks as to others.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many birds of prey were stolen in each region in each month since September 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Wildlife Liaison Officers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources were allocated, by region, to police wildlife liaison officers in each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement on Government support for their role.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected centrally. The deployment of police officers and other resources to wildlife liaison work is a matter for chief officers.

Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what common position with any other member of the European Union regarding the forthcoming executive committee meeting of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees he has agreed, in accordance with the agenda of the Germany Presidency of the European Union item 2(d).

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None, but at the meeting of the UNHCR executive committee from 3 to 7 October the German presidency made a statement on behalf of the European Union which had been agreed with the member states. I am placing a copy in the Library.

Deportations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect of which states his Department has encountered difficulties in obtaining, for aliens to be deported, travel documents from foreign missions of their states.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Difficulty in obtaining a travel document for a deportee is experienced in only a small proportion of cases, and I do not think it would be helpful to associate it with specific countries. Where delays do occur they are generally due to the embassy's or high commission's need to verify the identity and nationality of the person concerned.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often his officials attend meetings of the centre for information and exchange on asylum referred to in the agenda of the German Presidency of the European Union regarding title VI of the European Union treaty.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Home Office is represented at all CIREA meetings. There have been two so far this year, and a further two are planned.

WALES

Cardiff University Dental Hospital

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had with respect to the possibilities of trust status for the Cardiff University dental hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office has received two representations in respect of the South Glamorgan dental hospital's application for NHS trust status. Public consultation commenced on 5 September and ends on 4 December.

Morriston Open Heart Surgery Unit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the comparison techniques used in the determining of the bids for the provision of open heart operations at Morriston hospital cardiac surgery and cardiology service for West Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The tenders were assessed by an evaluation team against a set of non-financial criteria produced by the project board advised by independent experts. A separate financial evaluation was performed by independent management consultants.

TB Control

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of Welsh health purchasing authorities in relation to the need for integrated TB control programmes; and what arrangements he has made to ensure programmes achieve high immunisation uptakes and screening rates in areas of substantial immigration from high TB prevalence areas of the world.

Mr. Redwood: I have seen no need to consult with chairmen of Welsh health purchasing authorities on this matter. All health authorities in Wales are issued with regular guidance on vaccination and immunisation programmes, including TB. Current advice recommends that the BCG vaccine is offered to all school children between the ages of 10 and 13; to new immigrants from countries with a high prevalence of the disease and to their newly born children; and to certain other high-risk groups. Health authorities have been reminded recently to ensure that their arrangements to protect against TB are adequate.

The Government have set up a task force to consider what improvements to the TB control strategy are necessary, including the need for screening of immigrants and refugees.

Botanical Garden

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales and with the National Museum of Wales in relation to the proposed Welsh national botanical garden; if he will give the *(a)* capital cost and *(b)* annual maintenance cost of the project; what representations he has had in relation to responsibility for its administration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Consultants have been commissioned to consider whether there is a need for a national botanic garden for Wales and if so, to consider the costs and possible locations. They have consulted the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Museum of Wales. Details of costs will not be known until the consultants' report is received towards the end of the year. A number of representations have been received suggesting a variety of locations around Wales.

Filing and Recall System

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions in the past 12 months the filing and recall system of his Department has failed; what proposals he has for improvements in the computerised filing system; and what proposals he has for market testing the registry department.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is developing a new computerised filing system which so far covers only a small part of our operation. During this process, we are maintaining a manual back-up system which should prevent teething troubles from causing the Department's file recording system to fail.

The records management service in Cardiff—formerly the registry department—has recently been market tested and the contract has been awarded to the in–house bid team.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the waiting list figures and average waiting times for infertility treatment in each Welsh health authority area.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what date he received the draft corporate plan of the Welsh Development Agency; what consultations he has carried out in respect of it; when he expects to receive the final version of the corporate plan; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations he has held with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the arrangements for publication of the agency's corporate plan.

Mr. Redwood: I expect to receive the agency's corporate plan soon. My officials have been in discussion with the agency on possible options and priorities.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the future responsibilities of the agency in *(a)* factory development, *(b)* marketing, *(c)* urban regeneration, *(d)* derelict land clearance and *(e)* investment banking and venture capital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I meet the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency regularly to discuss a range of issues.

My letter to the chairman of 8 March 1994 set out the ways in which I expect the agency to contribute to the economic development of Wales. A copy of that letter was placed in the Library of the House at the time.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Audit Commission in relation to the terms of reference of the inquiry conducted by Grant Thornton into the Welsh Development Agency joint venture with Cynon Valley borough council and the land deal with Tesco plc.

Mr. Redwood: None. The arrangements for the inquiry are a matter for the agency.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he received notification from the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning his impending directorship of Development Securities Ltd.; on what date consent was given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The chairman notified me that he intended to take up a directorship of Development Securities plc on 25 March 1994.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the advice given to *(a)* schools proposing to switch to grant-maintained status and *(b)* their local education authorities in relation to the clearing of current year deficit in the final year under local authority administration;

(2) when he expects to refund to South Glamorgan county council the run-off deficit of Mary Immaculate high school, as at the date of its transfer to grant-maintained status on 31 March.

Mr. Redwood: The deficit which had been accumulated by Mary Immaculate high school over a period of years and while it was under the control of South Glamorgan local education authority will be paid off in its first year as a grant-maintained school without additional funding from the Welsh Office.

It has been made clear that, under the Education (Grant-Maintained Schools) (Finance) (Wales) Regulations 1994, any deficit incurred by schools while under local education authorities control will be taken into account in calculating their annual maintenance grant for their first year as a grant-maintained school.

DEFENCE

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Greenwich

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has agreed to sell the Queen Elizabeth hospital to Greenwich healthcare trust for NHS use.

Mr. Soames: Negotiations with the Greenwich healthcare trust have been progressing well although a number of stages remain to be completed before any contract could be signed. In the meantime, however, we have received an expression of interest from a private consortium. Should this result in a formal offer, we would consider it.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Jack: MAFF has collaborated with the Royal National Institute for the Blind to produce publications in alternative formats on a range of subjects. There are two MAFF publications, from the "Foodsense" series, available through the RNIB's customer services: the booklet "New Microwave Labels" is available in Braille or on audio; and the booklet "Healthy Eating" is available both in Braille and large print formats, as well as on audio tape. A third publication "Health Eating for Older People" is available in large print format via the "Foodsense" public ordering telephone line.

Livestock Transport

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* adult cattle, *(b)* calves, *(c)* sheep/lambs, *(d)* pigs and *(e)* other livestock were imported into Great Britain in each year since 1985.

Mr. Jack: Data for Great Britain in the form requested are not available except at disproportionate cost. Figures for recorded imports into the United Kingdom as a whole are given in the table.

Recorded imports of live animals into the United Kingdom since 1985

	Adult cattle	*Calves*	*Sheep & lambs*	*Pigs*	*Other livestock*	*Poultry (,000)*
1985	218,696	2,625	90,808	60,156	6,739	2,809·5
1986	231,867	429	64,591	64,844	8,150	4,446·8
1987	151,473	109	88,168	59,710	12,139	3,778·5
1988	178,051	510	67,677	45,445	11,921	2,526·2
1989	122,947	653	102,923	56,982	11,403	2,459·8
1990	124,337	355	119,217	52,581	10,584	3,224·6
1991	89,488	—	98,032	76,286	8,280	3,439·6

Recorded imports of live animals into the United Kingdom since 1985

	Adult cattle	*Calves*	*Sheep & lambs*	*Pigs*	*Other livestock*	*Poultry (,000)*
1992	79,366	1,462	234,487	109,964	11,533	4,402·9
1993	34,616	3,167	74,429	4,678	1,765	2,795·9

Source:
HM Customs and Excise

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licensed *(a)* red meat and *(b)* poultry abattoirs there were in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Browning: Until 1993, abattoirs in Great Britain were not licensed centrally by Agriculture Departments. The following figures for abattoirs licensed by local authorities are derived from records of state veterinary service visits and are therefore approximate.

The number of licensed abattoirs in England and Wales in each of the last five years was:

red meat	poultry meat
1989–780	1989–108
1990–700	1990–102
1991–640	1991–98
1992–595	1992–98
1993–473	1993–102

Tenderising Enzymes

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the use of meat tenderising enzymes administered to animals pre-slaughter.

Mrs Browning: The Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 currently prohibit the sale for human consumption of fresh meat from animals to which tenderisers have been administered.

The EC Scientific Veterinary Committee has been asked to consider the question of administration of tenderising enzymes to cattle after stunning and before slaughter. It is not clear when the committee is likely to report.

PRIME MINISTER

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the total cost, including staff time and legal fees, of representing each Government Department in cases at industrial tribunals in each of the past five years.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is not held centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Official Visits

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library *(a)* a list of official visits he has made since 21 July, *(b)* copies of speeches he made on each visit, *(c)* a list of interviews given to the media over the same period and *(d)* a copy of his speech to the Conservative and Unionist conference in Bournemouth on 14 October.

The Prime Minister: *(a)* I have made a number of official visits throughout the country since 21 July this year, delivering several speeches on a wide range of subjects. Since that date I have also made three overseas visits as follows:

Date	Destination
1–2 August	Poland and Lithuania
7–8 September	The Hague and Berlin
18–22 September	Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and South Africa

(b) Copies of the speeches made on each occasion have been placed in the Library, along with *(c)* a list of interviews given to the media since 21 July.

(d) A copy of my speech to the Conservative and Unionist conference in Bournemouth on 14 October is available in the Library of the House.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a current list of special advisers attached to Ministers stating the Minister they work for, the date of their appointment, the name of their previous employer before their initial appointment as a special adviser attached to a Minister, and the organisation from which they are seconded.

The Prime Minister: Currently there are 32 special advisers attached to Ministers. None is on secondment from an outside organisation. The names of the advisers, the Ministers they work for, the dates of their current appointments and the names of their previous employers before their initial appointments and the names of their previous employers before their initial appointments as special advisers are as follows:

Name	*Minister (s) served*	*Date of Appointment*	*Previous Employer*
K Adams	Secretary of State for the Environment	28 May 1993	Rt. Hon. John Gummer
P Barnes	Secretary of State for Social Security	28 May 1993	Boston Consulting Group
C Blunt	Secretary of State for Defence	15 February 1993	PI Political Consultants
Miss. A Broom	Secretary of State for Employment	21 July 1994	Freelance Political Consultant

Name	*Minister (s) served*	*Date of Appointment*	*Previous Employer*
T Burke*	Secretary of State for Environment	28 May 1993	Green Alliance
J Caine	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	17 June 1992	Conservative Central Office
Dr. E Cottrell	Secretary of State for Education	21 July 1994	Conservative Central Office
Dr. W Eltis*	President of the Board of Trade	1 January 1993	National Economic Development Office
M Fraser	Minister for Overseas Development	10 April 1992	Conservative Central Office
J Gray	Jointly to the Ministers for Local Government and Inner Cities; Environment and Countryside; and Housing and Planning	28 May 1993	GNI Ltd
D Green	Prime Minister	1 June 1992	Business Television
Mrs. S Hogg	Prime Minister	10 April 1992	Daily and Sunday Telegraph
Ms. S Hole	Chief Whip	13 April 1992	Lord Rothschild
A Kemp*	President of the Board of Trade	28 May 1992	CDP Nexus Ltd
Mrs. T Keswick	Chancellor of the Exchequer	28 May 1993	Cluff Investments and Trading
G MacKay	Secretary of State for Scotland	8 May 1992	Pieda plc
M MacLay	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs	19 July 1993	The European
R Marsh	Secretary of State for Health	21 April 1992	Conservative Central Office
Ms. S McEwen	Lord Privy Seal	21 July 1994	Namara Cowan Ltd
M McManus	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	21 July 1994	Conservative Central Office
P Moman	Lord President	15 December 1993	Self employed consultant and writer
L O'Connor*	Secretary of State for the Environment	14 March 1994	Self employed Architect
Mrs. K Ramsay	Prime Minister	2 June 1992	Conservative Central Office
P Rock	Home Secretary	28 May 1993	Conservative Central Office
D Ruffley	Chief Secretary	21 July 1994	Clifford Chance
D Rutley	Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food	21 July 1994	Pepsi Cola International
Lady Strathnaver	President of the Board of Trade	21 April 1992	Haymarket Publishing Services Ltd
N True	Prime Minister	10 April 1992	Public Policy Unit
Miss. A Warburton	Prime Minister	12 January 1994	Career break
Miss. R Whetstone	Home Secretary	5 September 1994	Conservative Central Office
H Williams	Secretary of State for Wales	18 October 1993	Governing Body of Rugby School, also Freelance Journalist and Writer
A Young	Secretary of State for Scotland	8 May 1992	Drummond & Co

* Special advisers fall into two categories, political and those with specialised expertise relevant to their appropriate Secretary of State. The latter are indicated by an Asterisk.

Ministerial Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will update the tables given in his answers of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *28*, following the changes in ministerial appointments that have occurred this year.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is as follows:

As at	*Paybill (1)* *£ million*	*1994–95 (2)* *£ million*
July 1994	1·16	1·16
June 1993	1·37	1·40
September 1992	1·30	1·36
September 1991	1·10	1·20
July 1990	0·95	1·09
June 1989	0·93	1·19
September 1988	0·74	1·00

(1) Not including earnings-related national insurance contribution and other personnel overheads.

(2) Calculated using the GDP deflator.

Salary Band	[1]*Number of Special Advisers*
£	
0–10,000	—
10–20,000	1
20–30,000	8
30–40,000	5
40–50,000	8
50–60,000	7
60–70,000	1
70–80,000	—
80–90,000	—
90–100,000	1

[1] As at 31 July 1994.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with Lord Justice Scott about his proposal, and the timescale of that proposal, to allow witnesses before his inquiry, whom he may criticise in his report, an opportunity to comment before the report is finalised.

The Prime Minister: There has been no discussion between the Government and Sir Richard Scott concerning the principles underlying his proposal to give witnesses whom he may criticise an opportunity to comment before his report is finalised. However, Government officials have discussions with the inquiry team from time to time on a range of issues including the administrative aspects of Sir Richard Scott's proposal outlined above, but the timing of these matters is entirely a matter for him,

EDUCATION

Schools Budget

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will show for each local education authority and for each year since 1988–89 *(a)* the cash value of the general schools budget divided by the number of pupils *(b)* the cash value of the potential schools budget divided by the number of pupils and *(c)* the cash value of the aggregate schools budget divided by the number of pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested for the financial years 1991–92 to 1994—95, has been placed in the Library. Corresponding information for the 1990—91 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Stratford Grant-maintained School

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement about Stratford grant-maintained school.

Mr. Robin Squire: Stratford grant-maintained school was judged by a registered inspector to require special measures. The school is being regularly monitored by the Office for Standards in Education to assess the progress it is making in implementing its action plan. In order to assist the governors, my right hon. Friend has exercised her power under section 67 of the Education Act 1993 to appoint an additional governor, Mrs Daphne Gould, to the school. I have placed a letter sent by officials to Mrs Gould concerning her appointment in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

English Heritage Inspections

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when officials from English Heritage last inspected *(a)* County hall, London and *(b)* Battersea power station.

Mr. Dorrell: County hall was last visited by English Heritage staff on 24 August 1994. Battersea power station was last visited on 8 June 1994 and English Heritage plans another visit within the next week.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Commission

17. **Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of work by the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Curry: To date, the Local Government Commission has submitted final reports for 10 shire counties, of which three have been referred back to the Commission for second review. It has now published its draft recommendations for these second reviews and for the remaining 29 counties. It plans to submit nine more final responses on 26 October and the rest by the turn of the year.

Water Supply

18. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many domestic households in England and Wales have their water supply disconnected, on average, each week.

Mr. Atkins: The latest figures available from the Office of Water Services indicate that, of the 19·4 million households in England and Wales receiving mains domestic water, 12,452 disconnections were undertaken in the 12 months to 31 March 1994, an average of 239 per week.

Single Regeneration Budget

19. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress with the implementation of the single regeneration budget.

28. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress with the implementation of the single regeneration budget.

Sir Paul Beresford: The single regeneration budget was implemented on 1 April 1994.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been submitted to the single regeneration budget for funds to support education programmes in schools, with particular reference to the teaching of English to ethnic minority children.

Sir Paul Beresford: Of the total of 469 bids for funding from the single regeneration budget received by Government offices for the regions by the deadline of 7 September 1994, approximately 200 relate in whole or in part to support for education programmes and, of those, approximately 50 specifically refer to the teaching of English to ethnic minority children.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress made on regional statements for the single regeneration budget.

Sir Paul Beresford: The criteria for the single regeneration budget are set out in the "Bidding Guidance" issued on 14 April 1994, copies of which are in the Library of the House. There are no separate regional statements for the budget, although, as the "Bidding Guidance" states at paragraph 17, initiatives supported by the budget may relate to existing local or regional strategies such as community support frameworks prepared in relation to European structural funds, planning policy guidance and local authority development plans and economic development strategies.

Summit

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new international environmental arrangements have been reached or discussed arising out of the G7 summit.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to meet United Kingdom environmental obligations arising out of the general agreement on tariffs and trade round.

Mr. Atkins: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reported to the House on 11 July, the G7 agreed to speed up progress in meeting the commitments made at the Earth summit in Rio, and to report further progress at next year's G7 summit.

Air Quality

21. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with ministerial colleagues on the links between air quality and respiratory problems experienced by people in areas close to motorways.

Mr. Atkins: There have been no recent discussions specifically with regard to problems experienced by those living close to motorways. However, I and my colleagues will be considering issues of air quality and public health when we discuss later this year the terms of our response to the consultation paper on improving air quality.

Town Centres

22. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to revitalise town centres.

Mr. Gummer: Through the combination of a strong national economy, sensible planning and specific measures such as city challenge to unlock local commitment.

GATT

23. **Ms Hodge:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has held on the on-going environmental obligations arising out of the GATT round.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom is contributing to the work of the Trade and Environment sub-committee of the preparatory committee of the new World Trade Organisation.

Local Government Review

24. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the local government review.

Mr. Curry: The Local Government Commission is on schedule to submit its final reports by the turn of the year and I intend that implementation of the review will be complete, in line with the published timetable, by 1 April 1997.

29. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the Local Government Commission's review of Derbyshire.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Local Government Commission published draft recommendations for Derbyshire on 5 September, following its further review of local government structure there. The consultation period lasts until 7 November and the Commission will then draw up its final recommendations, which are due at the end of December this year.

Water Industry

25. **Mr Keen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes in the system of regulation of the water industry.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Government have every confidence in the effectiveness of the existing regulatory system. In July, the Director General of Water Services announced new, tougher price limits for the water companies.

Local Government Reform, Essex

26. **Mr. Channon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made with local government reform in Essex.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Local Government Commission published draft recommendations for the future local government of Essex on 11 July. The consultation period ended on 26 September and the Commission is now drawing up its final recommendations which are due in December.

Homelessness

27. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimate of the number of people who are either homeless or inadequately housed.

Mr. Gummer: Some 128,000 households were accepted by local authorities in England as statutorily homeless during the 12 months ending in June 1994. In 1992, a housing attitudes survey carried out for my Department found that only 2 per cent. of households were very dissatisfied with their housing; some of this dissatisfaction will have been associated with factors other than the adequacy of the accommodation, for example its location.

National Parks

30. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to update the management of national parks.

Mr. Atkins: It remains our firm intention to introduce national parks legislation to establish independent authorities for the national parks in England and Wales as soon as there is an opportunity to do so.

Chlorine

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Government policy on EC proposals to restrict the use of chlorine in industrial processes.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom Government, in common with the rest of the European Union, support a science-based approach to evaluating the risk and benefits of substances including chlorine and chlorinated compounds which takes account of possible alternative substances. Only after the appropriate risk assessments have been undertaken, and the evidence from them demonstrates a need for action, will the Government agree to any restrictions.

Local Government Finance

34. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to meet representatives of the local authority associations to discuss the settlement of local government finance for 1995–96.

Mr. [illegible]rry: My right hon. Friend and I discussed the local government finance settlement for 1995–96 with representatives of the local authority associations at the meeting of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 10 October.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

36. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the benefits from compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Independent research confirms that compulsory competitive tendering has reduced costs by an average of 7 per cent. and up to 13 per cent. for some services; has at least maintained and in about 25 per cent. of contracts improved the standards set for services, with clear performance targets and better monitoring of service delivery; and has led to improved work practices and management.

Local Authority Standards

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each local authority in England and indicate whether the authority *(a)* has had no more than three reports of maladministration between 1990 and 1993, *(b)* has received one or more charter marks for council services in 1992 or 1993, *(c)* has received no directions for anti-competitive behaviour or for the financial failure of direct services organisations before January, *(d)* has been judged well ahead of the field in its region under the housing investment programme between 1992 and 1995, *(e)* has been the winner of a city challenge competition, *(f)* has local or unitary development plans for the whole council area and the council has decided half or more of its planning decisions within eight weeks, *(g)* budgeted to spend below its standard spending assessment between 1991 and 1994, *(h)* reduced its indebtedness between 1991 and 1993 and *(i)* collected at least half of its national non-domestic rates by 30 September in 1991 and 1993.

Mr. Gummer: I have today made available in the Library of the House a table which shows this information.

Air Pollution

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *44*, *(a)* how is the freephone helpline promoted, *(b)* what assessment has been made of the level of public awareness of the helpline and *(c)* how many calls the helpline has received in the past 12 months.

Mr. Atkins: *(a)* The freephone line is promoted in a variety of leaflets and cards produced by my Department as well as literature produced by organisations such as the National Society for Clean Air and the National Asthma Campaign. In addition, the freephone number is carried on Ceefax and Teletext.

(b) In 1993 two assessments were prepared for the Department, an independent consultancy and the survey of public attitudes to the environment—reported in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics No.16". These indicated a 2 per cent. awareness of the freephone line in the general population.

(c) In the 12 months ending on 30 September 1994, a total of 146,325 calls were received on the freephone, an average of 400 calls per day. In the previous 12 months to 30 September 1993 the average number was 259 calls per day.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *769*, what was the statistical basis for his statement that the number of telephone calls to the air quality bulletin freephone line increased substantially; and if he will place in the Library the survey on public awareness and actions during the pollution episode on 2 July.

Mr. Atkins: The daily average number of calls to the freephone in the week before 2 July was 536. The number of calls received on the freephone over the next three days averaged 1,184 per day.

I have placed a copy of the survey on public awareness and actions during the episodes of 2 to 3 and 12 to 13 of July 1994 in the Library.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times serious air pollution has occurred without being forecast by his Department in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: In the last three years air pollution has reached levels which the Department describes as "very poor" on seven days, six of which were forecast to be "poor" or "very poor" and one forecast to be "good".

Nitrogen Dioxide

Place	*Date*	*Predicted*	*Actual*
London	12–13 December 1991	Very Poor	Very Poor
Manchester	23 December 1991	Poor	Very Poor

Sulphur Dioxide

Place	*Date*	*Predicted*	*Actual*
Belfast	10 December 1991	Poor	Very Poor
Belfast	20 December 1991	Poor	Very Poor
Belfast	22 December 1991	Very Poor	Very Poor
Belfast	31 January 1993	Good	Very Poor

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) of 18 July, *Official Report,* column *44,* in what form and quantities the information from his Department's non-automatic and automatic monitoring sites is published; and how this information is distributed.

Mr. Atkins: The measurements of ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and benzene from the automatic monitoring networks are available on Ceefax, Teletext and the DOE air quality helpline—freephone 0800 556677—and are updated hourly. The information is supplied daily to 20 other organisations for their use and 70 groups have on-line access to the databases currently held at the National Environmental Technology centre. Specific requests for air quality information can also be made to the centre.

Following validation of the data, the air quality measurements from both the automatic and non-automatic networks are available from the operators of the network. Since 1987, annual reports such as "Air Pollution in the United Kingdom" have been prepared which summarise the measurements made by the different national networks. Two thousand copies of these reports are published and are available on request. The information is also published in specialist reports prepared by the Department's review groups and as specialist papers in the open scientific literature.

Tesco Store (Stockport)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to make a decision on the application and appeal to build a store at Tiviot way, Stockport by Tesco Stores and Salinam Investment Ltd.

Sir Paul Beresford: Our normal target is to seek to issue the decision on a planning appeal within eight weeks of receipt of the inspector's inquiry report, which in this case would be before 9 November.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have to abandon the future storage of radioactive waste at the British Nuclear Fuels plc base at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: None. The Government's position was set out in the consultation document, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions", which was published in August. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. Responses to the document are currently being considered.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses were received to his consultation paper on radioactive waste management as part of the nuclear review; if he will place in the Library a list of the respondents; and when he expects to complete the report on the responses to the consultation.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* The review of radioactive waste management policy is being carried out separately from but parallel to the nuclear review. The total number of responses received when the consultation period ended on 14 October was 292. We are, however, continuing to receive a number of late returns. A list of respondents will be placed in the Library of the House. A statement of the Government's conclusions in the light of the consultation exercise will be made in due course.

Climatic Change

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the Government have taken to evaluate evidence and research about climatic change; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government maintain a close watch on developments in the understanding of climate change, primarily through my Department's climate change prediction programme at the Meteorological Office's Hadley centre. The programme seeks to greatly improve our understanding of human impacts on the climate system and to provide improved predictions of future climate change. The programme also provides continual advice on the latest research results and current climate events and trends. The Hadley centre also provides a focus for the United Kingdom's effort on climate change research.

The Government also look to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—IPCC—to provide a well-balanced and comprehensive review of all the issues relating to climate change. The IPCC has prepared a number of assessments including an interim report this year and will prepare a major assessment in 1995.

Zoos

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the zoos refused a licence on welfare grounds in each year since 1984, together with subsequent Government actions.

Sir Paul Beresford: This information is not held centrally since zoo licensing and inspection under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 is the responsibility of district councils in England.

The Act provides for inspections of the premises by inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State, and the local authority has powers to refuse to grant a licence if it is not satisfied that the standards of accommodation, staffing or management are adequate for the proper care and well-being of the zoo animals.

If, following an inspection, a zoo is refused a licence, the authority concerned would normally give reasons for refusal. An establishment refused a licence would not be able to operate as a zoo, and would subsequently be granted a licence only if it was able to rectify any deficiencies identified by the local authority. Enforcement of animal welfare legislation is the responsibility of the police and local authorities.

Accommodation

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of *(a)* council tenants, *(b)* housing association tenants, *(c)* tenants of private landlords and *(d)* owner-occupiers who are living in accommodation which contains (i) one, (ii) two and (iii) three or more bedrooms more than are needed for their own household requirements, in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* each local authority area in Greater London.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The latest available estimates for England and Greater London are as follows:

Households with more bedrooms than the bedroom standard 1993–94

	Number of bedrooms more than bedroom standard		
Tenure	*One 000,s*	*Two 000,s*	*Three or more 000,s*
England			
Council tenants	1,260	470	20
Housing association tenants	180	40	—
Private tenants	690	300	50
Owner occupiers	5,450	4,300	980
All tenures	7,570	5,110	1,040
Greater London			
Council tenants	140	50	—
Housing association tenants	30	10	—
Private tenants	100	30	—
Owner occupiers	580	460	100
All tenures	860	550	110

— indicates less than 5,000.

These figures are from the 1993–94 Survey of English Housing and are subject to sampling error. The sample is not large enough to provide estimates for individual local authorities.

Comparable figures for England and Wales are not readily available.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what evidence he has on the extent of under-occupancy by tenants of *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* private landlords receiving housing benefit;

(2) what information he has on the number of tenants receiving housing benefit who are occupying accommodation which contains *(a)* one, *(b)* two and *(c)* three or more bedrooms more than are required by members of their household (i) in Great Britain, (ii) in England and Wales and (iii) in each local authority area in Greater London.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The latest available estimates for England and Greater London are as follows:

Households receiving housing benefit and having more bedrooms than the bedroom standard 1993–94

	Number of bedrooms more than bedroom standard		
Tenure	*One 000's*	*Two 000's*	*Three or more 000's*
England			
Council tenants	750	280	10
Housing association tenants	100	20	—
Private tenants	220	70	—
All tenants	1,070	370	10
Greater London			
Council tenants	100	40	—
Housing association tenants	10	—	—
Private tenants	40	10	—
All tenants	150	50	—

— indicates less than 5,000

These figures are from the 1993–94 Survey of English Housing and are subject to sampling error. The sample is not large enough to provide estimates for individual local authorities. Comparable figures for Great Britain and for England and Wales are not readily available.

Business Regulations

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will publish details of the annual on-going compliance costs for new regulations affecting business for which his Department has completed compliance cost assessments.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Details of the on-going compliance costs relating to new domestic and European Community legislation in 1993 are as follows:

The Environmental Protection (Controls on Injurious Substances Regulations 1993

These regulations restrict the marketing and use of specified substances such as lead carbonate and lead sulphate in paint in order to reduce risks to the environment and human health. Annual compliance costs to industry are estimated to be £50,000 for changing to alternatives for the few remaining uses where alternatives had not already been introduced by 1993.

The Environmental Protection (Controls on Injurious Substances) (no. 2) Regulation 1993 (Cadmium Directive)

The compliance cost assessment of 16 June 1993 estimated costs to business of restricting the use of cadmium at £200,000 over 3 years. Assuming a linear decline in the cost differential, the annual costs are estimated as:

1993–94 £100,000

1994–95 £66,000
1995–96 £33,000

The Boilers (Efficiency) Regulations 1993

Estimated initial costs incurred by manufacturers will be approximately £25 million, with annual costs thereafter of £750,000. These costs will be passed on to purchasers, but will be more than offset by the consequential savings from greater fuel efficiency which are expected to rise over 20 years to over £23 million, a year.

The Transfrontier Shipment of Radioactive Waste Regulation 1993

The regulations apply only to a narrow class of radioactive waste travelling in to and out of the United Kingdom. Compliance costs for the small number of shipments affected are limited to filling in the forms necessary to obtain authorisation for such a shipment to take place. This cost is estimated to be in the region of £150 per application, which is minimal in the context of the typical value of contracts likely to be affected by the regulations. Conditions imposed on an authorisation or approval granted under the regulations may not be stricter than those that would be imposed upon a purely domestic shipment of radioactive waste. The regulations came into force on 1 January 1994—implementing EC Directive 92–3/Euratom—and no applications have so far been made under them.

The Local Authorities (Recovery of Costs for Public Path Orders) Regulations 1993

The estimated cost for all applicants is £1·2 million–£1·5 million per year, not taking account of any refunds or waivers conceded in particular cases. The cost to business was not identified separately.

The European Community Substances Regulation 793/93 (and draft Notification of Existing Substances (Enforcement) Regulation 1994)

Estimated compliance costs are £11 million to £48 million for 1993–99 and thereafter under £1 million per year representing the cost of reporting data on substances to the Community for priority-setting and risk assessment of priority substances. Industry will supply information about significant new costs if any. Annual collection of data would not be cost-effective because it would place too high a burden on industry and the Department.

The Directive on Control of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) Emission Resulting from the Storage of Petrol and its Distribution from Terminals to Service Stations (the so-called 'Stage 1' Directive)

Total non-recurring costs to industry shown in the compliance cost assessment are between £332·8 million and £357.8 million. Total recurring costs are expected to be between £105·2 million and £113·1 million. A proposal for a further directive—stage 2—is expected later in 1994, and a CCA will be provided.

The Council Regulation on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer

The regulation is not likely to come into force before the end of 1994. Estimated costs to the refrigeration and air conditioning industry of changing from transitional HCFCS to non-ozone depleting alternatives were around £110 million at current prices. These costs will be staggered over time as equipment becomes obsolete. The foam-blowing industry will be the other major sector involved; the main issue here is not the cost of compliance but rather the increased flammability risk involved in alternative processes.

The Hazardous Waste Incineration Directive

Most of the hazardous waste incinerators are in the private sector where costs can be recovered.

I have also placed in the Library details of compliance costs for legislation passed before 1993 for which compliance cost assessments were completed.

Environment Council

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State of the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 4 October and on his meeting with representatives of central and eastern European states on 5 October.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at the Environment Council in Luxembourg on 4 October.

The Council called on the Commission to take forward work on eco-labelling urgently and to bring forward measures to protect groundwater. In the discussion on the disposal of PCBs/PCTs, I offered help to small member states, such as Portugal, without sufficient destruction capacity of their own and there was agreement on a split phase out date of 2000 for North sea states and 2005 or 2010 for other member states. Debates were held on climate change and transport and the environment. Discussion of both the draft biocides directive and proposals to amend the wildlife trade regulation showed the need for further work at official level. There was an inconclusive debate on an unsatisfactory presidency text on the draft directive for integrated pollution prevention and control.

The meeting on 5 October marked the start of structured dialogue with six central and eastern European states. Those present were Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. There was an useful exchange of views on a wide range of topics including preparations for the next Environment Ministers' conference in Sofia, climate change, and transport and the environment.

Crowfield Airfield

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will be involved in the decision to be taken on the discontinuance order made by Mid Suffolk district council seeking to restrict flying at Crowfield airfield, Suffolk.

Mr. Gummer: As the airfield is close to my home and constituency, I have delegated the taking of a decision on the discontinuance order to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Construction and Planning in accordance with the long-standing convention that planning Ministers do not take decisions where they have a personal or constituency interest.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what land the Housing Executive owns in the village of Ballyhalbert, and what plans the Executive has to build new homes in the village.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I understand from the chief executive that the Executive owns one small area of land at Moat road in Ballyhalbert. It does not, however, intend to develop the site because of low demand for housing in the area.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals there are for a homes renovation scheme at Victoria gardens, Ballyhalbert; and when the Northern Ireland Housing Executive plans to commence this work.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I understand from the chief executive that an improvement scheme for the five dwellings at Victoria gardens, Ballyhalbert is programmed to commence early in 1995.

Water Meters

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the percentage increase in the cost of water measured by meter in each of the past five years.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information is as follows:

Year	*Percentage*
1990–91	12·3
1991–92	14·6
1992–93	5·3
1993–94	8·1
1994–95	4·7

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are connected to the public water supply; and how many of these have their water consumption measured by water meter.

Mr. Tim Smith: It is estimated that approximately 98·5 per cent. of the Northern Ireland population of 1·6 million receives public water supplies. Only commercial, industrial and agricultural premises have their water consumption measured by meters. There are presently 77,912 supplies in these categories.

Social Security Agency

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his plans to review the Social Security Agency.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is the Government's policy that the status and organisation of all next steps agencies should be reviewed periodically to ensure that the organisational arrangements continue to be appropriate. The Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland has started work on a review of the Social Security Agency. As well as evaluating the performance of the agency since it was established in 1991, the review will consider what future organisation of the work of the agency will best support the cost-effective delivery of social security operations within Northern Ireland. The review will pay particular attention to improvements in service to the customer, value for money, accuracy and fraud prevention.

Comments and contributions from those with an interest in the Social Security Agency and its work will be most welcome. Anyone who would like to comment is asked to make contact as soon as possible with:

Mr. Peter Small
Principal Establishment & Finance Officer
Department of Health & Social Services
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3TL

The closing date for contributions is Friday 18 November 1994. I will inform the House of the result of the review.

Health and Social Services

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for developing the inspection of health and social services in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The citizens charter recognizes the key role played by public service inspectorates in checking standards and ensuring that the professional services which the public receives are delivered in the most effective way possible and genuinely meet the needs of the people they serve. The charter puts forward three key principles for inspectorates: independence, lay involvement and openness.

In August 1993 my right hon. and learned friend the Secretary of State issued a consultation paper, "Improving Inspections", which set out proposals for the entrenchment of each of these principles in the inspection of health and social services in Northern Ireland. The paper received a wide circulation amongst interested parties and attracted a generally favourable response. Having considered the comments made we have now issued a circular which provides that inspectorates will remain at arm's length from the management of services and that, from April 1995, lay people will play a full part in many inspections. It also reinforces earlier guidance in requiring that inspection reports should be published. I have placed a copy of the circular in the Library of the House.

The new requirements extend both to health and social services board's registration and inspection units and to the social services inspectorate of the Department of Health and Social Services. The latter has been publishing its reports of inspections on particular areas of practice for some time, and has already begun user involvement in certain inspections.

[illegible] believe that these changes will give inspectors a stronger influence on services and help the public form their own judgements.

TRANSPORT

Driver Qualifications

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the qualifications, including testing, which are required for drivers of minibuses and vehicles in which more than 10 passengers are carried.

Mr. Norris: A vehicle with up to 16 passenger seats may be driven by the holder of a category B, car, driving licence, provided the passengers are not being carried for hire or reward.

Drivers of such vehicles which are used for hire or reward, and drivers of vehicles with more than 16 passenger seats, are required to pass a further driving test for a category D, bus, licence and to be able to meet specified standards of health and conduct.

Drivers of vehicles which are used under the terms of the permit schemes which allow organisations concerned with education, social welfare and other activities of benefit to the community, to charge for transport services.

providing no overall profit is made, are exempted from the need to hold a category D licence and may be driven by category B licence holders.

EU Transport Council

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the Transport Council held in Brussels on 26 September.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what matters were discussed, what decisions taken, and which were decided by vote, at the EU Transport Council meeting in Brussels on 26 September.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Transport Council met in Brussels on 26 September. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council reached a common position on a draft directive which lays down uniform procedures for checking lorries carrying dangerous goods.

The Council discussed the texts of two directives on licences for railway operators and the allocation and charging of track capacity. The United Kingdom was successful in limiting the scope to certain types of international services only and protecting the position of the channel tunnel shuttle services. The adoption of a common position is subject to the lifting of the parliamentary scrutiny reserves that I placed.

The Council agreed a resolution on the situation in the European civil aviation industry. I expressed strong concern about the Commission's criteria for allowing state aids and the way in which they have been applied in recent cases. I emphasised that state aid was not acceptable if it maintained over-capacity.

The Council agreed a resolution on the road haulage industry. In particular it asked the Commission to review the standards for access to the road transport operator profession and to report on the training of lorry drivers.

The Council agreed resolutions on transport telematics and structural improvements in inland waterway transport. The Council held a preliminary debate on trans-European networks.

The Council invited the Commission to seek further clarification from the Swiss Government on their plans for implementing the referendum vote to ban lorries from transmitting the country by 2004, and to report at the November Council.

No votes were necessary.

Railstrike

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the effect of the extra *(a)* cars and *(b)* heavy goods vehicles on the road during the signalmen's strike to date.

Mr. Norris: No detailed estimates have been made but regular reports to the Department indicated that the level of congestion was not substantially worse on strike days.

A45

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of renumbering the A45 to A14 along its entire length.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mrs. Anne Campbell, dated 19 October 1994.

Steven Norris, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, has asked me to write in response to your Parliamentary Written Question about the cost of renumbering the A45 to A14 along its entire length.

The estimated total cost of renumbering the A45 to A14 through Cambridgeshire and Suffolk is £122,938. A final account has yet to be submitted.

Duty (Spirits)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the estimated cost to the Treasury would be in the next financial year if the relief from duty on spirits used to manufacture certain eligible foodstuffs and beverages was extended to businesses which manufacture mainly or wholly for retail sale in terms of *(a)* lost revenue and *(b)* administration and processing costs.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I regret that these figures could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

VAT

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much income was generated by VAT on zoo admission prices in each year since 1987.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Figures are not readily available on the amount of VAT generated on zoo admission prices for each year since 1987.

It is estimated that between £5 million and £10 million was generated by VAT on zoo admission prices in 1993.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which EC member states *(a)* charges and *(b)* do not charge VAT on entrance to zoos.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: France, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom all charge VAT on entrance to zoos.

Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal charge no VAT on entrance to zoos which are either non-profit making or administered by state bodies. VAT is charged on admissions to other types of zoos.

Denmark and Italy charge no VAT on entrance to zoos.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people;

(2) if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Nelson: If a request were received for a Braille version of a particular document, the Treasury would assess the feasibility of using Cabinet Office facilities which exist to produce documents in this format. The majority of Treasury publications are available on computer disk, on request. Such disks can be processed by voice synthesizer packages.

World Bank and IMF Meeting

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on matters discussed and decisions taken at the joint meeting of the World bank and the International Monetary Fund in Madrid in October; and if he will place in the Library copies of United Kingdom submissions to both meetings and their final communiqués.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I attended the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World bank in Madrid from 30 September to 4 October. I also attended the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' meeting in Valletta from 27 to 28 September which discussed several issues also discussed at the IMF/World bank meetings. Following on from the meeting in Valletta, I was able to make some progress, on behalf of the United Kingdom, on a number of issues of importance for the world economy, for developing countries and for the economies in transition.

At the meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers I set out new United Kingdom proposals for helping very poor countries with unsustainable burdens of multilateral debt. These proposals complement those we have been pressing for over the last four years to reduce the burden of bilateral debt for the poorest countries by full implementation of Trinidad terms debt relief. My new proposal for the IMF involves use of the income from investment of the proceeds of a modest and phased sale of part of the IMF's gold reserves to support more and longer-term concessional lending to highly indebted countries with significant debt to the IMF and which are following IMF programmes of economic reform. I also called on the other international financial institutions to consider further what they could do to assist their poorest most indebted members. The proposals received strong support from other Commonwealth Finance Ministers. They also supported my proposals to take forward action on international money laundering agreed at last year's Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

In Madrid, my proposals on multilateral debt received support in the development and interim committees of the World bank and the IMF, and will now be considered further by the boards of the World bank and the IMF.

As is usual, the IMF/World bank annual meetings were preceded by a meeting of G7 Finance Ministers and Central bank governors. We agreed, both in the G7 and in the IMF interim committee, that the outlook for the world economy is good; and that we must ensure the sustainability of the recovery by remaining vigilant against inflation, and by making further progress in reducing budget deficits and in structural reform to improve the flexibility of our labour markets and economies. G7 Ministers and Governors also met with Russian and Ukrainian Ministers, to discuss progress in economic reform in those countries.

In the IMF's interim committee I spoke about the development of the world capital markets and the implications for policy. I stressed the benefits of the free international flow of capital. I also highlighted the special responsibility of the countries with the world's major trading currencies and financial markets to follow sensible and credible economic policies, as the way to foster greater world financial market stability. I also raised the question of a possible connection between lower levels of world savings and high real interest rates. I am pleased that G10 Ministers and governors have agreed to my proposal to examine this important issue in more detail.

I was also very pleased we were able to reach agreement in the interim committee to an increase in access limits for the IMF's standby arrangement and extended financing facilities. The United Kingdom has been pressing for this: extra financial assistance in support of good economic policies is the best form of help the IMF can give to member countries with economic difficulties. I was disappointed that we were unable to agree to a renewal of, and an increase in, access under the fund's systemic transformation facility, which is of particular assistance to the former communist countries trying to create market economies. I also regret the failure to reach agreement on the long-standing issue of an SDR allocation. The proposals put forward jointly by the United Kingdom and United States on this remain on the table, and I very much hope that agreement will be possible on this basis over the months ahead.

The joint IMF/World bank development committee took aid effectiveness as its main theme. I stressed the need for market-friendly policies which allow private enterprise to flourish, and the need to ensure fuller participation by the people directly affected by World bank projects. I also welcomed World bank president Preston's vision of a leaner, more cost-effective, and more agile World bank.

This year's meetings of the World bank and IMF marked the 50th anniversary of their founding conference, and were preceded by a special conference, which I attended, to discuss their future directions. There was broad agreement among participants from developing countries, industrial countries and countries in transition on many aspects of the future role of the institutions, and also on the economic policies they should be encouraging their members to pursue.

Copies of my speeches to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting, the interim committee, the development committee and the IMF/World bank annual meetings and the communiques issued following the meetings of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers, the interim committee and the development committee will be placed in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Manufacturing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his assessment of the effects of the measures proposed in annex 2 of "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation". Cmnd. 9474 on output and employment in manufacturing industry; and if he will publish a table showing manufacturing output and the number of full-time male and female workers employed in manufacturing in 1973, 1979, 1984 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Oppenheim: An assessment of Government policies, including those over the last few years, is set out in "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win". Cmnd. 2563. Figures for manufacturing output and full-time employees in employment are set out in the following table:

Output and employees in employment in manufacturing

	Index of output (seasonally adjusted 1990 = 100)	*Male full-time employees in employment (thousands) Great Britain seasonally unadjusted*	*Female full-time employees in employment (thousands) Great Britain seasonally unadjusted*
1973	94·6	—	[1]1,794
1979	90·6	—	[1]1,617
1984	82·2	[2]3,709	[1]1,225
August 1994	98·9	[1]2,906	[1]1,002

Notes:

[1] June figures.

[2] September 1984, the earliest available figure.

—Unavailable.

Railway Signal Workers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, column *539*, comparing the increase in the real earnings of railway signal workers with those of other workers, what has been the percentage increase since 1979 in the real-wage cost of operating the railway signal system; what proportion of the sample quoted in his answer consisted of railway signal workers; and why he was unable to give the figures for such workers solely.

Mr. Oppenheim: The trend in the wages costs of operating the railway signalling system is a management matter for the industry.

In the 1993 "New Earnings Survey" sample, 56 full-time employees were classified as railway signal operatives and crossing keepers and 10 were classified as shunters and point operatives. In the combined category and it is impossible to separately identify those who were railway signal operatives.

Information on the increases in earnings between 1979 and 1993 of railway signal workers alone could not be given because the relevant category of the occupation coding scheme used between 1979 and 1990 included railway signal workers and the other workers.

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) further to his written reply dated 12 July comparing the increase in the real earnings of categories of full-time non-manual employees since 1989, if he will provide comparable figures for 1979 to 1989;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, column *539*, comparing the increases in the real earnings of categories of full-time non-manual employees, if he will provide comparable figures for 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested is in the following table:

Real percentage increase in average gross weekly earnings between April 1979 and April 1989 for full-time non-manual employees

Industry	*Percentage increase*
Production and distribution of electricity	33·3
Manufacture of office machinery and data processing equipment	56·4
Retail distribution	41·1
Railways	35·1
Banking and finance	45·8
Banking and bill discounting	43·3
Business services	58·9
Accountants, auditors, tax experts	55·0
Social security	[1]—
Higher education	41·0
School education (nursery, primary, secondary)	30·0

Source:

New Earnings Survey.

Note:

[1] In 1979 this category was grouped with National Government Service.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, column *539* if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the top and bottom deciles in each case, *(b)* the corresponding figures for manual workers in manufacturing industry and non-manuals in the public sector and *(c)* the estimated increase in output per head in railway signalmen.

Mr. Oppenheim: The available information is shown in the following table. There were too few railway signalmen and shunters in the new earnings survey sample for reliable estimates to be made of the top and bottom deciles.

Information on changes in output per head of railway signalmen is a management matter for the industry.

Gross weekly earnings of full time employees—pay unaffected by absence; at April

		Percentiles 10 per cent.	*25 per cent.*	*50 per cent.*	*75 per cent.*	*90 per cent.*
Percentage increase in pay 1979–1989						
Railway signalmen and shunters	men	—	5·3	13·7	21·8	—
	women	—	—	—	—	—
Public manuals	men	5·8	5·7	6·0	7·4	8·7
	women	11·5	17·8	17·2	19·5	23·1

Gross weekly earnings of full time employees—pay unaffected by absence; at April

		Percentiles *10 per cent.*	*25 per cent.*	*50 per cent.*	*75 per cent.*	*90 per cent.*
Manufacturing manuals	men	0·6	5·7	10·6	14·2	18·2
	women	6·7	6·9	9·2	13·8	22·0
All manuals	men	1·5	6·0	9·8	13·4	16·5
	women	10·1	10·3	12·2	16·6	24·3
Public non-manuals	men	12·2	22·5	27·5	27·6	30·0
	women	16·0	26·1	38·2	44·1	40·7
Private non-manuals	men	14·0	23·1	33·7	40·7	49·2
	women	25·3	30·8	40·8	50·3	64·5
Percentage increase in pay 1989–1993						
Railway	men	—	26·5	18·1	21·7	—
	women	—	—	—	—	—
	all	—	26·5	18·1	21·7	—
Public manuals	men	7·3	4·4	3·0	2·1	1·6
	women	1·0	4·1	7·0	10·9	12·3
	all	5·0	5·8	3·8	2·1	0·8
Manufacturing manuals	men	0·3	0·3	1·4	2·2	2·0
	women	6·2	6·3	5·6	7·2	8·7
	all	4·1	2·5	1·9	2·3	2·4
All manuals	men	1·5	1·6	2·2	2·3	3·0
	women	2·5	3·6	4·7	7·0	9·4
	all	2·0	2·8	2·2	2·3	3·2
Public non-manuals	men	10·7	9·3	10·9	10·5	10·5
	women	14·8	11·2	11·4	12·3	13·0
	all	12·0	10·0	10·4	9·3	10·7
Private non-manuals	men	–0·2	–0·1	1·2	2·8	4·1
	women	7·9	9·3	10·6	12·0	10·8
	all	6·9	6·6	5·1	4·7	4·2

Average gross weekly pay (£)

		Percentiles *10 per cent.*	*25 per cent.*	*50 per cent.*	*75 per cent*	*90 per cent.*
1993						
Railway signalmen and shunters	men	—	260·3	323·4	429·4	—
	women	—	—	—	—	—
	all	—	260·3	323·4	429·4	—
Public manuals	men	178·2	206·2	247·9	306·3	375·9
	women	111·7	137·6	171·7	214·4	266·6
	all	150·7	190·5	234·5	291·3	360·9
Manufacturing manuals	men	173·9	215·5	271·8	338·9	418·2
	women	118·5	139·2	168·5	209·7	264·3
	all	149·4	190·5	251·3	321·9	402·3
All manual	men	160·9	201·2	256·4	324·0	407·1
	women	109·6	130·5	162·2	205·8	263·7
	all	140·3	181·4	239·1	308·8	391·1
Public non-manuals	men	223·8	296·2	388·2	476·6	594·9
	women	169·6	203·4	272·2	366·4	433·1
	all	183·6	228·4	322·1	410·6	510·6
Private non-manuals	men	186·1	253·9	356·4	498·3	702.1
	women	135·8	167·0	218·9	293·3	391·7
	all	153·4	201.9	289·8	422·4	604·0

Source:
New Earnings Surveys

Mr Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer, 12 July *Official Report*, column 539 comparing the increase in the real earnings of categories of full-time non-manual employees, if he will publish a table adding the percentage change since 1989 in real average weekly earnings of *(a)* full-time primary school teachers, *(b)* hospital porters, *(c)* hospital ward orderlies, *(d)* NHS ancillary staff, *(e)* NHS maintenance staff, *(f)* local authority manual workers in England and Wales and *(g)* manual workers in the (i) footwear, (ii) textiles, (iii) clothing, (iv) mechanical engineering and (v) motor vehicle industries; and if he will distinguish between male and female workers.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested is in the following table:

Full time MEN on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence: at April

Percentage increases in real terms of average gross weekly earnings 1989–1993	*Percentage*
Analyses by occupation	
Primary and nursery education teaching professionals	17·1
Hospital porters	6·5
Hospital ward assistants	—
Analyses by agreement	
NHS ancillary staff Whitley Council	9·3
NHS maintenance staff	0·9
Local authority manual workers NJC (England and Wales)	9·8
Analyses by industry (manual employees)	
Footwear	11·6
Textile	7·8
Clothing, hats and gloves	−2·3
Mechanical engineering	0·2
Manufacture of motor vehicles and parts	−1·2

Full time WOMEN on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence: at April

Percentage increases in real terms of average gross weekly earnings 1989–1993	*Percentage*
Analyses by occupation	
Primary and nursery education teaching professionals	16·9
Hospital porters	—
Hospital ward assistants	9·5
Analyses by agreement	
NHS ancillary staff Whitley Council	15·2
NHS maintenance staff	—
Local authority manual workers NJC (England and Wales)	10·9
Analyses by industry (manual employees)	
Footwear	6·0
Textile	4·9
Clothing, hats and gloves	5·1
Mechanical engineering	7·2
Manufacture of motor vehicles and parts	5·5

Full time EMPLOYEES on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence: at April

Percentage increases in real terms of average gross weekly earnings 1989–1993	*Percentage*
Analyses by occupation	
Primary and nursery education teaching professionals	16·5
Hospital porters	6·3
Hospital ward assistants	3·6
Analyses by agreement	
NHS ancillary staff Whitley Council	11·1
NHS maintenance staff	2·1
Local authority manual workers NJC (England and Wales)	9·4
Analyses by industry (manual employees)	
Footwear	12·1
Textile	8·9
Clothing, hats and gloves	3·6
Mechanical engineering	0·7
Manufacture of motor vehicles and parts	−1·2

Sorce:
New Earnings Survey
Note:
"—" denotes sample number too small and/or standard error too large for reliable estimate

Cricket (Overseas Players)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions his Department has undertaken recently with the Test and County Cricket Board concerning work permits for overseas players; and if his Department has issued new advice during or resulting from these discussions.

Mr. Oppenheim: The arrangements for issuing work permits for overseas players are discussed on a regular and routine basis with the governing bodies of cricket, including the Test and County Cricket Board.

During and as a result of these discussions, the Department has advised the cricketing bodies on a number of matters concerning work permits. New advice has been issued by the Department where these discussions have raised issues which have not previously been clarified.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the increase or decrease in the number of full-time adult males and females in employment since *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1990; and to which of the factors and reforms listed in section 5·1 and annex 2 of "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation", Cmnd. 9474 he ascribes the change.

Mr. Oppenheim: The period since 1990 covers a trough and a peak in the unemployment cycle. Between the trough in April 1990 and the peak in December 1992, claimant unemployment in Britain grew by 1·37 million. Since then it has fallen by 395,600.

Claimant unemployment has peaked below its previous high point in 1986, and it also began to fall at an earlier stage than in the previous recovery in the early 1980s. A wide range of Government measures, including those in the White Paper referred to, are likely to have contributed to these encouraging signs.

Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the changes in real incomes of full-time adult male manual workers in manufacturing, full-time adult male non-manual workers in the private sector and non-manual public service workers *(a)* from

1979 to 1989 and *(b)* from 1989 to 1993, and the corresponding changes in productivity and unit labour costs.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested is in the following tables:

Real percentage increase in average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence

Males	*1979–89*	[1]*1989–93*
Manufacturing manuals	11·9	0·9
Private non-manuals	39·8	5·9
Public service non-manuals	27·1	12·7

Source:
New Earnings Survey.
Note:
[1] Adjusted for change in occupational classification in 1990.

Annual increases in unit wage costs and productivity

	Unit Wage Costs		*Productivity*	
	Actual percentage increases 1979–89	*Actual percentage increases 1989–93*	*1979–89*	*1989–93*
Manufacturing	78	18	48	12
Whole Economy	107	23	22	6

Health and Safety

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will accept the recommendation made in "The Environmental and Occupational Risks of Healthcare," published by the British Medical Association, on making further resources available to the Health and Safety Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Oppenheim: I am satisfied that the Commission has adequate resources to fulfil its responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Young People

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the rates of pay and the numbers employed in his Department at each age up to 21 years.

Mr. Oppenheim: The following table shows the numbers of staff employed in the Employment Department at each age up to 21 years. The salaries have been grouped, for convenience and to preserve confidentiality, into bands.

In addition to the staff shown in the table, there are three people in this age range who are paid an hourly or daily fee.

Salary Range	*Age 16*	*Age 17*	*Age 18*	*Age 19*	*Age 20*	*Age 21*
4,500 – 4,999	2	33	1	—	—	—
5,000 – 5,499	—	1	3	—	—	—
5,500 – 5,999	—	13	—	—	—	—
6,000 – 6,499	—	—	108	26	—	—
6,500 – 6,999	—	1	11	156	153	123
7,000 – 7,499	—	—	47	28	65	117
7,500 – 7,999	—	—	1	74	16	33
8,000 – 8,499	—	—	—	21	6	4
8,500 – 8,999	—	—	1	9	155	208
9,000 – 9,499	—	—	3	16	93	355
9,500 – 9,999	—	—	—	10	72	211
10,000 – 10,499	—	—	—	1	17	69
10,500 – 10,999	—	—	—	1	7	22
11,000 – 11,499	—	—	—	—	—	8
11,500 – 11,999	—	—	—	—	—	8
12,000 – 12,499	—	—	—	—	—	2
12,500 – 12,999	—	—	—	—	—	1
13,000 – 13,499	—	—	—	—	—	—
13,500 – 13,999	—	—	—	—	—	—
14,000 – 14,499	—	—	—	—	—	—
14,500 – 14,999	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	2	48	175	342	584	1,162

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits Agency Offices (Scotland)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each Benefits Agency office in Scotland, showing *(a)* the number of employees and *(b)* the number of claimants receiving benefit through these offices; and how much each office had paid out by way of (i) crisis loans and (ii) community care grants under the social fund in each of the last five years.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Norman A. Godman, dated 18 October 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of employees in each Benefits Agency office in Scotland and the number of customers receiving benefit in those offices. Also, how much has been paid out by way of Crisis Loans (CL) and Community Care Grants (CCG) under the Social Fund in each Benefits Agency (BA) office in Scotland for the last five years.

The latest available data for the number of employees in each BA office in Scotland is for May 1994 and for the purpose of consistency is provided at District level; this is given at Annex A.

The latest data available for the number of customers receiving benefits in each office in Scotland is for May 1994 and is only available at District level. I have provided details of the benefits authorised and paid from these offices and this is given at Annex B.

However, it should be noted that a person may be in receipt of more than one benefit at any one time and may therefore appear in these figures more than once.

Information in respect of the Social Fund for the offices you require is not available prior to April 1990. However, I have provided expenditure data from April 1990 and this can be broken down to each Branch office in Scotland; this data is given at Annex C. In April 1991 the Benefits Agency was established and from that date the information is only available at District level; this data is given at Annex D.

I have enclosed the information and a copy has been placed in the Library.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Council of Mortgage Lenders

Mr. Spellar : To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

Mr. Roger Evans: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met the Council of Mortgage Lenders on the 8 December 1992.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from the Council of Mortgage Lenders on the introduction of a mortgage benefit scheme and the level of income support to meet home owners' mortgage interest costs.

Mr. Roger Evans: The Council of Mortgage Lenders regularly keeps us abreast of its view.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of *(a)* the consistency of performance by local authorities in the administration of housing benefit and *(b)* the effect on this performance of the publication of a league table of performance indicators; and if he will make it his policy that league tables of local authority performance should be published.

Mr. Roger Evans: I am aware that levels of performance by local authorities in the administration of Housing Benefit vary and am currently considering the impact on performance that the publication of national league tables could have. However, in accordance with the citizens charter, every local authority is required to publish information about the level of its own housing and council tax benefit performance by 31 December. I understand that the Audit Commission intends to publish all of this information early next year.

Restart Courses

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have had their benefit cut for failure to attend a restart course in Great Britain (i) as a whole and (ii) in each region.

Mr. Burt *[pursuant to his reply, 21 July 1994, column 633]:* The available information is in the table.

Unemployed claimants who received a reduced personal rate of Income Support following failure to attend or complete a restart course during the period April 1991 to March 1994

Area	*Number of reductions*
Anglia	1,900
Chilterns	2,000
South London and West Sussex	2,400
West Country	1,600
East London and Essex	1,300
South East	2,000
Wessex	3,000
East Midlands	1,500
Midlands and South West	600
West Mercia	1,600
Wales	1,500
Merseyside	1,400
Greater Manchester	2,800
Lancashire and Cumbria	3,600
Tyne Tees	3,100
South Yorkshire and Humberside	2,000
North and West Yorkshire	1,800
Scotland and Northern	3,200
North, Central and West Scotland	1,600
East of Scotland	3,100
Total	42,000

Figures are rounded to the nearest 100, and are subject to amendment.

SCOTLAND

Wildcats

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *499*, for what purpose were the licences to take wildcats issued; and what methods were employed.

Sir Hector Monro: Licences to take wildcats were issued for scientific purposes to help build up a picture of the number and distribution of wildcats in Scotland.

This involved wildcats being fitted with radio collars to allow their movement in the wild to be tracked, tagging to identify individuals, and the taking of blood samples for genetic analysis.

The wildcats were taken by live-trapping, briefly sedated while being examined or tagged, then released back into the wild.

Seals

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the protection of seals.

Sir Hector Monro: Seals receive protection under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, and the Government have no plans for a seal cull.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will list the members of the Boundary Commission for Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have appointed Dr. Charles M. Glennie, CBE to the Boundary Commission for Scotland on 31 October 1994. The other members of the Commission are:

Madam Speaker — ex officio, chairman

The hon. Lord Davidson, appointed as deputy chairman by the Court of Session on 25 September 1985 and subsequently re-appointed.

Professor Urlan a Wannop — appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland on 6 October and subsequently reappointed.

All of the appointed members terms of office expire on 31 December 1996.

Access Funds

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will publish details of the level of access funds provision in Scotland for 1994–95.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A total of £4·14 million will be available for the access funds at higher and further education institution in Scotland for academic year 1994–95. This compares with a total of £3·83 million in 1993–94. The provision for 1994–95 thus represents an increase of 8 per cent. over 1993–94.

The sum has been allocated between the three funds as follows:

	£ million
Undergraduate Fund	2·5
Postgraduate Fund	0·79
Further Education	0·85

The 1994–95 allocations have been notified to the individual academic institutions in Scotland.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the way in which the Scottish Office sponsors non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office is currently responsible for 49 executive non-departmental public bodies—NDPBs—110 advisory NDPBs and 14 tribunals. These bodies received Government funding of £1·5 billion in 1993–94—10 per cent. of Scottish Office total resources—and play a significant role in the delivery of Government services in Scotland.

The business of ensuring the accountability of these NDPBs to me, and through me to Parliament, is a key task for my staff at the Scottish Office. Last year, therefore, the Scottish Office carried out an efficiency scrutiny to look for ways of improving still further our sponsorship arrangements.

The scrutiny report clearly identifies a general shift over recent years to a more strategic relationship with NDPBs. This involves delegation to each NDPB, to the maximum extent practicable, of responsibility for running its own affairs, within an agreed strategic framework. But across the Scottish Office the pace of change has varied considerably. The scrutiny report recommends a co-ordinated approach to the process of change.

I welcome the scrutiny report, and have put in hand a three-year programme to implement its recommendations. This will comprise new training and development programmes for staff involved in sponsorship; the provision of more advice and assistance to these sponsor staff; and action programmes for putting strategic frameworks into place for each NDPB as appropriate.

Taken together, the range of initiatives set out in the action statement will clarify relationships between sponsor and NDPB, and strengthen further the accountability and effectiveness of NDPBs in Scotland.

I have today placed copies of the efficiency scrutiny report and the action statement in the House Libraries.

Pollution (Mines)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his review of the legal framework governing ferruginous pollution from abandoned mines.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* The recent consultation paper "Contaminated Land—Clean-Up and Control" sought views on a number of issues, including the possible removal of the existing defence provision and exemption from clean-up costs for pollution caused by water permitted to flow from an abandoned mine. The responses are currently being evaluated and the outcome of this review will be announced shortly.

Incomes

Dr Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average per capita as a percentage of the United Kingdom average; and what were the equivalent figures in 1979.

Mr. Stewart: For 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, average household income per head in Scotland was 99·9 per cent. of the United Kingdom average. This is a provisional estimate. Equivalent figures for 1979 are not available as household income was not calculated on a United Kingdom regional basis prior to 1984.

Derelict Land

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has had from Scottish Enterprise about the work of the earthworm in accelerating the rate of recovery of derelict land, to which he referred in his letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 6 September.

Sir Hector Monro: Scottish Enterprise has confirmed that it is aware of the possible beneficial effects of earthworms in recovering derelict land. Indeed, it has had some work done on its behalf on this issue by the Strathclyde Greenbelt Company. Scottish Enterprise's environmental unit would be happy to provide the hon. Member with further details should he wish to contact it direct about the matter.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 20 October 1994

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Companies' Annual Returns

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place a copy in the Library of the list of sensitive companies maintained by the Registrar of Companies with respect to which Companies house undertakes special measures to ensure the filing of annual returns.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There is no such list, and there are no such measures. Companies house operates procedures which are intended to give all companies every opportunity to comply with Companies Act filing requirements before enforcement action is undertaken.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received in relation to the late filing of the annual returns by the Association of Conservative Clubs Ltd; what consultations he has had with the Registrar of Companies with respect to the default procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am not aware of any representations received from members of the public in relation to the overdue annual return. My office has been informed by a member of the registrar's staff that the usual pursuit action is under way in respect of the Association of Conservative Clubs Ltd. There is a long-standing practice whereby my office is informed whenever, in the judgment of the registrar, pursuit action may result in publicity in a particular case.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had from the Registrar of Companies in relation to the default procedure and reminder letters to the Association of Conservative Clubs Ltd.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None. A member of the Registrar of Companies' staff has informed my office that the usual default procedures are under way in respect of an overdue annual return by the Association of Conservative Clubs Ltd.

Post Office

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what has been the cost of establishing, advertising and operating the address The Post Office, Freepost Freedom, London EC1B 1GP for those wishing to write supporting the Post Office case for change and commercial freedom;

(2) how many letters have been received at the address The Post Office, Freepost Freedom, London EC1B 1GP by those supporting the Post Office case for change and commercial freedom;

(3) what authorisation his Department gave to the Post Office to establish and advertise the address Freepost Freedom, London EC1B 1GP for those wishing to write supporting the Post Office case for change and commercial freedom.

Mr. Wardle: These are all operational matters for the Post Office.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those individuals, organisations and companies who have made a submission to the nuclear review; and if he will place copies of these submissions in the Library.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1994]:* In accordance with the terms of reference for the review, this information and copies of all substantive submissions are available in the Library of the House.

TREASURY

Third World Debt

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide figures on the total debt relief resulting from the implementation of the Trinidad terms; which countries have benefited; which countries are eligible; and which of these have outstanding debts.

Mr. Nelson: To date over $7¼ billion of debt has been restructured by the Paris Club under the Trinidad terms which has resulted in debt or debt service reduction equivalent to over $2¾ billion.

To date, 22 countries have benefited from a reduction in the burden of their official bilateral debt under Trinidad terms. These are Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Cote D'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Republic, Guyana, Honduras, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia.

Trinidad terms are available to the world's poorest and most severely indebted countries which are following International Monetary Fund programmes of economic reform. It is not possible to say which countries might obtain debt relief under Trinidad terms in the future because the merits of all requests for debt rescheduling are considered by the Paris Club creditors on a case-by-case basis.

Dividend Taxation

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress of the review of dividend taxation and related issues, initiated by the Financial Secretary; and when he expects to publish its findings.

Sir George Young: A programme of discussions on the industrial finance initiative with business people and financial institutions has been completed. The initiative is continuing by analysing the ideas collected during the work to date and by examining the scope for new approaches to finance industry. There will be no single report on the initiative, but announcements on individual issues will be made in due course.

Doctor Dispensing

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions have taken place between HM customs and representatives of the British Medical Association on the VAT liability of dispensing by doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Officials of Customs and Excise met representatives of the British Medical Association on 3 May 1994 to discuss the VAT liability of dispensing by doctors who are authorised or required to provide NHS pharmacy services. Provisional arrangements whereby doctors can continue to treat this dispensing as a non-business NHS activity have been agreed, pending the outcome of customs' further consultations with the BMA and others.

Gaming Machines

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many ordinary gaming machine licences are currently due to applicants who have paid appropriate levels of duty; and over what period of time it has not been possible to issue licences.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the period from the beginning of April 1994 to 14 October there were 59,126 applications to the licensing centre. From these there are currently 16,606 licences which have not been despatched. It has been possible to issue licences throughout this period.

Civil Servants

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants including those in next steps agencies earn more than the current basic salary of hon. Members.

Mr. Nelson: At 1 July 1994 about 15,000 civil servants.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his reply to the honourable Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), *Official Report*, 19 July, column *91*, if he will estimate the printing and publishing costs of written and oral questions and the costs of the relevant work of the Table Office.

Mr. Tony Newton: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Safe Water

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the United Kingdom's bilateral aid programmes is spent on the provision of safe water.

Mr. Baldry: In 1993–94 around 4 per cent.—just over £30 million out of £795 million—of United Kingdom bilateral aid which was allocable by sector was spent on the water and sanitation sector. This figure, which is at present still provisional, excludes that part of emergency aid which is spent on the provision of water and sanitation during times of crisis.

Aid Programme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what plans Her Majesty's Government have to reach the target for bilateral aid for basic needs recommended by the United Nations development programme;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government will allocate a greater proportion of its bilateral aid to target the basic needs of poor people in developing countries.

Mr. Baldry: In allocating our bilateral aid, we recognise the importance of addressing basic human needs, but do not consider it appropriate to prescribe proportional targets for expenditure on a global basis. We estimate that in 1992–93 around 10 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid expenditure, excluding emergency aid, was on basic human needs, above the average for all donors. In addition we provide around £150 million of emergency aid, most of which goes to meet basic needs in times of crisis.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to improve the focus of the European Union's aid programmes towards meeting the basic needs of people living in absolute poverty in developing countries.

Mr. Baldry: Article 130u of the treaty on European Union identifies the campaign against poverty in developing countries as one of the central objectives of Community aid programmes. The Development Council in December 1993 adopted guidelines to improve the poverty focus of Community and member state programmes and projects. Seven countries—Ethiopia, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Peru, Ghana, Mali and Nicaragua—have been identified for a pilot exercise in enhanced co-ordination between Community and member state efforts to combat poverty. A social development adviser from ODA is seconded to the Commission and is closely involved in this exercise.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of his Department's total aid budget is expected to be allocated through the European Union and through multilateral channels by 1996–97.

Mr. Baldry: As indicated in the memorandum submitted by the ODA to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 27 April 1994, by 1996–97 we expect, on current plans, that 34 per cent. of the aid budget will be allocated through the European Union and 18 per cent. through other multilateral channels.

The figures for European Union expenditure are, however, constantly under review.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that all Overseas Development Administration funded aid projects are subject to assessment for their impact on different income groups or beneficiaries.

Mr. Baldry: ODA's procedures for the design and appraisal of projects require assessment of projects' impact on potential beneficiaries, with particular attention to the needs of disadvantaged groups.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Improvement Grants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have made representations to him about difficulties in meeting their obligations under the existing housing improvement grants policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Since April 1994 my Department has received separate written representations from 53 local authorities.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the review of the improvement grant system will be completed; when proposals will be announced; and when guidelines will be issued.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) the then Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction on 27 April 1994, *Official Report,* column, *205.*

Wildlife Trade

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what formal projects for monitoring all pet trade-related take of wildlife imported into the United Kingdom currently exists; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what scientific evaluations of natural populations of wildlife imported into the United Kingdom for pet trade purposes are made under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: Under CITES, scientific evaluations of natural populations are primarily the responsibility of those countries in which specimens are taken from the wild. Under a process promoted by the United Kingdom, a committee of the convention monitors the means by which these countries ensure that the number of animals taken from the wild for export do not threaten the survival of the species. Remedial action may be recommended and assistance may be offered in some cases. If recommendations are not implemented satisfactorily, trade may be suspended. The European Council regulation on CITES applies stricter tests to the import of certain species and trade in these may be suspended where there is insufficient evidence that the level of exports of animals taken from the wild is sustainable.

Some of the animals included in these processes will form part of the pet trade.

Individual import applications under CITES, including those relating to the pet trade, are also referred to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee which advises us on any conservation implications.

Community Charge

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the outstanding arrears of community charge in total and by each local authority on 31 March.

Mr. Curry: I estimate that the level of community charge arrears for local authorities in England at 31 March 1994 was between £1·5 and £1·6 billion. Authorities have, however, made provision for non-collection of £1·4 billion.

There is insufficient information available centrally to make a reliable estimate for each local authority. However, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy regularly publishes estimates for individual authorities: figures for 31 March 1993 are available in the Library of the House.

Business Regulations

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the annual on-going compliance costs for new regulations affecting business for which his Department has completed compliance cost assessments.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) on Wednesday 19 October 1994, *Official Report,* columns *266-67.*

Leeds Development Corporation

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when Leeds development corporation will be wound up and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Statutory orders will be laid before Parliament early next year to effect the wind-up and dissolution of Leeds development corporation. Subject to parliamentary approval, the corporation will cease to act from 1 April 1995, except for the purpose of preparing its final accounts and report and winding up its affairs. The corporation will be dissolved on 1 July 1995.

Urban development corporations were set up, with finite lifetimes, to regenerate their designated areas. Since designation on 30 June 1988, Leeds development corporation, in partnership with other agencies, has made a considerable and lasting contribution to the well-being of Leeds.

By the end of its lifetime, Leeds development corporation expects to have reclaimed 68 hectares of land, built 11·4 km of roads and footpaths and created 366,000 sq m. of non-housing floorspace and 561 housing units. This has led to some 8,000 jobs in new developments and levered in £317 million in private sector investment.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received about the proposed deletion of the Cutty Sark station for the docklands light railway extension plans;

(2) if the provision of a station at Cutty Sark will be included as an option when the docklands light railway extension proposals are put out to tender.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answers 19 October 1994]:* We have received representations from a range of national and local organisations and from Members of both Houses in support of a station at Cutty Sark. We will shortly make an announcement on the next steps for the project and on the option for a Cutty Sark station.

Zoos

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many exemptions have been granted in each county to establishments keeping animals from provisions of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 in each year since 1982; and if he will state the reasons for these exemptions in respect of the last year for which figures are available.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 19 October 1994]:* Between 1984 and 1991 the following exemptions from the provisions of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 have been granted:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Avon	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Cheshire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cornwall	5	5	1	—	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
Devon	—	3	3	—	1	1	—	1
Dorset	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Essex	—	3	2	1	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	1	1	3	—	—	—	—	—
Herefordshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	—	3	3	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
London	5	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	3
Middlesex	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Oxfordshire	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Somerset	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Sussex	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—
Tyne and Wear	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Warwickshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	2	1	—	1	—	—	—
Worcestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Yorkshire	—	3	1	3	1	1	—	—

No exemptions have been granted in 1992–1994. Exemptions from the Act are granted to collections which consist entirely of animals which are normally domesticated in Great Britain.

Establishments which have been granted exemptions are not considered to meet the definition of zoo within the meaning of the Act by virtue of the fact that wild animals are not being exhibited to the public.

Environmental Planning

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that environmental planning decisions are taken in full appreciation of their impact on human health and that adequate public health advice is provided by the national health service to joint regional offices of the Departments of Health, Employment, Transport and Trade and Industry.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

My Department does not have joint regional offices with other Departments.

It is a responsibility of regional and district directors of public health to have regard to and, when appropriate, provide advice on, all factors which may have significant impact upon the public health in their area—including those which may be associated with the consequences of planning decisions. Advice may also be obtained from the nation health service executive.

Responsibility for planning matters rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. We understand that guidance to planning authorities, and to applicants for consent to major projects, requires that impact upon human beings should be taken into account in assessing the environmental impact of development plans and projects.

EDUCATION

Nurse Training

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the higher education institutions that operate the USS superannuation pension scheme which are not able to offer nurse training facilities as a result of changes to pension arrangements for nurse training staff.

Mr. Boswell: Decision on whether to offer nurse training are for individual institutions. I understand that discussions about the pensions arrangements for staff transferring from the national health service to higher education institutions are taking place between the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the relevant pensions authorities.

Public Bodies

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the non-departmental public bodies to which her Department makes appointments in the Greater London area, together with the total annual budget for each body and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last five years.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is given in the table.

Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT)

Year	*Annual DFE Grant Aid*	*Appointments and Re-appointments by the Secretary of State*
1990–91	£535,000	4
1991–92	£652,000	3
1992–93	£949,000	2
1993–94	£857,000	4
1994–95	£832,000	1

Includes one appointment made by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Further Education Unit (FEU)

Year	*Annual DFE Grant Aid*	*Appointments and Re appointments by the Secretary of State*
1990–91	£2,840,000	3
1991–92	£3,030,000	8
1992–93	£3,620,000	3
1993–94	£3,550,000	12
1994–95	£3,550,000	13

Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), Greater London Regional Committee
Established in 1993

Year	*Appointments and Re appointments by the Secretary of State*
1993–94	10
1994–95	1

The FEFC Regional Committees do not have separate budgets. Their budgets are contained within the FEFC budget.

School curriculum and assessment authority (SCAA)
Established on 1 October 1993

Year	Annual DFE Grant Aid	Appointments and Re-appointments by the Secretary of State
1993–94	[1]£18,400,000	15
1994–95	[2]£29,600,000	15

[1] Part-year.

[2] Estimated.

Special Education Needs (SEN) Tribunal
Established on 1 September 1994

Year	*Annual DFE Grant Aid*	*Appointments and Re-appointments by the Secretary of State*
1994–95	[1]£775,204	79

[1] Part-year.

Appointments were made to the SEN tribunal to sit on hearings throughout England, effective from the Tribunal's creation. Whilst the Tribunal's HQ is in London, the hearings will take place across the country, as and when needed, and members will be paid on a per diem basis. Of the 79 members, 18 live in the Greater London area. These 18 members will not necessarily be assigned to hearings in the Greater London area.

Teacher Training Agency (TTA)
Established on 21 September 1994

Year	*Annual DFE Grant Aid*	*Appointments and Re appointments by the Secretary of State*
1994–95	[1]£2,000,000	[2]11

[1] Budget includes the costs of establishing the Agency part year.

[2] To date.

University Commissioners

Year	*Annual DFE Grant Aid*	*Appointments and Re-appointments by the Secretary of State*
1991–91	£185,529	5
1991–92	£201,851	5
1992–93	£243,823	5
1993–94	£255,124	5

Costs for 1994–95 arising from residual work are being met on a contingency basis.

Students

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time students were registered in colleges of further education for each of the last five years, on a regional basis.

Mr. Boswell: The number of full-time students by region enrolled on courses in colleges of further education, for each of the last five academic years for which date are available, were as shown in the table.

Number of Full-Time Students in Colleges of Further Education England 1988–89—1992–93

Students on FE and HE courses

thousands

Region	*Academic Year* 88–89	89–90	90–91	91–92	92–93
North	20	22	22	27	30
Yorkshire/ Humberside	37	39	43	48	52
North West	56	59	64	70	75
East Midlands	27	29	32	37	41
West Midlands	41	42	46	55	61
East Anglia	13	13	15	18	20
Greater London	51	52	55	64	69
South East	72	77	83	99	108
South West	36	39	40	49	54
Total (England)	352	371	400	469	510

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time students failed to complete courses in each of the last five years, on a regional basis.

Mr. Boswell: The number of further education students who do not complete their courses are not centrally recorded.

The wastage rates of full-time and sandwich students from first degree courses in former Universities Funding Council-funded United Kingdom universities and former English and Wales polytechnics are shown as follows:

	Academic Year 1987–88	1988–89	1989–90	1990–91	1991–92
Percentages	17	14	16	15	17

Source:

Table 14 (page 43) DFE Department Report (Cm 2510) published March 1994.

The proportions of students who left each of the former UFC-funded universities on successful completion of their full-time and sandwich first degree courses are published by the universities statistical record in "University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators". A copy of the 1993 edition is in the House Library.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff are employed by her Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Boswell: The Department currently employs 2,152 civil servants, of whom 368 are in the Teacher Pensions Agency; 41·8 per cent. of the Department's staff are based in Darlington and the remainder in London.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* her agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Forth: The information is as follows:

	DES/DFE £'000s	*Teachers' pensions agency £'000s*	*Total £'000s*
1990–91	57	—	57
1991–92	86	—	86
1992–93	95	1	96
1993–94	87	1	88

The cost of official hospitality in each of these years is included in the running cost expenditure for the Department which is published every year in the departmental report. Official hospitality includes the costs of teas and coffees, buffet lunches and dinners.

University-Validated Courses

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students are enrolled on university-validated diploma and first-degree courses and are studying in non-higher education institutions.

Mr. Boswell: In academic year 1992–93, there were 91,000 home domiciled students in English FE colleges registered on degree courses and on other institutional validated certificates and diplomas.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Consulate Staff, Kiev

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many embassy and consulate staff in Kiev speak *(a)* English as a first language and also Russian, *(b)* English as a first language and also Ukrainian, *(c)* English as a first language and also Russian and Ukrainian, *(d)* Russian as a first language and *(e)* Ukrainian as a first language; and what percentage speak Ukrainian.

Mr. Goodlad: There are 17 United Kingdom-based officers at the British embassy in Kiev; there is no separate consulate. Of these *(a)* two have a knowledge of English as a first language and Russian; *(b)* one has a knowledge of English as a first language and Ukrainian; and *(c)* six have a knowledge of English as a first language and both Russian and Ukrainian.

The remaining eight United Kingdom-based staff are in the support grades and are not given formal language training before they arrive at post.

There are 11 Ukrainian locally engaged staff, all of whom speak English, Russian and Ukrainian. Of the nine United Kingdom-based staff in speaker slots, 77 per cent. have a knowledge of Ukrainian.

World Summit for Children

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that the targets agreed by the 1990 world summit for children will be met by 2000.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom published in July 1992 Command Paper No. 1984 entitled "Report on the United Kingdom Implementation of the Goals agreed by the World Summit for Children". A copy was placed in the Library of the House.

The report on the implementation of the world summit's goals noted a parallel initiative in the UN convention on the rights of the child, to which the United Kingdom Government have agreed to be bound. A report on the application of the convention to the United Kingdom was published in February 1994. A copy was placed in the Library of the House.

Entry Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad on the application by Tariq Mahmood, Ref: IMM/B7299, to enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have asked the entry clearance officer in Islamabad to let me have a report on the application from Mr. Tariq Mahmood. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad on the application by Mrs. Najon Ul Noreen, Ref: IMM/C1222, to enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have asked the entry clearance officer in Islamabad to let me have a report on the application from Mrs. Najon Ul Noreen. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad on the application by Mr. Iftikar Hussain, Ref: B1475, to enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have asked the entry clearance officer in Islamabad to let me have a report on the application from Mr. Iftikar Hussain. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people made applications for asylum to his Department in the last half of 1993 and the first half of 1994; and of these how many waited *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* between three and six months, *(c)* between six months and a year and *(d)* over a year for a decision;

(2) how many people who made applications for asylum to the Home Office in the last half of 1993 and the first half of 1994 waited for a decision *(a)* for less than three months, *(b)* between three and six months, *(c)* between six months and a year and *(d)* for over a year.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: In the period 1 July 1993 to 30 June 1994, 25,660 applications for asylum, excluding dependants, were lodged in the United Kingdom.

As at 30 September 1994, an estimated 11,100 decisions had been taken on the 25,660 applications for asylum lodged between 1 July 1993 and 30 June 1994; of these decisions an estimated 3,600 waited less than three months for an initial decision on their asylum application; 3,000 waited between three and six months; 4,100 waited between six and 12 months; and 500 waited longer than 12 months, while an estimated 14,600 applications were outstanding.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many asylum seekers have been waiting for a decision on their claim for asylum for *(a)* over one year, *(b)* over two years and *(c)* over six years;

(2) who is the longest-delayed applicant for asylum; and how long has the applicant waited for a decision on his case.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on the length of time applicants have been waiting for an initial decision on their asylum application or the longest outstanding case is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of asylum seekers detained are those who are yet to have their application refused or granted or are contesting refusal of their application (i) in 1991, (ii) in 1992, (iii) in 1993 and (iv) in 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information is not available in the form requested. However, on 14 October 1994, 658 people detained under immigration powers had sought asylum at some stage. Of these, 177 had applications still under consideration and the remainder had had their applications refused. Of these, 386 had an appeal pending.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of asylum seekers were initially detained *(a)* in 1991, *(b)* in 1992, *(c)* in 1993 and *(d)* in 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The available information suggests that less than 1·5 per cent. of people who have sought asylum are detained. Information on the percentage of asylum seekers detained in a given year can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of the former Yugoslavia formerly resident in the area of Kosovo and of Albanian ethnic origin who had applied for political asylum in the United Kingdom and whose political asylum applications have been refused have been returned to any part of the current Federal Republic of Yugoslavia over the past 12 months.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: During the period 1 October 1993 to 30 September 1994, no nationals of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia/Montenegro, have been returned to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia/Montenegro. Information on the original residence or ethnic origin of asylum seekers is not separately identifiable in the statistics.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether all the provisions of the resolution on manifestly unfounded applications for asylum, agreed by the European Ministers meeting on 30 November 1992 and to be implemented by 1 January 1995, have now been incorporated into national law.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The procedures contained in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 and the immigration rules relating to applications for asylum that are judged to be without foundation are fully consistent with the principles contained in the resolution.

Homicides

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of *(a)* male victims of homicide and *(b)* female victims of homicide in 1993 were killed by their current or former spouses, cohabitees or lovers.

Mr. Maclean: Provisional figures for 1993 show that 6 per cent. of male victims and 40 per cent. of female victims of homicide in England and Wales were killed by their current or former spouses, cohabitants or lovers.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many homicides were recorded in England and Wales in 1993; and in how many cases were the victims *(a)* male and *(b)* female.

Mr. Maclean: Provisional figures for 1993 show that at 5 August 1994, 606 offences were currently recorded as homicide in England and Wales, involving 375 male and 231 female victims.

Deportation

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigrants were recommended for deportation in 1993 and how many were deported; how many appeals against deportation are currently pending; and how many such appeals were determined in 1993.

Mr. Nicholas Barker: A total of 310 court recommendations of deportation were made, and 410 persons were removed under deportation powers following such a recommendation, in 1993. These figures exclude persons issued with a notice of intention to deport because of a breach of conditions of leave to enter or remain, or because their deportation was deemed to be conducive to the public good. Data on appeals against such court recommendations are not separately available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of *(a)* the questionnaire which has been distributed to the member states in the context of title VI of the European Union treaty on the conditions under which EU member states refrain from deporting aliens and what rights they enjoy and *(b)* the United Kingdom Government's responses.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: No. These are working documents, which do not fall within the criteria for deposit in accordance with the Government's scrutiny arrangements for title VI matters.

Dogs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *280*, if he will list the different forms of identification for dogs considered by the Government before the introduction of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The methods of identification considered were tattooing, ear tagging, ear studs, collar tagging and microchips.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reports have been made by marriage registrars, and from which registration areas, to the Registrar-General, that marriages are suspected to be solely for immigration purposes, in each year since 1992, to the latest convenient date; and in how many of these instances information has been passed on to his Department.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

The information will be placed in the Library. During 1993 superintendent registrars reported 361 cases to the Registrar General where they suspected that a proposed marriage had been arranged for the sole purpose of evading statutory immigration controls. Of this number, information in respect of 304 was passed to the Home Office.

So far this year, to 14 July 1994, 270 reports have been received from superintendent registrars, of which 194 have been referred to the Home Office.

Refugees

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for refugee status are outstanding; how many individuals are covered by these applications; and what is the average length of time taken to determine an application.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: At 30 September 1994—the latest date for which the information is available—the estimated number of asylum applications outstanding is 52,760 which comprises an estimated 69,500 principal applicants and their dependants.

The estimated average length of time between the receipt of an asylum application and the decision, for cases decided on applications for asylum received since the introduction of the Asylum and Immigration Appeal Act 1993, from 26 July 1993 to 30 September 1994, was 4·7 months.

European Union (Visas)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of the proposal of the German presidency of the European Union that visa requirements be waived for third-country nationals resident in European Union states, where such persons are seeking to travel in transit or for short stays, as soon as possible and before the entry into force of the draft convention on the crossing of external borders of the European Union;

(2) if he will now place in the Library copies of the *(a)* draft resolution on admissions of self-employed persons from third countries, *(b)* draft resolution on admission of students and *(c)* draft resolutions of the principles for distributing refugees among the member states of the European Union which has been submitted for consultation, which, according to the German presidency of the European Union, have been submitted in accordance with the provisions of title VI, "Co-operation in the Fields of Justice and Home Affairs".

Mr. Nicholas Baker: These documents are being made available to Parliament in accordance with the arrangements for keeping it informed of work being carried out under title VI of the treaty on European Union, together with explanatory notes setting out the Government's views on each of them.

Family Reunification

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether all the provisions of the resolution of harmonisation of national policies on family reunification, adopted at the European Ministers meeting of 1 June 1993 and to be implemented by 1 January 1995, have now been implemented.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The immigration rules which came into effect on 1 October are fully consistent with the principles contained in this resolution.

Police Compensation Claims

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims have been made for compensation for wrongful arrest, malicious prosecution and false imprisonment for each year for the past five years for which figures are available, by police authority; how many of these claims have been settled each year, by police authority; how much compensation has been paid, by police authority, each year; how many individuals are involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected centrally.

Wheel clamping

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he now has to bring forward measures following the publication of the consultative paper, "Wheel clamping on Private Land."

Mr. Maclean: The Government are considering what action it would be appropriate to take in respect of wheel clamping on private land. The consultative paper referred to produced much useful information from interested parties. It did not, however, produce any consensus on how to ensure that any measure introduced to prevent or deter irresponsible and heavy-handed wheel clamping on private land does not prevent sensible measures from being taken to control genuine parking problems. We will make our conclusions known as soon as possible.

Party Conference Costs

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the policing costs associated with the annual conferences of *(a)* the Liberal Democrats, *(b)* the Labour party and *(c)* the Conservative party; and who meets the costs.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the forces concerned that the latest estimated costs of policing the 1994 party conferences are:-

		£
(a) Liberal Democrats	(Sussex)	3,500
(b) Labour Party	(Lancashire)	90,000
(c) Conservative Party	(Dorset)	2,600,000

The normal police funding arrangements apply with expenditure attracting 51 per cent. Home Office police grant.

Entry Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department following the request made by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad, when Mr. Gul Nawaz, resident in the United Kingdom, is going to be interviewed in connection with inquiries being made into the application by Nasreen Akhtar, Ref: GU100/18990, to enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Immigration Service at Leeds Bradford airport will shortly contact Mr. Hafiz Gul Nawaz to offer him an appointment for an interview within two months.

Mr. & Mrs. Kwabena Aidoobofour

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the honourable Member for Deptford will receive a reply to her letters of 3 February, 12 April and 31 May concerning Mr. and Mrs. Kwabena Aidoobofour.

Mr. Nicholas Baker *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* My hon. Friend the Minister of State wrote on 8 August.

United Nations (Civil and Political Rights)

Mr. Mates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Government submitted to the United Nations their latest periodic report under the international covenant on civil and political rights.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The United Kingdom's fourth periodic report under the international covenant on civil and political rights was submitted to the United Nations on 7 October 1994. On the same day copies of the report were placed in the Library.

European Union (Readmission)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with which third states his Department is negotiating readmission agreements regarding the return of their nationals from the United Kingdom on *(a)* the basis of the principles for the conclusion of such agreements which were drawn up during the Belgian presidency of the European Union and are referred to in the agenda of the German presidency and *(b)* any other basis.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Students

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Northern Ireland students are free to accept offers of places for courses in universities in Great Britain if similar courses are available in universities in *(a)* Northern Ireland or *(b)* the Republic of Ireland; and if grants are available to Northern Ireland students enrolled in university courses in Great Britain if similar courses are available in *(a)* Northern Ireland or *(b)* the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Yes. Students from Northern Ireland are free to attend courses at universities in Great Britain and are eligible for awards whether or not similar courses are available in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.

Arts Council

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were employed by the Northern Ireland Arts Council in each of the past three years; and how many were *(a)* Roman Catholic and *(b)* Protestant in each of these three years.

Mr Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

	January 1991	*January 1992*	*January 1993*
Number employed	105	108	102
Community Background:			
(a) Roman Catholic	38	41	41
(b) Protestant	51	51	47
(c) Non-determined	16	16	14

Health Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those areas which have developed joint commissioning operations for the planning and purchasing of primary and secondary health care in their area; and what are the principal organisational models used.

Mr. Ancram: The planning, management and delivery of health and personal social services in Northern Ireland have been integrated since 1973. There are four health and social services boards and they, together with GP fundholders, are responsible for the commissioning of primary and secondary care.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure on official entertaining by my office for each year since 1990 was as follows:

Year	*£*
1990–91	23,830
1991–92	40,976
1992–93	30,023
1993–94	21,793

I have asked my right honourable Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to provide information about expenditure on official entertaining by the Cabinet Office and agencies.

Macclesfield

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Prime Minister whether he has any plans to pay an official visit to Macclesfield.

The Prime Minister: As I have said before to my hon. Friend, I very much hope to be able to come to his constituency when my diary permits.

Ministerial Responsibilities

Dr. Marek: To ask the Prime Minister when the list of ministerial responsibilities after last summer's changes was delivered to the Vote Office.

The Prime Minister: The first batch of copies of the September 1994 edition of the "List of Ministerial Responsibilities" was delivered to the Vote Office on 4 October.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 October.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Intelligence Unit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Prime Minister how many persons are attached to the intelligence unit in the Chief Whip's offices at 12 Downing street and in the House of Commons; what is the purpose of the unit; and to whom it is accountable.

The Prime Minister: There is no such unit.

HEALTH

Women's Aid Federations

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much funding has been provided by her Department to *(a)* the Women's Aid Federation England and *(b)* the Welsh Women's Aid Federation in each of the past 10 years;

(2) how much funding has been provided from central Government to Women's Aid in each of the last 10 years, listing the amount provided by each Department.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the tables.

Table 1

Year	*DH Funding to Women's Aid Federation (England) £*	*Welsh Office Funding to Welsh Women's Aid £*
1985–86	Nil	*
1986–87	29,590	*
1987–88	98,000	*
1988–89	121,961	108,526
1989–90	110,000	129,693
1990–91	130,000	169,658
1991–92	144,650	212,901
1992–93	199,200	226,742
1993–94	201,020	238,687
1994–95	199,200	248,752

Figures are rounded to the nearest £.

*Figures not readily available.

Funding for Women's Aid - From all Government Departments Table 2

Year	[1]Dept of Health £	[2]Scottish Office £	Welsh Office £	Northern Ireland [2]Office £	Home Office £	Department of the [3]Environment £
1985–86	34,422	308,017	*	32,049	—	—
1986–87	66,011	424,503	*	33,350	—	—
1987–88	98,000	591,622	*	60,633	—	—
1988–89	196,961	627,517	108,526	45,669	—	6,439,000
1989–90	110,000	894,348	129,693	127,617	6,200	2,124,000
1990–91	150,000	1,228,781	169,658	155,031	5,380	1,737,000
1991–92	144,650	1,318,242	212,901	197,009	8,075	5,183,000
1992–93	199,200	1,220,371	664,742[2]	128,631	10,273	5,370,000
1993–94	201,020	1,800,349	742,333[2]	215,191	30,650	5,809,000
1994–95	199,200	1,738,111	704,597[2]	132,299	17,000	**3,175,720

All figures are rounded to the nearest £.

* Information for earlier years not available.

** Includes funding for a national housing coordinator for Women's Aid Federation (England) Ltd: £17,887.

Notes:

[1] Funding for Women's Aid Federation (England) and local child care projects. It excludes some central funding for child care projects allocated through voluntary organisations.

[2] Includes funding for national organisation and local projects.

[3] Funding for women's aid projects allocated by the Housing Corporation.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will instruct the South Thames regional health authority to publish weekly the number of occasions for the preceding week when response times of emergency ambulances of the London ambulance service exceeded 34 and 45 minutes respectively, together with a numerical summary of the category of relevant causes.

Mr. Sackville: No.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of calls to the London ambulance service are answered within *(a)* 10 minutes, *(b)* between 10 and 20 minutes and *(c)* 20 to 30 minutes.

Mr. Sackville: The London ambulance service has supplied the information in the table.

	Number of calls responded to within 10 minutes		*Number of calls responded to within 11-20 minutes.*		*Number of calls responded to within 21-30 minutes*	
April 1994	11,822	29 per cent.	24,811	60 per cent.	3,557	9 per cent.
May 1994	12,917	29 per cent.	26,806	60 per cent.	3,611	8 per cent.
June 1994	11,837	26 per cent.	26,807	60 per cent.	4,523	10 per cent.
July 1994	12,468	27 per cent.	28,024	60 per cent.	4,843	10 per cent.
August 1994	12,883	29 per cent.	26,588	60 per cent.	3,503	8 per cent.
September 1994	12,850	30 per cent.	26,297	60 per cent.	3,300	8 per cent.

Source:

London Ambulance Service internal statistics

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the size of the population covered by *(a)* the London ambulance service and *(b)* each of the ambulance services covering larger populations.

Mr. Sackville: The estimated size of populations served by the London ambulance service and larger urban and rural services is shown in the table:

Service	*Population*
London Ambulance Service	6,936,400
Urban	
Manchester	2,601,116
Mersey	2,408,900
Surrey	1,179,400
South Yorkshire	1,297,884
West Midlands	2,619,231
West Yorkshire	2,128,421
Rural	
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	1,515,001
Essex	1,472,397
Hampshire	1,409,803
Kent	1,532,457
Lancashire	1,398,909
Northumbria	1,432,931
Nottinghamshire	1,017,267
Sta[illegible]shire	1,046,853
Two Shires	1,187,906
West Country	1,921,567

Notes:

1. Population summaries are mid-1992 as used for 1993–94 summary KA34 information.

2. "Larger ambulance services" taken as those serving populations of more than one million.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many maintenance depots the London ambulance service operates.

Mr. Sackville: Seventeen.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulance men and women work for the London ambulance service; and what is the average rate of absenteeism.

Mr. Sackville: The latest centrally held information is that at 30 September 1992 there were 2,010—to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents—ambulance men and women in the London ambulance service.

According to figures supplied by the London ambulance service in August 1994, absenteeism in accident and emergency services was 8 per cent. and in patient transport 8.5 per cent.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paramedics are employed by the London ambulance service; and what was the comparable figure five years ago.

Mr. Sackville: According to information supplied by the London ambulance service, there are 455 paramedics in the service now, compared with only seven in 1989.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulances are operated by the London ambulance service; what is their average age; and how many days the ambulances spend on average out of service.

Mr. Sackville: According to figures supplied by the London ambulance service there are: 306 accident and emergency ambulances, average age of six years; and 376 patient transport service vehicles, with an average age of six years. In the current year 180 new vehicles will be delivered and put into service.

Information on average time out of service is not currently available.

Breathing Difficulties

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people received hospital treatment for acute breathing difficulties during *(a)* March, *(b)* April, *(c)* May, *(d)* June, *(e)* July and *(f)* August.

Mr. Sackville: Acute breathing difficulties occur as a symptom of a wide range of medical conditions. Central returns do not include numbers of hospital admissions classified by symptom. The number of hospital admissions for asthma recorded for the months requested in 1991, the latest figures available, is shown in the table.

Finished consultant episodes, ordinary admissions and day cases, England:

March	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*
6,086	6,346	6,791	6,695	6,782	6,197

Source

Hospital Episode Statistics (estimated from 25 per cent. sample). The figures do not include numbers of attendances at out-patient or accident and emergency facilities.

Disabled People

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a breakdown of the 6·5 million disabled people between those *(a)* who suffer from impaired hearing, *(b)* who have defective sight, *(c)* who suffer from immobility and *(d)* those with other difficulties.

Mr. Bowis: The four Office of Population Censuses and Surveys surveys of disability in Great Britain, which were carried out between 1985 and 1988, found that over 6·2 million adults and 360,000 children under 16 had at least one disability. Full details are contained in report 1: "The Prevalence of Disability among Adults", and report 3: "The Prevalence of Disability among Children", copies of which are available in the Library.

Health Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those areas which have developed joint commissioning operations for the planning and purchasing of primary and secondary health care in their area; and what are the principal organisational models used.

Mr. Malone: Every district health authority and family health services authority is required to develop effective joint working arrangements for the management of the health care services within their area. It is for the statutory authorities concerned to determine the exact management arrangements to promote joint working, within the current legislation governing the composition and functions of those authorities, and guidance issued by the Department.

Blood Supply

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the proposals of the National Blood Authority which include the closure of Liverpool's blood transfusion unit; what her response has been; if she will as a matter of urgency study the proposals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received representations from Members of both Houses, and from other interested parties. The National Blood Authority is undertaking a detailed consultation about its proposals. The results of the consultation will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

Community Health Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what *(a)* communications and *(b)* recommendations she has received from the North Thames regional health authority concerning the future structure and organisation of community health services in the City and east London; and on what basis and on what occasions any such conclusions were reached.

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received no such communication or recommendation. Prior to 1 April 1994, representations were received from North East Thames regional health authority expressing support for a combined community and primary care trust. We have yet to reach a decision.

Mr. Tom Pindar

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she or her Department has had with Mr. Tom Pindar, chairman of the Scarborough and North East Yorkshire Health Care NHS Trust, following his remarks in the course of a mental health review meeting in January; and what plans she has to seek his resignation.

Mr. Sackville: Discussions have taken place between Mr. Pindar and the chairman of Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority. I understand that Mr Pindar has apologised unreservedly for his remarks and this has been accepted by all parties. I am satisfied that he should continue as chairman of the Scarborough and East Yorkshire Health Care National Health Service Trust.

Prescriptions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those regions, areas and general practitioner practices which are participating in an incentive prescribing scheme; when the schemes started; for how long they are intended to run; and what arrangements she is making to set up an independent review of the results.

Mr. Malone: Prescribing incentive schemes were introduced on a pilot basis for non-fundholding general practitioner practices in 11 of the former 14 regions during 1993–94. Around 2,000 practices participated in nationally approved schemes. The regions and family health services authorities which participated in these schemes are shown in the table. There were also a number of locally approved schemes about which information is not available centrally.

The schemes are subject to annual review. Those for 1993–94 were effective in encouraging cost-effective prescribing and further nationally approved schemes are running this year in all new regions. Figures are not yet available centrally on the numbers of practices participating in this year's schemes.

List of FHSAs Participating in the 1993–94 Nationally Approved Practice based Prescribing Incentive Scheme

Northern	*Yorkshire*	*Trent*	*East Anglia*	*North East Thames*	*South East Thames*
Cleveland	Humberside	Lincolnshire	Cambridgeshire	Essex	East Sussex
Cumbria	North Yorkshire	Doncaster	Norfolk	Camden and Islington	Bromley
Durham	Bradford	Sheffield	Suffolk	Enfield and Haringey	Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham
Gateshead	Calderdale			Barking and Havering	Greenwich and Bexley
South Tyneside	Kirklees			City and East London	Kent
Sunderland	Leeds			Redbridge and Waltham Forest	
Newcastle	Wakefield				
North Tyneside					
Northumberland					

List of FHSAs participating in the 1993–94 nationally approved practice based prescribing incentive scheme

Oxford	*South Western*	*West Midlands*	*Mersey*	*North Western*
Berkshire	Avon	Coventry	Cheshire	Lancashire
Buckinghamshire	Cornwall	Solihull	Liverpool	Bolton
Northamptonshire	Devon	Staffordshire	Sefton	Bury
Oxfordshire	Gloucestershire	Walsall	St. Helens	Manchester
	Somerset		Wirral	Oldham
				Rochdale
				Salford
				Stockport
				Tameside
				Trafford
				Wigan

WALES

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times during the 1993–94 session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Redwood: Information requested has been refused 11 times on the grounds of commercial confidentiality during the 1993–94 Session.

Morriston Open Heart Surgery Unit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made for the management and ownership of the Morriston open heart surgery unit at the completion of the first five-year period, in the event of contractors being appointed for the second five year contract different from the owners of the facility for the duration of the first five years.

Mr. Redwood: Arrangements for the operation of the new unit following the first five years will be a matter for the Morriston Hospital NHS Trust and the commissioners of the service in negotiation with the successful contractor, whether public or private. The services provided by the unit will be free at the point of delivery to NHS patients as it will remain an NHS-controlled facility meeting NHS needs whoever is the manager.

Medical Genetic Services

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with purchasing health authorities in Wales with respect to the funding of a consortium to purchase medical genetic services.

Mr. Redwood: None. Advice on contracting mechanisms, including consortium purchasing, for specialised services was set out in Welsh Office circular

DGM(94)65. These are matters for health authorities and providers to decide.

Hospital Services

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those hospital services classified as regional services which he proposes to de-designate from 1 April 1995; what representations he has had from the chairmen of Welsh health authorities concerning the de-designation of these services; and if he will publish his assessment of the effect of de-designation subregionally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The following protected former regional services are to be de-designated from 1 April 1995:

Bone Marrow Transplantation Service
Medical Genetics Service
Pharmaceutical Service:
Drugs Information Service
Pharmaceutical Quality Assurance Service
Surgical Dressings Quality Control Service
Poisons Information Service
Renal Transplantation Service
Spinal Injuries Rehabilitation Service
Transplant Tissue Typing Service
Welsh Hearing Institute

It is open to any service provider or commissioner to argue against de-designation until April 1996. No such representations have been received to date from health authorities in Wales.

Health Authorities and Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the Welsh health authorities and trusts in relation to expenditure by trusts and units within the national health service in Wales on public relations consultants; under which powers such expenditure is approved by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. Health authorities and trusts have discretion to make their own judgments within delegated powers. I do not myself favour expenditure on such consultancy.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the prevalence and use of mobile abattoirs.

Mr. Redwood: At present there are no mobile abattoirs in use in Wales. All abattoirs, including mobile abattoirs, need to meet the structural and hygiene standards set out in regulations and require licensing by the appropriate Agriculture Department.

General Practitioners Training

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the funding of flexible training for qualification as general practitioners; how many places are currently funded by the grants from his Department; how many people are on the waiting list who have already completed their pre-registration year; how many women returners have entered their names on to the waiting list; what proposals he has to increase funding for the training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office has received one representation. The only scheme for training in general practice is the vocational training scheme, within which there is scope for trainees to work part-time. No figures are held centrally on the numbers undertaking vocational training for general practice whether on a full or part-time basis. There is no central waiting list. The general practice component of the vocational training scheme for full-time and part-time trainees is funded from the non cash-limited general medical services budget and paid by the family health services authority. Expenditure on trainee practitioner salaries in 1993–94 was in the order of £3·4 million.

Part-time hospital training posts are funded from the postgraduate dean's flexible training scheme budget, which funds all part-time junior grade hospital doctors' posts. The current annual budget is £235,000 which supports 14 posts.

At present there are no vocational training scheme trainees undertaking part-time hospital training. There are 13 women doctors waiting for placements under the flexible training scheme, three of whom are GP vocational trainees.

I will be considering the extension of this scheme in the context of this year's public expenditure review.

Neighbourhood Hospital

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority in relation to the planning and consultation exercise for a neighbourhood hospital on the site of St. David's hospital, Cowbridge Road, East Cardiff; on what date the approval in principle letter was sent to the health authority; on what date the detailed application has been requested from the authority; and on what date he expects the start of construction.

Mr. Redwood: These are matters for the South Glamorgan health authority. My Department advised the authority on a draft proposal for a local hospital on the site on 14 February 1994. No formal application has been submitted.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the west Wales cardiac care purchasing consortium in relation to the tendering procedure for the open heart surgery unit to be opened at Morriston hospital; what arrangements he has made for the treatment of non-standard open heart surgery cases; what departmental representation there is on the purchasing consortium; and what guarantees have been given regarding the overall activity at the centre in the initial two years.

Mr. Redwood: The South Wales Consortium is represented on the project board managing the competitive tendering process. The board's report and recommendations will be submitted shortly. The purchasing consortium has been operating successfully since 1993 and will work with the Morriston unit to determine overall activity. The unit will treat emergency and elective cases in line with the service specification.

Cardiff East Sewage Works

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he received the application for a derogation from the 2000 deadline under the European municipal waste water treatment directive for the completion of the Cardiff East sewage treatment works; what consultations he had with the chairman of the Wales area of the National Rivers Authority about it; and on what date he approved the derogation order.

Mr. Redwood: The Government made clear in "Paying For Quality" that they intended to take advantage of opportunities for derogations which EC directives accord to member states. Dwr Cymru Cyf has been in discussion with my officials about the possibility of a derogation under article 8·1 of the urban waste water treatment directive to extend the period during which the Cardiff East scheme is to be completed, but no application has as yet been made to the Commission.

Consultants (Merit Awards)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of consultants with merit awards for each of the three categories of award, employed by each Welsh health authority or trust at the latest conveniently available date.

Mr. Redwood: The numbers of consultants with merit awards for each Welsh health authority are as follows:

Health authority	*Category of award* *A+*	*A*	*B*	*C*
Clwyd		2	10	20
East Dyfed			4	10
Gwent	1	3	5	24
Gwynedd		1	4	17
Mid Glamorgan		1	7	23
Pembrokeshire				4
Powys		1	1	6
South Glamorgan	11	24	47	57
West Glamorgan		1	13	29

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the names of the members of the Merit Awards Assessment Committee for Wales; on what date they each commenced their period of service on the committee; and for how long a period.

Mr. Redwood: The membership of both the C awards committee and the higher awards committee together with their term of appointment are as follows:

'C' Regional Awards Committee

Name	*Term of Appointment* *From*	*To*
Mr. P. R. Gregory		
Dr. Patricia Steane FRCA	1992	1994
D. Harding Jones Esq. FRCS	1992	1994
R. T. Maxwell Esq. FRCP	1992	1994
Dr. Molly Hall FRCP	1992	1994
Professor W. I. Fraser FRCPsych DPM	1992	1994
C. W. Rouse Esq. FDSRCS	1992	1994
Dr. G. J. Arthurs FRCA	1993	1995
Dr. J. N. Horton FRCA	1993	1995
Mr. W. I. Jones FRCS	1993	1995
Mr. J. P. Williams FRCOG	1993	1995
Dr. M. Adams FRCOG FRCR.	1993	1995
Dr. C. P. Williams MRCPath	1993	1995
Dr. D. J. C. Davies FFCM	1993	1995
Dr. G. Hughes FRCP	1993	1995
Mr. R. F. Rintoul FRCS	1993	1995
Dr. J. E. Cawdery FRCP	1994	1997
Dr. J. Gough FRCPath	1994	1997
Dr. Gareth H. Jones FRCPsych	1994	1997
Dr. M. S. T. Ruttley FRCR	1994	1997
Mr. J. W. R. Hombal FRCS	1994	1997
Dr. G. Melville Jones FRCPath	1994	1997
Dr. John H. Williams FRCR	1994	1997
Dr. B. Ll. Griffiths FRCP	1994	1997
Dr. Neil S. Davies FRCPsych	1994	1997
Mr. C. J. Davies	1994	1997
Dr. Deidre Hine FFCM DPH		
Mr. K. Thomson	1994	1997
Mr. A. J. Beddow	1993	1994
Mr. R. Hudson	1993	1995
Mr. E. M. W. Griffith CBE	1993	1996

Higher Awards Committee

Name	*Term of Appointment* *From*	*To*
Professor G. M. Roberts FRCR DMRD	1992	1994
H. Bevan-Jones Esq FRCPsych DPM	1991	1993
D. D. R. Williams Esq MD MRCPsych DPM	1991	1993
D. Seel Esq FDSRCS D'ORTH	1991	1993
J. F. Pearson Esq FRCOG	1991	1993
Professor G. H. Elder FRCPath	1992	1994
Professor G. Crompton	1992	1994
Professor J. Rhodes FRCP	1992	1994
Dr. A. E. Edwards FRCA	1993	1995
Mr. K. H. Cromplin FRCS	1993	1995
Dr. D. M. Wayte FRCPath	1993	1995
Mr. M. H. Wheeler FRCS	1993	1995
Dr. R. S. Vaughan FRCA	1993	1995
Dr. Patricia Steane	1993	1995

Health Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those areas of Wales which have developed joint commissioning operations for the planning and purchasing of primary and secondary health care in their area; and if he will list the principal organisational models used.

Mr. Redwood: Every health authority and family health services authority is required to develop effective joint working arrangements for the management of the health care services within their area. It is for the statutory authorities concerned to determine the exact management arrangements to promote joint working, within the current legislation governing the composition and functions of those authorities, and guidance issued centrally.

At present all authorities in Wales apart from Clwyd and Powys have formal joint commissioning arrangements. Details of the arrangements in each area are available from the authorities concerned.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total cost of preparing each NHS trust's application in each of the financial years since the passing of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the terms of reference and reporting chain of command of *(a)* the Welsh Office departmental member seconded to the Grant Thornton inquiry team set up pursuant to his statement to the House of 7 July, *Official Report,* columns 463-67, and *(b)* the Grant Thornton members of that team; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office secondee works direct to Mr. Geraint Davies, partner at Grant Thornton, and has no terms of reference and no remit distinct from those of the inquiry in which she is assisting. The arrangements for the inquiry are a matter for the agency.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what requests his legal department has received from the Grant Thornton inquiry team set up, pursuant to his statement to the House of 7 July, in relation to the status and structure of the Welsh Development Agency's joint ventures in urban regeneration with local authorities as *(a)* boards with executive powers and *(b)* consultative forums.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Prescribing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those family health services authorities where computerised recording of average proportions of generic and non-generic prescribing for each practice is carried out.

Mr. Redwood: Levels of generic prescribing are recorded for each practice by the prescription pricing services division of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority. This information is made available to every family health services authority in Wales.

Wales Energy Project

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency in relation to the follow-up action appropriate for the Wales Energy Project completed in March 1993.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Child Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding has been allocated to each training and enterprise council in Wales from the out-of-school child care network; how much has been committed already; and if he will list the projects to which funds have already been committed.

Mr. Redwood: The budget for 1994–95 for the out-of-school child care grant initiative in Wales has been allocated to training and enterprise councils as follows:

Gwent	£135,054
Mid Glamorgan	£135,054
South Glamorgan	£135,054
West Wales	£133,395
Powys	£ 93,350
North West Wales	£ 84,150
North East Wales	£ 84,150

TECs have committed funding to the following projects beginning in 1994–95:

Gwent

Magor and Undy After School Club
Monmouth Holiday Club
Northern Telecom Holiday Club

Mid Glamorgan

Hendredenny After School Club
Creigau After School Club
Bridgend College
Menter Taf Elai (Rhydyfelin)
Menter Taf Elai (Llanhari)
Bridgend & District NHS Trust
Ogmore Valley Childcare Club

South Glamorgan

Allensbank Primary School
South Glamorgan Community Education Services
Penarth Community Education Service (Before-school)
Penarth Community Education Service (After-school)
Barry Holiday Playcare Scheme
Llanrumney East End Kids Club
Whitchurch "Out of School" Association

West Wales

The Kid Care Club
Llangumor School
St. Pauls
Melthrinfa Mair - Aberystwyth

Powys

School's Out - Talgarth
Maldwyn Nursery and Family Centre - Newtown
Kool for Kids - Llanidloes

N W Wales

Beach Play Club - Barmouth
Kidz Klub - Colwyn Bay
Bangor University Students Union

N E Wales

Hawarden Infants
Clych Meithrin
Lilliput Denbigh
Clwyd County Council

The total committed to these projects and other supporting development work as at 18 October 1994 is £592,490. The balance provides cover for other projects which will begin during the remainder of the financial year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Freedom Food

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee if the Catering Committee will require the Refreshment Department to ensure that as far as possible all meat and egg products served in the canteens and restaurant of the House have the RSPCA Freedom Food mark.

Mr. Shepherd: This is a matter for the director of catering services. I shall ask her to write to the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the value of the maintenance payments which have been received and held by the Child Support Agency; and for how many days on average such payments have been held;

(2) what plans he has to improve the performance of the Child Support Agency in passing on maintenance payments it receives to parents with care;

(3) what is the target time by which the Child Support Agency is expected to pass on maintenance payments received from parents without care responsibility to those with care;

(4) in how many cases maintenance payments received by the Child Support Agency have not been passed on to the parent with care after seven days; and what percentage of cases this represents.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chart to Mr. Clive Betts, dated 19 October 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the length of time taken to pass maintenance payments received by the Child Support Agency to parents with care.

To the end of July 1994, the Agency had collected about £30 million in maintenance payments arising from Child Support Agency assessments.

Straightforward cases that generally do not involve benefit payments are likely to be processed in a matter of days. However, in cases where income support is involved benefit details have to be checked with the benefits Agency and it has taken, on average, around ten weeks to process these payments. We recognise that this is unacceptable and have already introduced improved procedures to speed up the process.

At the end of August 1994, we estimate that there were some 9,000 cases where child maintenance had been paid to the Agency, but some or all of the maintenance had not been forwarded to either the parent with care, or the Secretary of State. To breakdown that figure to show the number over seven days old and the number involving parents with care only, would incur disproportionate cost. This total figure represented less than 4 per cent. of the total number of live cases.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many parents with care have waited *(a)* one month, *(b)* two months, *(c)* three months, *(d)* six months and *(e)* one year since the Child Support Act 1991 came into force to receive their first maintenance payment through the Child Support Agency from the date of first application; and what percentage of applications each group represents;

(2) how many parents with care have currently been waiting *(a)* one month, *(b)* two months, *(c)* three months, *(d)* six months and *(e)* one year to receive the first maintenance payment through the Child Support Agency from the date of first application; and what percentage of applications each group represents.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Clive Betts, dated 19 October 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security on outstanding claims for child maintenance.

Information in the format you have requested is not available. However information is available as follows:

Age of Cases Outstanding as at 31 August 1994

		Per cent.
Over 13 weeks old	403,187	79 per cent.
Over 26 weeks old	346,135	68 per cent.
Over 52 weeks old	Figures not yet available	Figures not yet available

Time taken to clear cases between 1 April and 31 August 1994

	per cent.
40 days or less	37
More than 40 days and up to 100 days	15
More than 100 days	48

Vaccine Damage

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in respect of payments under the vaccine damage payment scheme, in each year since 1987 *(a)* how many claims were withdrawn, *(b)* how many claimants were under two years of age, *(c)* how many claimants were disabled to less than 80 per cent. due to vaccination, *(d)* in how many cases claimants' disablement was not due to vaccination and *(e)* in how many other cases section 2 conditions were not fulfilled; and what were the reasons why claims were withdrawn.

Mr. Hague: *(a)* None prior to the vaccine damage tribunal stage. Claims withdrawn at the tribunal stage are in the table.

Year	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	[1]*1994*
No.	7	3	4	—	1	—	—	2

(b) to *(d)* The information is in the table.

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	[1]*1994*
(b)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(c)[1]	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
(d)[1]	32	10	20	23	21	17	31	21

(e) The information is in the table.

Disallowances under Section 2(1), VDP Act 1979

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*[2]1994*
S.2(1)(a)(i)	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
S.2(1)(a)(ii)	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	—
S.2(1)(a)(iii)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
S.2(1)(b)	4	2	4	2	—	—	5	—
S.2(1)(c)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

With reference to claims withdrawn, I would refer the honourable Member to my answer at *(a).*

[1] The figures exclude those where causation has not been fully investigated owing to the claimant's disability falling substantially short of 80 per cent.

[2] Correct at 13 October 1994.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients there were of rent allowance housing benefit in *(a)* housing association properties and *(b)* other private rented properties at 31 March 1992, 31 March 1993 and 31 March 1994; what was the average rent of each of these properties; and what was the average rent allowance being paid for each of these.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information is set out in the table:

	Recipients (thousands)		*Average weekly eligible rent*		*Average weekly rent allowance*	
	Housing associations tenants	*Other private tenants*	*Housing associations tenants*	*Other private tenants*	*Housing associations tenants*	*Other private tenants*
May 1992	340	952	£35·54	£43·91	£32·24	£40·68
May 1993	412	1,068	£39·88	£49·86	£35·75	£46·80
May 1994	508	1,126	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Figures are for 31 May as no counts are taken on 31 March.

Information relates to eligible rent for Housing Benefit as actual rents paid are not available.

Average eligible rents and average rent allowances figures apply to end of May 1992 and 1993.

May 1994 figures are not yet available.

Source:

Housing Benefit Management Information System.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total housing benefit paid in respect of *(a)* housing association properties and *(b)* other private rented properties in the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94; and what are the predicted figures for each of these for 1994–95.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information is:

Rent Allowance Expenditure in Great Britain	*£million*
1992–93	3,257
1993–94 estimated out-turn	3,817
1994–95 plans	4,320

Source:

DSS Department Report 1994.tnh2 Seperate information on the amount of Housing Benefit paid to housing association tenants is not available.

War Pensions

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost to *(a)* all English local authorities and *(b)* London boroughs of disregarding war widows and war disablement pensions for the purpose of housing benefit and community charge or council tax benefit in each year since 1988.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information relating to the cost to local authorities of their own disregard scheme, compiled from information provided by local authorities for the financial years from 1988–89 to 1992–93, has been placed in the Library.

Council Tax

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households receive council tax rebates in each region of Scotland.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information is set out in the table:

Scottish Regions and Islands	*Council Tax Benefit caseloads May 1994*
Borders	8,800
Central	35,800
Dumfries and Galloway	13,600
Fife	45,100
Grampian	33,900
Highland[1]	17,700
Lothian	60,800
Strathclyde[2]	322,200
Tayside	40,400
Regions Total	578,300
Islands Councils	5,900
Scotland Total	584,200

[1] estimated

[2] provisional (October 1994 figure)

The information relates to bnenefit units rather than households, a benefit unit may be a couple or a single person.

Source:

Council Tax benefit Management Information System.

Strathclyde—provided direct by region.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of applicants awarded benefit for PD D12 chronic bronchitis and emphysema in each 10 per cent. band between 14 per cent. and 100 per cent. for the period 13 September 1993 to 13 September 1994.

Mr. Hague: The full information requested is not available. The available information is in the table.

Chronic bronchitis and/or emphysema as at 11 September 1994. Awards of Benefit for PD D12.

14–24 per cent.	442
25–34 per cent.	634
35 per cent. and over	3,393

NB

A number of applications received up to 11 September 1994 are still being processed.

Based on 100 per cent. count but subject to amendment.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of applications for benefit for PD D12 chronic bronchitis and emphysema broken down by region between 13 September 1993 and 13 September 1994.

Mr. Hague: Information is not available by region. The available information is shown in the table and relates to applications received by 11 September 1994.

Applications for benefit in respect of chronic bronchitis and emphysema (PD D12) by area directorate

Area	*Claims*
South	
Anglia	25
Chilterns	22
South East	470
West Country	144
Wales and Central England	
East Midlands	5,663
Greater Manchester	326
Lancashire and Cumbria	2,252
Merseyside	495
Midlands South West	648
Wales	9,339
West Mercia	3,658
Scotland and North	
East Scotland	2,391
Glasgow	240
North and West Yorkshire	2,651
North, Central and West Scotland	1,893
South Yorkshire and Humberside	6,491
Tyne Tees	7,119
Total	43,827

Based on 100 per cent. count but subject to amendment.

Prisoners (Housing Benefit)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many prisoners are currently in receipt of housing benefit; and what is the cost of this as a proportion of *(a)* the overall housing benefit budget and *(b)* the overall social security budget;

(2) if he will give figures, in real cash terms, of the predicted savings his Department will make as a result of reducing prisoners' entitlement to housing benefit from 52 weeks to 13 weeks;

(3) how many prisoners over the last five-year period for which figures are available have had their entitlement to housing benefit renewed for a further 52 weeks following a home visit.

Mr. Roger Evans: No information is collected on the amount of housing benefit paid to prisoners, the number of prisoners in receipt of housing benefit, or the impact of home visits on prisoners' benefit. However, we estimate that there could be up to 10,000 single prisoners in receipt of housing benefit in any one year at a cost of up to £10 million.

This represents up to 0·1 per cent. of the housing benefit budget, and up to 0·01 per cent. of the total social security budget. The majority of this cost is expected to be recouped through reducing prisoners' benefit entitlement to 13 weeks.

Source: Prison Statistics England and Wales 1991 CM. 2157

Chief Adjudication Officer

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the 10th annual report of the Chief Adjudication Officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: The report is being published today. The report's findings point to improvements in the quality of adjudication in the Benefits Agency, notably in the income support area. Standards within the Employment Service also showed some improvement.

The Benefits Agency and Employment Service are committed to better standards of adjudication as illustrated by the increased emphasis on quality in agency business plans for 1994–95. Both the CAO and I look forward to progress in coming years.

The report contains six recommendations to build on the progress which the agencies have made in improving adjudication standards.

These recommendations are being considered and there will be a formal response in due course.

TRANSPORT

Shipping

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many ships in 1993 flying foreign flags *(a)* visited United Kingdom ports, *(b)* were inspected and *(c)* were detained.

Mr. Norris: In 1993, 6,540 individual ships flying foreign flags visited United Kingdom ports; 2,271 were inspected and 174 were detained.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what surveys of garbage reception facilities for ships using United Kingdom ports his Department is currently funding.

Mr. Norris: A comprehensive survey of reception facilities at United Kingdom ports has been carried out by the Marine Safety Agency. The data from that survey are being analysed. In addition an independent research project has been commissioned to assess the adequacy of these facilities.

Private Hire Vehicles

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to publish his proposals arising from his Department's review of taxis and private hire vehicle services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Member will be aware that in April the Transport Select Committee published volume I of its report on taxis and private hire vehicles—House of Commons Paper 239-I. We shall be replying to the Committee shortly.

Coaches

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received regarding the use of the outside lane of motorways by coaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell), on 17 October, *Official Report*, column *103*.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has as to the accident record involving coaches travelling in the outside lane of motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: In 1993 coaches were involved in 87 accidents on motorways resulting in 326 casualties. The lane occupied at the time is not known.

Plutonium Nitrate

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from the Atomic Energy Authority on the outcome of its review of the authority's 1984 report on the radiological consequences of the release into the sea of the contents of a plutonium nitrate package.

Mr. Norris: The Department has received an executive summary of the review which confirms the findings of the 1984 report.

Pelican Crossings

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to review departmental advice note TA 52/87, "Design Considerations for Pelican and Zebra Crossings" to relax the minimum PV_2 value necessary for the installation of a pelican crossing.

Mr. Norris: The numerical PV-squared criterion is purely advisory and highway authorities are free to decide whether to install pedestrian crossings on the roads for which they are responsible. The advice note emphasises the importance of taking local features into account in reaching a decision. The note is under review and we expect to replace it shortly with advice based on an examination of local factors and not relying on the numerical criterion.

British Rail Rule Book

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the chief inspecting officer of railways concerning the introduction of multiple separate publications to replace the single volume British Rail rule book; and if he will make a statement concerning changes in the distribution of the new publications compared to that for the single volume.

Mr. Watts: There have been no such consultations. However, the chief inspecting officer of railways is aware that Railtrack intends to re-publish the former British Rail rule book in a new format, divided into a number of separate publications. He has no objection to this proposal and shares Railtrack's opinion that it is potentially beneficial to safety.

Maritime False Alarms

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many false alarms have been registered in the past 12 months on the global maritime distress and safety systems; and what was the estimated cost of the false alarms.

Mr. Norris: During the year 1 October 1993 to 30 September 1994 HM Coastguard recorded a total of 956 false alerts within the global maritime distress and safety systems attributed to:

International Maritime Satellite (INMARSAT)	343
Satellite Aided Position Indicating Systems (COSPAS/SARSAT)	511
Medium Frequency Radio Digital Selective Calling (MFDSC)	102

The estimated cost to the Coastguard Agency based on an average of two man hours to deal with each false alert is £17,016 for the year 1 October 1993, to 30 September 1993.

Dumping at Sea

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many successful prosecutions have been mounted arising from the dumping of rubbish at sea in each of the last three years; and how many incidents were recorded in the same period.

Mr. Norris: In the past three years, there have been seven incidents of garbage dumping at sea reported to my Department's Marine Pollution Control Unit. Of these, two were referred for prosecution action. One case was found not guilty and the other is on-going. Further cases may have been brought by other authorities but records are not held centrally.

Airports

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the development of Redhill aerodrome fits into the long-term development of airports in the south-east in the context of the RUCATSE—runway capacity in the south-east group—report.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 July 1994]:* RUCATSE did not consider development of Redhill aerodrome as one of its options. The RUCATSE report noted that constraints could be imposed on Redhill, were a second runway to be developed at Gatwick.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in the numbers unemployed since 1990; and to which of the factors and reforms listed in section 5.1 and annex 2, "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation", Cmnd. 9474, he ascribes the change.

Mr. Oppenheim: There are two main measures of employment used in Great Britain: the "Workforce in Employment" which is based on a survey of employers, and the labour force survey, which is a survey of households. The "Workforce in Employment" estimates of the changes in full-time employment in Great Britain since 1984 are shown in the table:

	Males	*Females*
June 1984 to June 1990	+500,000	+834,000
June 1990 to June 1994	–1,683,000	–423,000
June 1984 to June 1994	–1,182,000	+412,000
The corresponding estimates based on the LFS are:		
Spring 1984 to Spring 1990	+811,000	+1,019,00
Spring 1990 to Summer 1994	–1,253,000	–359,000
Spring 1984 to Summer 1994	–442,000	+660,000

Note:
seasonally adjusted figures

There is currently some discrepancy between the two measures, and work is being done to ascertain the reasons for the differences.

The figures show how full-time employment moved during different stages in the economic cycle. However, a comparison of total employment at similar stages in the economic cycle is a broader indicator of Britain's recent employment record. The "Work force in employment" grew by around 1·5 million between peaks in the last cycle—1979 and 1990. This is the fastest rate of growth at least since the 1960s. The growth in the "Work force in employment" between the troughs in the last cycle—1983 to 1993—was of a similar order of magnitude. It is likely that the Government's policies, such as those in the White Paper cited above, contributed to this performance.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of unemployment in *(a)* the Liverpool, Riverside constituency and *(b)* Merseyside at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement on what measures are being taken to reduce these figures.

Mr. Oppenheim: The table gives the unadjusted claimant unemployed in the Liverpool, Riverside constituency and the county of Merseyside for September 1986, 1993 and 1994.

	Month	*Year*	*Total*
Merseyside			
	September	1986	140,472
	September	1993	96,516
	September	1994	87,814
Liverpool, Riverside			
	September	1986	11,652
	September	1993	7,458
	September	1994	6,973

The Government are committed to reducing unemployment by supporting the development of a more productive and competitive economy which will create better-paid and more secure jobs in the labour market.

Unemployed People

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the implications of the delay in negotiations with the European Union on existing training and support available to unemployed people.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that the Commission's failure to begin negotiations on the United Kingdom's objective 3 plan until the end of April led to serious problems for some training providers. I am pleased to say that thereafter negotiations on the United Kingdom's single programming document for objective 3, which accounts for most of the support for training unemployed people available from the Community, were undertaken intensively, and the document was formally agreed by the Commission at the beginning of August. Since then, the Department has been able to move quickly. Applications for European social fund grant in 1994 have now for the most part been approved, and the advances so far claimed have been paid. First priority in this process has been given to dealing with vulnerable projects from the voluntary sector.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in how many cases at industrial tribunals each Government Department has been represented in each of the past five years.

Mr. Oppenheim: I regret that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Public Bodies

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the non-departmental public bodies to which his Department makes appointments in the Greater London area, together with the total annual budget for each body and the number of appointments made or renewed in each of the last five years.

Miss Widdecombe: In the Greater London area, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is responsible for the appointment of lay members to the London (north) regional office of industrial tribunals and the London (south) regional office of industrial tribunals; and of chairmen and members to the London north and London south committees for the employment of people with disabilities.

It is not possible to breakdown the budget for these non-departmental public bodies. National figures for the industrial tribunals and CEPDs are available for the 1992–93 financial year in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Appointments and re-appointments to the industrial tribunals are made every three years, the last two such exercises having been carried out in 1989 and 1992. In 1989, a total of 46 new appointments and 277 re-appointments were made to industrial tribunals within the jurisdiction of the London (north) and London (south) regional offices. In 1992, there were 109 new appointments and 219 re-appointments.

The two London CEPDs each have an independent chairman and 13 members. The committees are reconstituted every three years when all appointments are considered afresh. The last reconstitution exercise was completed in March 1994. Running records of appointments including replacement members are not kept centrally and regional records do not go back as far as five years.

Soccer Players

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permit applications for professional soccer players have been made in each of the last 10 years; and how many granted in each year, specifying the nationality of the applicant in each case.

Mr. Oppenheim: The number of work permit applications, including those for extensions to existing permits, received by the Department for professional soccer players in each of the years for which this information is available is set out in the table. Information about the number of permits granted to professional soccer players and their nationality is not available.

Year	*Number Of Applications*
1989	9
1990	23
1991	32
1992	30
1993	35
1994	[1]22

[1] To date.

National Insurance Credits

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of persons who are currently in receipt of class 1 national insurance credits only, during unemployment, in each unemployment benefit office in Greater Manchester.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Mr. Terry Lewis, dated 20 October 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the total number of persons, who are currently in receipt of Class 1 National Insurance credits only, during unemployment, in each unemployment benefit office in Greater Manchester.

The information you have requested is not fully available. However the attached table gives the number of persons within each office in Greater Manchester, who were registered as unemployed and receiving neither unemployment benefit nor Income Support on 12 May. The vast majority, but not all, of these persons will have been receiving Class 1 National Insurance credits only. More recent data can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Table to show the number of persons not in receipt of unemployment benefit nor income support, during unemployment, in each benefit office in Greater Manchester on Thursday 12 May 1994

Office	*Number (See note below)*
Altrincham	509
Hyde	325
Marple	142
Stockport A	330
Wythenshawe	299
Stockport B	332
Stockport C	309
Rusholme	190
Rochdale	490
Ashton-in-Makerfield	157
Ashton-under-Lyne	261
Atherton & Tyldesley	160
Bolton A	200
Bury A	422
Bolton B	284
Bolton C	268
Denton	187
Eccles	187
Failsworth	256
Didsbury	365
Stretford B	527
Farnworth	127
Heywood	211
Horwich	123
Irlam	71
Leigh	318
Levenshulme	239
Little Borough	102
Middleton	155
Newton Heath	304
Oldham B	700
Swinton	172
Prestwich	335
Radcliffe	115
Manchester C	179
Salford A	347
Hindley	109
Worsley	198
West Houghton	90
Wigan A	585
Wigan B	257

Note:
The vast majority of these persons will have been in receipt of a Class 1 National Insurance credit at the time.

National Insurance

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of persons nationally who are currently in receipt of class 1 national insurance credits only, during unemployment.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Terry Lewis, dated 20 October 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the total number of persons, nationally, who are currently in receipt of Class 1 National Insurance credits only, during unemployment.

The information you have requested is not fully available. However, the number of persons nationally, who were registered as unemployed and receiving neither unemployment benefit nor

Income Support on 12 May was 281,318. The vast majority, but not all, of these persons, would have been receiving Class 1 National Insurance credits only. More recent data can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

It must be noted that of these persons, 47,598 were yet to have their unemployment benefit entitlement established.

I hope this is helpful.

Training Projects

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the European Community objective 3 training allocations and amounts of assistance to be given to projects in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 18 October 1994]:* European social fund grants for objective 3 are allocated to projects through sector managers, operating at Great Britain level, though in some sectors separate allocations for Scotland have been made at the outset.

Since the process of considering and approving applications for 1994 is still going on it is impossible as yet to give figures for the overall levels of assistance under objective 3 which will go to projects in Scotland as a whole or to projects in Strathclyde or Inverclyde.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Safety

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evaluation he has made of the potential for deregulation in food safety.

Mrs. Browning: Our food law deregulation plan involves taking a critical look at all existing regulations. We have already said that this will not undermine proper requirements for food safety and consumer protection but there will undoubtedly be opportunities for updating or simplification.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many species are infected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mrs. Browning: BSE is, by definition, a disease of cattle. Spongiform encephalopathies have also been diagnosed in other animal species in Great Britain and elsewhere and in three of them—cats, nyala and greater kudo—strain typing has indicated a possible common origin with BSE.

Bovine Immune Deficiency Virus

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had recently on bovine immune deficiency virus.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is undertaking into the bovine immune deficiency virus.

Mrs. Browning: Representations have been received from Members of this House and a farmer in Cheshire whose herd is being investigated. Studies have been commissioned at the Central Veterinary Laboratory on the inactivation of BIV in milk by pasteurisation, and further research is under way at the Institute of Animal Health.

Beef

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the export of beef to other members of the European Union.

Mr. Waldgrave: The Government have worked hard to enable our beef exports to continue since the new European Union trade rules on BSE were introduced in July.

Bovine Welfare

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the welfare of bovines.

Mrs. Browning: The welfare of bovines is protected on the farm by regulations and codes of recommendation made under the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 and in transit by the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992.

The Farm Animal Welfare Council, which advises Ministers on the welfare of all farm animals, is studying the on-farm welfare of dairy cows, and will report in due course.

Set-aside Land

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further plans he has to improve the use of set-aside land.

Mr. Jack: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) earlier, we want to improve environmental benefits from set-aside, and to develop alternative non-food crops which can be grown on set-aside land.

Animal Transportation

20. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what agreement has been reached with other European Union countries about the transportation of live animals.

Mrs. Browning: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff).

21. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he is making in promoting the consumption of speciality foods.

Mrs. Browning: We fully support speciality food and drink producers in their efforts to sell more of their products at home and abroad. The Department provides help through Food From Britain for groups of these producers aimed at improving their marketing. I intend myself to take every opportunity of demonstrating my close interest in the success of this dynamic sector of the food industry whose products are of such high quality, and I shall be visiting one of the regional groups next month.

Fur Farms

22. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on fur farming.

Mrs. Browning: Welfare conditions on fur farms are monitored regularly by the State Veterinary Service and we are seeking European Community legislation to set standards for all fur farms. Security standards for mink farms are set by the Mink Keeping Order 1992.

Oilseed Rape

23. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the use of set-aside land for the growing of oilseed rape, with a view to its conversion into bio-diesel fuel.

25. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the use of land set aside for the growing of oilseed rape with a view to its conversion into bio-diesel fuel.

Mr. Jack: Oilseed rape can be grown on land set aside under the arable area payments scheme, provided that it is processed into an approved non-food product. The approved non-food uses include the conversion of rapeseed oil into bio-diesel fuel.

Dioxin Contamination

24. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the farms in Bolsover, north Derbyshire, are now free from dioxin contamination.

Mrs. Browning: When the problem of dioxin contamination was first discovered, the Ministry undertook that it would monitor dioxins in the milk from farms in the Bolsover area for as long as was necessary. Further samples of cows' milk taken this July from these farms were found to contain dioxins at levels similar to those in samples taken last year. These results indicate that the Bolsover area remains largely free from unacceptable levels of dioxins, other than from the farm previously found to be the most heavily contaminated. This finding is not unexpected as dioxins are known to be very long lived. I have placed the full details of these latest findings in the Library.

Food Marketing

26. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to improve the marketing of agricultural produce domestically and abroad.

Mr. Waldegrave: The new marketing development scheme, launched on 15 June, provides £10 million-worth of assistance over the next three years to help develop new marketing ideas. Abroad, assistance to United Kingdom exporters is given by Food From Britain. Our export promotion division also helps the industry to identify new overseas markets.

Chemical Pollution

27. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to reduce chemical pollution arising from farmlands.

Mr. Jack: The Government operate an extensive programme of measures to control chemical pollution from farmland. Recent measures include the extension of the nitrate sensitive area scheme to protect a further 28 water sources; the proposed designation of 72 nitrate vulnerable zones in England and Wales where agricultural activities will be controlled; the issue and promotion of codes of good agricultural practice for the protection of air, soil and water from agricultural activities; a code of practice for the safe use of pesticides on farms and holdings; and a £10 million research and development programme. In addition we recently announced that in seven river catchments including Slapton Ley we will be carrying out an extensive promotion campaign to provide farm waste management plans aimed at avoiding water pollution.

British Food

28. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has further to promote British food.

Mr. Waldegrave: Food From Britain, which is partly funded by my Department, has a substantial programme of action in support of British food exporters which includes organising a strong British presence at overseas food trade fairs. My hon. Friend will be visiting the SIAL exhibition in Paris next week to demonstrate our continuing support for this export activity.

Sugar

29. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met other members of the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers to discuss the future of the sugar regime.

Mr. Jack: The future of the sugar regime was last discussed at the December 1993 Agriculture Council. At that meeting, it was agreed that the existing regime would be reviewed before 1 July 1995. Proposals from the Commission are expected shortly.

Badgers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food how many badgers were culled at the Highgrove estate, Tetbury, in each month since November 1993; and how many of those badgers culled were infected with tuberculosis.

Mrs. Browning: A total of 15 badgers were culled on the Highgrove estate in a badger removal operation which started on 5 April and finished on 26 July this year. Of these, three were taken in April and 12 were taken in July. All were negative for M. bovis.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what grounds licences to kill badgers on the Highgrove estate were issued in mid-August 1994; how many badgers were killed; and how many were found to have bovine tuberculosis.

Mrs. Browning: A detailed epidemiological investigation by Ministry veterinary staff attributed the confirmed cattle TB herd breakdown which occurred on the Highgrove estate in November 1993, to infection by badgers. The results of the badger removal operation that followed were given in my answer to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 20 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *334*.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many badgers were killed under licence in 1993 and 1994 to date; and how many were found to have bovine tuberculosis.

Mrs. Browning: A total of 1,094 badgers were trapped and killed in Ministry badger removal operations in 1993. Of these, 302 were positive for M. bovis. So far in 1994, a total of 1,448 badgers have been trapped and killed in Ministry badger removal operations. Of these, 257 were positive for M. bovis; 460 results are pending.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food what is the cumulative total of badgers killed arising from efforts to eradicate bovine tuberculosis in British cattle since 1964.

Mrs. Browning: The cumulative total of badgers killed in Ministry badger removal operations since 1974, when controls began, is 15,443. It is not known how many badgers died underground when gassing was used by the Ministry as a means of badger control between 1975 and 1982.

Rabbits

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy that viral haemorrhagic disease will not be released into the countryside as a wild rabbit control method.

Mrs. Browning: The deliberate introduction and spread of the virus causing viral haemorrhagic disease in rabbits is prohibited by the Specified Animal Pathogens Order 1993. The Ministry has no plans to amend this legislation.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the prevalence and use of mobile abattoirs.

Mrs. Browning: At present there are no mobile abattoirs in use in England. All slaughterhouses, including mobile abattoirs, must meet the structural and hygiene standards set out in the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 and have to be licensed by the appropriate Agriculture Department.

Livestock Transport

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm animals were identified as being unfit to travel in 1993.

Mrs. Browning: Figures for 1993 are not available. In Great Britain between March and August 1994, the number of farm animals for export rejected by veterinary inspectors as unfit to travel was 10,867.

Birds (Illegal Import)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the illegal import of birds from non-EU countries into the United Kingdom through other EU countries.

Mrs. Browning: In the absence of harmonised detailed animal health rules for the quarantine of captive birds imported into the Community from third countries, and in the light of a number of other factors including the presence of Newcastle disease in several member states, the Government decided in December 1993 to maintain, temporarily, the requirement that all captive birds imported in the United Kingdom, whether directly from a third country, or from or through another member state, undergo a period of at least 35 days quarantine in approved quarantine premises. The only exception to this requirement are those birds imported from other member states which are accompanied by official veterinary certification confirming, among other things, that the birds in question have been resident in a member state for a period of least 35 days or, if imported into the Community from a third country, have undergone an equivalent period of quarantine before import into the United Kingdom.

The Ministry is concerned about reports of illegal imports of birds from third countries into the United Kingdom via other member states which are intended to evade quarantine. Such imports pose a serious disease risk to the UK poultry industry and to the domestic captive bird population. Where information about illegal importations is sufficiently precise the Ministry's investigation branch undertakes formal investigations, in liaison with local authorities, who are responsible for the enforcement of the relevant import legislation. A number of investigations are currently under way.

Meat and Livestock Commission Levy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes he proposes to the way in which Meat and Livestock Commission levy is collected.

Mr. Jack: A review of the MLC was published on 1 March and included a recommendation that the levy should be collected at slaughter only. Comments on the review have now been received from the industry and my right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly.

Milk

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate has been made of the impact of Milk Marque's proposals upon *(a)* employment in the milk processing industry, *(b)* the level of imports of dairy products and *(c)* the level of investment by dairy companies.

Mr. Jack: My Department has not made any such estimates.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate has been made of the impact of Milk Marque's pricing regime upon *(a)* the price of liquid milk, *(b)* the price of dairy products, *(c)* the level of employment in the milk processing industry, *(d)* the level of investment in the dairy industry and *(e)* the output of butter and cheese.

Mr. Jack: It is estimated that the effect of Milk Marque's pricing regime might be to add up to $\frac{1}{2}$p per pint to the price of milk sold for liquid consumption. This estimate takes no account of the beneficial effort of abolishing the present milk marketing board levy of over $1\frac{1}{2}$ p per pint on direct sales by producer/retailers. No estimates have been prepared by my Department in respect of the other matters mentioned.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what his Department's priorities are concerning the promotion of animal welfare; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: The Department has the stated aim of protecting farm animals by encouraging high welfare standards. Every opportunity is taken to further this aim.

Learning Resources

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many learning resource packs of the "Food—A Fact of Life" programme have been sold since the launch of the initiative in June 1991.

Mrs. Browning: Sales to date of complete packs of "Food—A Fact of Life" total 3,174. This figure includes a small number of complimentary packs presented to schools and advisers who participated in the various development trials.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many learning resource packs of the "Food—A Fact of Life" programme have been sold to schools for *(a)* stage 1 and *(b)* stage 2.

Mrs. Browning: Sales to date of complete packs of "Food—A Fact of Life" total *(a)* 2,247 for stage 1 and *(b)* 927 for stage 2. These figures include a small number of complimentary packs presented to schools and advisers who participated in the various development trials.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much income has been generated from the sales of learning resource packs of the "Food—A Fact of Life" programme; and how the income from these sales is to be spent.

Mrs. Browning: The gross receipts received from sales of packs of "Food—A Fact of Life" up to 1 October 1994 total £115,846. All this money has been reinvested in the programme.

SCOTLAND

Nursing and Midwifery

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received opposing his plans for the provision of nursing and midwifery education in Scotland; if he will make it his policy that nursing training in the borders will not be centralised to the Lothian region; and what savings are expected to be made from the proposed arrangements.

Mr. Lang: My announcement on 16 May 1994 that the management executive of the NHS in Scotland would be tendering with tertiary education for the provision of pre-registration nursing and midwifery education and training has been generally welcomed. Representations received have related to concerns about the future locality of this training and the implications for staff in the existing colleges of nursing and midwifery. The future locality of the training currently delivered at the Scottish Borders college of nursing and midwifery and, indeed, the numbers of its staff to transfer to the education sector, cannot be predicted since this must await the outcome of the tendering process which is now due to be completed in July 1995. Even where future training is to be delivered in centres different from the current provision, the management executive will ensure that a good geographical spread of clinical placements—that is the practical element of the courses—still exists for each branch of training of nursing. Since the contracts will not be awarded solely on cost grounds, the contracting process is unlikely to result in substantial savings, but I believe that costs can be contained within the existing provision.

Dementia

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he plans to take to improve arrangements for consultation between health boards and local authorities for future provision of long-stay care for people with dementia.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State has no immediate plans to adjust the firmly established procedures that currently exist between health boards and local authorities for co-operation in the planning and delivery of services for all vulnerable client groups.

Earnings

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of *(a)* Highland, *(b)* Borders, *(c)* Dumfries and Galloway, *(d)* Orkney, *(e)* Shetland and *(f)* Western Isles, the earnings of full-time workers on adult rates of pay broken down by *(i)* male manual, *(ii)* male non-manual, *(iii)* all males, *(iv)* female manual, *(v)* female non-manual, *(vi)* all females and *(vii)* all workers.

Mr Stewart: The information requested, taken from the 1993 "New Earnings Survey", is given in the table:

Average gross weekly earnings (£)[1] April 1993

All full-time employees	*Male full-time employees All*	*Female full-time employees Manual*	*Non-Manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-Manual*
272·1	304·2	245·8	373·5	217·5	162·0	236·6

[1] For full-time employees on adult rates, whose pay was unaffected by absence.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of *(a)* Highland, *(b)* Borders, *(c)* Dumfries and Galloway, *(d)* Orkney, *(e)* Shetland and *(f)* Western Isles, the distribution of earnings for those earning under (i) £120, (ii) £150 and (iii) £160; what is (x) the point below which 10 per cent. of earners fall and (y) the point which 10 per cent. of earners exceed, broken down by (i) male manual, (ii) male non-manual, (iii) all males, (iv) female manual, (v) female non-manual, (vi) all females and (vii) all workers in total and by the standard industrial classifications.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested, taken from the 1993 "New Earnings Survey", is given in the table. Categories requested that are not present have not met the reliability criteria—sample of at least 50 and a standard error no higher than 5 per cent.

All employees[1] *April 1993*

	Percentage of employees with average gross weekly earnings *<£120*	 *<£150*	 *<£160*	*Lowest decile* *£*	*Highest decile* *£*
Divisions 0-9 (all employees)					
male					
manual	4·0	10·1	15·3	149·8	349·5
non-manual	6·5	10·9	13·7	147·3	553·5
all	5·2	10·5	14·5	148·8	488·0
female					
manual	64·3	77·9	81·4	—	203·3
non-manual	25·9	39·1	42·9	62·0	371·0
all	39·3	52·6	56·3	48·3	320·4
all employees	21·5	30·7	34·5	67·2	432·4
Division 4 (Other manufacturing industries)					
male					
manual	—	8·9	12·5	151·8	230·0
Division 5 (Construction)					
male					
manual	—	—	13·0	156·9	365·0
all	—	—	10·6	158·2	402·2
all employees	4·2	8·5	15·5	151·7	383·2
Division 6 (Distribution, hotels and catering; repairs)					
male					
all	6·1	19·4	25·5	130·8	367·0
all employees	37·4	54·6	58·8	55·5	284·2
Division 7 (Transport and Communication)					
male					
manual	5·8	11·5	13·5	137·7	316·7
Division 9 (Other Services)					
female					
non-manual	14·7	19·0	23·4	86·9	404·2
all	35·7	40·4	44·1	—	389·6
all employees	28·7	33·1	36·2	48·1	439·1

[1] All employees on adult rates, whose pay was unaffected by absence.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of *(a)* Highland, *(b)* Borders, *(c)* Dumfries and Galloway, *(d)* Orkney, *(e)* Shetland and *(f)* Western Isles, the distribution of gross hourly earnings for female part-time workers, giving the percentage of female part-time workers with hourly earnings less than (i) £3, (ii) £3·20, (iii) £3·60, (iv) £4, (v) £4·20, (x) in total and (y) broken down by the standard industrial classifications.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available. No category met the reliability criteria of the "New Earnings Survey"—sample of at least 50 and a standard error no higher than 5 per cent.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of *(a)* Highland, *(b)* Borders, *(c)* Dumfries and Galloway, *(d)* Orkney, *(e)* Shetland and *(f)* Western Isles, the figures for female part-time workers (i) average gross weekly earnings, (ii) average weekly hours, (iii) average gross hourly earnings, (iv) median gross hourly earnings (v) lowest decile of gross hourly earnings and (vi) the highest decile of gross hourly earnings (x) in total and (y) broken down by the standard industrial classifications.

Mr. Stewart: The average gross weekly earnings of female part-time employees on adult rates, whose pay was unaffected by absence, at April 1993 was £85·70. The remaining categories did not meet the reliability criteria of the "New Earnings Survey"—sample of at least 50 and a standard error no higher than 5 per cent.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of *(a)* Highland, *(b)* Borders, *(c)* Dumfries and Galloway, *(d)* Orkney, *(e)* Shetland and *(f)* Western Isles (i) average earnings, (ii) median earnings, (iii) average hours including overtime and (iv) overtime hours, broken down by the standard industrial classifications into (x) males, (y) females and (z) all workers;

(2) if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of *(a)* Highland, *(b)* Borders, *(c)* Dumfries and Galloway, *(d)* Orkney, *(e)* Shetland and *(f)* Western Isles (i) average earnings, (ii) median earnings, (iii) average hours including overtime and (iv) overtime hours.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested, taken from the 1993 "New Earnings Survey", is given in the table. Categories requested that are not present have not met the reliability criteria—sample of at least 50 and a standard error no higher than 5 per cent.

All employees[1] *April 1993*

	Average earnings (£)	*Median earnings (£)*	*Ave hours per week including overtime*	*Ave overtime hours per week*
Divisions 0–9 (all employees)				
male	296·2	265·5	41·3	3·5
female	165·9	142·6	30·9	0·8
all	233·8	203·6	36·5	2·2
Division 5 (Construction)				
male	255·8	236·9	45·6	6·9
all	245·6	233·7	44·4	6·5
Division 6 (Distribution, hotels and catering; repairs)				
male	228·1	207·4	41·3	2·2
all	161·9	138·7	34·5	1·3
Division 9 (Other services)				
female	189·5	181·9	29·3	0·6
all	225·5	199·1	21·2	1·0

[1] All employees on adult rates, whose pay was unaffected by absence.

Barlinnie Special Unit

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the special unit at Barlinnie was set up; what is its cost to date; and how many convicts have been referred to date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E.W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E.W. Frizzell to Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, dated 20 October 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the Barlinnie Special Unit. You asked when the Unit was set up; what is its cost to date; and how many convicts have been referred to date.

The Barlinnie Special Unit was opened on 5 February 1973 and, to date, 36 prisoners have been located there.

Until recently all the Unit's costs were incorporated with those of Barlinnie Prison and cannot be identified separately, and even now, some cost, for example on repairs, food and medical services, are not differentiated from the main prison. However,you may be interested to know that the Unit's staffing costs, which represent the largest part of the costs of any penal establishment in the last 3 years were £303,000 in 1991–92, £331,000 in 1992–93 and £383,000 in 1993–94.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information amongst visually impaired people.

Mr. Lang: My Department has spent a total of £26,000 in the last three years in the production of public information material in Braille and on audio tape. Details of the availability of this material are publicised through the Scottish Braille Press at no cost to my Department.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Lang: The following Scottish Office publications are currently available both in Braille and tape:

The Patient's Charter in Scotland
The Parent's Charter in Scotland
The Justice Charter for Scotland
The Tenant's Charter in Scotland
Council Tax — A Guide to the New Tax for Local Government in Scotland

"A Parents' Guide to Special Educational Needs" is also available in Braille.

Details of this material are publicised by the Scottish Braille Press, in liaison with the Scottish Office, through information releases to individual users and related organisations.

Sheep

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the numbers and causes of death of sheep in Scotland *(a)* at the latest available date, *(b)* 10 years ago and *(c)* 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Information in the form requested is not held centrally.

Waste Management

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the appropriateness of the Waste Management Licensing (Fees and Charges) Regulations in respect of small local disposal regimes in remoter rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Since the consultation paper on fees and charges for waste management licensing was published in August 1992 representations have been received from 11 individuals and organisations about fees and charges for small rural landfill sites. I also met the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) in July last year in connection with such sites in Berwickshire.

In setting fees and charges for licences the Government fixed a concessionary subsistence charge level of £650 per annum for the smallest sites which take inert waste.

Mountain Rescue

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department has received a report from the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland in respect of the project funded by his Department earlier this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hector Monro: Yes. The report was released on 6 May at the mountain safety seminar in Dunblane, which I addressed. Its findings are being studied carefully by all parties involved with mountain safety, including the Scottish Mountain Safety Group. The proceedings of the Dunblane seminar will be published within the next month or so.

In light of the issues raised in the report and discussed at the seminar, a number of initiatives have been undertaken, including the installation of information and warning signs at the start of routes and the development of a new training course on navigational skills. Consideration is also being given to the introduction of warning posts at particularly dangerous areas on certain routes, to the potential benefits of electronic aids and to possible areas for further research.

Health Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those areas which have developed joint commissioning operations for the planning and purchasing of primary and secondary health care in their area; and what are the principal organisational models used.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland, health boards are, and always have been, responsible for both primary — family health services — and secondary — hospital and community health services. In their new, enhanced role as purchasers of health services they have retained responsibility for commissioning both types of service. There has therefore been no need to develop joint commissioning operations as in England.

Gourock Ropeworks

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he had held with Historic Scotland and the Renfrewshire Enterprise Company concerning the Gourock ropeworks of Port Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 October 1994]:* Historic Scotland is an executive agency with the Scottish Office and reports to my right hon. Friend on built heritage matters. Historic Scotland has remained in close touch with Inverclyde district council, the relevant planning authority, since the company which owned the Gourock ropeworks building went into receivership earlier this year. Historic Scotland has therefore been aware of the interest by a housing company in converting the listed building to residential use.

Mr right hon. Friend has not had any recent discussions with Renfrewshire Enterprise on the future of the ropeworks building. However, Renfrewshire Enterprise has an interest in the future of the building because of its prominent location within the enterprise zone. Renfrewshire Enterprise is providing funds to the housing company for a feasibility study.

I understand that the study has been completed and the conclusions are that, while the building is suited for conversion and redevelopment for residential accommodation, and such a scheme would be practical and a worthwhile re-use of this important category A listed building, a substantial funding gap remains. It will be for each of the agencies involved to consider whether it would be appropriate for them to make a contribution.

I understand that Inverclyde district council officials are to arrange a meeting of all concerned.

Historic Buildings

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many buildings listed as of historical importance were cleared of such listing and demolished in each of the past 10 years in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many buildings of historical importance were renovated and at what cost in each of the past five years in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; how many of these were industrial buildings; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many buildings listed as being of special architectural or historical importance are located in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; how many of these have been or are the subject of grant aid from Historic Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 October 1994]:* The subjects of the questions relate to matters undertaken by Historic Scotland. I have asked its director and chief executive, Mr Graeme Munro, to write to the hon. Member.

The reply will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will be deposited in the Library of the House.

Letter from Graeme N. Munro to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 20 October 1994

You have tabled four Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Scotland for written answer on 18 October. Three of your Questions relate to operational matters undertaken by Historic Scotland and I have been asked to provide the information you are seeking. The terms of this letter will be reproduced in the Official Report and a copy of it will also be deposited in the Library of the House.

I shall answer each Question in the order in which it appears on the Order paper.

Question: How many buildings listed as of historical importance were cleared of such listing and demolished in each of the past 10 years in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole?

The decision by the Secretary of State to list a building is a recognition by him that the building satisfies the criteria for listing as being of special architectural or historic interest. A building does not lose the architectural or historic qualities which justified listing in the first place because someone wishes to alter or demolish it. Once a building is listed, formal consideration of works affecting its character, *including demolition*, is subject to listed building control requirements established by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972. Government policy on the demolition of listed buildings makes plain the practical considerations involved for a planning authority (and the Secretary of State) in assessing the case made by an applicant for the demolition of a listed building.

Planning authorities are required to notify to Historic Scotland, prior to the issue of consent, all non-delegated listed building and conservation area consent applications which they have resolved to approve, including all demolitions of listed buildings and of unlisted buildings within conservation areas. However, information is not readily available in the form in which you have requested it. Annex A shows—for Scotland, for Strathclyde and for Inverclyde—the annual totals of all categories of notified applications.

What the annual figures do not reveal is what happened to the notified applications. Historic Scotland aims to clear 95 per cent. of all notified applications within the statutory initial 28 day period for consideration. Of the remaining 5 per cent. extended for further consideration, most are cleared through negotiation and agreement. Only a small number of cases each year are called in for the Secretary of State's own decision, and of these a number over the 10 year period have been in respect of demolition. The number of cases called in for decision over the period was:

1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
3	3	5	1	4	10	6	8	8	5

of which the number of demolition applications granted consent were:

1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
2	—	—	—	—	3	1	1	1	1

In that period no demolition applications in Inverclyde District were called in for the Secretary of State's decision. However, it is more than likely that of the 140 notified cases in Inverclyde some were for demolition.

Deletions from statutory lists do occur as part of the maintenance of the lists. Deletions are required for a number of reasons, for example, fire, loss of original character for whatever reason, and demolition for public safety reasons.

Over the last 5 years, 3 deletions were required from the Inverclyde District list, 53 from the Strathclyde lists and 172 across Scotland.

Question: How many buildings of historical importance were renovated and at what cost in each of the past five years in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; how many of these were industrial buildings?

Question: How many buildings listed as being of special architectural or historical importance are located in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* as a whole; how many of these have been or are the subject of grant aid from Historic Scotland?

Again, we cannot answer these Questions precisely as asked but there are currently a total of 236 buildings in Inverclyde listed as being of special architectural or historic interest, 7,610 in Strathclyde and 40,654 in Scotland as a whole. We do not record particular types of listed buildings.

Annex B shows for each of the last five financial years the number of buildings of outstanding architectural or historic interest (or buildings in outstanding conservation areas) which have received grant for repairs under the historic buildings repair grant scheme administered by Historic Scotland. The Annex provides this information for Inverclyde, Strathclyde and Scotland; it shows the value of the grants awarded and the number of buildings which can be categorised as industrial.

I hope this information is helpful.

Listed Building Consent Statistics 1984–1993—Annex A

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*Total*
Inverclyde	10	12	20	15	21	11	17	11	8	15	140
Strathclyde	560	621	433	456	494	586	636	627	640	572	5,625
Scotland	1,724	1,925	1,800	2,022	1,782	1,943	1,989	1,995	2,092	2,189	19,461

Annex B

	Inverclyde	*Strathclyde*	*Scotland*
1989–90			
Number of buildings which have been the subject of grant	2	37	165
Value of grants awarded	£10,000	£2,719,550	£8,800,482
Number of the buildings that were industrial buildings	NIL	1	2
1990–91			
Number of buildings which have been the subject of grant	NIL	55	165
Value of grants awarded	NIL	£4,451,900	£11,349,704
Number of the buildings that were industrial buildings	NIL	1	4
1991–92			
Number of buildings which have been the subject of grant	NIL	38	149
Value of grants awarded	NIL	£4,440,734	£12,308,216
Number of the buildings that were industrial buildings	NIL	NIL	6
1992–93			
Number of buildings which have been the subject of grant	1	46	158
Value of grants awarded	£39,100	£3,142,127	£9,825,848
Number of the buildings that were industrial buildings	NIL	NIL	2

Annex B

	Inverclyde	*Strathclyde*	*Scotland*
1993–94			
Number of buildings which have been the subject of grant	4	61	202
Value of grants awarded	£399,100	£6,587,564	£14,613,653
Number of the buildings that were industrial buildings	NIL	2	5

DEFENCE

Equal Treatment Directive

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps *(a)* he has taken and *(b)* he intends to take to ensure that the armed forces comply with the equal treatment directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The armed forces are aware of the provisions of the equal treatment directive and are continuing to develop policies accordingly. It is the Government's intention to amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 in relation to its application to the armed forces as soon as a legislative opportunity arises.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people;

(2) if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Soames: While my Department's publications are not normally provided in alternative formats for visually impaired people, we would be happy to arrange for this on individual request. The overall cost to my Department is therefore low and could not be identified separately.

Queen Victoria School

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pupils attended the Queen Victoria school, Dunblane, in the summer term; and if he will give details of the ranks held by the parents serving in HM forces.

Mr. Soames: These matters are for the Queen Victoria school under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Brian Raine to Dr John Marek, dated 20 October 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your Question about the number of pupils attending Queen Victoria School in the Summer Term 1994 and Ranks held by parents serving in HM Forces.

The number of pupils who attended Queen Victoria School in the Summer Term 1994 was 250.

The parents of pupils are drawn from all three Services and the ranks held by them range from Private soldier to Major (or other Service equivalents). The majority of parents who are still serving, fall in the rank of Sergeant to Warrant Officer which are the ranks that regular servicemen or women would expect to achieve with children of an age eligible to attend the School. Children of Officers have only this year become eligible to attend the School in line with the practice at the Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover.

I hope this answers your question satisfactorily but if there is anything on which you wish me to elaborate please do not hesitate to contact me.

Party Conferences

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the costs to his Department arising from the annual conference of *(a)* the Liberal Democrats, *(b)* the Labour party and *(c)* the Conservative party.

Mr. Soames: In response to requests from the respective regional police authorities for each conference a small number of specialist military personnel were deployed to assist the police in searching the conference areas for explosive devices and on standby for potential bomb disposal tasks. No readily identifiable additional costs to the defence budget arose from these operations.

In addition, staff from private offices visited Bournemouth in order to deal with departmental work. Travel, subsistence and communication costs were incurred on defence votes.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich will be transferred or sold to Greenwich Healthcare Trust for national health service use;

(2) what offers he has received for the purchase of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich.

Mr. Soames: To date, my Department has received one offer for the purchase of Queen Elizabeth military hospital, from the Greenwich Healthcare Trust. As I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) on 19 October, *Official Report*, column 252, negotiations with the Greenwich Healthcare trust have been progressing well although a number of stages remain to be completed before any contract could be signed. In the meantime, however, we have received an expression of interest from a private consortium. Should this result in a formal offer, we would consider it.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 21 October 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the value of legal aid made available to Kevin and Ian Maxwell for the engagement of lawyers to represent and prepare their appearance before Select Committees of the House.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Legal aid is not available for legal representation before Select Committees of the House of Commons. Therefore, no payment was made from the legal aid fund to the lawyers acting on behalf of Kevin and Ian Maxwell regarding their appearance before the Social Services Select Committee in 1992.

ENVIRONMENT

War Memorial, County Hall

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why members of the Royal British Legion are being denied access to the war memorial in County hall, London SE1; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: My understanding is that the war memorial is located in the ambulatory that surrounds the former council chamber in County hall. The chamber and ambulatory are within the most historically sensitive area of County hall and will form part of the proposed conference centre which should be accessible to the public as development is completed over the coming year or two.

Replicas of the commemorative tablets to the London county council's dead of the two world wars have been installed in the London Fire Brigade headquarters on the Albert embankment, where, I understand, commemorative services to the fallen continue to be held.

However, as the riverside block of County hall is now privately owned by the Shirayama Corporation, I suggest that if any further information is required, it is in the best position to reassure the hon. Gentleman on the question of public access to the war memorial.

Elephants

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's estimate of the population of African elephants prior to the world ban on the trade in elephant products and the current population.

Sir Paul Beresford: The latest update of figures, prepared by the African Elephant database for the eighth meeting of the conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in Kyoto in 1992, reported an African elephant population of approximately 609,000 across the continent, with a range between 549,000 and 652,000. However, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources African elephant specialist group which now manage the AED, the quality of origin of those data is so varied that it would not be possible to establish population trends from comparisons with more up-to-date population estimates which it is preparing for the forthcoming CITES meeting in Florida. It also advises that due to the imprecision of current survey techniques, the true impacts of the ivory ban on elephant numbers might not be expected to show significant trends for a decade or more.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who organised the recent meeting in Botswana to consider the situation where trade in elephant products could be resumed; which countries attended the meeting; what was the agenda; who represented Her Majesty's Government; and what was the outcome.

Sir Paul Beresford: The United Kingdom organised the meeting on behalf of the European Union. Details of participants and the purpose of meeting were given in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment and Countryside to the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 20 July 1994 *Official Report*, columns *314–15*.

All the countries listed in that reply were represented with the exception of Congo, Gabon, Uganda and Zambia. The detailed agenda is included in a report of the meeting which is expected to be available shortly. The British high commissioner for Botswana and two officials from my Department represented the United Kingdom at the meeting, which succeeded in terms of improving dialogue between African elephant range states. A statement, agreed by the participants and issued at the close of the meeting, describes the outcome and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government will oppose the moves by the South African Government to downlist their elephant population from appendix I to appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Government have not yet decided their position on South Africa's proposal to be allowed to trade in elephant meat and hides but not ivory. We wish to take account of the views of range states and the report of the panel of experts established by CITES before reaching a conclusion. Maintaining the conservation status of the African elephant is our overriding concern and we will not therefore support any outcome which in our judgment puts this at risk.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the revival of illegal trade in elephant ivory should South Africa succeed in downlisting its elephant population from appendix I to appendix II of CITES.

Sir Paul Beresford: South Africa's proposal to CITES relates only to the possibility of international trade in elephant hide and meat, not ivory. Unfortunately an illegal trade in ivory continues, but there is no evidence currently available to my right hon. Friend to show that allowing a trade in hides from South Africa would affect the ivory position one way or the other. We are anxious, however, to learn the view of other Africa range states. The United Kingdom has tabled a resolution for the CITES meeting calling for greater effort and more international co-operation on the enforcement of wildlife sale controls. If, as we hope, this resolution leads to action, it should have a real impact on the illegal ivory trade.

Dioxins

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the report released by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in September on the dangers posed by dioxins; and what effect the findings of the report will have on his Department's policy on the incineration of *(a)* polychlorinated biphenyls and *(b)* other dioxin—contaminated wastes.

Mr. Atkins: The Government welcome the EPA's action in preparing this report, a substantial document of over 2,000 pages. It is still a preliminary draft, on which the EPA is inviting comments, and it will not be finalised until autumn 1995. We are considering all the implications of the report including any that there may be for the incineration of waste.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the statement made on 19 September to the 38th annual conference of the International Atomic Energy agencies, by the International Atomic Energy Agency's director-general, Dr. Blix, on the health risks of sea disposal of low level radioactive waste, is fully in accordance with the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Atkins: Yes.

Air Pollution

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many pollution warnings his Department has issued, broken down by category of pollutant and showing how many were incorrect, for each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: The Department provides regionalised air pollution level forecasts for ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide each day. The Department issues pollution warnings when the level of ozone, nitrogen dioxide or sulphur dioxide is forecast to be "very poor". For the breakdown of these figures, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Wednesday 19 October, *Official Report,* column *248.*

Before and during the episode this July, when ozone levels became "poor", the Department issued three press releases.

London Docklands

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects bylaws made under the powers contained in the London Docklands Development Corporation Act 1994 to be brought into effect.

Sir Paul Beresford: The London Docklands development corporation has submitted to the Department proposed byelaws to be made under the 1994 Act. Following final agreement on the wording of the laws, necessary statutory procedures, including public consultation, will have to be undertaken. I expect those procedures to be completed by the turn of the year and the byelaws to come into effect early next year.

Environmental Protection Act

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to implement the enhanced controls of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in respect of scrapyards and vehicle dismantlers.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer Thursday, 20 October 1994]:* The effect of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (commencement No.15) (Amendment) Order 1994 (S.I. 1994 No. 2487 (C.49) is to apply the waste management licensing provisions of part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to the recovery of scrap metal and the dismantling of waste motor vehicles on 1 January 1995.

Article 11 of the amended EC framework directive on waste provides that member states may exempt recovery activities from licensing where certain conditions are fulfilled. We intend to issue shortly a consultation paper on the provision of exemptions from licensing for the recovery of scrap metal and the dismantling of waste motor vehicles where these can be justified under the terms of article 11 of the directive.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

European Community Papers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council what consideration he has given to the House of Commons yellow demand form for printed papers of the European Community being made available to the public either in its existing form or a comparable one.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to adopt the hon. Gentleman's suggestion, which would duplicate a number of existing channels through which members of the public may obtain information of European Community documents, and the documents themselves.

SCOTLAND

Red Deer Commission

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to reach a decision on the Red Deer Commission's proposed amendments to the Deer (Scotland) Act 1959; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My Department has consulted a number of organisations about the Red Deer Commission's proposals for amendments to the Deer (Scotland) Act 1959 and is now considering their responses. A decision on those legislative proposals will be made in due course.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the prevalence and use of mobile abattoirs.

Sir Hector Monroe: While there was a trial operation of a mobile slaughtering facility on Skye in September 1993, no formal application for the appropriate licence under the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 has been submitted for such a facility.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many licensed *(a)* red meat and *(b)* poultry abattoirs there were in each of the last five years.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is given in the table.

[1]Year	[2]Number of Red Meat Abattoirs	Number of Poultry Abattoirs
1989	54	7
1990	51	7
1991	50	7
1992	48	8
1993	44	9

Notes:

[1] Prior to 1993, red meat slaughterhouses were registered with local authorities.

[2] Excludes abattoirs on the remote Scottish islands which operate for a short season each year and have a very low throughput when open. In 1993 there were 10 licensed abattoirs in this category.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Yemen

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with the Director-General of the British Council in relation to the cessation of Overseas Development Administration funding for the postgraduate English language diploma/MA programme funding at Sana'a university in the Yemen.

Mr. Baldry: None, but there is regular contact between the ODA and British Council officials, who were in close touch when it became necessary to withdraw the two advisers from Sana'a university.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in relation to the termination of United Kingdom Government funding to the Sana'a university professional English training programme to provide a postgraduate diploma/MA in English language studies.

Mr. Baldry: Several letters have been received on this matter. We withdrew our two advisers from Sana'a university, along with other aid personnel, at the outbreak of the civil war for security reasons. We continue to support the Sana'a university programme through our assistance to two Sana'a university lecturers currently studying in the UK.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each European country the levels of minimum pay and of unemployment for people *(a)* under 21 and *(b)* under 25 years.

Mr. Oppenheim: It is not possible to give details of the minimum pay of young people for each European country as the information is not held centrally. Equivalent information for people under 21 is unavailable. However, the following table shows the unemployment rates for people under 25 in European Union countries, with or without statutory minimum wages:

Countries with a statutory minimum wage		*Countries without a statutory minimum wage*	
	ILO under-25 year-old unemployment rate (August 1994) Per cent.		*ILO under-25 year-old unemployment rate (August 1994) Per cent.*
Belgium	19·7	Denmark	10·9 (June)
France	23·2	Western Germany	5·1
Greece	not available	Ireland	24·9
Luxembourg	7·6	Italy	32·0
Netherlands	9·7 (June)	United Kingdom	13·2
Portugal	10·9		
Spain	35·1	European Union	19·4

TRANSPORT

Buses

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what valuation his Department placed on each of the four bus garages at Catford, Plumstead, Orpington and Bromley in the Selkent area before their sale to Stagecoach Ltd; what safeguards exists to prevent these facilities being sold by the new owner; and what additional return the public can expect if any future sale price exceeds the Government's valuation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: London Transport arranged for independent advisers to value the properties before privatisation for the statutory accounts of Selkent. Individual property valuations are commercially confidential, and were made available in the privatisation information memorandum to interested parties who had signed a confidentiality agreement with London Transport.

The sale of Selkent included the freehold of Catford and Bromley garages and the lease of Plumstead and Orpington garages. Clawback arrangements were put in place for the two freehold properties and apply for a 10-year period from 1 April 1994. These enable the public sector to benefit from any gain arising from the sale of a freehold.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) to which company each component part of London Country Buses was sold in 1986; and what changes in ownership have occurred since;

(2) what considerations underlie the decision to divide London Country Bus Services Ltd. into four parts; what review of that policy has taken place since 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: London Country Bus Services Ltd. was split into four separate operating companies by the National Bus Company following the direction of the Secretary of State for Transport on 13 February 1986. The main policy objective was to promote competition within a deregulated bus industry. The competition authorities have a duty to keep markets, including the bus market, under review and to consider any qualifying mergers under the Fair Trading Act 1973. Information about the original sale of the companies and details of present ownership is shown in the table.

	Original purchaser	*Present fleetname and ownership*
London Country Bus (South East) Ltd *Renamed* Kentish Bus and Coach Ltd	Proudmutual Ltd	Kentish Bus—British Bus Ltd
London Country Bus (South West) Ltd	Drawline Ltd	London & Country—British Bus Ltd
	Speyhawk Land & Estates Ltd (Properties only)	
London Country Bus (North West) Ltd	Management	Luton & District—British Bus Ltd The Bee Line—Q Drive Buses
London Country Bus (North East) Ltd	London Country Travel Ltd	County Bus and Coach—West Midlands Travel Ltd Sovereign Bus & Coach—Blazefield Holdings

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safeguards exist to prevent the emergence of a private bus monopoly in London as a result of takeovers and mergers.

Mr. Norris: The competition authorities have a duty to keep markets, including the bus industry, under review and to consider any qualifying mergers under the Fair Trading Act 1973. In addition, London Transport will offer all its bus routes for competitive tender on a regular basis.

Railways

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much *(a)* British Rail and *(b)* the three new rolling stock leasing companies will invest in new rolling stock in 1994–95.

Mr. Watts: British Rail expects to spend £90 million and the three rolling stock leasing companies £129 million on new rolling stock in 1994–95. In addition, BR has authority to lease £150 million of new Networker trains from 1994–95.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is now *(a)* Railtrack's and *(b)* British Rail's external financing limit for 1994–95; and what plans he has to change these figures.

Mr Watts: The provisional external financing limits for 1994–95 for Railtrack and British Rail are, respectively, minus £280 million and minus £348 million. They will continue to be kept under review during the course of the year, and adjusted as appropriate.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is responsible for the appointments of:

(i) the Traffic Commissioner for the west midland traffic area, which includes Shropshire, whose current standard salary is £43,836. A new appointment is due in May 1998.

(ii) Deputy Traffic Commissioners to assist the Traffic Commissioner in the west midland traffic area with public inquiries. These are fixed term renewable appointments initially for two years. A fee, currently £186, is paid for public inquiry work on a daily basis. Of the four which have been appointed to the west midland traffic area, one appointment is due for review in April 1996 and two in July 1996.

London Buses

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money has been raised so far by privatisation of London Buses; and what was the forecast made in the 1993 autumn statement.

Mr. Norris: Six companies have so far been privatised, realising proceeds of approximately £100 million. Under arrangements agreed at the time of the unified budget, provision was made for London Transport to retain all proceeds up to £100 million and 25 per cent. of receipts above that level.

Rail Strike

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much fare income was lost by British Rail as a result of the signal staff strike; and how much compensation will be paid to British Rail by Railtrack in respect of this lost revenue.

Mr. John Watts: British Rail estimates that its net revenue loss—passenger and freight—as a result of the signal staff strike was £154 million. Questions of compensation as a result of strike action are a matter for British Rail and Railtrack.

British Rail

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport wht is the British Rail's public service obligation grant for 1994–95; and what plans he has to change it.

Mr. John Watts: Provision of £1,675 million is made for 1994–95 in class VI, vote 7 for compensation to British Rail for public service obligations imposed by the Secretary of State or the franchising director under EC regulation 1191/69.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Norris: According to the Department's personnel information system, there were 13,697 employees on the payroll of the Department, including its eight agencies, as at 1 October 1994. The regional breakdown is:

Region	*Numbers*	*Per cent.*
Eastern	282	2·06
East Midlands	573	4·18
London	2,962	21·63
N. Ireland	25	0·18
North West	745	5·44
Northern	387	2·83
Scotland	649	4·74
South East	2,327	16·99
South West	1,000	7·30
Wales	3,258	23·79
West Midlands	819	5·98
Yorks & Humberside	662	4·83
Overseas	8	0·06
Total	13,697	

Appointments

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the non-departmental public bodies to which his Department makes appointments in the Greater London area, with the total annual budget for each body and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last five years.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

a. The Traffic Director for London has a budget of £10·25 million for 1994–95. The appointment was made in 1991 for a five year term.

b. The London Regional Passengers' Committee's budget, to meet 1994–95 running costs, is £0·47 million. Since 1 April 1994, when responsibility for the committee was transferred to my right hon. Friend from the President of the Baord of Trade, no appointments have been made or renewed.

c. The Traffic Commissioner for the South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area, which includes the Greater London area, has a budget of £1·36 million to meet running costs in 1994–95. Only one appointment—that of a Deputy Traffic Commissioner in 1992—has been made over the last five years.

M11 (Trees)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of trees which have been cut down during the construction of the M11 extension.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Laurie Haynes to Mr. Neil Gerrard, dated 21 October 1994:

The Minister for Transport in London has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 Link Road since it is an operational matter for the Highways Agency.

To date 208 mature trees have been cut down in connection with work to build the Link Road.

British Rail Signalling (Productivity Gains)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what productivity gains in respect of signalling have been made on British Railways over the past decade; how they have been achieved; and what assessment he has made of consequential remuneration.

Mr. Watts: Between 1980 and 1993 the number of signalling staff, including relief grades, declined from 7,599 to 4,941, a reduction of 35 per cent. For the same period there was a 46 per cent. reduction in total railway staff.

Over the same period, productivity gains in signalling have largely arisen from investment of the order of £1 billion, especially in new technology in track and signalling projects, and changes in service patterns. This has led to a decline in the number of signal boxes from 1,855 to 1,033, a drop of 44 per cent.

Job changes arising from this investment have been reflected in regrading of signalling staff and higher allowances. In 1980, 22 per cent. were at the lowest grade: in 1993 it was 9 per cent. Similarly, the highest grade increased from 6 per cent. to 15 per cent. Those trends have continued in 1994. In addition, signalling staff have benefited from the creation of new allowances. As a result, signalling staff have had significant real increases in pay: since 1979 their real earnings growth has been 47 per cent., compared with 14 per cent. for manual workers and 37 per cent. for the whole economy.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the total investment by British Rail and the amount invested in Network SouthEast in *(a)* track, *(b)* signalling, *(c)* rolling stock and *(d)* other in each year since 1978 at both cash and at 1993–94 prices.

Mr. Watts: The information is not available in the form requested. The tables attached show British Rail investment in infrastructure, rolling stock and other, and Network SouthEast investment in rolling stock and infrastructure.

In the tables:

Infrastructure includes signalling, new track, track renewals, new routes and electrification.

Rolling stock includes prepayments.

Other is mostly plant, buildings and equipment.

There are no figures for Network SouthEast before 1985–86, when the division was created.

Table 1, British Rail investment, £ million cash

	British Rail			
	Infrastructure	*Rolling Stock*	*Other*	*Total*
1979	213	93	48	353
1980	242	122	54	417
1981	243	106	47	396
1982	233	98	41	372
1983	310	70	54	434

Table 1, British Rail investment, £ million cash.

	British Rail			
	Infrastructure	*Rolling Stock*	*Other*	*Total*
1984–85[1]	326	63	76	466
1985–86	327	80	131	538
1986–87	285	79	160	524
1987–88	374	154	157	685
1988–89	312	206	185	703
1989–90	406	234	227	867
1990–91	397	329	292	1,018
1991–92	490	450	320	1,260
1992–93	432	549	529	1,510
1993–94[2]	423	439	401	1,263

[1] 12 month equivalent of 15 month year

[2] provisional

Table 2, British Rail investment, £ million 1993–94 prices.

	British Rail			
	Infrastructure	*Rolling Stock*	*Other*	*Total*
1979	549	241	123	913
1980	523	263	116	902
1981	472	207	91	770
1982	420	178	74	671
1983	531	120	92	743
1984–85[1]	528	103	123	754
1985–86	501	123	200	824
1986–87	423	117	238	778
1987–88	526	217	220	964
1988–89	410	270	243	923
1989–90	501	289	279	1,069
1990–91	460	381	339	1,181
1991–92	530	487	346	1,363
1992–93	447	568	548	1,563
1993–94[2]	423	439	401	1,263

[1] 12 month equivalent of 15 month year

[2] provisional

Table 3. Network South East investment, £ million cash.

	Network South East		
	Infrastructure	*Rolling Stock*	*Total*
1985–86	131	17	148
1986–87	147	13	160
1987–88	195	58	253
1988–89	209	126	335
1989–90	291	111	402
1990–91	262	78	340
1991–92	263	133	396
1992–93	216	312	529
1993–94[1]	183	167	350

[1] provisional

Table 4. Network South East investment, £ million 1993–94 prices.

	Network South East		
	Infrastructure	*Rolling Stock*	*Total*
1985–86	201	26	227
1986–87	218	20	238
1987–88	274	82	356
1988–89	274	165	439
1989–90	359	137	496
1990–91	304	90	394
1991–92	284	144	428
1992–93	224	323	547
1993–94[1]	183	167	350

[1] provisional

EDUCATION

Dental Schools

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many dental schools have shut since 1985;

(2) if she will provide details on the closure of dental schools since 1985 and the rationale behind their closure.

Mr. Boswell: Since 1985, one dental school has closed in England. This school—part of University college London—closed following a review carried out by the former University Grants Committee in the light of the Government's decision to reduce the overall United Kingdom dental intake in line with manpower requirements. Information for other parts of the UK is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many dental schools provide training for dentists in England and Wales; and if she will give details on the number of places offered by each dental school for each year since 1985.

Mr. Boswell: The number of places offered by dental schools are determined by reference to a recommended national intake set by the Department of Health.

Recommended intake targets for individual dental schools are allocated by the Higher Education Funding Councils.

The recommended intake target for home, EC and overseas students for dental schools in England from the academic year 1985–86 onwards is set out in the table. Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales.

	1985 to 1991	*1991 to date*
Birmingham	75	65
Bristol	50	50
Leeds	55	55
Liverpool	55	55
Kings College London	57	57
London Hospital Medical College	55	55
United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals	88	88
Manchester	60	60
Newcastle	70	70
Sheffield	45	50
University College London	50	—

Note:

The recommended intake target for University College London applies up to 1988–89 only, when the school closed.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will provide figures on the number of applicants wishing to enter dental school for training for each year since 1985, the number of applicants who have successfully secured a training place at dental school for each year since 1985, and the number of dental students who have qualified to practice as dentist for each year since 1985.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested for home, EC and overseas students for each year from the 1985–86 academic year for dental schools in the United Kingdom is set out as follows:

Year	*Applications*	*Acceptances*	*Qualifications*
1985–86	2,315	894	622
1986–87	2,050	893	731
1987–88	1,834	906	852
1988–89	8,111	867	743
1989–90	7,823	853	744
1990–91	7,515	826	693
1991–92	7,562	864	734
1992–93	8,293	869	796

Sources:

UCCA Report Table 7 (applications and acceptances) USR Vol 2 Table 3 (qualifications).

Note:

Figures prior to 1988–89 are based on applicants' preferred subjects. Those from 1989 onwards are based on the total number of applications.

Statistical Bulletins

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals she has made for reducing the number of statistical bulletins issued by her analytical services branch on the contracting out of their publications; and what charge will be made, other than postage, for any bulletins so published.

Mr. Forth: Statistical bulletins will be produced only where the information to be published is not appropriate to either a statistical press notice or a statistical volume. It is planned that there will be three regular bulletins and a small number of ad-hoc bulletins reporting the results of occasional surveys and analyses. HMSO submitted the successful bid for the publishing work and it is proposed that bulletins be priced at £3.50.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the numbers on the rolls of each grant-maintained schools in Nottinghamshire when it became grant-maintained; and what are the latest numbers on the roll in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the table. This shows numbers on roll in the school year in which schools became grant-maintained and in January 1994, the latest data available.

Grant-maintained schools in Nottinghamshire

School name	*GM Start Date*	*Number on roll in January in School year in which GM start date fell*	*Number on roll in January 1994*
Greenwood Dale GM School	1/4/93	567	560
Ravensdale Grant Maintained Middle School	1/9/92	328	319
The George Spencer School	1/4/93	936	958

Notes

The numbers on roll shown in this table are derived from the Department for Education's annual Schools Census.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the numbers on the roll of each grant-maintained school in Derbyshire when it became grant-maintained; and what are the latest numbers on roll in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the table. This shows numbers on roll in the school year in which schools became grant-maintained and in January 1994, the latest data available.

Grant-maintained school in Derbyshire

School name	GM Start Date	Number on roll in January in school year in which GM start date fell	Number on roll in January 1994
Belmont Primary School	1/4/92	354	364
Belper Grant-maintained School	1/4/93	1,009	999
Borrow Wood Junior School	1/4/92	227	233
Chellaston Junior Grant Maintained School	1/9/93	323	323
Chellaston School	1/1/93	928	957
Fairmeadows Primary School	1/9/94	[1]—	246
Friesland School	1/9/93	850	850
Heanor Gate School	1/4/93	968	1,040
John Port School	1/4/93	1,660	1,635
Lady Manners School	1/9/93	1,440	1,440
Linton Primary School	1/9/93	275	275
Murray Park Community School	1/4/93	896	891
Netherthorpe School	1/4/90	571	800
Noel-Baker Community School (GM)	1/4/93	1,147	1,153
Redhill Primary School	1/1/94	183	183
Repton Primary School	1/4/93	188	187
St. John Houghton RC School	1/9/94	[1]—	438
St. Mary's Catholic High School	1/1/94	1,104	1,104
The Curzon CE Primary School	1/9/94	[1]—	86
The Ecclesbourne School	1/9/90	1,196	1,290
The Merrill Community School	1/1/93	744	746
The Pingle School	1/9/93	1,184	1,184
West Park Community School	1/9/93	1,396	1,396
William Gilbert Endowed (A) Primary School	1/9/93	222	222
Woodlands Community School	1/9/94	[1]—	887

Notes:

The numbers on roll shown in this table are derived from the Department for Education's annual Schools Census.

[1] These six schools became grant-maintained in the current school year, for which number on roll data is not yet available.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the numbers on the roll of each grant-maintained school in Staffordshire when it became grant-maintained; and what are the latest numbers on the roll in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the table. This shows numbers on roll in the school year in which schools became grant-maintained and in January 1994, the latest data available.

Grant-maintained schools in Staffordshire

School name	GM Start Date	Number on roll in January in school year in which GM start date fell	Number on roll in January 1994
Cannock Chase High School (GM)	1/4/93	1,021	1,077
Cardinal Griffin RC Comprehensive	1/9/93	849	849
Chasetown High School	1/9/93	869	869
Hollinsclough CE Primary School	1/9/93	28	28
Rising Brook Grant-Maintained School	1/6/93	658	654
St. Mildred's GM CE Primary School, Whiston	1/4/93	27	27
St. Thomas More RC High School	1/1/93	954	993
The Corbett CE Primary School	1/9/94	[1]—	63

Notes:

The numbers on roll shown in this table are derived from the Department for Education's annual Schools Census.

[1] These two schools became grant-maintained in the current school year, for which number on roll data is not yet available.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions she has had with ministerial colleagues about educational impact of changes in the balance of funding between section 11 and the single regeneration budget for the teaching of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend keeps these matters regularly under review with ministerial colleagues, and is a member of the cabinet committee which will consider SRB bids.

Pre-school Provision

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will ensure that choice and diversity will be maintained under any expansion of pre-school provision.

Mr. Robin Squire: Parents already choose a variety of forms of pre-school education. I recognise the valuable contribution made by the private and voluntary sectors. I am determined that they should play their part in any expansion.

School Funding

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) when she will make a response to the second report from the Education Select Committee on the disparity in funding between primary and secondary schools—HC, 1993–94, No. 45;

(2) what assessment she has made of the reasons for the disparity of funding between primary and secondary schools;

(3) what steps she is taking to reduce disparity in funding between secondary and primary schools;

(4) what is her assessment of the roles of standard spending assessments and local management of schools leading to the present disparity of funding between primary and secondary schools;

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals she has to increase the number of teachers in primary schools; and if she will increase the funds available for such schools.

Mr. Forth: The Government's formal response has been set to the Chairman of the Committee today; copies have been placed in the Library. The above matters are covered in the response.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to replace the historical basis of the funding formula for schools with a formula based upon educational needs.

Mr. Robin Squire: Central Government grant in support of local authority spending on education is allocated through the education standard spending assessment, which distributes funds according to the relevant populations, adjusted to reflect factors that cause the cost of providing education to vary between authorities.

Student Grants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions she has had with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, with regard to future policy on student financial support.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend and I have had a number of meetings with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, at which a range of issues were discussed.

Schools

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consultation she proposed to undertake about the effects on primary and secondary schools of the proposed alterations to county boundaries and the creation of unitary authorities.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Commission is pursuing extensive consultations within each area for which reorganisation might be in prospect, giving full opportunity for schools and their representatives to express their views. Moreover, ministerial colleagues and I, and Department officials, are in frequent contact with chief education officers and their associations, and I have been keen to hear their views on the commission's proposals.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the public appointments for which she is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is as follows:

Members	*Length of Appointment*	*Date when next appointment is due*	*Salary*
a. West Midlands			
Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) (Coventry)			
Chief Executive	4 years 10 months	November 1996	£91,107 Full-time
Chairman	No fixed term	January 1996 (expected)	£34,975 Part-time (2 days per week)
12 members	3 years	July 1995	Honorarium of £4000 per annum
FEFC West Midlands Regional Committee (Coventry)			
12 members	3 years	November 1996	No honorarium. Travelling and subsistence allowances are paid by the FEFC
FEFC East Midlands Regional Committee (Coventry)			
11 members	3 years	September 1996	No honorarium. Travelling and subsistence allowances are paid by the FEFC
National Council for Education and Training (NCET) (Coventry)			
Chairman	Normally 3 years	September 1995	Some expenses are paid for attendance at Council meetings
7 members	Normally 3 years	April 1995	
1 member	Normally 3 years	April 1996	
7 members	Normally 3 years	April 1997	

Members	*Length of Appointment*	*Date when next appointment is due*	*Salary*
b. Shropshire			
My right hon. Friend is not responsible for any public appointments in Shropshire			

Parents Charter

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 17 October, *Official Report*, column *24*, what was the total cost of preparing, printing and distributing the parents charter to homes and schools in Hampshire.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost of preparing, printing and distributing the parents charter to homes in Hampshire was approximately £53,000.

The charter was posted to all schools in England. It is not possible to disaggregate the cost of sending copies to schools in Hampshire.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Chartermarks

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many schools are eligible to receive a chartermark award; how many applied for the mark this year; how many schools were awarded the chartermark on 17 October; and what the cost has been of promoting the chartermark and inviting applications from schools;

(2) how many hospitals and ambulance authorities are eligible to receive a chartermark award; how many applied for the mark this year; how many were awarded on 17 October; and what was the cost been of promoting the chartermark and inviting applications from hospitals and ambulance authorities.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Any public sector organisation is eligible for the chartermark subject to the guidelines set out in the annual application booklet.

Some 101 hospitals, including NHS trusts and individual units within hospitals, two ambulance services and 37 schools applied for the chartermark in 1994. Of those, 13 hospitals, 10 schools and one ambulance service won chartermarks and eight hospitals and five schools were unsuccessful but received commendations.

There is no specific budget for promoting the chartermark scheme and inviting applications from schools or hospitals and ambulance services. The overall cost of advertising the 1994 scheme has been £370,000.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what costs were involved in the hire of the Royal Festival hall for the chartermark awards on 17 October; and what were the costs of advertising and associated publicity and the travel costs for those invited to attend.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The cost of hiring the Royal Festival hall for the chartermark awards on 17 October was £12,500. The cost of the advertising campaign to publicise the presentation of the awards was £320,000. There were no travel costs paid for those invited to attend.

Lord Archer

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade under what circumstances papers examined by his Department's inspectors and their file notes of interviews in the case of Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare and the purchase of shares in Anglia Television may be made available to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Information obtained by inspectors exercising powers under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 could be passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions where the purpose of the disclosure is,

"with a view to the institution of or otherwise for the purpose of criminal proceedings" that is in section 180 (1) *(a)* of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether all the independent legal experts he consulted were agreed as to whether a prosecution should be brought in the case of Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare and the purchase of shares in Anglia Television.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The decision to take no further action under the insider dealing legislation against any of the parties concerned in the investigation into alleged insider dealing in the shares of Anglia Television Group plc was wholly consistent with the advice of independent counsel following their consideration of the inspectors' report and other information available to the inspectors.

Coal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the bidders for British Coal's mining assets; which were successful; and if he will make a statement on the criteria adopted in choosing the preferred bidders.

Mr. Eggar: The names of the bidders for the five regional coal companies and the care and maintenance collieries are commercially confidential. Preferred bidders were announced on Wednesday 12 October. They are:

R J B Mining plc for Central North, Central South and North East Regional Coal Companies and Thorne and Ellington Care and Maintenance Collieries;

Celtic Energy Limited for South Wales;

Mining (Scotland) Limited for Scotland;

Coal Investment plc for Annesley Bentinck Colliery; and

Tower Employee Buyout Team for Tower Colliery.

All bids were carefully considered on their merits. Our aim has been to privatise British Coal in a way which achieves the largest economically viable industry while ensuring that the taxpayer obtains value for money.

Solar Electric Cells

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the development of a new design of solar electric cells by

Professor Green of the university of New South Wales, in so far as it is applicable to British weather conditions.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The new design of photovoltaic cells by Professor Green is an incremental development of current silicon PV cells. BP Solar, a major photovoltaic manufacturer in the United Kingdom, has a license to manufacture advanced PV cells based on Professor Green's earlier developments.

The DTI new and renewable energy programme is assessing PV technology for its future potential in the United Kingdom and also as an export opportunity for United Kingdom industry. This involves BP Solar and other United Kingdom manufacturers, and a continuing awareness of developments such as those by Professor Green.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parks Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter from PC Robert Jackson about the respective powers of various parks police constabularies and individual police officers.

Mr. Maclean: We have no record of having received such a letter. If the hon. Member would care to send a copy, we shall reply to it as soon as we reasonably can.

Drug Prevention

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evaluation he has made of the results of the drug prevention initiative in West Glamorgan, relative to the DPI projects in England and Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The drugs prevention team in West Glamorgan has implemented programmes of work which has been closely monitored both locally and by the central drugs prevention unit of the Home Office. No specific evaluation relative to other teams has been conducted.

Overseas Domestic Workers

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the effects of the new screening procedures introduced in May 1991 for overseas domestic workers on the number of such workers who experience physical, psychological and sexual abuse.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None. But we keep the general arrangements for the overseas domestic workers scheme under review.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to include in the notice to employers of domestic servants travelling to the United Kingdom a statement that it is a criminal offence to withhold another person's passport.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We are considering the inclusion in the leaflet for domestic servants of further advice about passports.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were granted entry clearance at posts abroad to come in to the United Kingdom as overseas domestic workers under the 1980 concession *(a)* between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 1991 and *(b)* since 31 August 1993.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available.

Mrs Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department *(a)* has taken and *(b)* plans to take to monitor the screening procedures introduced in May 1991 for overseas domestic workers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We are currently reviewing those procedures in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is responsible for the entry clearance system abroad.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many overseas domestic workers have initiated legal challenges against their former employers since 24 July 1990 on grounds of *(a)* sexual offences, *(b)* violent offences, *(c)* false imprisonment, *(d)* assault and battery, *(e)* intimidation, *(f)* breach of contract and *(g)* slavery; and how many employers in each category were found guilty.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available as statistics of the results of court proceedings do not distinguish the occupation or nationality of victims or defendants.

PC Rhys Trigg

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 17 October, *Official Report*, column *84*, what was the composition of the tribunal set up to consider the appeal of PC Rhys Trigg after his dismissal by the Police Commissioner.

Mr. Maclean: Police discipline appeals tribunals are appointed on an ad hoc basis under paragraph 3 of schedule 5 of the Police Act 1964, as substituted by section 103 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Paragraph 3 requires that the three members comprise a barrister or solicitor, who shall be the chairman, a serving or retired inspector of constabulary or a retired chief officer and a retired officer of appropriate rank to the appellant.

The chairman of the tribunal considering PC Trigg's appeal was Mr. T. M. E. Nash. The second member was Sir James Anderton CBE QPM DL. The third member was Mr. P. Astles.

Prisoners' Families

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what areas the responsibilities of *(a)* the Probation Service and *(b)* the Prison Service cover in relation to the welfare of prisoners' families;

(2) how much public money is spent on the welfare of prisoners' families;

(3) what liaison there is between the Probation Service, the Prison Service and the Benefits Agency in relation to the welfare of prisoners' families.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Miss Joan Lestor, dated 21 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the welfare of prisoners' families.

The welfare of prisoners' families is not the direct responsibility of either Service, although both recognise the importance of prisoners' family ties. I understand that the Probation Service offers help to families when this assists the rehabilitation of the prisoner. The Prison Service seeks to help prisoners maintain their family ties, including the establishment of a Family Ties Consultative Group, and the provision of better visiting facilities. This year funding was increased to help low-income families visit relatives in prison on a fortnightly, rather than monthly, basis.

Information about how much public money is spent on the welfare of prisoners' families is not available centrally. Prison Service spending on the assisted prison visits scheme is likely to be in the region of £3·5 million this year.

The Prison Service and the probation services liaise closely on a prisoner's release, and the prisoner's family is involved where appropriate. Probation staff are seconded to all prison establishments in England and Wales and provide an important link with probation staff in the community, who make contact with prisoners' families as appropriate.

A number of Benefits agency districts provide advice services for prisons within their areas and pre-release talks for prisoners about benefit entitlements. The Prison Service is also actively involved in a forthcoming project by the Benefits agency and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), which is specifically directed at the benefit information needs of prisoners and their families.

DEFENCE

Gibraltar

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current level of defence expenditure in Gibraltar; and what was the comparable level of expenditure on a real and comparable expenditure basis in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1984.

Mr. Soames: The level of defence expenditure in Gibraltar for the current financial year—1994–95—is approximately £59 million.

Before the financial year 1991–92, financial information was not collected in a way which attributed costs to any particular location, and comparable figures are not therefore available.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities are available to the inhabitants of Gibraltar for the protection of territorial waters and of the local fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: A seaborne patrol of Gibraltar's territorial waters is regularly conducted by the Gibraltar Squadron. The Gibraltar Squadron will call upon the services of the local police should it encounter a potential or actual offence at sea being committed. The Gibraltar guard ship, normally a frigate or a destroyer, is maintained within a few days steaming of Gibraltar. Other defence assets could be deployed to Gibraltar if necessary.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's commitment to the airport in Gibraltar with particular reference to RAF participation.

Mr. Soames: The airport remains under MOD ownership for the time being. While certain support services will be contractorised, an RAF element will remain to deal with the regular scheduled Hercules flights and also the occasional Nimrod or fast jet detachment.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the provision of forces' manpower to ensure that internal security can be maintained in pursuance of the constitutional responsibilities of the Governor of Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There are two police forces in Gibraltar, the Royal Gibraltar police and the Gibraltar Service police. In assessing the future size of the garrison and arrangements for reinforcing it if necessary, we have taken full account of all potential calls on service personnel, including the possibility of supporting the police.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is his intention to retain the two Royal Naval vessels based at Gibraltar charged with responsibilities for rescue and sea patrol.

Mr. Soames: As the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces said in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes North-East (Mr. Butler) on 7 July, *Official Report*, column 262, we intend to retain the Gibraltar Squadron, which consists of two patrol craft and two search and rescue rigid inflatable boats.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Mink Farming

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange for an emergency inspection of Lawley's mink farm, Brooksbank avenue, Scolemoor, Bradford by the State Veterinary Service.

Mrs. Browning: Welfare conditions on all fur farms are monitored regularly by the State Veterinary Service.

Mineral Hydrocarbons

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what action he proposes to take on mineral hydrocarbons in food.

Mrs. Browning: My predecessor announced last year his intention of making regulations to allow the direct food use of two mineral hydrocarbon waxes to continue for certain purposes, but otherwise to prohibit the use of mineral hydrocarbon oils and waxes. Uses as a glazing agent will be prohibited when we implement the EC directives on additives. However we have reviewed other uses in the light of further work which has shown that one of the two waxes cannot be adequately specified and that both are unsuitable for the intended purposes. We have also taken account of action by the European Commission to evaluate these products, which is likely in due course to lead to action at Community level.

In general the food industry has ended the use of mineral hydrocarbons except where there are not satisfactory alternatives, and consumer intakes are low. I welcome this response the advice that we have had from our independent advisory committees about the risk from mineral hydrocarbons in food. We have therefore decided not to take a separate initiative to amend the United Kingdom regulations as previously proposed, but to await Community action.

WALES

Water Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the implications for rural water contamination and sewage pollution in Wales of the proposals made in the review of rural water and sewage issued by the Department of the Environment in July.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Consultations are presently taking place in Wales on the implications of the proposals contained in the review of rural water supply and sewerage. The comments received will assist my right hon. Friend in assessing the impact of those proposals in Wales and the conclusions will be announced in due course.

Waste Management

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what support his Department is giving to farmers in Wales to develop environmentally safe waste management policies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is a special priority of the farm and conservation grant scheme to help farmers install and improve waste handling facilities so as to meet their obligations to minimise pollution risks. Under this scheme, grant is available at the rate of 25 per cent. of eligible expenditure. Since the beginning of the scheme in 1989, over £18·5 million has been paid to farmers in Wales toward such facilities.

Drug Prevention

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what proposals he has to secure the future of existing drug prevention initiatives in Wales;

(2) what proposals he has to fund the continuation and improvement of drug prevention projects in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Drug prevention work is undertaken by a number of agencies form both the statutory and voluntary sectors, which receive funds from various sources. The Government have reaffirmed their commitment to tackling the problems of drug misuse. I have in the past made funds available in Wales for a range of initiatives, and will continue to do so in future.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision he has made for extending the work and funding of the drugs prevention initiative.

Mr. Redwood: The drugs prevention initiative team in Swansea is part of a Home Office-funded pilot project.

I announced on 19 October that I am establishing a Welsh drug and alcohol unit based within the Welsh Office. This will be a small team composed mainly of professionally qualified staff with experience of treatment and prevention work. The task will be to raise the standards of services throughout Wales by investigating the effectiveness of treatments and initiatives, and publishing the results; by developing programmes of prevention for use at national and local level; and by helping train those involved in prevention and treatment.

I have already made available substantial funds for drug and alcohol prevention work and I will consider the need for any change in the level of support in the light of advice from the unit.

Sheep Quota

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications for allocation of sheep quota are currently being processed by his Department.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office is processing 2,197 applications received from Welsh producers in respect of categories 3 to 7 of the 1993 sheep national reserve. We have also received 784 applications to the 1994 national reserve.

Cardiff Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust and the Cardiff Bay development corporation in relation to the choice of architectural design of the proposed Cardiff Bay opera house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have spoken to the chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation about the consultation arrangements for the design of the proposed opera house. I have been to see the designs. The choice of design is a matter in the first instance for the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust, which is now consulting widely before making a final decision.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many companies were compensated and grant-aided by Cardiff Bay development corporation for the purposes of relocation from Cardiff bay for each six months or other convenient time period since 1 April 1988; what is the current estimate for the numbers of firms to be relocated with grant aid from 1 October 1994 to 1 April 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of companies relocated with compensation*	*Number of companies relocated with compensation and grant aid*	*Total*
1988–89	8	—	8
1989–90	9	4	13
1990–91	28	5	33
1991–92	48	11	59
1992–93	19	5	24
1993–94	8	4	12

Year	*Number of companies relocated with compensation*	*Number of companies relocated with compensation and grant aid*	*Total*
1994–95 (to date)	7	2	9
Oct–Mar 95 (expected)	4	1	5
Total	131	32	163

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation in relation to the corporation's moratorium on grant aid to companies required to relocate from the Cardiff bay area due to redevelopment.

Mr. Redwood: None. Cardiff Bay development corporation has not declared a moratorium on any part of its grant scheme. Grant applications are currently being appraised against the same criteria as in previous years.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority in relation to the appointment of a chief executive for the University Hospital of Wales–Cardiff Royal Group NHS hospital trust–designate.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Hip Protector Pads

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provisions he has made for the funding and supply of hip protector pads for the infirm of frail elderly in *(a)* NHS long-stay geriatric wards or hospitals, *(b)* private nursing or residential homes for the elderly and *(c)* elderly persons assisted by domiciliary services via care in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: District health authorities have a discretion to provide hip protector pads to infirm or elderly people living in their own homes, residential care homes, and NHS patients in nursing homes.

Where a district health authority agrees to supply this service, it should be equally available to all. District health authorities have the power to charge nursing homes for the supply of such aids to non-NHS patients.

Whether or not such a service is provided is a matter for a district health authority to determine in the light of its local priorities.

TREASURY

Private Health Insurance

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many elderly people claimed tax relief for private health insurance premiums; and what was the aggregate value of this tax relief in each year since tax relief for such premiums were introduced.

Sir George Young: The information is given in the table.

Tax relief on private medical insurance contracts for individuals aged 60 or over

Year	*Approximate Number of contracts*	*Approximate Numbers of individuals covered*	*Cost of tax relief (£ million)*
1990–91	350,000	500,000	40
1991–92	350,000	500,000	60
1992–93	350,000	500,000	70
1993–94	375,000	550,000	80
1994–95[1]	75,000	550,000	95

[1] Provisional

Gaming Machine Licences

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors have led to the delay in issuing ordinary gaming machine licences to applicants who have paid appropriate duty.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The delay in issuing some licences has been caused by two reasons. The first is an increase in the number of traders making errors on their applications, following the change in the law which resulted in more flexible licensing periods and start dates. The second is a fault in a computer program in the new system at the licensing centre which caused rejection of some batches of applications. A revised program is currently under going test.

Tobacco (Illegal Imports)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's latest estimate for the losses to the Revenue from illegal imports of tobacco products.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Forecasting levels of smuggling is extremely difficult. A broad estimate derived from amounts seized has been made of £35 million on revenue loss from all smuggling of excise goods. Work is continuing to improve estimation in this sector.

Economic and Finance Ministers Meeting

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make a statement on the most recent Council meeting of the Economic and Finance Ministers of the European Union.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I represented the United Kingdom at the Economic and Finance Council of the European Union in Luxembourg on 10 October.

The Council reviewed progress on the employment aspects of the Commission's White Paper, on growth, competitiveness and employment and is likely to agree formal conclusions on this subject at the next meeting on

7 November in preparation for the European Council at Essen in December.

The Council asked the Commission for a study of the fiscal policies of member states and their effects on saving rates, for consideration by the spring of 1995.

The Council reached political agreement on the recommendations to 10 member states with a view to bringing excessive deficits to an end within a given period.

The Council welcomed the revised Spanish convergence programme and encouraged the Spanish authorities to reduce the deficit faster.

The Council briefly discussed the Italian reserve on the own-resources decision.

No formal notes were taken at the council meeting.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Nelson: There are 1,374 staff in post in the Treasury, as at October 1994, of whom 1,255 are located in London and 119 in the south-east region, Basingstoke.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years *(a)* to produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* to publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people.

Mr. Hague: The Department has spent the following amounts over the last three years:

	Year	*£*
a)	1992–93	137,352·63
	1993–94	200,053·92
	1994–95	606,766·43 (to date)

b) Although no precise figure can be identified for publicising accessible information, the needs of visually impaired people are taken into account when publicity strategies are developed and would therefore be included in our overall publicity plans. Intermediaries and advisers are alerted to the availability of suitable formats.

Although no precise figure can be identified for publicising accessible information, the needs of visually impaired people are taken into account when publicity strategies are developed and would therefore be included in our overall publicity plans. Intermediaries and advisers are alerted to the availability of suitable formats.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will say which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will show what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Hague: The tables show publications and documents available in alternative formats. A catalogue of all publicity material available from the Benefits Agency and a guide to social security for blind and partially sighted people have been placed in the Library.

The consultation document on Government measures to tackle discrimination against disabled people, published on 15 July, made clear the Government's intention to seek to increase the range of information provided in these formats, and the Department will be taking an active role in progressing this work.

The Department automatically considers all alternative formats when preparing new or updated publicity material and now has its own Braillemaster, which is used to provide quantities of documents in Braille whenever possible. The Child Support Agency also has access to this facility.

Every DSS agency follows RNIB guidelines when producing forms and leaflets with regard to type and size. The War Pensions Agency has facilities for producing letters and leaflets in Braille but has not been requested to do so as yet. It is also considering the possibility of "talking" newspapers.

The Benefits Agency has a contract with the RNIB, which produces materials in Braille on its behalf. The RNIB advertises the availability of alternative formats of publications in its magazines. The Benefits Agency also runs the benefit enquiry line, which gives free advice to people with disabilities and to their carers. The service extends to a textphone line and a forms completion service.

In April 1994, the Benefits Agency ran a nationally co-ordinated programme of local information activities aimed at raising the awareness of the services and information it provides for people with disabilities, including the visually impaired. The initiative also sought to increase the awareness among staff of the needs of their customers in this sector. The period of activities ran for two weeks and included radio phone-ins, local exhibitions and a mailing to intermediaries.

An information pack, DIS 10 "Information and services for people with disabilities" was produced, part of which focused on services and material for blind and partially sighted people. The pack was used by the district information officers at local exhibitions, events and benefit surgeries. It was also mailed to appropriate disability groups and intermediaries. The Benefits Agency and DSS headquarters took part in the NAIDEX exhibition on the interdepartmental Government stand. The exhibition runs over three days and attracts approximately 10,000 people.

The Benefits Agency used a series of panels to present information about the services it provides and materials it has produced in alternative formats. A range of leaflets were available with some in large print and audio cassette format.

The Benefits Agency has planned to produce another 12 leaflets in Braille, production will be completed by April 1995.

The Child Support Agency has recently published an ASCII computer disk version of "for parents who live apart". This allows the visually impaired who have access to a computer to read in the disk and display it in a format which suits their visual impairment. The Child Support Agency has had contact with the RNIB regarding the advertising the ASCII computer disk and the other materials in its magazine. The agency's own publicity literature is constantly being updated to alert people to this material for the visually impaired.

Documents available in Braille

Consultation Document (Complete)	Disability on the Agenda
Consultation Document (Summary)	Disability on the Agenda
DSS 722	Taking the Plunge
Enable	Response Material
SEC 1(B)	Summary of Pensions White Paper
CSA	For People who Live Apart
DIS 10	Information and Services for People with Disabilities
CTB 1	Help with Council Tax
DS 702	Attendance Allowance
DS 703	Disability Working Allowance
DS 704	Disability Living Allowance
FB 2	Which Benefit
FB 4	Cash Help while you're Working
FB 6	Retiring?
FB 8	Babies and Benefits
FB 9	Unemployed
FB 19	Social Security Benefits—A Guide for Blind and Partially Sighted People
FB 23	Young People's Guide to Social Security
FB 26	Voluntary and Part-time Workers
FB 27	Bringing up children?
FB 28	Sick or Disabled
FB 30	Self-employed?
FB 31	Caring for Someone?
FB 32	Benefits after Retirement
IS 1	Income Support
IS 26	Income Support if you are 16 or 17
NI 6	Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
NI 16A	Invalidity Benefit
NI 196	Social Security Benefit Rates
NI 246	How to Appeal
NI 252	Severe Disablement Allowance
RR 1	Housing Benefit—Help with Your Rent
CSA 2020	For Parents who Live Apart
SFL 2	How the Social Fund can Help You
Z 3	Your Social Security Benefits and Compensation

Documents Available in Large Print

FB 19	*Social Security Benefits - A Guide for Blind and Partially Sighted People*
DLA	Claim Pack
DWA	Claim Pack
CSA 2049	For Parents who Live Apart

Documents available as Audio Cassettes

DS 712	New benefits for Disabled People, including People with Learning Difficulties. (Various Languages)
DS 706	New Benefits for Disabled People. (Various Languages)
DS 721	Taking the Plunge
DSS	Working with Benefits (Various Languages)
Community Care Charges	Caring for People (Various Languages)
CSA	For Parents who Live Apart
New Start Newspaper Issue 1	Working for People with Disabilities
New Start Newspaper Issue 2	Working for People with Disabilities
New Start Newspaper Issue 3	Working for People with Disabilities
New Start Newspaper Issue 4	Working for People with Disabilities
New Start Newspaper Issue 5	Working for People with Disabilities
	Jobhunters Guide to In-Work Benefits
Incapacity Benefit	Summary Leaflet
Consultation Document (Complete and Summary)	Disability on the Agenda
Enable	Response Material
PP 1	Thinking about a Personal Pension
Sec 1 (A)	Summary of Pensions White Paper
Incapacity Benefit	Medical Assessment
Incapacity Benefit	Consultation on the Medical Assessment
DWA	What's it About—Guide to DWA
DS 722	Taking the Plunge
FB 19	Social Security Benefits—A Guide for Blind and Partially Sighted People
TA 1	Out of Work
TA 2	Benefits for Working People
CSA 2029	For Parents who Live Apart

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps have been taken to amend the proposed mental health impairment score in respect of the medical test to determine eligibility for incapacity benefit to assess eligibility for those persons suffering from mental health disorders.

Mr. Hague: The proposed new medical test for incapacity benefit contains special procedures for assessing the effects of mental health problems. Those procedures were drawn up in the light of the responses to a consultation document published in December 1993 and the work of a group of experts drawn from a panel appointed to help with the design of the medical test. Detailed information on the proposed test and the development work leading up to it is given in the report published in September 1994 entitled "The medical assessment for Incapacity Benefit", copies of which have been placed in the Library.

National Insurance Contributions

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women aged 60 years are currently not eligible for state pension as a result of an insufficient national insurance contributions record.

Mr. Arbuthnot: It is estimated that approximately 110,000 women aged 60 at 5 April 1993 in the United Kingdom would not be eligible for a basic state pension on their own national insurance contributions, either because they had not paid sufficient national insurance contributions, or because they had opted to pay at the married woman's reduced rate. This figure includes women who would be eligible for a basic pension derived wholly or partially from their spouse's or former spouse's national insurance contributions.

Source: 1 per cent. sample of national insurance records and Government Actuary's Department population projections.

Mrs Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women in the United Kingdom were paying the reduced married woman's national insurance contributions in 1993–94.

Mr. Arbuthnot: In 1992–93—the latest year for which information is available—some 614,000 women in the United Kingdom paid employees' national insurance contributions at the reduced rate.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the responses to his consultation paper "Disability—On the Agenda".

Mr. Hague: We have no plans to do so. We have received more than 1,000 responses to the consultation document "Disability—On the Agenda". It is open to organisations and individuals to publish their own replies should they so wish.

Pensions

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for the past five years the percentage of gross domestic product spent by the United Kingdom on the payment of state pensions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is in the table.

Year	*£ million GDP*	*£ million Pension*	*Percentage*
1988–89	484,138	19,237	3·9
1989–90	525,809	20,697	3·9
1990–91	556,759	22,699	4·1
1991–92	580,751	25,543	4·4
1992–93	604,897	26,706	4·4

Income Support

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the income support live E, A and P and total cases for each of the district and branch offices in Great Britain for the first quarter of 1991 and the first quarter of 1994 and the percentage change over that period.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of Income Support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Henry McLeish, dated 20 October 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question requesting various statistical data concerning Income Support cases in Great Britain for the first quarters of 1991 and 1994.

The information is not available in the exact format requested. This is because statistics are not readily available for each of the Agency's Branch Offices and to obtain them for the whole of Great Britain would incur disproportionate cost. However, I have provided the data requested broken down for the 159 Benefits Agency Districts. You should note that some Districts have had boundary changes which may have had some impact upon the percentage changes.

I have enclosed the information and a copy has been placed in the Library.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of how many of the sites identified by the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq as being part of Iraq's nuclear weapons programme her Majesty's Government have been informed by the United Nations special envoy that technology and material originating in the United Kingdom has been found; and what is his policy on publishing such information.

Mr. David Davis: International Atomic Energy Agency and UNSCOM inspectors have investigated a wide range of sites in Iraq known to have been part of, or connected to, the nuclear programme where British equipment has been found. It is not our practice to comment on information given to us in confidence by UNSCOM and the IAEA, nor to publish the names of companies which delivered goods to Iraq. Any evidence of wrong-doing will be investigated and, if appropriate, will be a matter for the courts.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's assessment of the degree to which Iraq has complied with each of United Nations Security Council resolutions 687, 712 and 715.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At its last review of the sanctions on Iraq on 14 September, the Security Council decided that Iraq had not complied with resolutions 687 and 715. The next is scheduled for mid-November.

Regrettably, Iraq has not implemented resolutions 706 and 712 under which Iraq would be permitted to sell $1·6 billion of oil, the proceeds of the sale to be used for humanitarian aid and compensating victims of the Gulf war.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he raised the matter of financial commissions paid in connection with military equipment sales from the United Kingdom to

Saudi Arabia during his recent meeting with the Saudi Arabian leadership.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary did not raise that matter.

Reflections Group

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the names of the persons, together with details of their past and current responsibilities, who have been appointed to the reflections group preparing for the 1996 revision of the treaty of European Union as agreed by the European Council meeting in Corfu.

Mr. David Davis: The only member state whose representative has so far been appointed is Portugal. The Portuguese representative will be Professor André Gonclaves Pereira. He is a former Portuguese Foreign Minister. He now holds a chair in law at Lisbon university.

Kuwait

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters in regard to internal democratisation in Kuwait were discussed with the Al-Sabah leadership during his visit to Kuwait on 12 October.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During his recent visit to Kuwait, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's discussions focused on Iraq and the actions of Saddam Hussein. We fully support measures to broaden participation in the process of government. We welcome the Kuwaiti decision taken in June this year to extend the franchise to the sons of naturalised Kuwaitis born after their father's naturalisation.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he discussed with Saudi defence officials or Ministers the Al-Yamamah defence agreement during his recent visit to Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During his recent visits to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's discussion with the Saudi Government focused on Iraq and the actions of Saddam Hussein. Al-Yamamah is a major success story for British industry.

Israel (Trade Boycott)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next be holding discussions with other European Union ministers to discuss the implication for Community policy of the decision of the Gulf Co-operation Council to stop boycotting companies that trade with Israel.

Mr. David Davis: There are no plans at present for a discussion on this subject with other European Union Ministers. We welcome this move by the Gulf Co-operation Council. The European Union and the United Kingdom would like to see the boycott on trade with Israel lifted completely.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Goodlad: The following has been spent on official hospitality by the FCO and ODA, in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Year	*£ pounds*
1990–91	5,178,849
1991–92	5,700,606
1992–93	6,946,298
1993–94	7,488,121
1994–95 (to date)	3,592,503

The following has been spent on official hospitality by the ODA's agency, the Natural Resources Institute:

Year	*£ pounds*
1990–91	3,836
1991–92	4,813
1992–93	3,624
1993–94	4,952
1994–95 (to date)	938

There is no separate official hospitality budget for the FCO's agency, Wilton Park. The small amount involved is subsumed in the agency running costs and cannot be extracted without disproportionate cost.

International Organisations

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the international organisations of which Britain is a member, showing in each case the date of joining.

Mr. Baldry: A list of international organisations for which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office makes provision is published in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Departmental Report 1994, Cm 2502, pages 85-6, 93-4.

Details of membership of other international organisations will be found in the appropriate supply estimates, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

It is not possible to compile a full list of commencement dates without disproportionate expense, but the generally accepted dates for the major international institutions may be seen in the United Nations Handbook 1994.

Diplomatic Relations

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the member states of the United Nations Organisation with which the United Kingdom does not have diplomatic relations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The countries are Bhutan, Iraq, North Korea and Libya.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed by each of the standard regions.

Mr. Goodlad: At 1 April 1994, the latest date for which data are available, the FCO employed 7,907 people, of whom 30·9 per cent. worked overseas. The percentages employed in the standard regions were:

South East—63·0 per cent, of which:

	per cent.
Inner London	38·6
Outer London	0·9
Rest of South East	23·5
South West	<0·1
West Midlands	<0·1
Scotland	6·0

No staff were employed in other regions.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific actions have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to implement the resolutions to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear materials, agreed to by the International Atomic Energy Agency's 38th general conference.

Mr. David Davis: That matter was discussed shortly before the IAEA general conference at the informal plutonium users group, which meets in Vienna under the chairmanship of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom raised the issue of the physical security of nuclear installations in the light of the recent reports of smuggling of nuclear materials. The group is now considering specific proposals as to the role it might take, alongside the Interactional Atomic Energy Agency, to help improve security measures.

There are a number of projects already under way. Through the Overseas Development Administration, the United Kingdom contributes towards the International Science and Technology Centre in Moscow which is designed to provide work for Russian scientists, including those in the Russian nuclear industry.

We are also actively engaged in discussions with partners both in the European Union and the G7/G8 to ensure a co-ordinated international response to this problem.

Domestic Servants

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the people granted entry clearance at posts abroad to come into the United Kingdom as overseas domestic workers since 1 May 1991 have *(a)* been interviewed by an entry officer and *(b)* received a copy of "Information for Domestic Servants Travelling to the United Kingdom"; and what proportion each of these is of the whole.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the number of overseas domestic workers granted entry clearance since May 1991, and the proportion of those who were interviewed by an entry clearance officer, is available only at a disproportionate cost. Since 20 May 1991, all overseas domestic workers granted entry clearance have been issued with a copy of the leaflet "Information for Domestic Servants Travelling to the United Kingdom".

HEALTH

Public Bodies

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all the trusts, health authorities and other public bodies to which her Department makes appointments in the Greater London area, together with the total annual budget for each body and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last five years.

Mr. Malone: A full answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health makes the following appointments to national health service bodies in the Greater London area:

Regional Health Authorities	Chairman and five non-executives per board
District Health Authorities	Chairman
Family Health Services Authorities	Chairman
NHS Trusts	Chairmen and up to three non-executives per board
Special Health Authorities for London Post Graduate Teaching Hospitals	Chairman and five non-executives per board
Special Trustees	Up to six Special Trustees per body

Each appointment is for a period of up to four years.

Requests for budget or income details should be made to the organisations directly.

Blood

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what priority is given to the NHS over the private sector for obtaining blood; and if she will publish guidance on this.

Mr. Sackville: It has always been the policy of the national health service to meet non-NHS hospitals' reasonable requests for blood on the basis of availability and clinical need. Private hospitals in this country, and private patients in NHS hospitals, use blood in very small quantities. NHS hospitals are constrained in that treatment for private patients must not be given to the detriment of NHS contracts. We see no need to issue further guidance.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure self-sufficiency in both blood and blood products for England.

Mr. Sackville: In general, England has been self-sufficient in blood.

The EC directive which harmonises the licensing requirements for blood products promotes a policy of Community self-sufficiency in such products derived from the donations of voluntary and unpaid donors but does not forbid importation. This is consistent with our long-standing policy of seeking self-sufficiency in blood products sourced from our own volunteer donors. Nevertheless, whilst promoting self-sufficiency we also recognise the clinical freedom of doctors to choose the product most suitable for an individual patient.

Some patients are receiving imported blood products where the clinician feels this is appropriate. The Bio Products Laboratory continues to make efforts to increase its share of the blood products market but the choice of product for the individual patient remains with the clinician.

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of chief executives of national health service trusts in each of the last four years have been paid on a performance-related pay basis.

Mr. Malone: The information is not available centrally.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff are employed by her Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Sackville: The latest staff in post information at 1 July 1994 gives a total of 4,715 staff in the Department of Health. The proportions in each of the standard regions are shown in the table.

Region	*Per cent.*
Scotland	—
Northern	0·3
Yorks and Humberside	19·2
North West	14·0
East Midlands	1·1
West Midlands	2·7
Wales	—
East Anglia	—
South East	62·3
South West	0·5
Northern Ireland	—
Overseas	—

1. *Source:* Quarterly whole time equivalent staff in post returns to Treasury.
2. Figures include inward loans and secondments, fixed term appointments and staff in Agencies.
3. Figures exclude casual and industrial staff and outward loans and secondments.
4. Figures do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Measles

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the cost of the proposed mass measles immunisation programme; which pharmaceutical company will be awarded the contract to provide the amounts of vaccine needed; on what medical, social and public health grounds the decision to provide a mass measles immunisation programme was taken; if the proposed programme is separate from current vaccination arrangements; who will be targeted; and how the programme will be delivered.

Mr. Sackville: The cost of the measles immunisation programme has been estimated at about £20 million. The contract for measles/rubella vaccine for the campaign has been awarded to two companies: SmithKline Beecham and Merieux.

The decision to undertake a comprehensive immunisation campaign against measles was based on the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation following analysis by two independent groups of data on serosurveillance of measles antibodies by age group, measles notifications to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and age-related case confirmation. The results indicated that an epidemic of measles was likely involving 150,000 cases—range 100,000 to 200,000—in England and Wales, mostly affecting children aged five up to 16. Two-thirds of the cases would be in secondary school aged children. This is confirmed by experience in other European countries. Trends in measles notifications in 1994, the usual seasonality of measles and a marked increase in cases experienced in Scotland show that the epidemic is likely to occur in early 1995.

Measles can lead to pneumonia, blindness, deafness, brain damage and even death. Measles is likely to be more serious in older children and we would expect many to be admitted to hospital and about 50 deaths to occur. As well as the morbidity and mortality associated with an epidemic, there would be considerable disruption to children's education. An estimated 300,000 working days would also be lost through parents needing to stay at home with sick children. The cost to the health service of treating a measles epidemic would be up to £30 million.

The main childhood immunisation campaign is separate from the measles campaign, and it will be continuing as usual.

Each district has an immunisation co-ordinator who will also be responsible for organising this campaign. This will be a school-based campaign. District health authorities have been charged with offering immunisation to all children in school forms where most children are aged five up to 16. This will include four-year-olds and 16-year-olds in those school years. Parent information leaflets and consent forms have been distributed through schools and most children will be immunised in school.

As the campaign is on a greater scale than other immunisations carried out in schools, additional staff may be contracted by the health authority to work with the existing school health service during the campaign or to immunise any children missed by the main campaign in November. This may include health visitors, practice nurses or general practitioners. Staffing arrangements will be a matter for local decision according to local circumstances.

Dental Health

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she intends to take to improve the control of cross-infection in dental practice; what measures are intended to improve both the opportunity for and take-up of postgraduate education in the clinical management of cross-infection by dentists and their teams; and how she will monitor the control of cross-infection in dental surgery and practice.

Mr. Malone: The maintenance of clinical standards is primarily a matter for the dental profession. The

Department, however, issues guidance which covers the control of cross-infection in dental practice. The latest advice from the Department is contained in a letter from the Chief Dental Officer in July 1993, copies of which are available in the Library.

Central funds are provided to postgraduate deans to provide those postgraduate and continuing education courses that are necessary. That includes the control of cross-infection.

Dentists have a responsibility in their terms of service to observe appropriate cross-infection control procedures. Inspection of practices is undertaken by family health services authorities.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she intends to take to review dental manpower in England and Wales; and what forward planning her Department currently undertakes to plan for future dental manpower needs over the next five-year period.

Mr. Malone: The Department, together with the British Dental Association, regularly conducts reviews of the need for dental manpower.

The current review, which began in 1992, has been deferred so that future developments can take account of Government proposals for the future of national health service dentistry

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide figures on the morbidity and mortality rates associated with the administration of general anaesthetics and sedatives for the purpose of dental surgery in England and Wales for each year since 1985.

Mr. Malone: The available information is shown in the table.

Deaths associated with the administration of general anaesthetics for dental treatment

England and Wales *Year*	*Number of deaths*
1985	4
1986	3
1987	5
1988	1
1989	3
1990	3
1991	0
1992	4
1993	1

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she plans to provide national standards or guidelines for the administration of general anaesthesia and sedation for children undergoing dental surgery.

Mr. Malone: In October 1992, the United Kingdom health Minister gave the clinical standards advisory group the remit

> "to advise on standards of clinical care for, and access to and availability of services to National Health Service patients referred to out-patient and community health services for dental treatment that may require the administration of a general anaesthetic".

The group is currently preparing its report.

Blood Transfusion Centre, Brentwood

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations were undertaken by the relevant bodies within the national health service concerning the plans to close the blood transfusion centre at Brentwood; and what assessment has been made of the impact of the closure on the total volume of blood available from donors in east London and the speed of its supply to hospitals there and in south Essex.

Mr. Sackville: The proposal to close the Brentwood transfusion centre is part of the proposals for reorganisation of the National Blood Transfusion Service currently out for consultation. The results of the consultation will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

The proposals are mainly about processing and administration. The amount of blood collected in east London and Essex should not be affected. The National Blood Transfusion Service's mobile teams will continue to go to all areas as they do now, wherever centres are amalgamated or not. New locally based teams would be set up and sessions would be easily accessible to donors.

The National Blood Authority is committed to maintaining and wherever possible improving the service it provides to hospitals. One of its key proposals is to establish a network of stockholding units. The National Blood Authority is satisfied that the proposed structure will enable it to continue to respond to emergency demand for blood without detriment to patient care.

Occupational Therapy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that regional health authorities consult directors of social services as to their occupational therapy requirements.

Mr. Bowis: Regional health authorities are required to consult with all employers to calculate the overall demand for non-medical education and training, including occupational therapy. Social services directors are therefore included in this consultation process. The national health service executive and regional health authorities meet regularly with the professional bodies and associations, including the College of Occupational Therapists, to discuss the number of training commissions placed each year. On 13 September 1994, the chief inspector, social services inspectorate, wrote to all directors of social services reminding them of their role in collaborating with regional health authorities in forecasting the numbers of occupational therapists needed to staff their services in future.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of occupational therapy student training commissions funded in each regional health authority and *(b)* the number of actual students undertaking such commissions.

Mr. Bowis: Figures on the number of occupational therapy student training commissions funded in each regional health authority are not available before 1991. The figures in the table are taken from the annual balance sheet of regional health authorities commissions and detail the number of occupational therapy students funded by regional health authorities since 1991. Information on the number of actual students undertaking such commissions is not held centrally.

Number of occupational therapy student training places in regions 1991–93

Region	*England* *1991*	*1992*	*1993*
	Number of funded places		
Northern	30	53	58
Yorkshire	60	61	80
Trent	102	110	90
East Anglia	30	30	30
Oxford	135	88	44
North-west Thames	60	80	80
North-east Thames	38	57	76
South-east Thames	24	73	[1]76
South-west Thames	44	44	45
Wessex	0	[2]30	31
South Western	115	58	[3]60
Mersey	70	40	41
North Western	52	57	57
West Midlands	64	64	70
Total	824	845	838

Source:

National Balance Sheet (March 1994)[4]

[1] Figure amended from 100 to 76 since March 1994. Includes training places funded by individual Trusts within S E Thames region (which itself purchased 42 places.)

[2] Figure amended from 0 to 30 since March 1994.

[3] Figure amended from 46 to 60 since March 1994.

[4] Figures include all training commissions which include 2 year accelerated courses, 3 and 4 year degree courses and 4 year in-service and part-time courses.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action has been taken on the recent social services inspectorate report on occupational therapy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Following publication of the report, senior managers of local authority occupational therapy services were invited to two seminars in February and March to discuss the report's findings and exchange ideas on developing good practice. A report of these seminars has been placed in the Library.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Health and I met on 26 July with the local authority associations, the Local Government Board, the Association of Directors of Social Services and the College of Occupational Therapists to discuss the report. We drew particular attention to the need to adopt strategies for the effective and efficient use of occupational therapists. A further meeting is planned to take stock of progress.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many contracts the Health Education Authority has placed with external providers in the last three years; and what was the nature of the work contracted for and the cost.

Mr. Malone: This information is not held by the Department as this is an operational matter for the Health Education Authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the authority for details.

BUPA

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on what date she first knew of the appointment of the former chief executive of the National Health Service to the board of BUPA;

(2) if she gave permission for the former chief executive of the NHS to join the board of BUPA.

Mr. Sackville: Sir Duncan Nichol's application for permission to accept an outside appointment following retirement from Crown service was received on 24 May 1994. The application was to accept the appointment from 1 October, that is six months after his last day of service. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was told of the application soon after its arrival in the Department. The established rules relating to business appointment were scrupulously observed. Permission was granted by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and with my right hon. Friend's agreement. Permission was subject to the condition that Sir Duncan takes no part in any dealings between BUPA and the national health service executive for two years from his last day of service.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the trusts which have failed to produce a 6 per cent. rate of return on their assets for the financial year 1993–94;

(2) if she will list *(a)* the trusts which have reported a deficit and *(b)* the amount of the deficit, for the financial year 1993–94;

(3) if she will list the trusts which have failed to operate within external financing limits for the year 1993–94.

Mr. Sackville: We expect the information to be available in December. It will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the directors of trusts who hold directorships of companies which *(a)* are doing business and *(b)* are seeking to do business with the NHS.

Mr. Malone: The code of conduct for national health service boards requires that information about the private interests of non-executive directors of NHS trusts that might be material and relevant to NHS business should be recorded in a public register maintained by each trust. Such information is not available centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the trusts which have borrowed money for capital spending projects; and how much each has borrowed for the financial year 1993–94.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the last quarterly report, prepared by the NHS executive, of trusts in financial peril.

Mr. Sackville: Quarterly reports prepared by the national health service executive represent fast track management information. This information is not audited and is used for internal management purposes only, and is not suitable for publication.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health upon what basis the figure for management costs, to be published by NHS trusts in their annual accounts, is to be calculated; and whether the salaries of all staff who work in corporate management functions will be included in the operational definition of management costs.

Mr. Malone: I shall be making an announcement in due course.

Phenylketonuria

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will include phenylketonuria in those prescriptions accepted for free status.

Mr. Malone: No.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information has to be published by fundholding practices.

Mr. Malone: All general practitioners are required to publish essential information for patients about available services in practice leaflets. In addition, general practitioner fundholders' audited fundholding accounts, and their contracts with hospitals and community units, are public documents and are available on request. General practitioner fundholders also publish annual patients charter statements setting out standards achieved by hospitals with which they hold contracts and detailing the handling of any complaints received.

Chelation Therapy

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has undertaken into the effectiveness of Chelation therapy as a treatment for arteriosclerosis and other related conditions.

Mr. Malone: None.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what record she has of people suffering from radiation damage after radiotherapy; and what plans she has to set up a national register.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not keep records of people suffering from radiation damage after radiotherapy and we have no plans to set up a national register.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will extend the audit of patients damaged by radiotherapy in the breast area to patients damaged in the pelvic area.

Mr. Sackville: The Department commissioned an audit of breast cases because they were all suffering from the same cancer and had similar radiotherapy. Patients who had pelvic radiotherapy had different cancers and underwent different techniques of radiotherapy. It is easier to detect common features between members of the first group than between members of the second. For that reason, we have commenced an audit of women exhibiting adverse effects following breast radiotherapy.

National Health Service Pay

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will show national health service pay expenditure in each year since 1990–91 and her best estimate for 1995–96, showing figures both in millions of pounds and at current prices.

Mr. Malone: The information available is shown in the table.

NHS pay expenditure 1990–91 to 1992–93

Year	*Cash Value (£million)*	*94–95 Prices (£million)*
1990–91	11,284	13,258
1991–92	12,651	13,983
1992–93	13,750	14,621

Source:

Annual financial returns of regional, district, and special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals (1990–91 to 1992–93), NHS trusts (1991–92 and 1992–93) and Family Health Services Authorities (1990–91 to 1992–93).

Notes:

1. The figures are based upon gross pay costs including employers' National Insurance and superannuation contributions.
2. 1994–95 prices have been calculated using the GDP deflator dated 29/6/94.

Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is her intention to issue new guidance on the emergency closure of care homes under the Registered Homes Act 1984 following her evaluation of the urgent actions of Buckinghamshire county council; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The Registered Homes Act 1984 already provides adequate procedures to enable homes to be closed if appropriate, including procedures for urgent closure by order of a JP where there appears to be serious risk to the life, health or well-being of residents.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many emergency closures under the Registered Homes Act 1984 have taken place in each local authority area since 1985.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 24 October 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Law Students

Ms Walley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary , Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the numbers of law students embarking on the final year legal practice course in order to qualify for the profession of solicitors; how many he estimates were unable to obtain discretionary grant funding; and what assessment he has made of the effect that the availability of discretionary grant has had on the number of people entering the legal profession.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The award of discretionary grants is a matter for individual local authorities, and policy on postgraduate grant funding is a matter for the Secretary of State for Education. The Lord Chancellor's Department has therefore made no assessment of the numbers of law students embarking on the legal practice course, of those unable to obtain discretionary funding, or of the effect this may have had on numbers of entrants to the legal profession. However, I understand from the Law Society that numbers embarking on the course have risen steadily in recent years. There will be about 6,500 students commencing the 1994–95 course, compared with about 6,000 for 1993–94.

Contract Law

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to the answer of 31 March 1993 to the hon. Member of High Peak (Mr. Hendry), *Official Report*, columns *195–96* what representations he has received concerning the date when reforms of privity of contract should take effect.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since 31 March 1993, representations have been received from the British Retail Consortium and from several members of the public.

Mr. Ernest Saunders

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much legal aid was given to Mr. Ernest Saunders, formerly of Guinness plc.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Lawyers representing Ernest Saunders in the first Guiness trial received legal aid payments totalling £1,342,465. This figure includes VAT and covers all legal representation at the Crown court and the Court of Appeal.

Legal Aid

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many applications there were for legal aid in 1993–94; how many staff are employed in total to check the financial data presented with each claim; how many staff on average check the financial data presented with such claims; and how many prosecutions there were for fraudulent claims in 1993–94.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In 1993–94, there were 413,728 applications for civil legal aid. Civil legal aid means assessments are carried out by trained specialist staff of the Benefits' Agency legal aid assessment office. The office has 134 assessment officers whose duties are to check and assess legal aid applications. In 1993, there were 606,041 applications for criminal legal aid. Applications are dealt with by magistrates court or Crown court centre staff. Prosecutions for fraudulent claims by applicants for legal aid are matters for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service. In 1993–94, the Legal Aid Assessment Office referred 15 cases to them.

Sheriffs

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department to whom high sheriffs and under-sheriffs are accountable; and what are the procedures for an individual citizen to pursue a claim against an under-sheriff whom he believes to have acted in an oppressive manner.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A complaint about a sheriff's officer should, in the first instance, be made to the under-sheriff. If the matter is to be taken further, a complaint should go to the high sheriff. High sheriffs are appointed annually by Her Majesty the Queen and are independent of Government.

In addition, complaints can be made to the Under-Sheriffs Association. and the Sheriffs Officers Association. Although the associations have no statutory authority to act on their findings or to punish an offending member, together the two associations are able to investigate and resolve justified grievances. There is no professional requirement for appointment as an under-sheriff, but in practice all are solicitors and a complaint can also be addressed to the Law Society.

The final recourse for a person who wishes to pursue a grievance is to issue legal proceedings against the high sheriff. The high sheriff would be in a position to issue a third party notice to the sheriff's officer.

Magistrates Bench

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what efforts he is making to ensure that the magistrates bench throughout England and Wales is politically balanced.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster seek, through their local advisory committees, to encourage applications from suitable people of all walks of life and political affiliations by means of press notice and articles, posters and leaflets, court open days and contact with local organisations and employers. Appointments are made from those considered to be suitable having proper regard to the various balancing factors, including political affiliation, so that each bench broadly reflects the community it serves.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the political balance of the magistrates bench in *(a)* the London borough of Brent and *(b)* England and Wales, broken down into petty sessional areas.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* The political affiliation of magistrates in the London borough of Brent, based on the latest information available, is as follows:

Conservative	79
Labour	43
Liberal/Democrat	18
Green	8
Independent/Not Known	18

(b) The individual political balance of each of the 406 petty sessional divisions in England and Wales could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Should the hon. Member require this information for a particular bench or benches it could be supplied to him.

Lord Chancellor

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of meetings of the Cabinet the Lord Chancellor has attended for each year since 1970.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is not Government policy to release details concerning meetings of the Cabinet. The Lord Chancellor is, however, guided, as are all Cabinet Ministers, by paragraph 20 of Questions of Procedure for Ministers, which states:

> "Cabinet meetings take precedence over all other business except meetings of the Privy Council."

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what figures he has concerning the percentage of working time spent by *(a)* the current Lord Chancellor and *(b)* Lord Chancellors since 1964 on their three respective roles as head of the judiciary, Speaker of the House of Lords and head of the administration of the civil justice system; what figures he has on the number of hours each has spent sitting as a judge and as Speaker of the House of Lords; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available in the form requested and it could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Information is available on the number of days which Lord Chancellors since 1964 have spent sitting judicially in the House of Lords and in the Privy Council, and is set out in the table. The Lord Chancellor spends a significant proportion of his time carrying out his duties as Speaker of the House of Lords, for which 14 per cent. of his official salary is paid by the House of Lords. The great majority of the Lord Chancellor's time is spent on his combined duties as head of the judiciary and as a Cabinet Minister with a wide range of responsibilities for the administration of justice.

Lord Chancellor	*Period of Office*	*Number of days* House of Lords*	*Number of days* Privy Council*
Lord Gardiner	1964–70	4	9
Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone	1970–74	28	10
Lord Elwyn-Jones	1974–79	8	—
Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone	1979–87	53	15
Lord Havers	1987	—	—
Lord Mackay of Clashfern	1987–94	60	7

* ie 4·5 hours.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken by his Department to promote the smoky vehicle hotline; what assessment he has made of how many individual members of the public are aware of its existence; and what additional steps he is prepared to take to publicise its existence.

Mr. Norris: The procedure under which members of the public can report excessively smoky heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles to the Vehicle Inspectorate is explained in detail in a leaflet published in August 1993. I have placed copies in the library.

Copies of the leaflet were sent to local authorities, libraries, citizens advice bureaux, motoring organisations, environmental groups and other interested bodies. The leaflet is currently available on request from both the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment. The reporting procedure is also explained in a leaflet which has been sent out with all vehicle excise licence renewal notices since February 1994.

The Vehicle Inspectorate received almost 3,000 hotline calls between April 1993 and March 1994. We are committed to continuing to run the hotline and to encouraging people to make good use of it.

Public Transport (Fares)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to take into account the surveys carried out by the Association of London Authorities and the London Research Council in reviewing public transport fares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I am aware of the results of these surveys. In reviewing operators' proposals for public transport fares, we take all relevant factors into account.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage above inflation increases in fares represent for the period 1984–85 to 1993—94 in respect of *(a)* London Buses, *(b)* London Underground and *(c)* Network SouthEast.

Mr. Norris: The following is the information:

(a) 33 per cent., *(b)* 34 per cent., *(c)* 25 per cent.

Night Blindness

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has a record of the number of accidents caused through motorists not being able to identify other vehicle headlamps at night.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is not available.

SS Richard Montgomery

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the survey in 1993 of the wreck of the SS Richard Montgomery.

Mr. Norris: A very thorough survey of this dangerous wreck was completed in September 1993 and delivered to the Coastguard Agency, which has responsibility for the wreck. The wreck is surveyed on a biennial basis to monitor its condition. A hydrographic survey of seabed area surrounding the wreck was also completed by the

Port of Sheerness Ltd. The port authority is under contract to the Coastguard Agency to guard the wreck.

The survey revealed that there was no evidence of any major change to the wreck since the previous survey in 1991, although it continues to deteriorate slowly and may be expected to begin to break up within the next few years. No dangerous material was found during the survey, although a substantial quantity of munitions remain on board. The silt surrounding the site was shown to be mobile with a deep scour under the wreck itself which is expected to accelerate the deterioration of the hull and eventually lead to the disappearance of that part of the wreck still visible above the surface.

In the light of the survey findings, I have decided that the site of the wreck should remain a prohibited area under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 and that no attempt be made to clear it or its cargo. The wreck will continue to be monitored and another survey undertaken in due course.

I have placed in the Library a report by the Coastguard Agency summarising the result of the 1993 survey, and the steps taken over the years to contain the danger from the munitions on board.

I am sending a copy to my hon. Friend.

Marine Accidents

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will name those flag states which, according to the 1993 annual report of the marine accident investigation branch, leave the investigation of accidents involving vessels bearing their flag to other administrations; and what representations he has made to those countries.

Mr. Norris: A definitive list is not available. No direct representations have been made, but the United Kingdom is working through IMO to encourage those flag states to fulfil their obligations under the various conventions.

Sleeper Services

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement outlining Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to the provision of rail sleeper services between London and Scotland; and if he will make it his policy that existing services will be guaranteed for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Watts: The provision of sleeper services between London and Scotland is at present a matter for British Rail. In future it will be for the operator to decide on the level of such services in the light of the minimum service specification set by the franchising director. The objectives, instructions and guidance given to him by the Secretary of State made it clear that for the initial letting of franchises minimum service specifications should be based on the level of services being provided by British Rail immediately prior to franchising, taking into account the existence of and justification for seasonal variations in service schedules.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to promote the inclusion of the west coast main line route in the proposed trans-European railway network currently under consideration by the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: The west coast main line is already included in the draft trans-European railway network. We have proposed adding the modernisation of the line to the list of priority projects which is being developed by the Christophersen group, and have provided the Commission with full briefings on its scale and significance. We are optimistic that the group will recognise the importance of this project to the trans-European railway network in the report which it is due to present to the European Council in December.

Gatwick Airport

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many cubic metres of soil are being removed to make the cutting for the M3 at Twyford Down; and how much would need to be removed if an additional runway were to be constructed at Gatwick as suggested by the RUCATSE working group.

Mr. Norris: I understand that some 1·8 million cubic metres of soil were removed to make the cutting for the M3 at Twyford Down. The RUCATSE working group estimated that, at Gatwick, some 18 million cubic metres of soil would need to be removed in constructing the northern runway option that was subject to detailed study.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has undertaken the further study, referred to in the report of the RUCATSE working group, into the possibility that the construction of a runway at Gatwick in a deep cutting would create turbulence.

Mr. Norris: No.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the non-departmental public bodies to which his Department makes appointments in the Greater London area, together with the total annual budget for each body and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is shown in the chart.

Name of Body	*Gross Expenditure (£million*)*	*Number of New Appointments and Appointments Renewed*
EXECUTIVE BODIES		
Arts Council of England		17A
1989–91	155·5	4N 1R
1990–91	175·792	1N 2R
1991–92	206·365	2N 2R
1992–93	206·365	5N 1R
1993–94	225·6	2N
British Film Institute		20A
1989–90	22·98	5N 3R
1990–91	24·14	3N 4R
1991–92	26·82	2N 4R
1992–93	30·369	7N 2R
1993–94	27·178	3N 2R

Name of Body	*Gross Expenditure (£million*)*	*Number of New Appointments and Appointments Renewed*
British Library		14A (includes 3 ex-officio appointments)
1989–90	77·05	2N 2R
1990–91	80·49	1N 1R
1991–92	80·49	3N
1992–93	96·71	1N 2R
1993–94	105·123	2N 2R
British Museum		25A
1989–90	31·120	4N 2R
1990–91	34·531	1N 3R
1991–92	38·351	2N 3R
1992–93	42·68	1N
1993–94	44·32	2N 4R
British Tourist Authority		6A
1989–90	37·9	1N 5R
1990–91	39·8	1N 1R
1991–92	43·51	1N 4R
1992–93	45·08	
1993–94	48·0	3N 3R
Broadcasting Complaints Commission		5A
1989–90	0·259	1N
1990–91	0·340	1N
1991–92	0·482	1N 1R
1992–93	0·417	2N
1993–94	0·537	2N
Broadcasting Standards Council		8A
1989–90	1·080	
1990–91	1·243	
1991–92	1·343	1N
1992–93	1·263	1N 1R
1993–94	1·465	4N 1R
Crafts Council		14A
1989–90	3·26	2N 3R
1990–91	3·49	5N
1991–92	3·83	2N 3R
1992–93	4·11	3N 1R
1993–94	4·6	2R
English Tourist Board		7A
1989–90	19·15	2N 5R
1990–91	24·5	1N 1R
1991–92	18·95	1N 4R
1992–93	20·8	1N 1R
1993–94	18·9	2N 4R
Football Licensing Authority		9A
1989–90	—	
1990–91	0·110	6N
1991–92	0·766	
1992–93	0·8	
1993–94	0·9	3N 5R
Geffrye Museum[1]		12A
1992–93	0·971	1N
1993–94	1·195	4R
Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (English Heritage)		14A
1989–90	87·0	4N 2R
1990–91	90·2	3N
1991–92	102·857	5N 1R
1992–93	114·257	3N 3R
1993–94	114·264	2R
Horniman Museum[1]		10A
1992–93	2·895	4R
1993–94	2·477	1R
Imperial War Museum		15A (+6 Commonwealth Commissioners)
1989–90	16·464	
1990–91	14·588	3N 2R
1991–92	17·262	1N 2R
1992–93	17·415	2N 1R
1993–94	17·975	1N
Millennium Commission[2]		9A
1993–94	0·082	9N
Museum of London		18A
1989–90	6·233	3R
1990–91	7·233	4R
1991–92	8·258	1N 4R
1992–93	12·989	5R
1993–94	13·631	3N
Museums and Galleries Commission		15A
1989–90	6·95	1R
1990–91	10·439	1R
1991–92	11·676	3N 2R
1992–93	9·123	3R
1993–94	9·364	3N 3R
National Film Development Fund		3A
1989–90	0·35	
1990–91	0·24	1N 1R
1991–92	—	1N
1992–93	—	
1993–94	—	2R
National Gallery		12A
1989–90	17·328	2N 1R
1990–91	22·953	3N
1991–92	21·976	—
1992–93	22·871	1N 1R
1993–94	26·1	3N 1R
National Heritage Memorial Fund		13A
1989–90	17·6	1R
1990–91	17·9	1N 1R
1991–92	15·811	3N 2R
1992–93	12·292	3N 1R
1993–94	10·558	2R
National Maritime Museum		12A
1989–90	11·109	2N
1990–91	12·461	1N 1R
1991–92	12·468	1R
1992–93	12·468	3N
1993–94	11·608	2N
National Portrait Gallery		14A (+2 ex officio appointments)
1989–90	4·93	1R
1990–91	5·97	1R
1991–92	6·691	2N 2R
1992–93	11·031	3N
1993–94	11·402	1R

Name of Body	*Gross Expenditure (£million*)*	*Number of New Appointments and Appointments Renewed*
Natural History Museum		12A
1989–90	29·1	2N
1990–91	32·552	1N 2R
1991–92	38·115	2N
1992–93	39·509	1N
1993–94	41·208	1N 4R
Royal Armouries		11A
1989–90	4·0	2N
1990–91	4·2	1N
1991–92	4·35	1N 1R
1992–93	6·031	2R
1993–94	6·641	1N 2R
Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts		17A
1989–90	0·62	3N
1990–91	0·79	3N
1991–92	0·81	1N
1992–93	0·81	2N
1993–94	0·947	2R
Science Museum (National Museum of Science and		15A
Industry)		1N
1989–90	29·099	2N 1R
1990–91	22·186	1N 3R
1991–92	22·722	2N 2R
1992–93	25·148	2R
1993–94	26·233	—
Sir John Soane's Museum		9A
1989–90	0·33	—
1990–91	0·73	—
1991–92	1·029	1N 1R
1992–93	0·892	2N 1R
1993–94	0·994	1N 2R
South Bank Theatre Board		3A
1989–90	0·017	2N
1990–91	0·017	
1991–92	0·004	1N
1992–93	0·001	1N
1993–94	0·003	
Sports Council		14A
1989–90	49·7	3N 2R
1990–91	55·9	2N 1R
1991–92	51·7	1N 6R
1992–93	51·7	2N 8R
1993–94	53·955	5N 20R
Tate Gallery		12A
1989–90	12·973	2N 1R
1990–91	15·067	
1991–92	21·709	3N
1992–93	21·709	1R
1993–94	21·829	4N 1R
Victoria and Albert Museum		17A
1989–90	17·392	2N
1990–91	31·939	3N 3R
1991–92	32·082	5R
1992–93	35·6	
1993–94	32·938	2N 4R
Wallace Collection		7A
1989–90	1·26	1N
1990–91	2·104	1N 2R
1991–92	2·181	1R
1992–93	2·319	
1993–94	2·164	
ADVISORY BODIES		
Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites		9A
1989–90	0·091	
1990–91	0·165	
1991–92	0·001	
1992–93	0·001	
1993–94	0·001	
Advisory Committee on the Government Art Collection		7A (4 ex-officio)
1989–90	0·001	
1990–91	0·001	1N
1991–92	0·001	1N
1992–93	—	
1993–94	—	1N 1R
Library and Information Services Council		20A
1989–90	0·034	5N 1R
1990–91	0·037	4N
1991–92	0·023	4N 6R
1992–93	0·023	3N 3R
1993–94	—	4R
Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art		8A
1989–90	0·014	1N 1R
1990–91	0·093	1N 2R
1991–92	0·012	2R
1992–93	0·012	2N 1R
1993–94	0·014	1N 3R
Royal Fine Art Commission		18A
1989–90	0·395	2R
1990–91	0·513	2R
1991–92	0·61	
1992-93	0·655	1N 8R
1993–94	0·69	1N 1R
Theatres Trust		15A
1989–90	0·015	3N 2R
1990–91	0·016	1N 3R
1991–92	0·063	2N 2R
1992–93	0·059	2N 3R
1993–94	0·052	5R
REGIONAL COUNCILS FOR SPORT AND RECREATION		
London Council		7A
1989–90	—	2N 1R
1990–91	—	1N
1991–92	—	2R
1992–93	—	3N 1R
1993–94	—	1R

Notes

* Gross expenditure as published annually in 'Public Bodies'

[1] Sponsorship commenced in the 1992–93 financial year

[2] New body established in 1994

Key

A = total number of current appointees
N = new appointments
R = reappointments

Chess

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from the British Chess Federation concerning the recognition of chess as a sport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: We have received several representations from the British Chess Federation concerning the recognition of chess as a sport. However, my Department's responsibility is for physical sport and recreation. The Government's interest in intellectual pursuits rests with the Department for Education, from which the British Chess Federation receives some financial assistance.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Sproat: The information requested is as follows:

	Department of National Heritage	*Historic Royal Palaces Agency*	*Royal Parks Agency*
1992–93	£22,037	£17,690	£1,032
1993–94	£18,278	£16,374	£8,541

The figures for the years prior to the establishment of my department, in April 1992, are not available.

Channel 3

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what arrangements he intends to introduce to ensure that all persons licensed to provide Channel 3 services will continue to share transmission and distribution costs in such a manner as to maintain the viability of regional services beyond the end of 1996.

Mr. Dorrell: As required under the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1990, I have given my approval to the arrangements proposed by the Independent Television Association for sharing the transmission costs for Channel 3 for the period 1994–1998. These arrangements have the unanimous approval of all the Channel 3 licensees.

ENVIRONMENT

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Gummer: Expenditure on official hospitality by my Department—including Property Holdings—was approximately £67,000 in 1990–91, £63,000 in 1991–92, £98,000 in 1992–93 and £75,000 in 1993–94.

Expenditure on hospitality by the Department's agencies was £15,000 in 1990–91, £29,200 in 1991–92, £41,000 in 1992–93 and £32,000 in 1993–94.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have to introduce transitional relief for authorities which will be adversely affected by the new rating list coming into effect on 1 April 1995.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My Department issued a consultation paper on 3 October setting out proposals for transitional arrangements to phase in the effects of the 1995 revaluation. Copies have been placed in the Library. We expect to announce our decisions by the end of November. The arrangements would apply to local authorities, in respect of rate bills on the properties they occupy, in the same way as to other ratepayers.

Conference Speeches

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of his speeches to *(a)* the Conservative and Unionist party conference and *(b)* the Tory green initiative fringe meeting on matters for which he has departmental responsibility at Bournemouth on 13 October.

Mr. Gummer: In responding to the environment and planning debate I did not use a pre-prepared text. However in the course of my speech I confirmed that the Government had begun work on a major White Paper on the countryside; I announced that the Government intended to legislate to secure a dramatic increase in recycling of packaging waste; I announced the publication of draft legislation for the creation of the new environment agency in order to maintain this country's lead in developing methods of integrated pollution control; and I emphasised the importance of raising the quality of new development and the quality of the built environment generally.

At the fringe meeting of the Tory Green Initiative I discussed the outstanding record of the Conservative party in government in taking practical and specific action to deal with environmental issues and I emphasised the responsibility which falls to a party of government not to pretend that high environmental standards can be achieved without anyone anywhere having to meet the bill. I pointed to the fundamental inconsistency of the Opposition, who demand higher environmental standards while attacking the necessary means of delivery, in particular VAT on fuel, the sensible extension of water metering and additional taxation in petrol.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be making an announcement on the method it is proposed to use to ensure that the National Rivers Authority new main and new second fund will be fully able to meet all its liabilities.

Mr. Atkins: Section 173 of the Water Act 1989 puts beyond any doubt my right hon. Friend's obligation to meet any deficit. The method and timing of any action necessary under the section will ensure that pension liabilities are met in full, while minimising the burden on the taxpayer.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

(a) West Midlands Region

Appointment	*New Appointment Due*	*Salary*
Birmingham Heartlands Development Corporation		
Chairman	8 March 1995	£26,700
Deputy Chairman	8 March 1995	*£9,060
Up to 11 other Board members	22 June 1995(9) 31 October 1995(1) One vacancy	£5,300
Black Country Development Corporation		
Chairman	14 May 1997	£26,700
Deputy Chairman	15 April 1996	**£18,120
Up to 11 other Board members	4 April 1995 21 June 1995 31 December 1995 31 January 1996 21 June 1996 31 July 1996(3) 31 August 1996 Two vacancies	£5,300
Castle Vale Housing Action Trust		
Chairman	30 June 1996	£26,700
Deputy Chairman	30 June 1996	£9,060
Up to 10 other Board members	30 June 1996 (10)	£5,300
Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel		
Chairman 5 other members	Open - ended appointments	Fee based on attendance at meetings

* based on one day per week

** based on two days per week

(b) Shropshire

None

Environment Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria will be used in the appointment of the head of the environment agency.

Mr. Atkins: In appointing the chairman and other members of the environment agency, my right hon. Friend will have regard to the desirability of appointing persons who have experience of, and have shown capacity in, some matter relevant to the functions of the agency.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the time frame he intends to adopt in directing existing waste regulation authorities to submit schemes for the transfer of property, rights and liabilities to the environment agency, as required under paragraph 3(3) *(a)* and *(b)* of the Environment Agencies Bill.

Mr. Atkins: Timing will depend upon passage of the necessary legislation. If this is enacted by the summer of 1995, it is the Government's intention to invite authorities shortly thereafter to submit transfer schemes and for the Secretary of State to complete the approval of schemes in time for the agency to be vested on 1 April 1996.

Pollution Control

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contracts have been awarded by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for the monitoring of releases from sectors controlled by integrated pollution control.

Mr. Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP—has awarded the following contracts for the routine monitoring of releases from processes regulated by Integrated Pollution Control—IPC:

Contract	*Contractor*
1. Emissions to Atmosphere—National Power Sites	BCRA Scientific and Technical Services Ltd.
2. Emissions to Atmosphere—Powergen Sites	TBV Science
3. Releases to Water—National Power Sites	National Rivers Authority
4. Releases to Water—Powergen Sites	Yorkshire Environmental Ltd.
5. Releases to both Atmosphere and Water from Chemical Waste Incinerators	Fugro Environmental Ltd.
6. Releases to Atmosphere in the Midlands and South West of England	EA Technology

In addition, ad-hoc/reactive monitoring of IPC controlled processes is carried out under the following contracts:

Contract	*Contractor*
7. Releases to Water and Effluent Streams	National Rivers Authority
8. Releases to Atmosphere in the NW and NE Regions of HMIP	Entec Cremer and Warner Ltd.
9. Releases to Atmosphere in Wales, the Midlands and South West Regions of HMIP	CRE Group Ltd.
10. Releases to Atmosphere in the Anglian and Southern Regions of HMIP	AEA Technology

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many enforcement notices have been served on British Nuclear Fuels plc under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 since it came into force; and what actions have been taken by British Nuclear Fuels plc to comply.

Mr. Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has served one enforcement notice on British Nuclear Fuels plc under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993. This was served on 20 June 1994 and related to its Sellafield site.

British Nuclear Fuels plc confirmed compliance with the requirements of this notice within the specified time in a report submitted to HMIP on 1 September 1994.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Gummer: As at 1 October 1994, there were 6,340 non-industrial staff in my Department, excluding PSA Services. These staff were employed in each of the regions as follows:

Region	*Staff employed as percentage of total*
Eastern	1·1
East Midlands	1·6
London	61·9
North West	7.9
Northern	2·0
South East	4.0
South West	13·1
West Midlands	3·0
Yorkshire & Humberside	3·4
Scotland	1·1
Wales	0·9

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the rules governing profit-related pay in relation to local authority direct labour organisations; and what changes he proposes to make.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Subject to the statutory requirement for local authority direct services organisations —DSOs—to meet the prescribed financial objective for the service in question, and to the normal rules of financial propriety and regularity, local authorities have discretion to structure DSO pay in whatever way they think appropriate, including linking it to financial surpluses achieved. My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce rules on this matter.

Odour Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received on the two odour pollution incidents at the Global Environmental plant in Leeds in August; and what steps have been taken to avoid future discharge from wet air oxidation waste processing plants.

Mr. Atkins: The global environmental waste disposal site in Leeds is subject to waste management licensing under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Enforcement of environmental regulations at the site is therefore a matter for the West Yorkshire waste regulation authority. The authority is investigating the incidents referred to and will decide what action, if any, should be taken.

On the general question of the control of discharges from wet oxidation plants, a waste regulation authority can, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, impose such conditions as it considers appropriate in a waste management licence in order to minimise the risk of pollution of the environment or harm to human health, including conditions relating to the control of odour release.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to introduce primary legislation to amend the homeless persons legislation contained in part III of the Housing Act 1985; and what administrative action he will be taking to further the proposals contained in the consultation document "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies" pending the introduction of such legislation.

Mr. Curry: We will introduce legislation when parliamentary time permits. Meanwhile we will be encouraging local authorities to pursue such proposals as developing advice services, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their allocation systems, working in partnership with the private rented sector, and examining the potential to develop common housing registers with housing associations.

Enterprise Zone (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the granting of enterprise zone status to areas within the district of Easington.

Sir Paul Beresford: The designation of the proposed East Durham—Easington—enterprise zones is contingent on satisfactory arrangements being in place to ensure that EC sectoral restrictions on aids to industry can be enforced. As soon as these arrangements have been finalised, the United Kingdom statutory procedures will be initiated and these normally take about six months.

Broads Authority (Planning)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what sections of which planning legislation planning enforcement action may be taken against individuals in the area now covered by the Broads Authority.

Sir Paul Beresford: As the local planning authority, the Broads Authority has the following discretionary enforcement powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991:

(1) to issue an enforcement notice (section 172);

(2) to serve a stop notice (section 183);

(3) to serve a breach of condition notice (section 187A);

(4) to apply to the Court for an injunction to restrain a breach of planning control (section 187B); and

(5) the right of entry on to land for enforcement purposes (section 196A)

Guidance to planning authorities on the use of these powers is given in DOE circulars 21/91 and 17/92, copies of which I am sending to my hon. Friend.

Special Conservation Areas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish a list of proposed special areas of conservation.

Mr. Atkins: I expect to be able to publish a list of candidate special areas of conservation for consultation by Christmas.

Power Stations

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has the authority to require power stations fitted with flue gas desulphurisation plant, electrostatic precipitators or low oxides of nitrogen burners to use that plant across the whole range of power output.

Mr. Atkins: Yes, if it is not excessively costly to run the abatement equipment.

A condition may be included in an authorisation granted under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to require an operator to run an abatement plant when the authorised process is being operated, provided that it is not excessively costly to do so and provided that there is not some other preferable technique, having regard to cost and efficacy.

EC Directives

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cases the European Commission has started against the United Kingdom for non-compliance with directive 76/464/EEC; and what sites are involved.

Sir Paul Beresford: There have been a number of exchanges with the Commission about directive 76/464/EEC in recent years. Details of proceedings under article 169 of the treaty are kept in confidence between the Commission and the member state Government.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Lord Archer

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what correspondence he has received on the withholding from publication of his Department's report on the allegations of insider dealing by Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Heseltine: There is no provision in the Financial Services Act 1986 for inspectors reports to be published and it follows that it would be inappropriate to place a copy in the Library of the House. I have received several letters from Members of the House and others on the subject.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the dates on which his Department communicated with the inspectors who conducted the inquiry into allegations of insider dealing involving Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, showing the purpose of each communication.

Mr. Heseltine: It is normal practice for officials of my Department to keep in regular contact with inspectors during the course of their inquiries. Details of those contacts are confidential.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* total cost of the inquiry into the allegations of insider trading involving Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare.

Mr. Heseltine: The total cost, including inspectors' fees, disbursements and VAT, of the investigation into alleged insider dealing in the shares of Anglia Television Group plc was £213,767. Individual inquiries are not subject to separate budgets.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken to obtain the consent of Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare to releasing the report on alleged insider dealing in relation to the MAI purchase of Anglia Television.

Mr. Heseltine: I have taken no such action.

Los Angeles Times (Interview)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the interview he gave to the *Los Angeles Times* in the summer.

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Oil and Gas Fields

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what environmental protection conditions cover the loan by the European Investment bank to BHP Hamilton Oil for its development of oil and gas fields off the Welsh Coast.

Mr. Eggar: Before the loan was granted environmental impact assessments—EIAs—were carried out in accordance with directive EEC/85/337 on all on-shore and off-shore elements of the project. The project has also met all the environmental requirements of the United Kingdom authorities, following their separate EIA on the off-shore installations. A 500m shipping exclusion zone and a 1,000m development zone will operate around each offshore structure; radar coverage from Liverpool will be extended to include these structures.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the circumstances in which, as a matter of policy, persons other than departmental staff are engaged to investigate allegations of insider dealing under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Heseltine: There is no laid down policy: decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

Credit Reference Agencies

Ms Mowlam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the use of postal codes or addresses by credit reference agencies and other institutions in assessing credit worthiness.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The matter was assessed in 1992 by the then Director General of Fair Trading. He concluded that the use of such information was legitimate provided that it was not capable of outweighing all other factors. I have no plans to initiate a further assessment.

Jaguar Cars

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from Ford or Jaguar cars about investment by his Department for the development of a new model to be built in Coventry by Jaguar.

Mr. Eggar: Ford and Jaguar have discussed with my Department the scope for possible selective financial assistance for a new Jaguar model, codenamed the X200. No application has yet been made.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The information is as follows:

Public Body	*Title of Appointment*	*Duration*	*Date appointment expires*	*Salary*
Public appointments in the West Midlands Region				
Office of Electricity Regulation	Director General of Electricity Supply	5 years	31 August 1999	£100,000 pa
West Midlands Industrial Development Board	Chairman	2 years	31 December 1995	None
	Member x 5	2 years	31 December 1994	None
	Member x 5	2 years	31 December 1995	None
Persons Hearing Consumer Credit Licensing Appeals	Panel Member x 3	No fixed period for appointments		None
Persons Hearing Estate Agents Appeals	Panel Member x 3	No fixed period for appointments		None
Public appointments in Shropshire				
Persons Hearing Credit Licensing Appeals	Panel Member	No fixed period for appointment		None

Insider Dealing

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many inquiries into alleged insider dealing his Department has undertaken under the Financial Services Act 1986 in the past three years; what period of time elapsed between the decision to commence an inquiry and its completion in each case; and on how many occasions persons other than departmental staff have been used as investigators.

Mr. Heseltine: In the last three years inspectors have been appointed to investigate alleged insider dealing under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 on 10 occasions as follows:

Case	*Date of appointment*	*Date of report*	*Inspectors*
A	19 December 1991	31 July 1992	Internal
B	21 February 1992	Not yet reported	Internal
C	6 July 1992	31 December 1992	Internal
D	13 May 1993	30 September 1993	Internal
E	8 September 1993	26 August 1994	Internal
F	1 November 1993	Not yet reported	External
G	28 January 1994	26 April 1994	Internal
H	8 February 1994	19 July 1994	External
I	20 April 1994	Not yet reported	Internal
J	4 May 1994	Not yet reported	Internal

Droit de Suite Levy

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions the Government have taken part in with the European Union on the imposition of a droit de suite levy on works of art; what position it has taken; and whether he proposes to introduce such a tax.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Government decided against the introduction of droit de suite, or "resale right", in the United Kingdom when this was considered during the process of review leading up to the present copyright legislation, the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, since it was not convinced that this right, which entitles artists to a share in the proceeds of the second and subsequent sales of their work, is either justified or satisfactorily workable in practice. There are no plans to reverse this decision, but the Commission is studying droit de suite as part of its working programme in the copyright field announced in 1991, since several other EC states already provide a right of this kind in their copyright laws. So far as the Government are aware, however, the Commission has not yet decided whether to bring forward any proposals for harmonisation in this area. It has not sought the views of member states on the matter, but has nevertheless been made aware of the United Kingdom's general reservations on the principle of droit de suite.

Post Office

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the current salaries of the chairman and chief executive of the Post Office; and what has been the average increase over a three-year period in the salaries of chairmen and chief executives of newly privatised companies.

Mr. Eggar: The chairman's basic salary is £101,500 per annum and the chief executive's £182,700. The figure of the average increase over a three-year period in the salaries of chairmen and chief executives of newly privatised companies is not available as no information on these salaries is held centrally.

Departmental Transport

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the engagements of the Minister for Energy and Industry for 10 September 1993; what means of transport was used to attend these engagements; and who provided or paid for it.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 21 October 1994]:* I had a number of engagements in my office on 10 September 1993 and travelled by ministerial car to Heathrow airport to commence an overseas visit on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions he or his ministerial colleagues have used transport provided by Mr. R. Budge or R.J.B. Ltd.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 21 October 1994]:* I am not aware of any occasion on which any Minister whilst serving in this Department used transport provided by Mr R. Budge or RJB Ltd.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines exist about the offers or use by transport provided by companies with which his Department has dealings.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 21 October 1994]:* The relevant guidelines are contained in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION

Students

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the estimated cost of extending mandatory fee support to part-time first degree students.

Mr. Boswell: The cost would depend upon the decisions taken about eligible courses, future student numbers, the maximum fee entitlement and the account to be taken of the personal circumstances of potentially eligible students.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children were excluded from school in the last academic year.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Failing Schools

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the quality of the inspectors' reports on failing schools.

Mr. Forth: This is a matter for Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, who heads the independent office for Standards in Education. I have asked Mr. Woodhead to write to the hon. Member.

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what evidence there is to suggest that staff at grant-maintained schools wish to return to local education authority control.

Mr. Robin Squire: There is none of which the Department is aware. Recent suggestions that some grant-maintained schools in Hillingdon wish to return to LEA control are completely unfounded.

Chinese Students

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what funding she *(a)* has made and *(b)* intends to make available for Chinese students, with particular reference to translators, to study English.

Mr. Boswell: None. However, Chinese students will receive nearly £1·4 million of Government funding in the 1994–95 financial year from FCO, ODA and the British Council scholarship schemes for overseas students. It is not possible to identify how much of this funding will benefit students who wish to study English with the aim of becoming translators.

Further Education

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what evidence exists to suggest that there has been a substantial change in the numbers of further education students in the last 12 months;

(2) what has been the change in the numbers of further education students in the last 12 months; and what subjects and what geographical areas are most affected.

Mr. Boswell: The number of students on further education courses at institutions of further or higher education, including sixth form colleges, increased by about 3 per cent. between the 1992–93 and 1993–94 academic years. In terms of full-time equivalents the increase was about 6 per cent.

All regions showed an increase of some magnitude, but that in Greater London was particularly pronounced. Most main subject groups also showed an increase. The largest increases were for subjects allied to medicine, education and mathematical and computing sciences.

Korean Students

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Korean nationals are currently studying at United Kingdom institutions of higher education.

Mr. Boswell: In the academic year 1992–93 there were 596 students from Korea studying at institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom—572 students from South Korea and 24 students from North Korea. Data for the academic year 1993–94 is not yet available.

Teachers Pay

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the annual costs of implementing the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1993 in relation to teacher salary re-assessments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department estimated that the overall cost of implementing the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1993 would be 1·5 per cent. across the profession as a whole. Costs will have varied from teacher to teacher for a number of reasons when salaries were re-assessed on 1 September 1993.

Village Primary Schools

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she proposes to take to safeguard the future of village primary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend will always consider very carefully, and on their individual merits, any statutory proposals involving village schools which come to her for decision.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Jack: The information covers all permanent staff employed by the Department, including agencies, at 1 October 1994. Part-time staff are counted as one.

Total staff in Department 10,307

Percentage of staff by MAFF Region	*Per cent.*
Headquarters staff	55·8
Anglia	6·6
East Midlands	3·2
North Eastern	3·8
Northern	5·1
North Mercia	5·3
South Eastern	6·0
South Mercia	3·6
South Western	5·4
Wessex	2·6
Wales	2·6
Total	100·0

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now publish figures for how much the United Kingdom contribution to the common agricultural policy costs the average British family per week.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 15 March, *Official Report* column *601–2.*

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current estimate of the cost of the common agricultural policy in *(a)* 1994 and *(b)* 1995; and what was the cost in (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993.

Mr. Jack: The Commission has proposed a supplementary and amending budget for 1994 which would reduce the common agricultural policy budget from 36,465 mecu—£28,143 million— to 34,787 mecu—£26,848 million. The 1995 draft budget has been set at the level of the agricultural guideline of 36,994 mecu—£29,056 million. Expenditure in 1992 and 1993 was 32,109 mecu—£22,722 million—and 35,095 mecu—£27,571 million—respectively.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due and the salary.

Mr. Jack: The south mercia and north mercia regional panels cover the west midlands region and Shropshire respectively. The regional panels are advisory non-statutory bodies consisting of between eight and 10 members. The members are appointed for an initial period of up to three years, normally from 1 April, and can serve for a maximum of six years. The panel chairman and members receive no salary, but can claim travel and subsistence expenses.

Agricultural wages committees for each of the regions have two independent members appointed by the Minister, whose terms of appointment end on 31 December 1994, together with additional members appointed by other organisations. Members are appointed for a period of up to two years and receive a daily fee for attending meetings of £68. If elected chairman of the agricultural wages committee, they are entitled to a fee of £86 per day.

The Minister appoints the chairmen of the agricultural dwelling house advisory committees for the two areas for up to three years. Most of these appointments are due for renewal on 31 December 1994. The chairman receives a daily fee of £86.

The Severn-Trent regional flood defence committee of the National Rivers Authority covers most of the specified area. The Minister is responsible for the appointment of a chairman and seven members; these appointments are for three years and new ministerial appointments will be made on 1 July 1997. Other members are appointed by local authorities and the National Rivers Authority. The chairman receives a salary of £11,200 per annum; members receive expenses.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each of the last five years for which figures are available, and broken down into the constituent counties within the United Kingdom, the number of cases of application for sheep annual premium which have been rejected because the application date was missed by the applicant; and what percentage that number constitutes of the total number of SAP applications made in that county for that year.

Mr. Jack: The number and percentage of sheep premium claims rejected because they arrived after the last date for receipt, in respect of each agriculture department for each of the last five years, are set out in the table. I will write to the hon. Member to provide the breakdown by county.

Claims for Sheep Annual Premium rejected after late submission

	1990	*Percentage of claims received*	*1991*	*Percentage of claims received*	*1992*	*Percentage of claims received*	*1993*	*Percentage of claims received*	*1994*	*Percentage of claims received*
England	*	*	*	*	40	0·09	190	0·44	61	0·15
Scotland	14	0·08	15	0·09	9	0·05	38	0·22	12	0·07
Wales	1	0·01	7	0·04	3	0·02	10	0·05	18	0·01
Northern Ireland	34	0·26	26	0·02	18	0·13	24	0·18	31	0·25

* No figures are available for 1991 and 1992

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider making a case to the European Commission to allow national discretion in a limited number of circumstances to enable sheep annual premium applications to be deemed to be received by the due application date where sheep producers have a bona fide reason for not lodging the necessary application forms on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Member states have discretion under the sheep annual premium scheme to accept claims lodged after the final date for receipt where the reasons for late lodgement constitute force majeure, which covers the most exceptional of circumstances. Wider discretion to accept late claims would carry the risk that the retention period, which is a fundamental requirement of the scheme, could not be effectively enforced.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his predecessor's answer of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *562*, if he is now able to provide the information requested for 1994 concerning changes in hill livestock compensatory allowance payments.

Mr. Waldgrave: There remains a small number of payments to be made under the 1994 hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme. The information requested is therefore not yet complete. I will write to the hon. Member in January 1995 when the information will be available.

Nephrops

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will ask the Council of Ministers to increase current precautionary nephrops total allowable catches in the North sea to take into account increased catches from Fladden bank;

(2) what proposals he has to introduce separate precautionary total allowable catches for nephrops on the Fladden bank in the North sea;

(3) what steps he is taking to prevent current nephrops quota being reduced before the end of the current year.

Mr. Jack: Following representations from the fishing and processing industries, my Department is approaching the European Commission with a request for an increase in the current precautionary total allowable catch for North sea nephrops. I shall be considering the case for treating the Fladden ground separately. In the meantime, strict controls are being maintained in order to keep this year's fishery open as long as possible.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to ban twin prawn trawls.

Mr. Jack: EC technical conservation rules permit fishing for nephrops with a minimum mesh size of 70 mm in the North sea and allow fishing for cod and other white fish with a minimum mesh size of 100 mm. Since August 1993, with the agreement of the United Kingdom industry, it has not been possible for United Kingdom fishing vessels to use twin or multirig fishing gear in the North sea, except on the Fladen ground, unless the minimum mesh size has been 100 mm. There are no current plans to change this.

Animal Health and Veterinary Group

Mr. Booth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes he proposes to make in his Department's functions and organisation following the management review of the animal health and veterinary group.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 16 March 1993, my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), announced a review of the Ministry's Animal Health and Veterinary Group with a view to improving the use of the Ministry's resources in this area. The review team reported earlier this year and a consultation document is now being sent out to interested organisations and placed in the Library of the House which sets out the initial conclusions which I have reached in consultation with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales, who share with me policy responsibilities in this area.

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of ADAS.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are anxious to press ahead with the privatisation of ADAS as soon as possible. However, it is necessary to have regard to financial aspects, competition policy and the need for any privatised body to avoid unacceptable conflicts of interests. Accordingly, we have now instructed officials to look into the possibility of privatising part of the organisation while avoiding these potential problems. The expectation is that the privatised body will include the whole of the commercial consultancy and commercial research and development arms and some other work. Some functions presently located within ADAS would probably remain within the departments after privatisation. I will make a further statement in due course.

WALES

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information amongst visually impaired people.

Mr. Redwood: My Department has spent a total of £6,000 in the last three years producing and publicising public information material in Braille, large print and on audio tape.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate which Departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Redwood: The following Welsh Office publications are currently available in formats other than normal print:

Council Tax - A guide to the New Tax for Local Government in Wales (available in Braille, large print and on tape)

Council Tax - Valuation and Banding (Braille, large print and tape)

Council Tax - How to Appeal (Braille, large print and tape)

Council Tax - Liability, Discounts and Exemptions (Braille, large print and tape.

An Inspection of Services for the Visually Impaired in Gwynedd (large print and tape)

Published Information for Users and Carers and General Public—

A Guide to Good Practice (large print)

Keep Warm, Keep Well (tape)

Details of material produced in alternative formats is publicised through information releases to the media and through direct contact with relevant organisations.

Health Service Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific analysis his Department has conducted on the cost and efficiency of introducing performance-related pay to clinical grades in the national health service.

Mr. Redwood: Local managers are in the best position to devise local pay schemes for clinicians linked to the needs of the hospital. The assessment of the cost and efficiency of any such schemes would also be for local determination.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Redwood: The amounts spent by the Welsh Office and its agencies on official hospitality were:

Year	*Welsh Office* £	*Cadw* £
1990–91	45,419	632
1991–92	35,982	481
1992–93	38,382	1,955
1993–94	26,818	2,248
1994–95 (to 30 September 1994)	12,938	244

Student Maintenance Grant

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average maintenance grant paid by Welsh local education authorities to students for the 1994–95 academic year; and what the figure was for *(a)* the 1993–94 academic year and *(b)* the 1979–80 academic year.

Mr. Redwood: The average net maintenance grant paid as part of a mandatory award by local education authorities in Wales was £1,540 in the academic year 1989–90, £1,620 in 1991–92 and £1,690 in 1992–93. This is fully reimbursed by central Government.

Discretionary student awards are funded entirely from LEAs' own resources. The average net maintenance grant paid as part of a discretionary award by LEAs in Wales was £620 in the academic year 1989–90, £670 in 1991–92 and £440 in the academic year 1992–93.

1992–93 is the latest academic year for which information on LEAs' expenditure on either mandatory or discretionary awards is available. Similar information for the years prior to 1989–90 is not readily available.

Tourist Boards

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the *(a)* chairs and *(b)* non-executive directors of each tourist board, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Wales tourist board has exclusive responsibility for tourism in Wales. The current board comprises:-

Chairman: Mr. A.R. Lewis—Broadcaster and journalist

Members: Mrs T. Bevan—Retired former head of programmes with BBC Wales

Mr. S. Wanhill—Professor of Tourism, University of Wales College of Cardiff

Mr. J. Dunscombe—Managing Director of Washington Travel

Mr. C. Jackson—Administrative Director of Zoological Society of Wales also involved with running Welsh Mountain Zoo.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Mozambique

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he plans to provide for rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes following the elections in Mozambique.

Mr. Baldry: We plan to maintain a substantial bilateral development programme, focusing on support for economic reform, promotion of rural development in Zambezia province and English language teaching. We shall also continue to provide emergency assistance where appropriate, channelling it through non-governmental organisations mainly for seeds, tools and de-mining.

Mozambique will also benefit under the EC's southern African reconstruction and rehabilitation programme, the United Kingdom share of which is over £12 million.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many humanitarian flights have landed in Tuzla, in the former Yugoslavia, since the airport was officially opened in March; and what are now the principal obstacles to further humanitarian flights.

Mr. Baldry: It has not been possible to use Tuzla airport for humanitarian aid flights because the parties have not provided a security guarantee.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

The Prime Minister: No such surveys have been commissioned by my office.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he made during his recent visit to Saudia Arabia about the Arab embargo on Israeli goods; and what was the reaction of the Government of Saudi Arabia.

The Prime Minister: During my visit to Saudi Arabia I made clear the importance we attach to a just and lasting settlement on all aspects of the peace process. The Gulf co-operation states have since announced that, for all practical purposes, the secondary and tertiary elements of the Arab boycott will no longer be applied. I welcome any moves towards the full lifting of the boycott.

Public Appointments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a statistical analysis of the number of known members of each political party represented in the House who are listed by the Cabinet Office as *(a)* current and *(b)* potential appointees to public bodies.

The Prime Minister: Appointments to public bodies are made on the basis of merit, aptitude and suitability to meet the demands of the post.

Nominees on the public appointments unit's register are not required to give any details of their political affiliation. From the information made available by individuals, only 12·5 per cent. are known to have been members of a political party.

Constitutional Discussions

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what machinery exists for the Queen to receive the collective advice of the Heads of Government of all the Commonwealth countries of which she is head of state when matters arise which relate to the common constitutional link of the monarchy.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty the Queen consults her Ministers in the United Kingdom, and in those countries of which she is sovereign, in matters relating to her capacity as Head of the Commonwealth.

Her Majesty also has contact with heads of state and Government of Commonwealth countries at the biennial Commonwealth heads of government meetings and on other occasions.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what communications he, or the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, has had with Heads of Government of other Commonwealth countries of which the Queen is sovereign on matters relating to the succession.

The Prime Minister: None.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what communications he, or the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, has had with heads of Government of other Commonwealth countries of which the Queen is sovereign on matters relating to the common constitutional link of the Crown since his answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *352*.

The Prime Minister: None.

Insider Trading

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 18 October, *Official Report*, columns *142–43*, if he will set out on which occasions statements were made by Ministers requiring that DTI inspectors' reports on matters relating to insider trading inquiries be not published; and if he will give the *Official Report* column references to which he is referring.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 21 October 1994]:* The question was debated during the passage of the Financial Services Bill. I refer the hon. Member to the *Official Report* of the House of Lords, 29 July 1986, columns *737–44*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

War Crimes Act

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on progress under the War Crimes Act 1991.

The Attorney-General: Seven cases have now been investigated by the police to a stage where it has become possible for the Crown Prosecution Service to consider the question of whether or not to prosecute. Inquiries continue into these and other cases.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

European Community Legislation

37. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will review the arrangements for the consideration of EC legislation.

Mr. Newton: The arrangements are kept under constant review.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Emphysema

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received concerning entitlement to awards for emphysema contracted through pit face working.

Mr. Hague: I have received a number of representations about the qualifying criteria recommended by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, in respect of payment of benefit for chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Poverty

Mr Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will constitute an inquiry into the current levels and extent of poverty in Britain.

Mr. Burt: Research is now regularly conducted into the role of social security and its impact on those in low-income households. A list of research projects sponsored by the Department is published in the Social Security yearbooks, formerly the "DSS Handbook of Research and Development", copies of which are in the Library.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the total cost and number of recipients of housing benefit in the current year; and what were the equivalent figures for 1982.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is in the table.

Great Britain		*Housing Benefit only*		*Housing Benefit plus an estimate for the number of people on Supplementary Benefit who get help with housing costs*	
		Spending £ (millions)	*Caseload (thousands)*	*Spending £ (millions)*	*Caseload (thousands)*
1982–83[1]	Rent Rebate	929	3,050	1,777	3,580
	Rent Allowance	74	260	351	851
1994–95[2]	Rent Rebate	5,659	1,432	n/a	n/a
	Rent Allowance	4,320	3,186	n/a	n/a

n/a = not applicable

Note:

1982–83 caseload and expenditure figures include estimates for people whose Supplementary Benefit payments included help with their rent.

[1] Information taken from Public Expenditure papers.

[2] "Government's Expenditure Plans 1994–95 to 1996–97". Caseload information extrapolated from figures in same report.

Child Support Agency

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many letters he has received concerning the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: Between April 1993 and the end of September 1994, approximately 18,000 letters have been received at DSS headquarters covering a range of views about child support.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what factors led to the delay in assessing child maintenance by the Child Support Agency; and if he will make a statement on what proportion of assessments for lone mothers take more than six months.

Mr. Burt: A variety of factors were involved, including early operating difficulties and clients' response to the new arrangements.

The agency acknowledge that an unacceptable proportion of cases take more than six months to clear and is already taking action to improve processing times.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the operations of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: Despite acknowledged early difficulties, the performance of the agency has improved significantly during the first part of this year. I will be monitoring its performance very closely to ensure that such improvements continue.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the recommendation made by the Social Security Select Committee in its first report on the operation of the Child Support Act that if the appeal is decided in favour of the applicant, a reimbursement of the excess paid should be made within five working days and that this should also be part of the citizens charter for the agency; and what plans he has to implement that recommendation.

Mr. Burt: The Government did not accept this recommendation. The reasons are set out in the Government's response to the report—CM 2469, published February 1994.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the detection of social security fraud.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The fight against fraud remains a top priority. In 1993–94 Benefits Agency investigators caught 312,000 cheats and a record £654 million of fraud was identified and stopped.

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he is planning to reduce fraud involving order books and giros.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Luff).

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what incentives he is giving to Benefits Agency staff to reduce order book fraud.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Benefits Agency staff are expected to be alert to the possibility of fraud at all times. Last year a record £105·5 million worth of fraudulent and counterfeit order books and girocheques were recovered, and new performance indicators have been set for this year to improve upon this performance.

Automation

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy in respect of the automated payment of benefits.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Our preferred method of payment is by automated credit transfer directly into bank or building society accounts. However, we recognise that many people prefer to collect their benefit at post offices, and in May my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced our intention to automate the process by which benefits are delivered at post office counters. This is good news for customers, good news for taxpayers and good news for post offices.

Child Poverty

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next intends to meet the Child Poverty Action Group to discuss initiatives to reduce the extent of child poverty in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Burt: Ministers meet regularly with representatives of children's groups, including the Child Poverty Action Group, to discuss a variety of issues affecting children. I last met CPAG on 13 October.

Pensioners

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans exist to incorporate the provisions of the War Pensioners (Equal Rights) Bill within the overall review of differentials between pensions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the progress of the review of the differentials between pensions.

Mr. Roger Evans: There are no plans for such a review.

Pension Trusts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what safeguards will exist under the new proposals to protect employee trustees from dismissal for whistleblowing on any illegitimate action taken by pension trusts.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Were an employee trustee to be dismissed from his employment for whistleblowing he would enjoy the protection afforded by the appropriate provisions contained in existing employment law.

Pension Trusts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received on the prospective complications posed by the proposed opt-out option for the requirement for compulsory employee trustee elections for pension schemes.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Department of Social Security received 178 replies to its consultation document on the selection and appointment of member-nominated trustees. A majority of respondents supported our proposals that members in all types of schemes should have the right to select one third of the trustees but many were concerned that the arrangements for opt-out, suggested in this document, could prove difficult to operate on a practical level. We are now considering the best way to implement our proposals in the light of these comments.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Hague: Three of the war pensions committees for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible cover parts of the west midlands region, including Shropshire.

Each committee consists of 30 members, appointed for a period of five years. New appointments are due on 1 January 1996. No salary is payable.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Hague: On 1 October 1994, 88,173 full time equivalent staff were employed by the Department of Social Security. The proportions employed in each of the economic planning regions are shown in the table.

Region	*Proportion per cent. of Total Staff Employed*
Scotland	10
Northern	18
Yorkshire and Humberside	8
North West	21
East Midlands	4
West Midlands	7
Wales	4
East Anglia	2
South East	21
South West	5
Northern Ireland and Overseas	Less than 1

State Pensions

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the latest figure for the number of *(a)* men aged 65 years and over and *(b)* women aged 60 years and over who are receiving a state pension.

Mr. Arbuthnot: At March 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, a total of 3,561,390 men and 6,690,270 women were in receipt of a state retirement pension[1].*Note* [1] "State Retirement Pension" means a contributory retirement pension, a non-contributory retirement pension or graduated retirement benefit.

Child Allowance

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of claimants eligible for the new child allowance.

Mr. Burt: We estimate that 150,000 families will benefit from the introduction of the new help with child-care charges in family credit, disability working allowance, housing benefit and council tax benefit. This includes 50,000 taking up work as a direct result of the change.

National Insurance

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the total cost in the full year of widening the nil band of the class 1 employee NIC (contracted in) up to earnings of £100 per week.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The loss of income would be some £1·5 billion in a full year.

Notes:

Employee contributions—assumes that contributions are deducted at 2 per cent. on first £100 of earnings once they exceed the lower earnings limit.

Employer contribution—assumes that the lower earnings limit becomes £100 and that the existing structure of rates and earnings brackets applies above it.

Assumes that band earnings for the purpose of contracting out also begins at £100.

Pensioner Income

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners are estimated to have no income other than the statutory retirement pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Information is not available on the number of pensioners whose sole income is retirement pension. An estimated 92 per cent. of pensioner couples* and 81 per cent of single pensioners receive income on top of state benefits.

* Pensioner couples are those where the husband is over 65. *Source:* Family Expenditure Survey 1992.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish the current value of the elderly persons' Christmas bonus if increased to a sum equivalent to the value of £10 in 1977 using the September increase in the RPI to calculate the current value;

(2) if he will publish the cost to the Exchequer of raising the elderly persons' Christmas bonus to 1994 prices and paying the bonus at the new value at Christmas 1994;

(3) whether he will consider increasing the elderly persons' Christmas bonus to a sum equivalent to the value of £10 in 1977 and allowing the annual increases thereafter in line with the increase in the RPI.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Christmas bonus was first introduced in 1972 at the rate of £10 and is paid to about 13·1 million people. No Government have increased the bonus since. The equivalent value of £10 bonus in December 1977 at September 1994 prices is £30.36. The additional cost of raising the bonus from 1977 to 1994 prices would be approximately £267 million. We have no plans to increase the Christmas bonus.

Note: Roundings to nearest 5 pence. *Source:* The Retail price Index (all items) as published by the Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would now be the level of the £10 Christmas bonus paid to retirement pensioners adjusted in line with changes in the RPI since its introduction.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The lump sum £10 Christmas bonus was introduced in December 1972. If it had been increased in line with the movement in the RPI each year since its introduction the rate in December 1994 would be £65.70.

Source: The retail price index (all items) as published by the Central Statistical Office

Note:

1: Calculations for each step rounded to the nearest 5p.

2: December 1994 increase based on September 1992 to September 1993 RPI

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of retirement pensioners eligible for the £10 Christmas bonus when introduced in 1973 and its cost to public funds; and what were the comparable figures at December 1993.

Mr. Arbuthnot: When it was first introduced in December 1972, the £10 bonus was paid to approximately 7.8 million retirement pensioners at a cost of £78 million. Comparable figures at December 1993 were 9.8 million retirement pensioners at a cost of £98 million.

Source: DSS Statistics

Cold Weather Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish the current value of the cold weather allowance if increased to a sum equivalent to the value of £5 in 1986 using the September increase in the RPI to calculate the current value;

(2) if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of increasing the cold weather allowance to 1994 price levels and paying the allowance at the new level during financial year 1994–95;

(3) whether he will consider increasing the level of payment of cold weather allowance to a sum equivalent to £5 in 1986 and raising the annual increases thereafter in line with the increase in the RPI;

(4) what increases he proposes to the value of the cold weather allowance to compensate for the increases in VAT on fuel costs imposed in the 1993 Budget.

Mr. Roger Evans: Cold weather payments towards the cost of domestic fuel bills will increase to £7 from 1 November 1994 and to £7·50 from 1 November 1995. If the previous payment of £5, originally introduced in December 1986, had been increased using the September value of the fuel and light component of the retail price index the amount would have increased to £6·70 from 1 November 1994–30p less than the actual new payment. Using this alternative payment, the Exchequer would have saved £619,256 this winter, if the same number of cold weather payments were made as last year. As cold weather payments are a contribution towards fuel costs designed to complement day-to-day living expenses met through income support, we have no plans to link these payments with the RPI.

Fire Safety, Quarry House

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *18–19*, whether Quarry house, Leeds, has now been issued with a fire safety certificate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: Following an inspection of Quarry house the Home Office fire inspectorate issued a notice in July 1994 confirming that a fire certificate would be issued a soon as a small number of remedial works had been satisfactorily completed. A limit of six months was set for the completion of the work. It is anticipated that the fire certificate will be issued in January 1995 when the Home Office fire inspector conducts a final inspection of the building.

Lady Mary Hospitality Home

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the full amount of weekly benefit paid to a constituent of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood, details of whom have been supplied to him, during the period 1989 to 1993 when he was registered as living at the Lady Mary hospitality home; if he will include a breakdown of how those payments were made up and how they changed over the period; what were the exact dates he was registered as living at the home; and what payments would have been made to that person if he had been living in accommodation with no care staff, during those periods;

(2) what was the amount of weekly benefit paid to a constituent of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood, details of whom have been supplied to him, *(a)* during 1992 and early 1993 and *(b)* between late 1993 and February 1994 when he was registered as living at the Lady Mary hospitality home; if he will publish a breakdown of how those payments were made up; and what were the exact dates he was living at the above home;

(3) what were the exact dates on which the claims of two constituents of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood, details of whom have been supplied to him, made in 1990 while they were registered as living at the Lady Mary hospitality home *(a)* started and *(b)* finished; what account was taken of the circumstances of the accommodation provided when meeting those claims; what was the full amount of weekly benefit over that period to each of those constituents; and how those payments differed from the amount payable in comparable circumstances except that no personal care was provided.

Mr. Roger Evans: It has not been possible to identify the constituent or constituents to whom the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood refers. However, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, Michael Bichard, will be happy to look into this matter and respond in writing if the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood will provide him with further details of the constituents.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims were closed down as a result of each raid at the Lady Mary hospitality home since 1989; when the most recent concern was raised about irregular claims being made from the home; and what action was taken;

(2) how many raids were carried out by the Benefits Agency or others on behalf of his Department at the Lady Mary hospitality home, 13–15 Soho road, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 since 1989; and what were the dates of each raid and the name and grade of the DSS officer conducting each raid;

(3) how may claims were being made from the Lady Mary hospitality home on each occasion it was raided since 1989; and what was the amount of each claim; and in how many of those cases *(a)* individuals were signing themselves for books or *(b)* an agent or appointee was being used.

Mr. Roger Evans: There have been three investigations of the Lady Mary hospitality home conducted by DSS officers since 1989, all by fraud investigators. The records of the first of these investigations, which took place in 1989, have been destroyed in accordance with normal procedures. The second investigation took place in October 1990 and resulted in the closure of six claims. The third investigation in 1992 resulted in the closure of 11 claims to benefit. The most recent concerns arose in March 1994 and the evidence available was thoroughly examined.

The fraud area manager currently responsible for investigations in this area is Frank Ashford. It is not our policy to divulge the names of individual investigators.

Sixteen claims were in payment at the time of the second investigation; full details of the amounts of each claim are not available. Twenty-eight claims were in payment at the time of the investigation in 1992. All customers were being paid £181·40 per week, the appropriate residential care rate of income support, except for one resident who was receiving £105·47 per week.

Information is not available to indicate in how many cases individuals were signing order books themselves or by agent or appointee.

Age Allowance

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would now be the level of the 25p a week age allowance for retirement pensioners adjusted in line with changes in the RPI since its introduction.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The 25p age addition to state retirement pension, paid to people who are aged over 80, was introduced in 1971. No Government have increased the age addition since its introduction. If the age addition had been increased in line with the movement in the retail prices index[1] in each year since its introduction the rate payable from April 1994 would have been £1·55[2].

Notes

[1] The retail price index (all items) as published by the Central Statistical Office has been used.

[2] In each step of the calculation the notional payable rate has been rounded to the nearest 5p in line with the normal convention for the up-rating of social security benefits.

EMPLOYMENT

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information amongst visually impaired people.

Miss Widdecombe: Public information material in alternative formats for visually impaired people is produced for, and on behalf of, the Department from a wide variety of sources within its area of responsibility, including the Employment Service, training and enterprise councils, external contractors providing assessment, rehabilitation and training, and the Department itself. When access to work was launched, many organisations of and for disabled people were contacted directly with details of the programme, and offered materials in standard text, Braille and audio tape. Cost information for the production of that material is not available centrally.

Dissemination methods vary according to what is appropriate to the item. For example, ES materials are made available to visually impaired people through jobcentre and placing, assessment and counselling team services, and through periodic disability advertising campaigns. TECs, local enterprise companies and contractors for rehabilitation and training make local arrangements to publicise materials. There is no comprehensive information centrally available on the costs of publicising the availability of accessible information.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Miss Widdecombe: In the west midlands and Shropshire, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, is responsible for the appointment of:

—lay members to the Birmingham regional office of the industrial tribunals, ROITs, which covers the counties of West Midlands, Warwickshire and Hereford and Worcester. There are currently 158 appointments to the Birmingham tribunal. Shropshire is served by the Cardiff ROITs, along with the whole of Wales and part of the county of Cheshire. There are currently 116 appointments of lay members to the Cardiff tribunal;

—and chairmen and members of the following seven committees for the employment of people with disabilities, CEPDs:

Birmingham and Solihull

Coventry and Warwickshire

Dudley and Sandwell

Hereford and Worcester

Shropshire

Staffordshire

Wolverhampton and Wallsall.

Each committee has an independent chairman and up to 14 members.

Appointments, and re-appointments to industrial tribunals are initially for three years. The next round of appointments will take effect in October 1995.

The CEPDs are usually reconstituted every three years, when all appointments are considered afresh. The last reconstitution exercise was completed in 1994.

Lay members of industrial tribunals are paid a fee of £119 for a day's sitting. CEPD chairmen and members are unpaid but may reclaim from the Employment Service travelling and subsistence expenses incurred on approved committee business.

Labour Statistics (Wirral)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were *(a)* unemployed and *(b)* economically inactive in each constituency in the Wirral on average in each year since 1979; and if he will publish a breakdown of rates of *(a)* unemployment and *(b)* economic inactivity on average in each year since 1979 in the travel-to-work areas covering the Wirral.

Mr. Oppenheim: The numbers of unemployed claimants in each parliamentary constituency and unemployment rates for travel-to-work areas are available monthly from June 1983, on the unadjusted basis. An analysis of economic inactivity by travel-to-work area is available from 1981 census and by parliamentary constituency from the 1981 and 1991 census. All this information can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Miss. Widdecombe: The total costs of official hospitality in the Department was:

Year	*£ pounds*
1990–91	26,483
1991–92	63,560
1992–93	48,702
1993–94	33,972
1994–95	(to September) 4,952

The expenditure for the agencies was:

Year	*£ pounds*
1990–91	29,000
1991–92	22,760
1992–93	21,140
1993–94	35,470
1994–95	(to September) 4,220

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total budget of TECs for 1993–94.

Mr. Paice: The total budget of training and enterprise councils in England in 1993–94 for activities funded by the Employment Department was £1,891 million, including the allowance payments for training for work participants. A further £30 million was made available to TECs in pit closure areas.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on how TEC courses are supervised and validated.

Mr. Paice: Training and enterprise councils are responsible for the quality and performance of all their suppliers. Employment Department quality assessors audit each TEC regularly to ensure that their arrangements meet the Department's published TEC quality assurance: supplier management requirements.

Temporary Contracts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in each region were employed on temporary contracts in each of the last 10 years *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of employees in employment.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information is available from the labour force survey and can be obtained via the Quantime LFS service available in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Caribbean

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the offshore financial regulatory arrangements in each of the dependent territories in the Caribbean; what plans he has to change them; what arrangements cover the issue of banking licences; and what EC provisions are applicable.

Mr. Baldry: All the dependent territory Governments are reviewing arrangements for regulation of their offshore financial sectors. We have encouraged this review and are giving it our full support. Its objective is to raise to internationally accepted standards existing levels of regulation across the range of financial services. The effect will be: *(a)* to prevent criminals and fraudsters from bringing the dependent territories into disrepute, and *(b)* to increase the attractiveness of dependent territories to legitimate business investors. New offshore bank licensing guidelines have been, or are in the process of being, introduced by each of the dependent territories. These bring dependent territory licensing practice into line with the Basle committee's recommendations on consolidated home state supervision. European Union provisions do not apply.

Anti-personnel Mines

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Ministry of Defence regarding the military utility of anti-personnel mines for the armed forces.

Mr. David Davis: We continue to regard landmines as a legitimate defensive weapon when used responsibly in accordance with the laws of war. We are, however, working with like-minded countries to establish a viable and effective international control regime to ensure the responsible use of anti-personnel landmines. My Department is in regular contact with the Ministry of Defence over this.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Governments of other countries in the European Union regarding the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines, in particular regarding the exclusion of self-destruct and self-neutralising mines from the terms of the moratorium introduced by Her Majesty's Government on 27 July.

Mr. David Davis: We have regular discussions with our European Union partners with the aim of developing a viable and effective international control regime for anti-personnel landmines.

China

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken by his Department to encourage investment in China.

Mr. Goodlad: The British embassy in Peking, the consulate-general in Shanghai and the China trade unit in Hong Kong work closely with the DTI and the China Britain trade group to provide advice and information to British companies on the Chinese market. When, for example, the largest trade mission ever organised by the China Britain trade group visited China in September, one component specifically studied industrial investment opportunities with the help and support of our posts there.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which British industries by turnover are most active in China.

Mr. Goodlad: Total United Kingdom exports to China in 1993 increased by 72 per cent. over the previous year. The principal United Kingdom exports by industrial sectors were:

	£ million
Specialised machinery	111
Power generating equipment	106
General industrial machinery and equipment	80
Other transport equipment	74
Telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment	70
Iron and steel	42
Metal working machinery	38
Professional, scientific and controlling equipment	29
Organic chemicals	25
Electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances	25

Armenia

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will now open a legation in Yerevan, Armenia, for the protection of British interests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are at present no plans to establish a resident British mission in Yerevan. The pattern of our overseas representation is kept under review. Her Majesty's ambassador in Moscow is accredited to Armenia. He and his staff visit Yerevan regularly.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which location Armenian citizens requiring visas to enter the United Kingdom apply.

Mr. Baldry: Armenian citizens requiring visas to visit the United Kingdom may apply at any post designated to offer a visa service. Those persons wishing to enter the United Kingdom for some other purpose should apply to the British embassy in Moscow. A list of designated posts is available in the Library of the House.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Armenians live in each state of the EU.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not centrally recorded and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of the EU have diplomatic representations with Armenia in Yerevan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Three—France, Germany and Greece.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he assesses would be the cost of operating an embassy in Armenia by renting premises in Yerevan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible to give a reliable estimate. Much would depend on the number of staff to be accommodated, the functions to be performed, and the size and location of the premises.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the balance of trade between the United Kingdom and Armenia in each of the past five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The balance of trade between the United Kingdom and Armenia for the year 1993 and from January to August 1994 is shown in the table:

	Exports £000s	*Imports £000s*	*Crude Balance £000s*
Jan–Dec 1993	5,346	18	+5,328
Jan–Aug 1994	3,332	21	+3,311

Previously, all United Kingdom trade with Armenia was included in records of UK trade with the Soviet Union.

Embassies

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if United Kingdom interests are safeguarded *(a)* by embassies and *(b)* other means in (i) Azerbaijan, (ii) Kazakhstan, (iii) Turkmenistan and (iv) Uzbekistan; and if he will specify the other means used.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are British embassies in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Her Majesty's ambassador in Moscow is also accredited to Turkmenistan. He and his staff visit regularly.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the embassies the United Kingdom in former territories of the USSR which have become independent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British embassies in the former Soviet Union and Baltic states are:

Almaty
Baku
Kiev
Minsk
Moscow
Riga
Tallinn
Tashkent
Vilnius.

Oil, Caspian Sea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the relationship between the Russian Government and the Azerbaijan Government and the claims to the oil resources of the Caspian sea in so far as it relates to the activities of oil companies operating from Britain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand that discussions on co-operation in the Caspian sea among the five littoral states, including Russia and Azerbaijan, are continuing. We welcomed the signature on 20 September of a production-sharing agreement between the Azerbaijan state oil company and a consortium including British-based oil companies.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent visit to the Caribbean by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Baldry: I visited the Caribbean from 1–7 October and chaired a meeting of the governors and chief Ministers of the Caribbean dependent territories in Montserrat. I also visited Anguilla, the British Virgin islands and the Turks and Caicos islands. I had constructive meetings in each territory with local Ministers on a wide range of issues of mutual concern.

I also met the British military short-term training team who are currently based in Puerto Rico training the Commonwealth contingent of the multinational force in preparation for duties in Haiti.

China

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the level of *(a)* British, *(b)* other EU countries, *(c)* USA, *(d)* Australian and *(e)* Canadian investment in China.

Mr. Goodlad: According to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation, figures for cumulative investment in China are as follows:

Investment in China: 1979–1993

Country	*Projects*	*Pledged investment US$ millions*	*Utilised investment US$ millions*
United Kingdom	616	3,013	578
Germany	569	1,458	527
France	547	920	602
Italy	467	552	397
Netherlands	191	406	176
Spain	168	289	24
Belgium	100	137	67
Denmark	51	102	63
Ireland	8	49	5
Luxembourg	13	16	2·3
Portugal	9	5	0·3
Greece	2	0·5	—
Total EU	2,749	6,947·5	2,441·6
United States of America	12,019	14,659	5,237
Australia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Canada	n/a	n/a	n/a

Rwanda

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made by the United Nations Security Council regarding the establishment of an international tribunal for Rwanda.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the preliminary report of the United Nations Commission of Experts, the question of an international tribunal for Rwanda is being discussed by the Security Council.

Hong Kong

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect on Sino—British relations of the disagreements about the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: It is in the clear interests of Hong Kong, China and Britain to draw a line under recent disagreements and to work for an improvement in Sino—British co-operation across the range of bilateral and international issues. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary took this forward with Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen during their meeting on 29 September. The governor's annual policy address to Hong Kong's Legislative Council on 5 October underlined our determination to improve co-operation, and set out specific ideas to that end.

Indonesia

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will approach the Indonesian Government to demand the release of Muchtar Pakpakan, the head of Indonesia's leading independent trade union.

Mr. Goodlad: We have made no approach to the Indonesian Government, but European Union heads of mission in Jakarta are monitoring the trial of Mr. Pakpahan, which is still in progress.

South Africa

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to make European Union markets more open to South African goods.

Mr. David Davies: The European Community included South Africa in its generalised system of preferences for the first time from 3 September. This allows a range of South African goods to enter the Community at lower tariffs than before.

The Community has also recently signed a framework agreement with South Africa which establishes a basis for a future relationship. The agreement commits both sides to stepping up co-operation, with an explicit reference to trade.

Discussion on how this commitment is to be honoured in detail is still at an early stage.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the meeting in September between IGADD heads of state and the combatants in the Sudanese war; and what new initiatives are now to be taken.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The fourth round of talks ended in stalemate over the issues of self-determination of Sharia law. The IGADD heads of state remain committed to their peace initiative, which we and the European Union will continue to support.

Indonesia

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *804*, what evidence he has that, following the consensus statement, Indonesia is now living up to its human rights obligations.

Mr. Goodlad: We welcome as a positive step the visit to Indonesia and East Timor in July of the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. We continue to encourage Indonesia to live up to the other commitments made at the last session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

United Nations Day

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what events are planned in the United Kingdom to mark United Nations day on 24 October; and what steps have been taken to publicise these events.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Normally the only way the Government marks United Nations day is by raising flags in Parliament square. As the Secretary-General is in London on the day this year he has agreed to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph.

The pool of photographers were informed of the event on 20 October.

Hospitality Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the members, salaries and occupations of those serving on the Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine.

Mr. Goodlad: Members of the Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine receive no salaries, allowances or expenses. The chairman is Sir Ewen Fergusson, formerly ambassador to France and now employed by Coutts bank. The other four members are all wine experts and either serving or retired wine merchants. It is not normally customary to disclose their names so as to prevent undue lobbying by members of the wine trade. However, the details are:-

1. Major John Surtees, retired wine merchant
2. Mr. Anthony Hanson, wine consultant
3. Mr. Mark Savage, wine merchant
4. Mr. Sebastian Payne, The Wine Society

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what have been the *(a)* annual budget, *(b)* annual running costs and *(c)* annual travel costs of the Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine in each of the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: The chairman and members of the Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine receive neither salaries, allowances nor expenses. The answers are *(a)* nil—actual purchases of wine are funded separately *(b)* about £1,500 a year *(c)* nil.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mr. Naveed Ahmed, the husband of Mrs. Shahida Naz, of Bradford, is to be issued by the post in Islamabad with a visa enabling him to join his wife in the United Kingdom following the withdrawal by the Home Office of their application to the immigration appeal tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have asked the entry clearance officer in Islamabad to let me have a report on the application from Mr. Naveed Ahmed to join his wife Mrs. Shahida Naz in the United Kingdom. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of the European Parliament each year since 1989–90; and what amount is included in the draft budget for 1995.

Mr. David Davis: The outturn for expenditure by the European Parliament each year form 1989–93 (ecu/£ sterling) was:

Year	*ecu*	*£*
1989	381,146,291	256,043,458
1990	429,706,145	306,932,961
1991	488,691,650	342,125,210
1992	579,968,058	425,820,894
1993	624,592,678	486,253,544

The amount in the 1994 budget (as adopted is 665,910,000 (£502,839,236).

The amount in the 1995 draft budget is 693,321,000 (£544,549,953).

Note—conversion rates for years prior to 1994 are:

1989 £1=1·4886
1990 £1=1·4000
1991 £1=1·4284
1992 £1=1·3620
1993 £1=1·2845

The 1994 figures are converted at the rate of £1= 1·3243, which is the rate set for United Kingdom VAT and fourth resource contributions to the 1994 Community budget.

The 1995 figures are converted at the rate of £1= 1·2732, the rate notified in the *Official Journal* as prevailing on the last working day of last month (30 September 1994).

South Africa

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of South Africa regarding allegations of sales of arms by British companies to the former South African Government in breach of the UN arms embargo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No such discussions have taken place. Britain conscientiously enforced the UN arms embargo and related European and Commonwealth restrictions. At no time did we knowingly authorise any company to export defence equipment to South Africa, and any reports of British companies breaching the embargo were rigorously investigated by the appropriate authorities.

TREASURY

Ministers (Severance Payments)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total amount spent on severance payments to those who have resigned, retired or been dismissed from ministerial office for each year since 1990.

Mr. Aitken: The Prime Minister explained on 7 December 1993 *Official Report*, columns *142–43* in his reply to an earlier question from the hon. Member that no composite list then existed of severance payments made under the Parliamentary Pensions Act 1984 and the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991.

The Treasury instituted a composite record of such payments with effect from 1 January 1994 on the basis of written confirmation from individual Departments. Since that date, the record shows that the total amount expended on severance payments in accordance with the terms of the relevant Act has been £131,776·75.

Government Expenditure

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the latest estimate of the outturn of general Government expenditure for 1994–95 analysed by function as in table 1.2 of Cm. 2519.

Mr. Aitken: Following the usual practice, estimates of general Government expenditure for 1994–95 in total and a breakdown of the control total by Department will be published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report on 29 November 1994. A full functional breakdown of general Government expenditure as in table 1.2 of Cm. 2519 will be published in the statistical supplement in February 1995. The most recent published estimate of total general Government expenditure for 1994–95 was £291·6 billion, in the Treasury summer economic forecast published on 28 June 1994.

Construction Industry

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of the construction industry.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer met the export group for the constructional industries on 21 September this year.

European Union (Membership Cost)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now publish a calculation of the cost to the average family per week of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The calculation of the budgetary cost to the average family of United Kingdom membership of the European Union is as follows:

Weekly net contributions per family[1]

Year	Number
1992	2·63
1993	2·79
1994	1·75

Those calculations relate to the net direct budgetary cost of United Kingdom membership. They do not reflect the wider benefits and costs of United Kingdom membership. They do not reflect the wider benefits and costs of United Kingdom membership of the European Union.

[1] Based on an average 2-parent family size of 3.9.

Source:

Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys 1992 General Household Survey.

Negative Equity

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of house purchasers with negative equity on their homes.

Mr. Nelson: House prices have clearly increased since their trough in the first half of 1993, reducing negative equity. The latest estimate from the Bank of England is that in the third quarter of 1994, 1,096,000 households had negative equity. This represents a fall of 678,000 households, or over 38 per cent. compared with the first quarter of 1993.

Maintenance Payments

Ms Corston: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Inland Revenue staff have received specific training on the effects of the changes to the tax treatment of maintenance payments, introduced in the Finance Act 1988, and the option to elect to stay with the previous regime.

Sir George Young: Statistics are not available centrally. However, the Inland Revenue provides appropriate information and training for all staff who deal with the tax treatment of maintenance payments.

Ms Corston: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are subject to the special transitional rules for the tax treatment of maintenance payments, introduced by the Finance Act 1988.

Sir George Young: It is estimated that about 210,000 people paying maintenance are subject to the special transitional rules.

VAT

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make a statement regarding the continuation of the exemption of the United Kingdom from the European Union's sixth VAT directive (77/3881 EEC) after 31 December 1996.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The sixth VAT directive lays down the common system for VAT throughout the European Union and has been adopted by all member states, including the United Kingdom. With effect from 1 January 1993, the directive was amended to allow a transitional system for VAT to be introduced for the single market. That system will continue until the end of 1996, when it is planned to introduce a definitive VAT regime. Failing unanimous agreement among member states on what this regime should be, the present arrangements will continue.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will continue to make it his policy that a trader should receive a visit from Customs and Excise within the first three years of registering for VAT.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs and Excise is committed to ensuring that businesses new to VAT are given an opportunity to learn about the tax and their responsibilities in the three years following VAT registration. They will continue to keep the best means of ensuring this under review.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the outcome of the meeting of the IMF on 16 September relating to the continued membership of Sudan and its judgment about the economic policy being pursued by Sudan.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The IMF's executive board decided on 16 September that it would not recommend a vote of governors of the IMF on the compulsory withdrawal of Sudan from the IMF. It decided to consider further the issue, and Sudan's programme, by 15 January 1995 or at the time it considers Sudan's 1994 article IV consultation, whichever is the earlier.

Severance Payments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish details of each of the list of severance payments deemed to be illegal or outside appropriate limits as described in the memorandum dated 10 August from the NHS executive to the Treasury showing what action is now being taken in each case.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the written reply that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health gave him earlier today.

National Health Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the financing rules on capital programmes within the NHS.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken *[holding answer 21 October 1994]:* The financial framework within which the NHS is required to operate is set out in "Government Accounting". Detailed guidance, such as the NHS trusts finance manual, on the rules governing the financing of capital projects in the health service is supplied by the NHS executive. Copies of "Government Accounting" and the NHS trusts finance manual are available in the Library.

HEALTH

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 October, what costs have been incurred in consultancy work related to the study of OPCS market testing; and what assumptions have been made regarding on-going security costs in the event of the contract being awarded to the private sector.

Mr. Sackville: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is market testing its computer mainframe service. Consultancy costs of £1,000 have been incurred to date. The Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency is providing OPCS with procurement assistance at an estimated cost of up to £50,000. The in-house bid team will require consultancy help estimated at £35,000.

When issued, the statement of service requirement for this market test, will contain a mandatory requirement to provide security at a level to maintain OPCS's reputation for careful guardianship of data in its care. All potential contractors will have to take this factor into account when submitting tenders, with a full breakdown of costs.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the public appointments for which she is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Malone: A full answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health makes the following appointments to national health service bodies in the west midlands area:

Body	*Appointments made by Secretary of State*	*Annual rates of remuneration for chairmen*
Regional health authorities	Chairman and 5 non-executives per board	£20,925
District health authorities	Chairman	From £15,125 to £19,285
Family health services authorities	Chairman	From £10,845 to £12,605
NHS trusts	Chairman and up to 3 non-executives per board	From £15,125 to £19,285
Special trustees	Up to 6 special trustees per body	Not applicable

The annual rate of remuneration for all non-executives is £5,000.
Each appointment is for a period of up to four years.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a current list of the chairmen and non-executive directors of each NHS trust.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide an up-to-date list of all the *(a)* chairs and *(b)* non-executive directors of each trust board indicating the gender and occupation of each individual.

Mr. Malone: Many chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts are currently being considered for reappointment. This process will be finished by the end of November. An up-to-date list of appointees will be placed in the Library as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what expenditure has been incurred on NHS trust chairs, non-executive directors, committee members and sub-committee members for *(a)* travelling allowances, *(b)* overnight absence allowances and *(c)* day subsistence allowances in each year since 1990–91;

(2) what expenditure has been incurred in each region on NHS trust chairs, non-executive directors, committee members and sub-committee members for *(a)* travelling allowances, *(b)* overnight absence allowances and *(c)* day subsistence allowances in each year since 1990–91.

Mr. Malone: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many company secretaries have been appointed by NHS trusts.

Mr. Malone: It is a matter for each individual trust to decide how they ensure proper corporate control of financial and other business. The number of company secretaries appointed to national health service trusts is not available centrally.

Child Care Staff

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest available figures for changes in the number of appropriately qualified staff working in residential care since the publication of the Utting report on children in public care.

Mr. Kirwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the number of appropriately qualified staff working in residential child care since the publication of the Utting report.

Mr. Bowis: The Utting report found that 21 per cent. of all officers in charge of residential children's homes had no relevant qualification. We introduced the residential child care initiative in 1992 to assist authorities to achieve the Utting recommendation that all officers in charge should be professionally qualified by 1995. Under this initiative, the Department is funding 465 places on special DipSW programmes. In addition, the training support programme is available to support the costs of training all social services staff, including those in residential children's homes.

Local authorities social services departments are responsible for ensuring that all heads of residential homes for children are qualified and appropriately trained. Their policies and practice on staff recruitment and retention have a considerable influence on this objective.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to ensure a significant expansion of training for residential child care staff.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will list the fresh initiatives she proposes to take to assure a major expansion of training for residential child care staff; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The Government attach great importance to the training of all social services staff who work with children, particularly those in the residential sector. This year the Department is providing £15·4 million under the training support programme for the training of staff working in the child care field. This includes £4 million specifically earmarked for the residential child care initiative, for the professional training of officers in charge of residential children's homes. New occupational standards covering staff in residential child care settings will be available from next spring.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps *(a)* she has taken and *(b)* proposes to take to implement the recommendations of the Utting and Warner reports.

Mr. Bowis: Progress on the implementation of recommendations in the Utting and Warner reports is reported annually in the Children Act reports, copies of which are available in the Library.

Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to publish her document on the merit award system for consultants.

Mr. Malone: Very shortly.

Social Work Students

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to the adequacy of the daily placement fee budget available to CCETSW and its implications for voluntary and independent sector social work student placements.

Mr. Bowis: The Department gives the Central Council for the Education and Training of Social Work—CCETSW—a budget to support practice learning. The amount assigned to the daily placement fees budget is one element of this, the size of which is for CCETSW to determine within the total allocated for practice learning. The Department continues to work with CCETSW on the provision of student placements in all sectors. Moreover, the Department has set aside £700,000 of the training support grant to local authorities to make additional practice placements available in 1994–95. This has been warmly welcomed by them.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will arrange for an inquiry to be conducted into the use of pituitary derived hormones and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in line with the one being conducted by the Federal Government of Australia; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease—CJD—is a rare but fatal disease. The Government acted promptly in 1985 when evidence of an association between the pituitary derived hormone programmes and CJD first became available. All treatment programmes were brought to an end. As many patients as possible have been traced. Expert counselling and information are available to them, and many patients have used these services. The treatment programme is currently the subject of litigation. We have no plans to set up an inquiry.

Hospitals (Video Surveillance)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce regulations concerning the use in hospitals of covert video surveillance in child protection.

Mr. Sackville: The particular security measures which are appropriate to individual hospitals are the responsibility of local management.

Blood

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the regional and local availability of blood from blood banks under the control of the National Blood Authority;

(2) what assessment she has made of the proposed revision of distribution arrangements by the National Blood Authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority is responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the National Blood Service in order to meet the demand from hospitals for blood, both nationally and locally. The authority has made proposals for reorganisation of the National Blood Service and these are out for consultation. The National Blood Authority plans to have a network of stockholding units around the country so that it can maintain supply at its present level and improve it wherever possible. The results of the consultation will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many places blood donor sessions were held in each year since 1987; in how many places sessions are expected to take place in 1995 and 1996; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Under the National Blood Authority's proposals to improve the national blood service, blood collection will continue, as at present, to be easily accessible to donors. Collection teams would be larger and locally based, rather than all operating from the transfusion centres as at present. All major population areas would be covered. In 1992 there were 19,000 blood donor sessions. The number of blood donor session locations is not available centrally.

Dental Services

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide the figures for the number of patients who were registered with dental practices in Devon and Cornwall in *(a)* July 1992 and *(b)* July 1994.

Mr. Malone: This information is shown in the table.

Number of patients registered with dentists on the dental list of Devon and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Family Health Services Authorities at 31 July 1992 and 31 July 1994.

		Family Health Services Authority	
Date	*Patients*	*Devon*	*Cornwall and Isles of Scilly*
31 July 1992	All	681,468	301,719
31 July 1994	All	650,645	286,816

Source:
Dental Practice Board

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practices are currently operating in Devon; and how many are currently accepting NHS patients.

Mr. Malone: This information is shown in the table.

Number of dentists[1] on the dental list of Devon family health services authority at 30 June.

Year	*Number of dentists*
1992	373
1993	376
1994	384

Source:
Dental Practice Board. At 30 June 1994, 384 dentists were registered to treat National Health Service patients.

[1] Includes principals, assistants and vocational trainees. Some dentists may also be on the dental lists of other family health services authorities.

Trained Children's Nurses Survey

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answers of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *160*, 19 May, *Official Report*, column *559*, and 21 April, *Official Report*, column *160*, when she expects to announce the publication of the results of the survey of trained children's nurses conducted by the NHS Executive.

Mr. Malone: We hope to respond to all the recommendations in the Allitt inquiry report shortly.

Severance Payments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of each of the list of severance payments deemed to be illegal or outside appropriate limits as described in the memorandum dated 10 August 1994 from the NHS Executive to the Treasury, indicating what action is now being taken in each case.

Mr. Malone: The National Health Service Executive is, with the Treasury, examining each payment. It would not be appropriate to publish details while this examination is in progress.

Residential Care Homes (Deaths)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many death by misadventure verdicts have been recorded in respect of residents of residential care and nursing homes during the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: The Department does not hold this information.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the extent to which patients of *(a)* GP fundholders and *(b)* non-fundholders make use of private medical insurance.

Mr. Malone: None.

Hospices

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospice beds there have been in each health authority area in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

Hospice beds by regional health authority

Regional health authority	*1985*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Northern	57	71	80	80	98	101	96	102	105
Yorkshire	127	179	180	180	224	243	263	220	221
Trent	66	91	91	105	125	135	147	153	161
East Anglian	50	57	57	57	71	73	118	114	125
North West Thames	151	126	118	142	142	157	163	185	177
North East Thames	75	169	169	169	180	182	201	195	214
South East Thames	183	192	187	187	187	186	192	216	237
South West Thames	144	199	201	201	187	184	182	177	193
Wessex	75	91	91	91	92	98	107	137	161
Oxford	90	103	98	98	110	102	108	130	141
South Western	118	143	141	141	144	144	149	166	179
West Midlands	188	187	186	196	218	205	205	201	197
Mersey	78	88	104	104	110	149	161	156	146
North Western	114	186	186	186	205	212	229	257	264
Total	1,516	1,882	1,889	1,937	2,093	2,171	2,321	2,409	2,521

Source:
Hospice Information Service, St. Christopher's Hospice.

Note:
Figures are as at January of each year, *except* for 1985 (April), for 1987 (December) and for 1988 (July). No figures are available for 1986.

General Practitioners

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the extent to which *(a)* GP fundholders and *(b)* non-fundholding GPs make use of emergency hospital admissions.

Mr. Malone: As part of our plans for developing national health service purchasing, we shall be reviewing contracting for emergency admissions in a number of sites, including the use general practioners make of these services.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been removed from *(a)* general practitioners' fundholding practice registers and *(b)* non-general practitioners' fundholding practices in each of the last three years.

Mr. Malone: All general practitioners are bound by the requirements of their terms of service when removing patients from their list. Data collected by family health services authorities on patient movement between general practioners does not separately identify the fundholding status of the doctor.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce a statutory obligation on fundholders to publish their accounts.

Mr. Malone: General practioner fundholders are already required under section 98(2B)(c) of the National Health Service Act 1977, as amended by Section 20(2)(b) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, to produce annual accounts to the relevant family health services authority. These accounts are public documents and are available on request.

Staff Cars

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *215*, if she is now able to list for 1993–94 the expenditure on staff cars for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville: Data for 1993–94 will not be available until the end of November when health authorities and trusts' annual accounts will have been received and summarised. I will write to the hon. Member with this information when it is available.

Pinderfields Hospital Trust

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will require a report from the Pinderfields hospital trust as to the reasons for the inability to provide the service of an anaesthetist in certain circumstances within their obstetric care.

Mr. Sackville: This is a local matter for Pinderfields Hospitals national health service trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Roy Cusworth, the chairman of the trust.

Salary Costs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *421*, what was the total salary costs per regional health authority for *(a)* managerial staff, *(b)* clerical and administrative staff and *(c)* nursing and midwifery staff for 1993–94.

Mr. Malone: The information requested will not be available before June 1995.

Staff Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* senior and general managerial staff, *(b)* administrative and clerical staff and *(c)* nursing and midwifery staff were employed by region in 1993.

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table.

Numbers of general and senior managers, administrative and clerical and nursing and midwifery staff by region—England 30 September 1993—whole-time equivalents.

	General and Senior Managers	*Administration and Clerical*	*Nursing and Midwifery*
Northern	830	7,030	24,580
Yorkshire	1,920	9,140	27,140
Trent	1,210	10,980	35,580
East Anglian	810	4,660	14,810
North West Thames	840	8,590	21,550
North East Thames	1,900	10,420	28,280
South East Thames	1,310	9,760	24,250
South West Thames	910	7,070	21,350
Wessex	1,180	6,800	23,000
Oxford	970	6,040	16,850
South Western	1,180	7,880	26,000
West Midlands	1,970	13,020	39,210
Mersey	970	5,970	18,170
North Western	1,390	11,060	33,830
SHAs and Others	2,630	14,230	6,840
England Total	20,010	132,650	361,460

Notes:

[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest ten whole-time equivalents.

[2] "Nursing and Midwifery" excludes agency staff and Project 2000 students.

[3] "SHAs and Others" includes staff in special health authorities, other statutory authorities and family health service authorities.

[4] Some totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding.

[5] The number of general and senior managers in September 1993 are not directly comparable with numbers given in the reply my right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) gave him on 4 November 1993 at columns 458-459, which have since been updated. A change in data collection procedures in September 1993 have since been updated. A change in data collection procedures in September 1993 resulted in the recategorisation as managers of many staff who would have been coded as "others" in the 1991 and 1992 censuses.

Health Service Administration

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *220*, if she is now able to publish a table showing the total amount spent on administration by *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities, (c) special health authorities, *(d)* family health service authorities, *(e)* trusts, and *(f)* the Department of Health/NHS executive in 1993–94 in each case breaking the figure down to show expenditure on (i) salaries and wages and (ii) establishment expenses.

Mr. Malone: Expenditure on Department of Health administration, including national health service executive administration in 1993–94, was £251 million, of which £117 million was on salaries and wages. Information on the 1993–94 expenditure of NHS bodies will not be available until December 1994.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *219*, if she will list the number of managers and administrative staff that have been employed by each regional health authority in 1993–94.

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table.

Administrative and Clerical Staff and General and Senior Managers with Regional Health Authority Headquarters at 30 September 1993 in Whole-Time Equivalents.

	Administrative and Clerical	*General and Senior Managers*
Northern RHA	1,130	150
Yorkshire RHA	890	380
Trent RHA	300	90
East Anglian RHA	480	70
North West Thames RHA	380	—
North East Thames RHA	320	170
South East Thames RHA	310	110
South West Thames RHA	410	110
Wessex RHA	260	120
Oxford RHA	500	150
South Western RHA	800	180
West Midlands RHA	340	70
Mersey RHA	300	60
North Western RHA	650	130
Total	7,070	1,790

Source:

Department of Health Non-Medical Workforce Census.

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. '-' denotes no staff.
3. The figures given are those employed within Regional Health Authority Headquarters or Headquarters units, or are on their payroll system.

Ambulances

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *561*, if she will publish a table listing what percentages of ambulances in each service in England responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in 1993–94 and the first two quarters of 1994–95.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected quarterly. Information for 1993–94 was published in June 1994—"Patient Transport Services—1993–94—Summary Information from Form KA34—England copies of which are available in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Vacant Land

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who owns the vacant ground to the rear of the footway at the northern junction of High street with Harbour road, Ballyhalbert; and if he will make a statement about this vacant plot.

Mr. Moss: The Department of the Environment does not own the land or have any record of who does and, therefore, I have no comment to make.

Road Widening

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals there are to widen the Harbour road, Ballyhalbert from the High street junction in the northern direction; what consultations there will be with the local community; when the scheme will commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moss: There are no proposals to widen that section of road. A scheme to provide a footway on the inland side of the road is planned for the current financial year. The proposal has been discussed with the Ballyhalbert community association and further discussions will be held when the detailed design of the scheme has been finalised.

Livestock Marketing

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total expenditure in each of the past two years by the Northern Ireland Livestock Marketing Commission; and how much in each of those two years was expended by the Commission in promoting the marketing of red meat *(a)* outside Northern Ireland and *(b)* to the internal Northern Ireland market.

Mr. Ancram: The Livestock Marketing Commission, now the Livestock and Meat Commission, incurred expenditure of £1,139,002 in 1992–93, of which £81,378 was spent on promoting the marketing of red meat—£14,421 outside Northern Ireland and £66,957 within Northern Ireland. The corresponding figures for 1993–94 are expenditure of £1,036,007 of which £107,304 was spent on promotion—£61,766 outside Northern Ireland and £45,538 within Northern Ireland.

Further information on the commission's income and expenditure is available in the commission's annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library.

Structural Funds Assistance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place a copy of the single programming document for the spending of European Union structural funds assistance in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: The single programming document is being published by the European Commission and is expected to be available shortly. I shall make arrangements for a copy to be placed in the Library as soon as possible thereafter.

Bill of Rights

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received concerning the issue of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir. Patrick Mayhew: No further representations have been received since I answered a similar question from the hon. Member on 26 May 1994, *Official Report*, column *294*.

Opsahl Report

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which of the recommendations contained in the Opsahl report he has accepted; if it is his intention to issue a formal response to the report; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government recognise the value of the submissions made to the commission by a large number of individuals and organisations. The recommendations made by the commission are wide ranging and are addressed to various groups and bodies, not just to the Government. Accordingly, we have no plans to make a formal response to the report. The commission's main political recommendation is based on the assumption that the talks process has failed. The Government do not accept this premise and remain firmly committed to the political talks process which we believe provides the best opportunity of achieving a widely acceptable political accommodation addressing all the relevant relationships.

Hualon Corporation

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which firm of consultants was commissioned to prepare a confidential report on the implications of the application of the Hualon Corporation for a grant of £61 million for the opening of new facilities in Northern Ireland; when that report was received by his Department; whether, upon what date, and upon what authority sections of the report have been quoted by officials to representatives of the press, and how any such quoted sections were selected; and if he will now make available copies of that report both to the Library and to the Committee of Public Accounts.

Mr. Ancram: The consultants commissioned were Kurt Salmon Associates Ltd. Three separate reports were received—technical review, October 1992, preliminary market report, April 1993, and market assessment report, December 1993.

There have been no quotes by officials to representatives of the press. However, relevant extracts from those reports were quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) in the *Financial Times* of 3 June 1994 in response to that newspapers's coverage of the project on 31 May 1994.

Those reports contain commercially confidential information and will not therefore be made available in the Library. Should the Public Accounts Committee decide to examine the project and call for the information, then a decision will be made as to the availability of the reports at that time.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inquiries he has made of the Taiwanese authorities about charges recently reported as having been filed against individuals associated with member companies of the Hualon group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: From the information available, confirmed by a press statement issued by the Hualon Corporation on 11 October, none of those arrested for alleged violation of the Taiwan stock exchange regulations is employed by the corporation, which is a totally separate entity to the suspended brokerage houses.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland upon which date, and in what sum, the first payment is expected to be made to the Hualon Corporation in connection with the proposed grant to the corporation for the development of new textile facilities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The timing and amount of the first grant payment cannot be determined at this stage. It will depend, inter alia, on a number of prepayment conditions being satisfied by the company, the factory construction period and the delivery of the equipment for the first phase.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the textile companies, trade unions or textile employers' organisations which have to date welcomed the proposed grant to the Hualon Corporation in connection with the development of new textile facilities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The General and Municipal Boilermakers Union in Northern Ireland has publicly said it is "very very pleased" to see jobs on the projected scale and the technology coming to Northern Ireland. There has also been a widespread welcome for the project and the prospect of 1,800 jobs not only from the people of north and west Belfast but across the political spectrum.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has concerning the type of looms which the Hualon Corporation is intending to purchase for use in the facilities in Northern Ireland for which it has been awarded a £61 million grant; what steps he has taken to check with the manufacturers of those looms Hualon's assertion that they will be running at 20 per cent. more than the normal speed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not possible to disclose details of the type of equipment to be purchased. However, during the course of the expert consultant's examination it was confirmed that Hualon was already running looms at up to 20 per cent. above the norm with no apparent increase in down time.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Payment-by-results

40. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to introduce a payment-by-results scheme for hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: Substantial structural changes have in the past normally been made only following a report from the Senior Salaries Review Body or its predecessors, and I have no plans to ask them to examine a system of the kind the hon. Member seems to have in mind.

36. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what responsibilities he has in relation to methods of payment-by-results for hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: Motions concerning the pay of hon. Members are brought before the House in my name. However, substantial structural changes have in the past normally been made only following a report from the Senior Salaries Review Body or its predecessors, and I have no plans to ask it to examine a system of the kind that the hon. Member seems to have in mind.

Parliamentary Recesses

39. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received in the past four months concerning the length of parliamentary recesses.

Mr. Newton: In the past four months I have received one oral and one written representation from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East concerning the length of parliamentary recess.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he will send a substantive response to the letter from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, sent on 29 July and acknowledged on 3 August, concerning parliamentary recesses.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East on 18 October. I regret the delay in doing so.

Westminster Hall

29. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the chairman of the Finances Westminster Hall and Services Committee, what financial provision is being made for greater use of Westminster Hall by the public.

Mr. Channon: Following approval by the House of the Catering Committee's report on refreshment provision for Line of Route visitors, plans for a temporary souvenir kiosk in Westminster Hall are being developed and have been agreed by the authorities which control the Hall. Financial provision will depend on a detailed feasibility study which has yet to be considered by my Committee.

Television Link

33. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the right hon. member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what financial resources have been earmarked for this and the next financial year to enable hon. Members whose offices are in the Palace of Westminster to enjoy the same television facility linking them with annunciator messages and the House of

Commons Chamber in the same way as those hon. Members in newly equipped offices.

Mr. Beith: Cabling of the Palace itself for the "clean feed" is being undertaken as part of the installation of the parliamentary data and video network, for which provision of some £100,000 and £1 million have been allocated in the current and next financial years.

Ibbs Report

30. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if the Commissioner will review the working of the recommendations of the Ibbs report.

Mr. Beith: The Commission has no plans to carry out an overall review as proposed by the hon. Member, but individual areas of the House's services are studied as appropriate by the Finance and Services Committee and individual domestic committees.

SCOTLAND

Sheep

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the population of sheep in Scotland *(a)* at the latest available date, *(b)* 10 years ago and *(c)* 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Information in the form requested is not held centrally.

Forestry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that the Forestry Commission make money available for the buying back of leasehold forestry land.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government are providing almost £1 million per annum to allow the Forestry Commission to buy the freeholds of its leased woodlands where this would offer significant access and recreation benefits.

Mr. Morley : To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is his policy that the Forestry Commission will pay the legal costs for local authorities seeking access agreements on privately owned forestry land.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission will be prepared to meet the reasonable legal costs incurred by local authorities in making access agreements for commission woodlands which are to be sold into private ownership.

St. Andrew's Day

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will request Her Majesty the Queen to proclaim St. Andrew's day a bank holiday under section 1(3) of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have no proposals for making St Andrew's Day a bank holiday.

Fishing Guidelines

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his guidelines for fishermen on how to deal with *(a)* reptiles and *(b)* endangered species of turtles in Scottish waters.

Sir Hector Monro: Scottish Natural Heritage is considering the possibility of measures which could contribute to the safe passage of turtles in our national waters. A recent study conducted for SNH by Herpetofauna Consultants International considered reports of turtles in Scottish waters from biological record centres, local museums, fishermen and other sources. The results suggest that turtles are more common around the coast than was previously thought. It is considered that they may have strayed from their migration paths or followed prey along oceanic currents.

SNH, in a news release on 4 October, announced these findings and called for further information from anybody who has sighted turtles. SNH proposes to design appropriate measures once as full a picture as possible has been drawn. My right hon. Friend will be happy to consider any recommendations for turtles and other reptiles.

All marine turtles are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Barlinnie Prison

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what proposals he has concerning the modification of the rules governing the operation of the special unit at HM prison, Barlinnie; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what formal training is undertaken by prison officers in relation to service in the special unit, HM prison, Barlinnie; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many prisoners have spent part of their sentences in the special unit, HM prison, Barlinnie over the past 15 years; what was the average length of time served in the unit; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is the average length of service a prison officer serves in the special unit, HM prison, Barlinnie; and what proposals he has to modify such service;

(5) how many prison governors have been placed in charge of the special unit, HM prison, Barlinnie, in the past 15 years; what was the average length of service of such personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subjects of these questions relate to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E.W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman A. Godman dated 24 October 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Questions about the Barlinnie Special Unit. These concerned the rules governing the operation of the Unit, the training of staff, the average length of time served by prisoners in the Unit, the average length of time prison officers serve in the Unit, and the number of governors in charge of the Unit in the past 15 years

Following the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, which was published in March this year, an internal Scottish Prison Service Working Party was set up to review the operation of the Barlinnie Special Unit. Its remit was subsequently extended to address recommendations made by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in respect of the Shotts Unit.

The Working Party has recently completed its work and its findings will require very careful consideration. I hope, however, that it will be possible to take decisions about the Units shortly.

So far as training is concerned, there is at present no formal Unit-specific training programme for staff, but staff are required to apply for Unit posts, and there is a rigorous selection process to ensure that suitable personnel are posted. The Scottish Prison Service provides a wide programme of training for staff in general, including Unit staff, and courses in group work, managing aggression, and influencing skills are among the training which has been undertaken by current members of staff. All Barlinnie Unit staff have completed an accredited counselling course. The selection and training of staff are among the issues which the internal Working Party, to which I have already referred, has considered.

You asked about the number of prisoners who have spent part of their sentences in the Barlinnie Special Unit over the past 15 years and the average length of time served in the Unit. Over the past 15 years a total of 23 prisoners have spent part of their sentence in the Unit, and the average length of time served there is three years seven months.

So far as officers are concerned the average length of service in the Unit of current staff is approximately three years.

In the past 15 years the Barlinnie Special Unit has had eight Governors in charge, including the present Governor, who was appointed in late March 1994. Excluding the present Governor the average length of Governor in charge appointment in that 15 year period has been two years and two months.

Local Authority Ombudsman

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to modify the role, functions and powers of the local authority ombudsman; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The powers of the Commissioner for Local Administration in Scotland, the local government ombudsman, are kept under review in the light of changing circumstances.

Specific provision is included in the local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill to extend the commissioner's jurisdiction, for non-contractual activities, to the new Srathclyde passenger transport authority. In addition, powers are being taken in the Bill to extend the Commission's jurisdiction to cover residuary bodies, if required.

Health Care International

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has reached on the viability of Health Care International as a private hospital.

Mr. Stewart: It would be inappropriate for my right hon. Friend to speculate publicly on the viability of this or any other private company.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on attempts to attract patients to Health Care International from *(a)* Spain, *(b)* Italy, *(c)* Turkey, *(d)* Egypt, *(e)* Morocco and *(f)* other European, American, North African and middle eastern countries.

Mr. Stewart: This information is commercially confidential to the company.

Health Treatment Abroad

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the current size of the worldwide market in people willing to travel abroad for health treatments; what was the size of the market in 1987; what proportion of that market in 1987 and currently has been won by French healthcare firms; and what assessments he has made of the factors which make French bids more competitive.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend's health responsibilities extend only to Scotland.

Lung Cancer

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the figures for lung cancer by gender in each of the health board areas in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table shows the numbers of registrations of cancer of the trachea, bronchus and lung by sex, health board of residence at the time of diagnosis and year of diagnosis, for the period 1988–94.

Numbers of registrations of lung cancer (ICD-9 162) by sex, health board of residence at time of diagnosis and year of diagnosis, Scotland 1988–94

	Year of diagnosis						
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993**	*1994**
Males							
Argyll and Clyde	281	308	257	244	277	239	14
Ayrshire and Arran	196	236	240	216	232	197	18
Borders	52	64	63	59	73	40	1
Dumfries and Galloway	73	79	70	76	84	65	0
Fife	181	159	180	191	184	144	2
Forth Valley	175	132	156	148	158	138	16
Grampian	262	236	212	234	226	80	0
Greater Glasgow	728	760	707	766	729	589	35
Highland	64	70	88	91	105	79	8
Lanarkshire	302	284	316	303	302	214	10
Lothian	438	450	447	432	442	347	3
Orkney	10	9	4	9	11	1	0
Shetland	8	7	7	11	6	1	0
Tayside	258	221	235	244	209	164	21
Western Isles	12	14	7	19	18	7	0
Scotland	3,040	3,029	2,989	3,043	3,056	2,305	128

Numbers of registrations of lung cancer (ICD-9 162) by sex, health board of residence at time of diagnosis and year of diagnosis, Scotland 1988–94

	Year of diagnosis						
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993**	*1994**
Females							
Argyll and Clyde	159	140	158	143	171	140	7
Ayrshire and Arran	114	110	125	121	126	107	13
Borders	20	35	32	30	27	31	1
Dumfries and Galloway	43	42	49	66	66	44	0
Fife	104	76	73	96	113	84	6
Forth Valley	64	74	88	83	90	72	14
Grampian	126	104	107	135	152	63	0
Greater Glasgow	412	421	499	444	505	381	28
Highland	29	25	45	44	42	43	7
Lanarkshire	151	152	148	157	148	131	4
Lothian	228	247	258	265	259	217	5
Orkney	2	1	4	4	5	1	0
Shetland	5	2	4	2	3	1	0
Tayside	118	124	135	128	116	110	14
Western Isles	5	5	3	4	3	6	0
Scotland	1,580	1,558	1,728	1,722	1,826	1,431	99

*registrations for 1993 and 1994 are incomplete

Highlands and Islands Veterinary Services Scheme

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his officials will meet representatives of the British Veterinary Association and highland veterinary practices to discuss the highlands and islands veterinary services scheme.

Sir Hector Monro: My officials are still considering what changes need to be made to the scheme. Once this has been done, they will meet representatives of the veterinary profession to consider the way forward.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Channel Islands

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has made to the Governments of Jersey and Guernsey regarding the transfer of funds from Iran to the IRA.

Mr. Howard: Any allegations that funds have been transferred to the IRA by foreign states are a matter of grave concern. They are always followed up by the relevant agencies who receive full co-operation from the island authorities whenever they need it. It would not be right for me to go into detail on specific cases, but I have had no need to make representations to the island authorities on the matter to which the hon. Member refers.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the greatest number of prisoner nights spent in police cells by any prisoner in 1994 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the greatest number of prisoner nights spent in police cells by any prisoner in 1994 to date.

This information is not collected centrally, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of prisoner nights spent by prisoners in police cells in 1994 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the average number of prisoner nights spent by prisoners in police cells in 1994 to date.

This information is not collected centrally, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoner nights have been spent in police cells in each month of 1994 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoner nights spent in police cell in each month of 1994 to date.

The latest information, up to and including 13 October, is shown below:

	Numbers
January	16
February	4,439
March	12,178
April	9,739
May	4,795
June	2,100
July	1,890
August	4,512
September	4,255
October (to 13 October)	1,557
Total	45,481

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* remand and *(b)* convicted prisoners were held in police cells in *(a)* Greater Manchester and *(b)* the north-west of England in each of the last four months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of remand and convicted prisoners held in police cells in Greater Manchester and the North West of England in each of the last 4 months.

The information you require is given below:

Numbers of remand and convicted prisoners (expressed as the average number of prisoners per night) held in police cells in Greater Manchester and the rest of the North West (Merseyside and Lancashire) from June to September 1994

	Greater Manchester		*North West England (excluding Greater Manchester)*	
	Remand	*Convicted*	*Remand*	*Convicted*
June	74	13	48	—
July	73	5	—	—
August	136	10	23	3
September	115	12	25	4

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people.

Mr. Howard: The following is my Department's spend on producing public information for visually impaired people in each of the past three years:

	£
1991–92	63,000
1992–93	93,000
1993–94	165,280

My Department does not cost the work done by crime prevention officers, fire officers or others to publicise the availability of material. To gather such data would not be cost-effective.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate which departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Mr. Howard: My Department publishes the following printed material in large print:

Fire Safety advice for disabled people

Don't Lose Your Vote

In doubt? Keep Them Out (warning against bogus callers)

The following audio tapes are available:

Make a Difference (about voluntary services)

Fire Safety in the Home

Practical Ways to Crack Crime—the Family Guide

My Department has not produced material in Braille but would consider requests to do so.

Crime prevention material is ordered and distributed by local police crime prevention officers. Blind or partially sighted people may obtain copies free of charge by contacting their local police. My Department's crime prevention publicity catalogue lists the availability of material for blind and partially sighted people.

Fire safety material is promoted through all libraries in England and Wales which have large print sections; the RNIB; health authorities; social services; talking newspapers; and citizens advice bureaux. The material is also provided at local level by fire brigades.

The RNIB has been informed about the availability of "Don't Lose Your Vote" and "Make a Difference".

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is as follows:

Staff in Post by Region

Mandate Region	*Total (Including Industrial staff)*	*Percentage*	*Total (Excluding Industrial staff)*	*Percentage*
East Anglia	3,163	6·18	2,897	6·00
East Midlands	3,278	6·40	2,982	6·18
North West	5,670	11·10	5,388	11·16
Northern	2,814	5·49	2,636	5·46
Northern Ireland	96	0·19	96	0·20
Scotland	298	0·58	298	·62
South East	22,973	44·85	22,174	45·93
South West	3,394	6·63	3,025	6·27
Wales	1,114	2·17	1,039	2·15
West Midlands	3,072	7·23	3,362	6·96
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,718	9·21	4,379	9·07
Grand Total	51,220	100·00	48,276	100·00

Salford Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the timetable for the site purchase, planning, building and opening of the proposed new prison in Salford;

(2) whether the proposed new prison at Salford will be planned, built and run by private sector companies.

(3) how many prisoners will be held at the proposed new prison at Salford, announced on 18 October.

(4) whether the proposed new prison in Salford, announced on 18 October, will be one of the six new prisons announced by the Home Secretary in October 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the announcement on 18 October by the Prison Service of plans to build a new category B prison in Greater Manchester.

Discussions are taking place about the purchase of the site and about the planning implications, but a formal planning notice has not yet been submitted to the relevant planning authority, Salford City Council. Subject to the outcome of these discussions, it is envisaged that tenders could be invited for the prison's construction by the summer of 1995, which would enable the prison to open before the end of the financial year 1998–99.

Our initial assessment is that the site is large enough to accommodate up to 800 prisoners, but the level of occupancy will be one of the issues for discussion with the planning authority.

This will be one of the six prisons announced by the Home Secretary on 2 September 1993, for which the design, construction, management and finance will be contracted out to the private sector.

Criminal Justice

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to introduce a system similar to the three-strikes-and-out rule in criminal justice in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: It has always been our policy that, except in the special case of murder, it should be for the courts to decide the appropriate sentence in individual cases within the maximum sentence set by Parliament. We will of course, however, watch developments in penal policy in the United States with interest, and take careful note of any lessons that emerge.

Crown Courts

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to allow police authorities to charge against Crown court budgets for the use of police officer time in attending Crown courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No. The Government have no plans to introduce such charges.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make more efficient use of police time in attending Crown courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The police research study group report "Court Attendance by Police Officers" identified a number of good practices which could lead to the more efficient use of officer time at court. These will be taken forward through the pre-trial issues steering group whose members include representatives from the Home Office, police, Crown Prosecution Service and the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Pre-Trial Hearings

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress towards making disclosures by the defence match disclosures by the prosecution in all pre-trial hearings.

Mr. Maclean: I am not at present in a position to add to what was said on this matter earlier this year in the interim Government response to the report of the Royal Commission on criminal justice. The Government are inclined to think that it will be necessary to introduce a new statutory regime to govern both prosecution and defence disclosure, but I cannot yet announce whether or when proposals for legislation will be introduced.

Prisoners (Telephone Calls)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current arrangements for prisoners of category B security status or lower, with regard to private telephone calls.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison

Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the current arrangements for private telephone calls by prisoners of category B status or lower.

Following the installation of cardphones in all establishments, prisoners may make private telephone calls in accordance with guidance to Governors set out in Circular Instruction 21/92. A copy of this is in the House of Commons Library. All calls are paid for by prisoners through the purchase of phonecards.

Only in exceptional compassionate circumstances where it is not appropriate to use a cardphone, or where there is an urgent need to contact a legal or consular representative, are prisoners allowed to use official telephones. For foreign nationals only, the Prison Service Operating Standards provide they may be permitted a short call of no more than five minutes duration once a month to their home country using an official telephone, if they have not received a visit from either family or friends in the preceding month.

Under the guidelines in Circular Instruction 50/88 on the use of official telephones, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library, prisoners are normally expected to pay for calls made on an official telephone. This is except where the amount involved does not justify the effort of collection, or where the Governor is satisfied that the inmate has insufficient funds to meet the cost of the call.

Prison Job Clubs

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of released prisoners have found jobs as a result of the work of prison job clubs at the latest available date;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of prison job clubs, as compared with job clubs outside prisons.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions on the number and percentage of released prisoners who have found jobs as a result of the work of prison job clubs, and on what assessment has been made of the effectiveness of prison job clubs, as compared with those outside prisons.

Information on the number and percentage of released prisoners who have found jobs as a result of the work of prison job clubs is not collected centrally at present and there are currently no plans to do so. Figures have, however, been obtained from the Employment Service in respect of the job clubs at Holloway and Pentonville Prisons covering the months of April to August this year. They show that, of the 27 prisoners who used the Holloway job club 12 (45 per cent.) found jobs. At Pentonville 46 prisoners used the job club and 30 (66 per cent.) found jobs. These figures compare with a rate of approximately 45 per cent. for job clubs in the community.

The Prison Service has made no comparative assessment of the effectiveness of prison job clubs. However, following their establishment in 1991 with assistance from the Employment Service of job clubs in the two London prisons mentioned earlier, the Employment Service carried out its own evaluation. This concluded that prison job clubs can provide effective help in getting jobs for people nearing release from prison. On that basis the Prison Service has, together with the Employment Service and other organisations, continued to develop further jobsearch assistance for prisoners.

Increasing the number of establishments operating prison job clubs to at least eleven by next April is one of a number of initiatives aimed at this. This is in keeping with the commitment in the Prison Service's "Statement of Purpose, Visions, Goals and Values" to help prisoners prepare for their release into the community.

Hostels

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the composited report on national conditions in hostels which was undertaken by the central building services unit.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Each hostel in the survey has received its own report and assessment, and a report of general findings will be sent to probation and voluntary managing committees by the end of the year.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what criteria were used by his Department in drawing up the A, B and C lists of hostels derived from the hostel conditions survey;

(2) if he will publish the A, B and C lists of hostels which have been derived from the hostel conditions survey.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The main criteria for the three lists were the amount of space per resident, the proportion of single rooms, running costs and the likely costs of repairs and refurbishment to bring the hostel to an acceptable standard.

The three lists are as follows:

List A

Hostels assessed as unsuitable for economic refurbishment to a standard which would extend their minimum life as approved hostels to 50 years:

Name	*Location*
Highfield House	Accrington
Carpenter House	Birmingham
Cecil Road	Boscombe
Walmer Villas	Bradford
Hoole House	Elswick
North Road	Kew
Cardigan House	Leeds
Howden House	Leeds
Charnwood Lodge	Leicester
Channing House	Liverpool
Westbourne House North	London E7
Shenley Road	[1]London SE5
Bedford Hill	[1]London SW12
St Mungo's	London SW11
Southbank	Middlesborough
Bridgewood House	Northampton
Stone House	Northants
Milton Keynes	Great Holm
Lawson House	Plymouth
Emroch House	Port Talbot
The Grange	Purbrook
Elizabeth Fry	Reading
Lichfield Road	Stafford
St Albans	Watford
Wellesley House	Windsor
Blackburn Hostel	Blackburn

[1]Operates as one hostel

The following hostels were on list A but have now been closed:

Name	*Location*
Stoke Green	Coventry
Fir Tree Grange	Durham
Windyridge	Essex
Dover Bail Hostel	Kent
Hollywood Manor	Kent
St. Vincents	London SE4
West Park	London SE9
Dudley Centre	Newton Abbot

The following hostels were on list A but have now been closed:

Name	*Location*
Centre 45	Sheffield
Bewsey Street	Warrington
Marshall House	Wolverhampton

List B

Hostels below standard but capable of economic refurbishment as approved hostels.

Name	*Location*
Ashley House	Bristol
Meneghy House	Cambourne
Bowling Green	Carlisle
Elm Bank	Cleckheaton
Burdett Lodge	Derby
Astral House	Hucknell
The Cottage	Ipswich
Kenilworth Road	Leamington Spa
Ripon House	Leeds
St. Johns Hostel	Leeds
Howard House	Leicester
Wordsworth House	Lincoln
Southwood Hostel	Liverpool
Adelaide House	Liverpool
Seafield Lodge	London NW2
Corfton Road	London W5
St. Edmunds	London W16
Tulse Hill	London SW2
Napier Road	Luton
Wenger House	Newcastle under Lyme
John Boag House	Norwich
Southwell House	Nottingham
Trent House	Nottingham
Peterborough	Peterborough
St. Leonards	Reading
Aldridge	West Midlands
Braley House	Worcester
Plas-y-Wern	Wrexham

List C

Hostels assessed as broadly satisfactory

Name	*Location*
Felmores	Basildon
Beckenham Road	Beckenham
Crowley House	Birmingham
Elliott House	Birmingham
Welford House	Birmingham
Bridge House	Bristol
Brigstocke Road	Bristol
St. Josephs	Eccles
Dickson House	Fareham
Queens Road	Hull
Lightfoot House	Ipswich
Fleming House	Maidstone
Manor Lodge	Old Windsor
Maudsley House	Oxford
Katherine Price Hughes	London N5
Camden House	London NW1
Kelly House	London SW1
Withington Road	Manchester
Ozanam House	Newcastle upon Tyne
St. Christophers House	Newcastle upon Tyne
Norfolk Park	Sheffield
Weston Hostel	Weymouth
Wellington Road	Wolverhampton
Ellison House	Inner London

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional resources will be given to the police to deal with the enforcement of summonses and warrants issued for the non-compliance of community orders and hostel rules.

Mr. Maclean: No specific additional resources will be provided for this work. General police funding covers all operational activities and it is for chief officers to prioritise tasks, taking account of the resources available.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if hostel occupancy figures are determined by beds committed or beds occupied overnight.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Hostel occupancy is measured by beds occupied as a proportion of total approved places.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the hostels on the A list, drawn up from the hostel conditions survey, will be disposed of.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Home Office is discussing the future of List A hostels with the probation committees and voluntary management committees concerned. Although the buildings concerned may not have a long term future, they may be able to operate satisfactorily for some time.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the occupancy rate for the hostels at *(a)* Cecil road, Boscombe, *(b)* Walmer villas, Bradford, *(c)* Cardigan house, Leeds, *(d)* Howden house, Leeds, *(e)* Canning house, Liverpool, *(f)* Westbourne house, London E7, *(g)* Shenley road, London SE5, *(h)* Bedford hill, London SW12, *(i)* The Stone house, Northamptonshire, *(j)* Lawson house, Plymouth, *(k)* the Grange, Purbrook, *(l)* Elizabeth Fry, Reading and *(m)* Wellesley house, Windsor, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The occupancy rate of these hostels for the month of August 1994 is set out. Shenley road, London SE5 and Bedford hill, London SW12, whilst being two separate properties, constitute a single hostel known as Bedford/Shenley probation/bail hostel.

	Per cent.
Cecil Road, Boscombe	84
Walmer Villas, Bradford	81
Cardigan House, Leeds	91
Howden House, Leeds	84
Canning House, Liverpool	61
Westbourne House, London E7	72
Bedford/Shenley, London SE5	62
Stone House, Northampton	85
Lawson House, Plymouth	81
The Grange, Purbrook	80
Elizabeth Fry, Reading	69
Wellesley House, Windsor	48

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of places available in bail hostels; and what will be the number in 12 months' time.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: There are at present 2,474 places available. Following the 1993 public expenditure survey, provision was planned for an increase to 2,560 by 31 March next year and 2,680 by 31 March 1996: these plans are subject to review in the current survey.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional resources will be made available to hostels on the B list, drawn up from the hostel conditions survey, to assist them with refurbishment.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Home Office plans to finance the refurbishment of these hostels as resources permit. A capital grant budget is maintained for the refurbishment or redevelopment of approved hostels premises or sites: provision in the current financial year is £4 million.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of persons accepted for hostel places are actually remanded into custody.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Figures on this are not held centrally.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice and assistance will be given to hostel managers to increase successful completion rates for hostel residents from 48 to 70 per cent. in 1995.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The framework within which hostels operate is given by the "National Standards for the Supervision of Offenders within the Community". A revised draft is currently subject to consultation. There are plans to issue a hostels handbook giving additional more detailed guidance for all hostel staff in the new year.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will remove the discretion of hostel managers to report minor breaches of hostel rules to the police and the courts in the final version of the national standards.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Draft revised national standards are currently the subject of consultation, and my right hon. and learned Friend will wish to consider any representations before deciding the wording of the final version.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the rules of procedure adopted for the Executive committee of the Dublin convention, relating to the state responsible for determining an asylum application.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The committee provided for in article 18 of the Dublin convention is required to determine its own rules of procedure. Draft rules are in preparation but they cannot be finally decided until the committee comes into existence on entry into force of the convention. I shall place a copy of the rules in the Library then.

Prison and Court Escort Service

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will announce the award of contracts for the prison and court escort services in *(a)* East Anglia, *(b)* Merseyside, *(c)* north Wales and *(d)* the north of England; and what is the proposed timetable for their implementation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the announcing of the award of contracts for the prison and court escort services in various areas.

Tenders for the court escort and custody service in East Anglia (Area 4), the North West and North Wales (Area 6), and the North of England (Area 8) were received on 19 September and are being considered. The Prisons Board should make its decision on contract award by the end of the year.

All three areas will be phased in. It is currently planned that Area 4 will commence contracted operation in July 1995 and will be fully operational by January 1996; Area 6 will start in August 1995 and be fully operational by February 1996; and Area 8 will commence in September 1995 and be fully operational by March 1996.

Bail

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be publishing the research into bail procedures which was submitted earlier in the year.

Mr. Maclean: The recommendations for best practice in the bail process arising from a report on research which was carried out last year are currently being studied. Once decisions have been taken on those recommendations we expect the report to be published.

Woolf Report

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made to date on each of the recommendations of the Woolf report; and what are the timetables for future implementation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the progress made on the recommendations of the Woolf Report and the timetable for future implementation.

As you know, the major recommendations in the Woolf Report have been a key priority for the Prison Service. A summary of the progress made is set out below.

Improve security

- Prison Security Act now in force
- Refurbishment to higher standards (long term programme)
- Lakes/Hadfield proposals; most of the accepted recommendations have now been implemented.
- Incidents in private sector prisons now managed from Incident Management Suite
- Programme for installing X-ray machines completed in all prisons holding Category A prisoners
- New guidance issued on escorting prisoners
- New standard intelligence—handling system in place in all prison security departments
- Guidance on best practice in tackling bullying issued August 1993; research project is underway
- Visitor recognition schemes being trialed to improve security on visits
- Cognitive skills programmes already running prisons and being piloted in 21 more
- Regime monitoring system extended from April 1992
- Admissions guide on reception and induction arrangements issued November 1992
- Sentence planning implemented for prisoners sentenced to four years or more after October 1992, and all sentenced Category A prisoners

Sentence planning extended at the end of 1993 to prisoners sentenced to four years or more before October 1992, and to those newly sentenced to one to four years

A full review of sentence planning—its objectives and supporting systems—is underway

Work commenced on improving arrangements for management of research

New guidance for juveniles issued October 1992

Provide Code of Standards

Prison Service Operating Standards published April 1994

Improve relationships with prisoners

Prisoners information pack issued

Changes in BOV role introduced on schedule

Prisons Ombudsman appointed April 1994

Improving standards of diets and food distribution in establishments

Improved guidance on recording racial incidents issued; major research project underway into how incidents are recorded and dealt with

Prisoner compacts introduced

Greater openness over parole and early release decisions

Provide access to sanitation

£9 million to be spent on simple sanitation schemes in 1994–95

More than 92 per cent. of prison places now have access to night sanitation

By the end of 1994, 95 per cent. of prison places will have access to night sanitation. It is planned that the remainder will be completed within the 1996 deadline proposed by Lord Justice Woolf

End overcrowding

Thirteen new prisons opened since 1991 providing 7,743 places

Two new prison starts planned for 1995–96 to provide further 1,200 places by 1997–98

Buckley Hall to re-open in 1994–95 providing 90 places, rising to 350 places in early 1995–96

Over 2,000 new houseblock places to be built at existing prisons by 1996–97; most have now started on site

Four further prisons also planned, sites and timescale yet to be decided

Trebling eliminated

Divide large wings into smaller units wherever possible

Requirement considered as part of all major wing refurbishment schemes.

Develop community prisons

Family ties and pre-release initiatives to complement community prisons approach, including increase in frequency and flexibility of duration of visits; further extension of financially assisted visits scheme introduced in 1994; provision of cardphones now extended to all prisons; review of home leave scheme under way

In September 1993 Prisons Board decided on steps to be taken in the short term for moving towards a community prison system

Community cluster arrangements introduced in the Kent area during 1993; similar arrangements to be introduced for East Anglia in September 1994; and feasibility study in hand for North East

Reasons for building community prisons in urban areas vindicated in 1994 at public enquiry into proposals for new prison in Merseyside

New Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the timetable for the building and opening of the four new prisons which were announced in October 1993; and what progress has been made in identifying sites and securing planning permission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the timetable for building new prisons, and the progress that has been made on identifying sites for the new prisons to be built.

In September 1993, the Home Secretary announced that six new prisons are planned to be built, including the two announced in Autumn 1992. The first two of these will be in North East Liverpool and South Wales, and outline planning agreement for these has been obtained. It is anticipated that construction work will commence in 1995 and the prisons will open in 1997-98 providing about 1,400 places.

Potential sites for the remaining four prisons are still under investigation and it is too early to give a timetable for their building and opening.

A site has been identified for the third prison in the Salford area of Greater Manchester. Preliminary meetings have been held with the local planning authority as a prelude to seeking formal planning clearance. Several potential sites for the remaining three prisons have been identified and are under consideration.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision about the award of contracts for the proposed new prisons at Bridgend, Glamorgan, and Fazakerley, Merseyside; and what is the timetable for the building and opening of the prisons.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the award of contracts for the proposed new prisons at Bridgend and Fazakerley.

Invitations to Tender for the provision of prisons at Bridgend and Fazakerley were sent out on 29 July 1994. Tenders are due back on 8 November and we are aiming to sign the contracts by the end of March 1995. We expect construction work to start soon after contract signature. The opening of each prison will depend on the proposals of the two preferred contractors, but we hope that prisoners will be able to be accepted early in the financial year 1997–98.

Fine Defaulters

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been received into prison for fine defaults in 1994 to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many people have been received into prison for fine defaults in 1994 to the latest available date.

Provisional information for January to August 1994 shows that 13,619 persons (12,688 males and 931 females) were received into Prison Service establishments for fine default.

Prisons (Market Testing)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the timetable for the proposed market-testing of prisons, to be chosen from the short-list of 21 prisons announced in August.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the timetable for the proposed market-testing of prisons.

The list was of twelve prisons. In addition, nine open prisons were asked for submissions to allow the Prisons Board to decide if any should be added to the shortlist. Having considered these submissions, the Board informed the local prisons on 30 September that no open prison would be shortlisted on this occasion.

The Prisons Board has not yet selected which one or two establishments will be market tested from the list of twelve.

I would expect the market test to take about nine months to reach the stage of selecting the successful bidder.

Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prisoners are held in establishments where prisoners are unlocked for a total of at least 12 hours on weekdays.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what percentage of prisoners are held in establishments where prisoners are unlocked for a total of at least 12 hours on weekdays.

At the end of September 1994, 36·4 per cent. of the prison population were held in establishments where prisoners are unlocked for a total of at least twelve hours on weekdays.

Prisoner Statistics

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current estimate for the number of *(a)* sentenced prisoners and *(b)* unsentenced prisoners who are (i) mentally ill, (ii) drug misusers and (iii) alcohol addicted, in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of sentenced and unsentenced prisoners who are mentally ill, drug misusers, or alcohol addicted, in England and Wales.

This information is not available in the form requested. The most up to date information held centrally is for 27 June 1994. On that day there were 174 mentally disordered prisoners awaiting transfer to NHS psychiatric facilities, 684 being treated in prison health care centres and 1,921 requiring mental health care.

Information on drug misuse is taken from the study carried out by Professor Gunn et al from the Institute of Psychiatry and published in the report "Mentally Disordered Prisoners" in May 1991. This study of 1,751 sentenced male prisoners in England and Wales showed that before entering prison 43 per cent. had used cannabis, nine per cent. had used opiates, nine per cent. had used amphetamines and five per cent. had used cocaine. Within this group of prisoners eleven per cent. of adult male prisoners were classified as drug dependent, six per cent. of male young offenders and 23 per cent. of women prisoners were dependent. The Home Office were notified of 3,764 drug addicts identified within prison during 1993.

There are currently no central records of the number of alcohol addicted prisoners in England and Wales. There has been little research on alcohol misuse by prisoners but such studies as have been done suggest that alcohol misuse by prisoners before imprisonment is considerably higher than in the general population. However, the Mentally Disordered Prisoners study found a prevalence of alcohol abuse where treatment was indicated in 8·6 per cent. of adult sentenced prisoners, 8·7 per cent. of male sentenced young offenders and 4·4 per cent. of sentenced women.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in England and Wales were made subject to hospital orders under sections 37 and 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983; and how many were transferred to hospital under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in the year 1993–94.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Reponsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners in England and Wales made subject to hospital orders under sections 37 and 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983, and the number transferred to hospital under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983, in the year 1993–94.

In the year 1993–94, 421 prisoners were made subject to hospital orders without restrictions (S37 Mental Health Act 1983) and 45 were made subject to hospital orders with restrictions (S37 and S41 Mental Health Act 1983).

Transfers of convicted prisoners to hospital under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983 are recorded on a calendar year basis. 271 transfers took place during 1993.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the *(a)* certified normal accommodation, *(b)* operational capacity and *(c)* actual population at each prison in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on the certified normal accommodation, operational capacity and actual population at each prison in England and Wales at the latest available date.

The latest available information is for 30 September and is given in the attached table.

Certified Normal Accommodation, Operational Capacity and Population in Prisons in England and Wales on 19 October 1994

National	*CNA in use*	*OP cap*	*Population*
Acklington	658	658	616
Albany	436	436	431
Aldington	127	127	127
Ashwell	404	404	384
Askham Grange	146	146	124
Aylesbury	229	232	225

Certified Normal Accommodation, Operational Capacity and Population in Prisons in England and Wales on 19 October 1994

National	*CNA in use*	*OP cap*	*Population*
Bedford	303	329	320
Belmarsh	841	841	759
Birmingham	567	850	762
Blakenhurst	649	649	642
Blantyre House	95	95	94
Blundeston	408	408	389
Brinsford	477	477	455
Bristol	423	473	460
Brixton	484	668	622
Brockhill	111	120	115
Bullingdon	635	635	642
Bullwood Hall	125	125	121
Camp Hill	378	441	391
Canterbury	184	275	262
Cardiff	334	450	420
Castington	300	300	268
Channings Wood	594	594	550
Chelmsford	251	416	349
Coldingley	292	292	282
Cookham Wood	120	140	131
Dartmoor	538	538	501
Deerbolt	417	417	386
Doncaster	771	773	767
Dorchester	138	232	199
Dover	316	316	301
Downview	287	291	270
Drake Hall	255	255	255
Durham	399	577	628
East Sutton Park	94	94	85
Eastwood Park	0	0	0
Elmley	637	637	619
Erlestoke	250	270	245
Everthorpe	318	318	231
Exeter	260	473	413
Featherstone	599	599	582
Feltham	842	842	807
Finnamore Wood	0	0	0
Ford	536	536	472
Frankland	447	447	421
Full Sutton	567	567	545
Garth	512	512	495
Gartree	277	277	265
Glen Parva	767	788	749
Gloucester	202	262	240
Grendon	190	186	185
Guys Marsh	240	240	203
Hollesley Bay	365	365	333
Haslar	127	127	125
Hatfield	180	180	152
Haverigg	394	394	341
Hewell Grange	156	179	168
High Down	629	629	626
Highpoint	679	679	572
Hindley	280	319	285
Holloway	517	532	499
Holme House	649	649	618
Hull	328	412	406
Huntercombe	240	240	219
Kingston	154	154	142
Kirkham	644	644	569
Kirklevington	86	86	82
Lancaster Farms	364	364	333
Lancaster	260	246	220
Latchmere House	151	151	142
Leeds	814	1,168	1,003
Leicester	192	348	346
Lewes	282	377	349
Leyhill	410	410	393
Lincoln	444	628	603
Lindholme	567	567	524
Littlehey	593	583	546
Liverpool	1,104	1,305	1,265
Long Lartin	362	362	353
Low Newton	198	343	208
Maidstone	485	485	424
Manchester	827	969	896
Moorland	635	635	299
Morton Hall	168	168	[1]170
New Hall	169	181	175
North Sea Camp	201	201	[1]221
Northallerton	150	219	200
Norwich	333	478	350
Nottingham	222	222	206
Onley	520	520	494
Oxford	106	120	102
Parkhurst	253	253	224
Pentonville	559	765	747
Portland	420	420	398
Preston	342	536	501
Pucklechurch	56	81	61
Ranby	347	347	346
Reading	182	205	188
Risley	794	753	727
Rochester	294	330	253
Rudgate	287	300	272
Send	113	113	115
Shepton Mallet	158	211	197
Shrewsbury	168	307	259
Spring Hill	210	210	207
Stafford	358	530	521
Standford Hill	384	384	355
Stocken	396	396	394
Stoke Heath	300	300	233
Styal	211	260	248
Sudbury	413	348	341
Sudbury Foston	96	96	91
Swaleside	512	512	499
Swansea	151	220	222
Swinfen Hall	182	182	182
Thorn Cross	209	209	192
The Mount	484	484	492
The Verne	552	538	522
The Wolds	320	368	289
Thorp Arch	166	166	159
Usk	241	241	226
Wormwood Scrubs	714	1,050	752
Wakefield	727	727	700
Wandsworth	833	1,056	965
Wayland	580	580	550
Wellingborough	344	314	308
Werrington	114	114	108
Wetherby	160	160	151
Watton	216	216	211
Whitemoor	534	524	463
Winchester	356	451	412
Woodhill	566	566	532
Wymott	432	432	420
Total	49,149	53,922	49,797

[1] The population of Morton Hall and North Sea Camp appear to be in excess of the operational capacity. This is because the total population includes a number of prisoners temporarily absent from the establishment for home leave or other authorised reasons.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* unsentenced and *(b)* sentenced prisoners were being held at temporary allocation centres in prisons in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison

Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners being held at temporary allocation centres in prisons in England and Wales.

Because of the population pressures in the North West, it has been necessary to establish a temporary allocation centre at Risley prison.

On 18 October, the temporary allocation centre at Risley held 3 unsentenced prisoners and 182 sentenced prisoners.

Securicor Court Escort Service

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many escapes there have been from the Securicor court escort service in the metropolitan area: and how many prisoner movements have been carried out by the service at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of escapes and prisoner movements carried out in the Metropolitan area.

The contract with Securicor started on 27 June 1994. Up to 15 October there had been 15,469 prisoner movements and one escape.

Prison Dogs

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dog handlers and dogs are currently working in the prison dogs section; what tasks they undertake; and how many dogs are trained in the detection of *(a)* explosives and *(b)* illicit drugs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about dog handlers and dogs in the Prison Service.

There are 426 dog handlers and 463 dogs in the Prison Service. Patrol dogs undertake tasks such as patrol duties, escorting prisoners, searching for missing property (eg. escape equipment) searching for and detecting would-be escapers and apprehending them. They can also be used to safeguard the perimeter or for control in prison disturbances.

72 dogs are trained to detect arms and explosives (no dogs are trained to detect explosives only); 101 dogs are trained to detect illicit drugs.

Prisons (Overcrowding)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what preparations he is making to deal with prison overcrowding; and what plans there are to use *(a)* temporary buildings or portakabins, *(b)* Army camps, *(c)* prisons which are not currently in use and *(d)* prison ships or barges.

Mr Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the preparations being made to deal with prison overcrowding.

The provision of additional accommodation is already well underway. Work on the 2,000 new accommodation places at existing prisons is at an advanced stage and the new prison at Buckley Hall will be open before the end of this year. Tenders for the first two of the six new prisons announced last year are due in the next month.

The Prison Service has also developed contingency plans for an accelerated building programme to meet a potentially higher population but will decide whether or not to proceed with them in the light of population developments in the next few weeks.

There are no plans at present to use temporary buildings, portakabins, prisons ships or barges. Legislative changes however are being made in the Criminal Justice Bill which permit the use of ships/barges in the future. Contingency plans to defer closure of prisons and to convert army camps for use as low security prisons have been prepared to cope with any emergency need for additional accommodation.

Prisoners (Visits)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prisoners are held in establishments where they have the opportunity to exceed the minimum visiting entitlement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what percentage of prisoners are held in establishments where they have the opportunity to exceed the minimum visiting entitlement.

At the end of September 1994, all establishments were providing prisoners with the opportunity to exceed the minimum visiting entitlement.

Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his Department's definition is of burden sharing with regard to the admission and residence of refugees from third countries.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Burden sharing is not a precise term. In this context it is taken to mean a proportion sharing out of persons displaced by events, such as the conflict in the former Yugoslavia; it is also used more generally to describe the overall response of the international community to such events.

Custodial Sentences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of *(a)* male juveniles and *(b)* juveniles convicted of an indictable offence received a custodial sentence in 1993–94, and in each of the last 10 years;

(2) what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women convicted of an indictable offence received a custodial sentence in 1993–94, and in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1983 to 1993, which is provisional, is given in the table.

Information for 1994 will not be available until the autumn 1995.

Persons sentenced to immediate custody (1) by sex, type of offence and type of court
Number of persons (thousands) and percentage

Age sex and year	*Total number sentenced to immediate custody*	*Number of persons sentenced to immediate custody*					*Persons sentenced to immediate custody as a percentage of all persons of relevant age group sentenced for indictable offences*		
		Indictable offences (2)			*Summary offences (2)*		*Indictable offences*		
		All courts	*Magistrates' courts*	*The Crown court*	*Total non motoring*	*Total motoring*	*All courts*	*Magistrates' courts*	*The Crown court*
England and Wales									
Aged 14 and under 18									
Males									
1983	13·9	13·5	8·8	4·7	0·4	—	15·3	10·9	61·6
1984	12·5	12·0	8·7	3·3	0·4	—	14·4	11·2	56·3
1985	11·9	11·5	8·0	3·4	0·4	—	14·7	11·2	54·4
1986	9·2	8·9	5·8	3·1	0·3	—	14·0	10·1	53·8
1987	8·5	8·2	5·1	3·1	0·3	—	14·0	9·7	50·1
1988	7·6	7·3	4·2	3·1	0·3	—	13·7	8·9	48·4
1989	5·6	4·7	2·5	2·2	0·8	0·1	11·7	7·0	43·5
1990	4·4	3·6	1·8	1·8	0·6	0·1	9·5	5·4	37·4
1991	4·3	3·5	1·9	1·5	0·7	0·2	9·9	6·3	36·6
1992	3·9	3·3	1·8	1·5	0·5	0·1	10·4	6·5	39·2
1993*	3·8	3·3	2·5	0·7	0·4	0·2	11·1	9·3	35·8
Females									
1983	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	—	—	1·6	0·7	22·5
1984	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	—	—	2·5	1·8	20·4
1985	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·1	—	—	2·6	1·8	21·6
1986	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	—	—	2·5	1·6	20·4
1987	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1	—	—	2·5	1·6	18·9
1988	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1	—	—	2·6	1·4	20·1
1989	0·1	0·1	—	0·1	—	—	2·1	1·1	16·6
1990	0·1	0·1	—	0·1	—	—	1·7	0·6	15·7
1991	0·1	0·1	—	—	—	—	1·9	0·9	17·8
1992	0·1	0·1	—	—	—	—	1·7	0·9	14·8
1993*	0·1	0·1	0·1	—	—	—	2·6	1·9	18·5
Persons									
1983	14·1	13·6	8·8	4·8	0·4	—	13·9	9·8	59·6
1984	12·7	12·2	8·9	3·4	0·4	—	13·2	10·2	54·4
1985	12·2	11·7	8·2	3·5	0·4	—	13·4	10·2	52·7
1986	9·4	9·1	5·9	3·1	0·3	—	12·9	9·2	52·0
1987	8·7	8·4	5·2	3·2	0·3	—	12·9	8·9	48·5
1988	7·8	7·5	4·3	3·2	0·3	—	12·6	8·2	46·8
1989	5·8	4·8	2·5	2·3	0·8	0·1	10·7	6·4	42·0
1990	4·5	3·7	1·8	1·9	0·6	0·1	8·6	4·9	35·9
1991	4·4	3·5	2·0	1·6	0·7	0·2	9·0	5·6	35·5
1992	4·0	3·3	1·8	1·5	0·5	0·1	9·4	5·8	37·8
1993*	3·9	3·4	2·6	0·8	0·4	0·2	10·2	8·5	34·7
Aged 18 and under 21 Males									
1983	16·6	15·6	5·8	9·8	0·8	0·1	19·1	9·2	54·2
1984	18·7	17·7	7·1	10·5	0·9	0·1	21·2	11·0	56·9
1985	19·9	18·9	7·3	11·6	0·8	0·2	22·5	11·4	57·6
1986	16·9	16·0	5·5	10·6	0·8	0·1	21·9	10·0	55·8
1987	17·1	16·4	5·0	11·4	0·6	0·1	21·7	9·1	54·9
1988	15·8	15·1	4·2	10·9	0·6	0·1	20·7	8·0	51·7
1989	13·0	11·0	2·7	8·4	1·3	0·6	17·4	5·9	46·6
1990	11·5	9·7	2·3	7·3	1·2	0·6	14·8	4·8	42·2
1991	12·2	10·1	2·7	7·4	1·3	0·8	15·6	5·7	43·1
1992	10·8	9·0	2·3	6·8	1·0	0·8	15·3	5·2	44·2
1993*	11·0	9·0	3·0	6·0	0·9	1·1	17·0	7·2	51·3

Persons sentenced to immediate custody (1) by sex, type of offence and type of court
Number of persons (thousands) and percentage

		Number of persons sentenced to immediate custody					Persons sentenced to immediate custody as a percentage of all persons of relevant age group sentenced for indictable offences		
		Indictable offences (2)			Summary offences (2)		Indictable offences		
Age sex and year	*Total number sentenced to immediate custody*	*All courts*	*Magistrates' courts*	*The Crown court*	*Total non motoring*	*Total motoring*	*All courts*	*Magistrates' courts*	*The Crown court*
Females									
1983	0·6	0·6	0·3	0·3	—	—	5·7	3·2	23·7
1984	0·6	0·6	0·3	0·3	—	—	5·6	3·1	23·7
1985	0·7	0·6	0·3	0·3	—	—	5·9	3·1	23·9
1986	0·6	0·6	0·2	0·3	—	—	6·0	2·9	25·9
1987	0·5	0·5	0·2	0·3	—	—	5·6	2·7	22·8
1988	0·5	0·5	0·2	0·3	—	—	5·2	2·3	21·1
1989	0·4	0·4	0·1	0·2	—	—	4·4	1·8	19·1
1990	0·3	0·3	0·1	0·2	—	—	3·4	1·2	15·6
1991	0·3	0·3	0·1	0·2	—	—	3·4	1·2	16·0
1992	0·3	0·3	0·1	0·2	—	—	3·5	1·4	18·1
1993*	0·3	0·3	0·1	0·2	—	—	5·0	2·4	25·1
Persons									
1983	17·2	16·2	6·1	10·1	0·9	0·1	17·5	8·4	52·2
1984	19·3	18·3	7·4	10·9	0·9	0·1	19·4	10·0	54·8
1985	20·6	19·5	7·6	11·9	0·9	0·2	20·6	10·4	55·3
1986	17·5	16·6	5·7	10·9	0·8	0·1	20·1	9·1	53·9
1987	17·7	16·9	5·2	11·7	0·7	0·1	19·9	8·3	53·0
1988	16·3	15·6	4·3	11·2	0·6	0·1	19·0	7·3	49·8
1989	13·3	11·4	2·8	8·6	1·3	0·6	15·9	5·3	44·8
1990	11·7	9·9	2·4	7·5	1·2	0·6	13·5	4·3	40·4
1991	12·5	10·3	2·8	7·6	1·4	0·8	14·2	5·1	41·4
1992	11·1	9·3	2·3	6·9	1·0	0·8	14·0	4·7	42·7
1993*	11·3	9·3	3·1	6·2	0·9	1·1	15·7	6·6	49·8
Aged 21 and over Males									
1983	44·6	41·6	15·3	26·3	2·3	0·8	19·2	9·2	52·3
1984	44·3	41·0	14·3	26·7	2·1	1·2	19·5	9·0	52·9
1985	48·0	44·4	14·1	30·3	2·2	1·4	21·0	9·0	54·7
1986	43·6	40·5	11·4	29·2	1·7	1·4	21·4	8·4	54·1
1987	45·5	42·0	10·6	31·5	1·8	1·7	21·2	7·5	54·1
1988	45·7	41·9	9·8	32·0	1·8	2·0	20·2	6·8	51·4
1989	42·9	35·9	7·3	28·6	2·5	4·5	19·2	5·6	49·8
1990	39·5	32·7	6·6	26·1	2·4	4·5	17·3	5·0	46·8
1991	42·4	34·3	7·8	26·5	2·8	5·3	18·0	5·8	48·1
1992	40·9	33·3	7·1	26·2	2·4	5·2	17·5	5·3	47·2
1993*	41·1	32·1	7·6	24·6	2·2	6·8	17·5	5·6	51·3
Females									
1983	2·3	2·2	0·9	1·3	0·1	0·0	5·3	2·5	26·2
1984	2·5	2·4	1·0	1·4	0·1	0·0	6·1	2·8	27·3
1985	2·7	2·5	0·9	1·7	0·1	0·0	6·6	2·7	29·3
1986	2·4	2·3	0·7	1·6	0·1	0·0	6·8	2·5	29·4
1987	2·5	2·5	0·6	1·8	0·1	0·0	7·7	2·4	32·2
1988	2·3	2·2	0·6	1·6	0·1	0·0	7·0	2·3	27·3
1989	2·1	2·0	0·5	1·5	0·1	0·0	6·8	2·1	25·9
1990	1·8	1·7	0·4	1·3	0·1	0·0	5·5	1·8	21·6
1991	2·0	1·8	0·5	1·3	0·1	0·1	6·2	2·3	23·0
1992	2·0	1·8	0·5	1·3	0·1	0·1	6·4	2·2	24·3
1993*	2·1	1·9	0·6	1·2	0·1	0·1	6·8	2·7	27·7
Persons									
1983	46·9	43·7	16·2	27·6	2·4	0·8	17·0	8·0	50·0
1984	46·8	43·4	15·2	28·1	2·2	1·2	17·4	7·9	50·5
1985	50·6	47·0	15·0	31·9	2·3	1·4	18·8	7·9	52·4
1986	46·0	42·8	12·1	30·7	1·8	1·4	19·2	7·4	51·9
1987	48·0	44·5	11·2	33·3	1·9	1·7	19·3	6·7	52·2
1988	48·0	44·1	10·4	33·6	1·9	2·0	18·4	6·1	49·4
1989	45·0	37·9	7·8	30·1	2·6	4·5	17·5	5·1	47·6
1990	41·4	34·4	7·0	27·4	2·5	4·5	15·7	4·5	44·5

Persons sentenced to immediate custody (1) by sex, type of offence and type of court
Number of persons (thousands) and percentage

	Number of persons sentenced to immediate custody						Persons sentenced to immediate custody as a percentage of all persons of relevant age group sentenced for indictable offences		
		Indictable offences (2)			Summary offences (2)		Indictable offences		
Age sex and year	*Total number sentenced to immediate custody*	*All courts*	*Magistrates' courts*	*The Crown court*	*Total non motoring*	*Total motoring*	*All courts*	*Magistrates' courts*	*The Crown court*
1991	44·3	36·1	8·3	27·8	2·9	5·3	16·5	5·2	45·8
1992	42·9	35·1	7·6	27·5	2·5	5·3	16·1	4·8	45·2
1993*	43·2	34·0	8·2	25·8	2·3	6·9	16·1	5·2	49·3
Aged 14 and over									
Males									
1983	75·1	70·7	29·9	40·8	3·5	0·9	18·3	9·6	53·7
1984	75·4	70·7	30·1	40·6	3·4	1·4	18·8	10·0	54·2
1985	79·7	74·8	29·5	45·3	3·4	1·5	20·0	10·1	55·4
1986	69·7	65·4	22·6	42·8	2·8	1·5	20·0	9·1	54·5
1987	71·1	66·6	20·7	45·9	2·7	1·8	20·0	8·4	54·0
1988	69·1	64·3	18·2	46·1	2·7	2·2	19·2	7·5	51·3
1989	61·5	51·6	12·4	39·2	4·6	5·2	17·8	5·9	48·7
1990	55·4	46·0	10·7	35·3	4·2	5·2	15·7	5·0	45·2
1991	58·9	47·8	12·4	35·4	4·8	6·2	16·5	5·8	46·4
1992	55·7	45·6	11·2	34·4	4·0	6·1	16·3	5·4	46·2
1993*	55·9	44·4	13·1	31·3	3·4	8·1	16·7	6·4	50·8
Females									
1983	3·1	2·9	1·3	1·7	0·2	0·0	4·8	2·3	25·5
1984	3·3	3·2	1·4	1·8	0·1	0·0	5·4	2·7	26·3
1985	3·6	3·4	1·3	2·1	0·1	0·0	5·9	2·6	27·9
1986	3·2	3·0	1·0	2·0	0·1	0·0	6·1	2·4	28·3
1987	3·2	3·1	0·9	2·2	0·1	0·0	6·6	2·4	29·9
1988	2·9	2·8	0·8	2·0	0·1	0·0	6·1	2·2	25·8
1989	2·6	2·5	0·7	1·8	0·1	0·0	5·8	1·9	24·3
1990	2·2	2·1	0·5	1·5	0·1	0·0	4·7	1·5	20·3
1991	2·4	2·2	0·7	1·5	0·1	0·1	5·2	1·9	21·7
1992	2·3	2·1	0·6	1·5	0·1	0·1	5·4	1·9	23·1
1993*	2·5	2·3	0·8	1·4	0·1	0·1	6·1	2·6	27·1
Persons									
1983	78·2	73·6	31·2	42·5	3·7	1·0	16·5	8·5	51·5
1984	78·8	73·9	31·5	42·4	3·5	1·4	17·0	8·9	51·9
1985	83·3	78·2	30·8	47·4	3·6	1·6	18·1	9·0	53·1
1986	72·9	68·4	23·7	44·8	2·9	1·6	18·2	8·1	52·4
1987	74·4	69·8	21·6	48·1	2·8	1·8	18·4	7·5	52·1
1988	72·1	67·1	19·1	48·0	2·8	2·2	17·7	6·7	49·3
1989	64·1	54·1	13·1	41·0	4·8	5·2	16·3	5·3	46·6
1990	57·6	48·0	11·3	36·8	4·3	5·3	14·3	4·5	43·1
1991	61·2	50·0	13·1	36·9	5·0	6·3	15·1	5·3	44·3
1992	58·0	47·7	11·8	36·0	4·1	6·1	14·9	4·9	44·3
1993*	58·4	46·6	13·9	32·7	3·6	8·2	15·4	5·9	48·9

[1] Immediate custody for persons aged 14 and under 21 comprises borstal training and unsuspended imprisonment (before 24 May 1983) or youth custody (from 24 May 1983) and detention centre orders until 1 October 1988 and detention in a young offender institution after 1 October 1988; for persons aged 21 and over immediate custody is equivalent to immediate imprisonment, which includes partly suspended sentences up to 30 September 1992.

[2] Improvements in the data collection methods used by the Metropolitan Police District have led to an increase in the number recorded as sentenced of about 2 per cent. in 1993 and 1 per cent. in 1992 for indictable offences and 0.5 per cent. in both years for summary non-motoring offences; also, about 5 per cent. for summary motoring offences in 1991.

* Provisional

Temporary Allocation Centres

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase the number of temporary allocation centres in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about plans to increase the number of temporary allocation centres in prisons in England and Wales.

Temporary allocation facilities are currently being provided at Risley prison because of population pressure in the North West. We have no plans to provide such facilities at any other prisons in England and Wales.

Security Vetting

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what security vetting prison officers and civilian staff engaged to work in prisons in England and Wales are subject to prior to appointment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the security vetting of staff engaged to work in prisons in England and Wales.

All staff engaged to work in prisons in England and Wales are subject to criminal record checks. In addition, governor grades are subject to security vetting, including a counter terrorist check, beforeappointment. All other staff are subject to security vetting before appointment to prisons housing Category A prisoners.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what security vetting prior to appointment prison officers and civilian staff engaged to work with *(a)* category A and *(b)* exceptionally high risk prisoners in prisons in England and Wales are subject to.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the security vetting of staff engaged to work with category A and exceptionally high risk prisoners.

All staff engaged to work in prisons housing Category A prisoners, including exceptionally high risk prisoners, in England and Wales are subject to security vetting before appointment to the establishments concerned.

Prison Population

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in the prison population for each month of 1994.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what has been the change in the prison population for each month of 1994.

The information requested is shown in the attached table.

Prison population including those held in police cells, England and Wales, January—September 1994

Last day of each month	*Total population*	*Change on previous month*
1994		
January	46,902	—
February	47,906	+1,004
March	48,778	+872
April	47,943	-835
May	48,675	+732
June	48,929	+254
July	49,169	+240
August	49,392	+223
September[1]	49,821	+429

[1] Provisional figure.

Prisoners (Activities)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of hours per week which prisoners spent in purposeful activity, in each month of 1994 to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the average number of hours per week which prisoners spend in purposeful activity, in each month of 1994 to the latest available date.

The latest available information is as follows:

Weekly average hours per prisoner in purposeful activity

Month	*Hours*
January 1994	23·3
February	25·5
March	26·3
April	25·0
May	26·7
June	26·3
July	27·3
August	26·9
September	26·4

Drug Prescribing

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at which prisons medical officers are authorised to prescribe opiate substances as part of a drug rehabilitation programme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking at which prisons medical officers are authorised to prescribe opiate substances as part of drug rehabilitation programmes.

All prison medical officers are authorised to prescribe opiate substances when its use is clinically indicated.

Prison Cells

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners since the beginning of April have been held three to a cell designed for one; on what dates and at which prisons prisoners have been held three to a cell; and how many prisoners have been held three to a cell on each occasion.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prisoners sharing three to a cell designed for one.

This information is reported by establishments on the last Friday of each month. Since 1 April 1994, no prisoners have been reported as sharing three to a cell designed for one.

Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the prison population were *(a)* remanded and *(b)* sentenced prisoners in each month from April to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what percentage of the prison population were *(a)* remanded and *(b)* sentenced prisoners in each month from April to the latest available date.

The attached table shows this information for the last day of each month, from April to August 1994.

Percentage of prison population by type of custody: England and Wales, April—August 1994[1][2]

	Percentage on remand	Percentage sentenced
1994		
April	25	74
May	26	73
June	26	73
July	25	74
August	26	73

[1] Figures relate to last day of month. They include prisoners held in police cells.

[2] Non-criminal prisoners account for about 1 per cent. of the total prison population and are excluded from both the remand and sentenced.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in which no drug rehabilitation programmes are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on the availability of drug rehabilitation programmes in prisons.

All Prison Service establishments provide prisoners with access to a range of services including education, treatment and counselling for drug misuse via the prison health care centre, the probation service or outside drug agencies.

As part of the new Prison Service drugs strategy, to be launched in the near future, all prison governors will be required to develop and implement local drug strategies which will form part of their contract with their area manager. These local strategies will include additional provision for education, treatment and throughcare services for prisoners who misuse, have misused or are potential misusers of drugs.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of prisoners with access to 24-hour sanitation, at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners with access to 24 hour sanitation.

At the end of September 1994, 94 per cent. of prison places, or approximately 47,000 prisoners, had access to night sanitation.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* prison workshops and *(b)* farms and gardens enterprises there are in operation at the latest available date; and in which prisons they are.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of workshops and farms and gardens enterprises there are in operation in each prison.

I enclose a list of all prisons in England and Wales having workshops, arranged in alphabetical order and a separate list of Farms and Gardens activities arranged in enterprises. There are 240 workshops in all, at 98 prison establishments. All establishments have a grounds maintenance enterprise; 38 have major agricultural and horticultural enterprises; in addition, approximately 24 establishments have smaller scale horticultural production units.

Prison Farms and Gardens Enterprises

Establishment	*Enterprise*
All establishments	Amenity/sports areas
Dartmoor	Quarrying
Dartmoor	Beef
Guys Marsh	
Hatfield	
Onley	
Stocken	
Ford	Compost
Camphill	Dairy—Milk
Dartmoor	
East Sutton Park	
Everthorpe	
Featherstone	
Hatfield	
Hewell Grange	
Hollesley Bay Colony	
Kirkham	
Littlehey	

Prison Farms and Gardens Enterprises

Establishment	*Enterprise*
New Hall	
Rochester	
Stocken	
The Verne	
Usk/Prescoed	
Werrington	
East Sutton Park	Dairy—Mozzarella Cheese
Guys Marsh	Dairy—replacement stock
Leyhill	
Portland	
Swinfen Hall	
Askham Grange	Field Scale Vegetables—
Everthorpe	
Featherstone	
Ford	Green vegetables, roots and potatoes
Hatfield	
Haverigg	
Hewell Grange	
Hollesley Bay Colony	
Kirkham	
Lindholme	
Morton Hall	
Northallerton	
North Sea Camp	
Portland	
Ranby	
Rudgate	
Stanford Hill	
Swinfen Hall	
The Vern	
Thorn Cross	
Usk/Prescoed	
Whatton	
Wymott	
Albany	Glasshouses/ Polytunnels—
Ashwell	
Blantyre House	
Blundeston	Salad items, pot plants and floral decorations
Bullingdon	
Bullwood Hall	
Camphill	
Channings Wood	
Coldingley	
Drake Hall	
East Sutton Park	
Erlestoke	
Featherstone	
Ford	
Frankland	
Glen Parva	
Grendon/Springhill	
Guys Marsh	
Haslar	
Haverigg	
Hewell Grange	
Highdown	
Highpoint	
Hindley	
Hollesley Bay Colony	
Holme House	
Huntercombe/Finnamore Wood	
Kirkham	
Leyhill	
Lindholme	
Morton Hall	
New Hall	
Northallerton	
North Sea Camp	
Norwich	
Onley	
Portland	
Pucklechurch	
Ranby	
Rochester	
Rudgate	
Send	
Standford Hill	
Stocken	Glasshouses/ Polytunnels—
Styal	
Sudbury/Foston	Salad items, pot plants and floral decorations
Swinfen Hall	
The Verne	
Thorn Cross	
Wellingborough	
Werrington	
Wetherby	
Whatton	
Hollesley Bay Colony	Horses—Suffolk Punches
Highpoint	Jam factory—Jam and marmalade
Full Sutton Wayland	Machinery repairs—Mowers, farm equipment and 4-wheel trucks
Ford	Nursery stock—Trees and shrubs
Blundeston	Pigs—
Everthorpe	
Hatfield	Bacon and pork
Haverigg	
Hewell Grange	
Hollesley Bay Colony	
Kirkham	
New Hall	
North Sea Camp	
Portland	
Rochester	
Standford Hill	
Stocken	
Swinfen Hall	
The Verne	
Usk/Prescoed	
Lindholme	Poultry—Eggs
Dartmoor	Sheep
Featherstone	
Gartree	
North Sea Camp	
Hollesley Bay Colony	Vegetable preparation units
Kirkham	
Leyhill	

Prison Farms and Gardens Enterprises

Establishment	*Enterprise*
Lindholme Standford Hill	
Hafield Stocken	Cereal
East Sutton Park	Vineyard
Usk	Sawmill
Everthorpe Dartmoor Featherstone Swinfen Hall Huntercombe Hollesley Bay	Woodland
All establishments	21 enterprises

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking on illegal trading in radioactive materials, following his meeting in Berlin on 8 September with justice Ministers for central and eastern Europe.

Mr. Howard: My officials, together with colleagues in other Departments, are participating in work within the inter-governmental structures of the European Union to review the incidence of illegal trading in radioactive materials and to examine proposals for increased co-operation against it, in furtherance of the declaration of the ministerial conference in Berlin on 8 September. Responsibility for executive action in respect of any attempt illegally to import or export radioactive materials, or to engage in any other criminal activity involving such materials, remains with HM Customs and Excise and with the police respectively.

Prevention of Terrorism Acts

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now arrange to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Acts.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to do so at the present time.

Exclusion Orders

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange to revoke all exclusion orders which exclude citizens normally resident in Northern Ireland from entering the rest of the United Kingdom; how many such people are currently subject to such exclusion orders; how frequently such orders require renewal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced last Friday that I had that day revoked the orders excluding Mr. Gerry Adams and Mr. Martin McGuinness from Great Britain, that other exclusion orders would remain in place for the time being, and that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would keep the need for them under review. It is the Government's hope that the day is approaching when exclusion orders will no longer be needed but we are not prepared to lower our guard prematurely.

There are currently 72 orders in force, of which 62 have been made by myself and my predecessors and 10 by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. All orders expire after three years unless revoked earlier. Of the 62 Home Office orders, 55 involve exclusion from Great Britain and seven exclusion from the United Kingdom.

Salford Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the timetable for the site purchase, planning, building and opening of the proposed new prison in Salford;

(2) whether the proposed new prison at Salford will be planned, built and run by private sector companies;

(3) how many prisoners will be held at the proposed new prison at Salford, announced on 18 October;

(4) whether the proposed new prison in Salford, announced on 18 October, will be one of the six new prisons announced by the Home Secretary in October 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the announcement on 18 October by the Prison Service of plans to build a new category B prison in Greater Manchester.

Discussions are taking place about the purchase of the site and about the planning implications, but a formal planning notice has not yet been submitted to the relevant planning authority, Salford City Council. Subject to the outcome of these discussions, it is envisaged that tenders could be invited for the prison's construction by the summer of 1995, which would enable the prison to open before the end of the financial year 1998–99.

Our initial assessment is that the site is large enough to accommodate up to 800 prisoners but the level of occupancy will be one of the issues for discussion with the planning authority.

This will be one of the six prisons announced by the Home Secretary on 2 September 1993, for which the design, construction, management and finance will be contracted out to the private sector.

DEFENCE

Pregnancy (Dismissals)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women have been dismissed from each of the armed forces on the grounds of pregnancy in each year since August 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Records held centrally show only the total numbers of women who left each of the services on grounds of pregnancy during the period since August 1990. These figures are as follows:

	Female officers[1]			Non-commissioned females		
	RN	*Army*	*RAF*	*RN*	*Army*	*RAF*
August 1990—1 April 1991[2]	2	10	7	35	98	73
1991-92	4	17	15	78	177	140
1992-93	3	16	18	85	204	112
1993-94	—	6	9	85	184	91
1 April 1994—June 1994[3]	—	—	2	35[4]	29	12

Notes:

[1] Actual figures for the number of female officers who left on pregnancy between 1990-91 and 1992-93 are not available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost and effort. The figures provided are therefore estimates based on the percentage of non-commissioned females leaving on pregnancy.

[2] Figures represent pro-rata apportionment for 1990-91. Separate figures for period from August are not available.

[3] Latest figures available.

[4] This figure includes women who left on marriage. Separate figures are not available at present.

Depleted Uranium Shells

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the seabed search for depleted uranium shells fired into the Solway firth conducted on behalf of his Department during the summer; and what has been the cost to his Department to date.

Mr. Freeman: Following an underwater video survey by the Fisheries Protection Vessel, Solway Protector, British Telecom Marine, using Ministry of Defence equipment was contracted to attempt the recovery of sample depleted uranium penetrators from the bed of the Solway firth. Sonar, visual and magnetometer surveys were conducted with no result. Water and seabed silt samples showed no increase in background radiation levels. The cost of these activities was some £27,000 for work covering six days overall.

Equal Treatment Directive

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department conducted an evaluation of the impact of the equal treatment directive on any of their employment policies or practices when it came into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I am not aware of any such evaluation having taken place within my Department. In any case, my Department believed at that time that the directive did not apply to the armed forces.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to obtain a copy of the report published in August by the Washington-based Natural Resources Defence Council on the control over military usable plutonium.

Mr. Soames: My Department already holds a copy of the report in question.

Al-Yamamah Agreement

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent meetings he has had with Saudi Arabian Government officials on the plans of the Saudi Offset committee in regard to the Al-Yamamah agreement.

Mr. Freeman: My officials met the Saudi economic offset committee on 17 October to review the progress of the Al-Yamamah offset programme.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has requested from the *Sunday Times* the original tape recordings and other evidence reported on 9 October alleging the payment of brokerage fees to Mr. Mark Thatcher in regard to the Al-Yamamah defence contracts with Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Defence Export Sales Organisation has held any formal or informal meetings with Mr. Mark Thatcher in regard to the Al-Yamamah defence agreement with Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Freeman: I know of no evidence that Mr. Thatcher played any part in, or influenced, the British Government's negotiations with the Saudi Arabian Government on the Al-Yamamah contracts.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of the Al-Yamamah defence agreements signed with Saudi Arabia on 26 September 1985, 17 February 1986 and 3 July 1988; and what plans there are to update these agreements.

Mr. Freeman: No. The understandings referred to are confidential between the British and Saudi Arabian Governments. There are no current plans to update these understandings.

Army Apprentices College

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department expects to spend in total on refurbishing the army apprentices college, Chepstow; and if he will publish a breakdown of that expenditure.

Mr. Soames: The estimated total cost of converting Beachley camp, Chepstow from an apprentices college to an infantry battalion barracks is £15,300,000. These costs are broken down as follows:

	£
Conversion of barracks	9,300,000
Provision of additional quarters	5,000,000
Design and management	1,000,000

All of these figures are inclusive of VAT.

Air Chief Marshal (Residence)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will describe the procedures leading to the appointment of KPMG Marwick to carry out an investigation into expenditure on the Air Chief Marshal's official residence.

Mr. Soames: Wherever possible and appropriate my Department places consultancy work by competitive tender. On this occasion, however, the need to make rapid progress with the investigation made it preferable to engage Ms Masters of KPMG Marwick. Ms Masters was already engaged on other work for the Department and we were confident that she was a suitable choice to conduct the assignment.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the guidance given regarding avoidance procedures to pilots operating in low flying or ultra-low-flying regimes when training over geographically prominent secondary schools.

Mr. Soames: No specific guidance on avoidance procedures is given to pilots when training in the vicinity of schools. However, pilots are instructed to avoid flying over major conurbations and towns and to avoid all other populated areas wherever possible, whether they are listed for avoidance or not. In tactical training areas, pilots are instructed, if possible, to avoid all buildings likely to be occupied by people when conducting operational low flying.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if pilots are permitted to use geographically prominent secondary schools as low flying targets during low-level training flights.

Mr. Soames: Schools do not feature on lists from which targets for simulated toss and dive attacks must be selected. Aircrews are instructed that targets for simulated level attacks are to be selected with consideration for nearby habitation, thereby ruling out the choice of schools.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of low-flying sorties which have passed within a five-mile radius of Berwickshire high school in Duns during the last 12 months.

Mr. Soames: The information is not held in the form requested.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria would have to be satisfied in order to secure a permanent low flying exclusion zone around a secondary school in a geographically prominent position in a low flying practice zone.

Mr. Soames: Many schools are located in areas such as large towns where low flying is not practised. It is our policy not to grant avoidances for schools in other areas where routine low flying takes place. To do otherwise would concentrate the activity on neighbouring communities and would have an unacceptable impact on our ability to meet essential training needs.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence is he will make an official visit to Berwickshire high school in Duns in order to explain Her Majesty's Government's policy regarding low overflights of secondary schools in prominent positions in low flying practice zones.

Mr. Soames: There is no specific policy regarding low flying overflights of secondary schools in prominent positions in low flying practice zones. Our policy on low flying was explained to staff and parents at Berwickshire High School by the RAF regional community relations officer for the Borders when he visited the school on 11 May, and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence responded in his letter of 22 July to further concerns raised by the clerk of the school.

Military Land Byelaws

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to reply to letters sent to him on 28 August, 5 September and 19 September by Lindis Percy, of Bradford, a constituent of the hon. Member for Bradford, West, concerning military land byelaws and related matters.

Mr. Soames: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's office replied on the 21st October to the letter of 28 August from Ms Lindis Percy. As to her letters of 5 and 19 September, replies will be sent shortly.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people in each of the last 10 years to date have been *(a)* arrested, *(b)* charged, *(c)* convicted and *(d)* acquitted of offences relating to military land bylaws.

Mr. Soames: Before 1988 information of this sort was not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. From 1988 the figures, which relate to the number of reported incidents in England and Wales, are as follows:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Arrested	245	641	619	151	30	21	3
Charged	175	108	88	11	6	5	—
Convicted	87	35	49	5	4	3	—
Acquitted	11	—	16	—	—	—	—

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to review military land byelaws at HMS Forest Moor, at Menwith Hill and at RAF Alconbury; when the review is due to be completed; when he expects to receive the conclusions of the review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: My Department is currently reviewing all military land byelaws. This will include those at HMS Forest Moor, Menwith Hill and RAF Alconbury. Because this is an extensive and legally complex task, I am unable to say when the review will be completed.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost to his Department, in each year since 1984, to date, of legal costs relating to military land byelaws; and in how many court proceedings in each of these years relating to military land byelaws the Ministry has been legally represented.

Mr. Soames: It is not possible separately to identify the legal costs relating to military land byelaws from other work carried out by my Department's legal adviser and his staff.

I will write to the hon. Member concerning the number of court proceedings relating to military land byelaws in which the Ministry has been legally represented.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military land byelaws he regards as being invalid; to which sites such byelaws relate; and what steps he has taken to take down byelaw notices displayed at these sites.

Mr. Soames: Court judgments have indicated that there are defects in the military lands byelaws at HMS Forest Moor, Menwith Hill, RAF Alconbury and Greenham Common. Byelaw notices are no longer displayed at these establishments.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to reply to a letter dated 20 August from Lindis Percy of Bradford.

Mr. Soames: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's office replied to the letter of Ms Lindis Percy on 21 October.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current status of military land byelaws at RAF Molesworth, Lakenheath, Fylingdales, Brawdy, Burghfield and Aldermaston.

Mr. Soames: The military byelaws at those sites remain extant.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will issue instructions for all military land byelaw notices, concerning byelaws deemed by the courts as being unsafe, to be taken down from public display; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Military land byelaw notices are no longer displayed at those sites where the courts have declared that the byelaws are defective. When new byelaws are promulgated, appropriate notices will be erected.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on which military lands byelaws are currently regarded by him as being operational and in force; in how many such cases such byelaws are being used and observed; and how many have been deemed by the courts to be defective on their face.

Mr. Soames: Military land byelaws operate at any site to which they apply unless they have been declared defective by the courts. Byelaws for HMS Forest Moor, Menwith Hill, RAF Alconbury and Greenham Common have been so declared.

RAF Chicksands

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when RAF Chicksands is due to close; and when activities conducted there will be transferred to the National Security Agency of America base at Edzell.

Mr. Soames: The US Air Force will leave RAF Chicksands by the end of September 1995. RAF Chicksands is a US Department of Defense communications centre managed by the United States Air Force. It is not our policy to comment further on operational matters.

Flight Costs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the comparative cost of Tornado and Harrier flights of similar duration in the United Kingdom and Germany.

Mr. Soames: The average current cost of a flight lasting one hour by Tornado and Harrier aircraft based in Germany and the United Kingdom is:

		£		£
Tornado GR1	*(a)* Germany	6,617	*(b)* United Kingdom	6,642
Harrier GR5	*(b)* Germany	3,720	*(b)* United Kingdom	3,715

These figures exclude apportionment of stationed fixed costs.

Aircraft Accidents

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's policy on the replacement of aircraft lost through accidents.

Mr. Soames: Operational aircraft fleets generally include a reserve for peacetime attrition from which aircraft can be taken to replace those lost through accidents.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Tornado aircraft have crashed or crash landed in the past three years; what where the causes of these accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Since October 1991, seven RAF Tornados have crashed or crash landed. Six accidents are still under investigation by RAF boards of inquiry; summaries of the findings of the respective boards will be placed in the Library of the House as soon as they become available. The remaining accident occurred on 21 October 1993 as a result of the ignition of a fuel leak. A summary of the findings of the board of inquiry into this accident has already been placed in the Library of the House.

HIV

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel in the armed forces have contracted HIV; and if he will make a statement on policy towards those with the virus.

Mr. Soames: Twenty-eight service personnel are known to have contracted HIV. Personnel who consider themselves to be at risk of HIV infection are encouraged to undergo counselling and voluntary testing. Service personnel who are infected are given counselling and receive advice and treatment appropriate to their medical condition. The services continue to employ HIV carriers until their health deteriorates to a point at which it is appropriate to terminate their employment on medical grounds.

Royal Marines Reserve

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a decision has been made on the future of the Royal Marines Reserve; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: No decisions on the future size and shape of the Royal Marines Reserve have yet been taken. Should any proposals be made, they will be subject to formal consultation.

Benefit Claimants

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many families in the armed services claim income support or housing benefit.

Mr. Soames: The claiming of benefits is a private matter between the individual and the appropriate authority; if members of the armed forces were for any reason entitled to receive such a benefit, it would be claimed through the Benefits Agency or the local council, as appropriate.

European Security Policy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the creation of a common European security policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The treaty on European Union provides for a common foreign and security policy that will include the eventual framing of a common European defence policy; and that this and other matters having defence implications are dealt with by the Western European Union. At its meeting in Luxembourg on 9 May this year, the WEU Council of Ministers tasked the Permanent Council to begin work on the formulation of a common European defence policy, with the aim of presenting preliminary conclusions to the Council of Ministers' next meeting in November. To that end, work is in hand in the Permanent Council on an approach to formulating such a policy.

Service Hospitals

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of service personnel has been treated at the service hospitals of Haslar and Wroughton in each of the last five years; and what is the estimated travelling time to each hospital from the closest airfield likely to be used in emergencies.

Mr. Soames: The proportion of service personnel, expressed as a percentage of the total strength of the armed forces, treated at the Royal Naval hospital Haslar and the Princess Alexandra RAF hospital Wroughton averaged 7·3 per cent. and 6·4 per cent. respectively in the five years from 1989–90 to 1993–94. The closest airfield to the Princess Alexandra RAF hospital is RAF Lyneham, which is approximately 30 minutes by road. The closest suitable airfield to the Royal Naval hospital Haslar is Eastleigh, which is about 45 minutes away by road. Both hospitals have helicopter landing sites. Depending on the circumstances, Service patients requiring emergency treatment will continue to be taken to the most convenient civilian or military hospital; one of the primary purposes for a military hospital is to train defence medical services personnel.

Frigate Sales

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the last refit took place for each frigate that was sold to Pakistan; and how much each of these refits cost.

Mr. Freeman: Refit details for five frigates that were sold to Pakistan between 1940 and 1951 are no longer held. Additionally, the cost of refits undertaken before the dockyards passed into commercial management in April 1987 is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Details of the refit dates of frigates sold to Pakistan since 1951 and the approximate costs, where available, are as follows.

Ship	*Date last refit completed*	*Total cost*
HMS Diomede	August 1984	Not available
HMS Amazon	September 1984	Not available
HMS Apollo	May 1985	Not available
HMS Ambuscade	December 1985	Not available
HMS Active	August 1986	Not available
HMS Avenger	April 1988	£17 million
HMS Alacrity	November 1987	£20 million
HMS Arrow	July 1989	£23 million

Gulf War Syndrome

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what study of the effects of fluorine have been made in the context of Gulf war syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Fluorine was neither identified nor encountered as a specific hazard to service personnel of the alliance forces during the Gulf conflict. No evidence of any of the effects of fluorine has since been found in any of the medical investigations conducted on United Kingdom Gulf war veterans.

Overseas Deployment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the Armilla patrol costs Britain per year before UN reimbursement; and how much the deployment of aircraft to patrol the no-fly zones in Iraq is costing per year.

Mr. Soames: It is not possible to separate the costs of individual fleet tasks, such as the Armilla patrol from the costs of operating the fleet as a whole. The additional costs to the defence budget arising from the no-fly zones in the Gulf region are estimated to be:

	£
1991–92	2,600,000
1992–93	8,900,000
1993–94	16,100,000
1994–95	9,400,000

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what aircraft were used to deploy British forces to Rwanda and Zaire.

Mr. Soames: The British contingent in the United Nations assistance mission for Rwanda were deployed using a combination of British and American aircraft. The first elements travelled in Royal Air Force Hercules aircraft. The remainder deployed in US Air Force C5s and C141s operating on behalf of the United Nations.

English Language Training

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people will attend the English language training course in the United Kingdom; and what will be the estimated cost per attendee and for the course as a whole.

Mr. Soames: We currently offer a number of English language training courses to students of various nationalities. With the exception of core courses, the number of courses and type of training offered depends on the requirements of overseas services.

Course costs depend on duration, syllabus and number of students. The average cost per student per week is currently £470.

Each course is allocated a maximum student capacity between six and 16, although where specific training is requested, this may vary.

Bosnia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Ministry's estimate of the Bosnian army's weaponry, and its estimates on the type and quantity of illegal arms that have reached the Bosnian army since 1992.

Mr. Soames: The Bosnian army is assessed to have about 20 tanks, 300 artillery pieces and mortars, and five helicopters. We believe that the arms embargo has prevented deliveries of heavy weaponry to the Bosnian Government, but that supplies of small arms, light anti-tank weapons and ammunition have reached them, from a number of sources.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Harrier shot down over Bosnia will be replaced.

Mr. Soames: A replacement Sea Harrier joined HMS Ark Royal within a day of the loss of the Sea Harrier over Gorazde on 16 April. There are no plans to buy a new aircraft specifically to replace the one lost, as the purchase of attrition aircraft was designed with such eventualities in mind.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many violations of the Bosnian no-fly zone have taken place this year.

Mr. Soames: As at 30 September there had been 985 reported violations of the Bosnian no-fly zone; 98 per cent. of these were attributed to helicopters.

Trident

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the possibility of using Trident in a sub-strategic role; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced to the House on 18 October 1993, *Official Report*, column *34*, that we plan that Trident will provide the United Kingdom's sub-strategic nuclear capability in the longer term.

Test Ban Negotiations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the comprehensive test ban negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Good progress has been made in the negotiations towards a comprehensive test ban treaty, which have been the main focus of the work in the conference on disarmament this year. A rolling text has been produced which covers all the main issues in treaty form, and is based on the work of the two working groups on verification and legal and institutional issues. The United Kingdom has been playing an active and constructive part in the negotiations and the contribution of the United Kingdom friend of the chair verification has been particularly recognised and appreciated.

Equipment Co-operation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on how the United Kingdom has encouraged equipment co-operation between east European countries and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence has been involved in a number of initiatives designed to provide central and eastern European countries with an understanding of United Kingdom defence procurement policy and practices. These initiatives have comprised the exchange of expert working groups from the defence procurement agencies of the United Kingdom and central and eastern European countries and the United Kingdom's involvement in visits to those countries of teams of experts from NATO.

We have also provided United Kingdom defence industry with information on our approach to equipment procurement from central and eastern Europe to help them make commercial judgments on the possibility of joint ventures with central and eastern European industry.

Armed Forces in Europe Agreement

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what equipment has been sold or leased abroad as a result of reductions under the conventional armed forces in Europe agreement.

Mr. Freeman: No United Kingdom equipment has been sold or leased abroad as a result of reductions under the conventional armed forces in Europe treaty.

Nuclear Weapons (Ukraine)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the form of assistance that Britain is providing to Ukraine in its dismantling of nuclear weapons; which British engineers are helping; what progress has been made in the dismantling; and for how long this commitment lasts.

Mr. Soames: The United Kingdom does not currently provide Ukraine with specific assistance for the dismantling of the nuclear weapons remaining in her territory. Assistance with the safe disposal of hazardous rocket fuels was offered, but declined. However, a number of more general assistance programmes, including ones run under the auspices of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, should help with the drawdown of the former strategic rocket forces in Ukraine, particularly the resettlement and retraining of personnel.

East European Employees

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals have been agreed for a training course for east European civilians employed in the defence field.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has written to colleagues in central Europe, inviting attendance at a seminar on the roles and responsibilities of civilians in the defence field, to be held in the United Kingdom in November. We shall determine our future programme of assistance, including training, in the light of requirements identified at the seminar.

Partnership for Peace

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with what countries Britain has begun military co-operation under the partnership for peace; with which countries exercises have been held in 1994; what was the experience gained from these exercises; and what co-operation has already been agreed for the rest of this year and 1995.

Mr. Soames: The United Kingdom has undertaken bilateral military co-operation with the majority of signatories to partnership for peace. This bilateral activity is being subsumed into PFP as the partnership work programme is developed.

During 1994, United Kingdom land forces have conducted bilateral peacekeeping exercises with Poland and Hungary, and United Kingdom naval forces participated in a Norwegian—led exercise in the Barents sea. In addition, the United Kingdom has participated in three PFP exercises:

Co-operative Bridge in Poland, involving 13 nations;

Co-operative Spirit in Holland involving 12 nations; and

Co-operative Venture in the Norwegian sea, involving 14 nations.

We are continuing to evaluate the military lessons of these exercises but they will provide useful lessons on the planning and conduct of future exercises in the evolving PFP programme. The 1995 programmes of PFP and bilateral work have yet to be finalised.

Redundancies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been paid out in redundancy payments to officers of brigadier rank and above in each of the past five years.

Mr. Soames: In the past five financial years, the following payments have been made to brigadiers or their equivalents in other services:

Year	*£*
1989–90	26,908
1990–91	[illegible]185
1991–92	86,[illegible]0
1992–93	257,352
1993–94	866,836

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers of brigadier rank and above have chosen redundancy in each of the past five years.

Mr. Soames: In the past five financial years, the following numbers of officers of brigadier rank and above and their equivalents in other services, have chosen redundancy:

Year	*Number*
1989–90	—
1990–91	—
1991–92	—
1992–93	12
1993–94	34

Hercules Aircraft

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Hercules, of which types, were advertised for sale in September;

(2) if he will make a statement on the state of the Hercules aircraft being offered for sale.

Mr. Freeman: No RAF Hercules aircraft has been offered for sale. An advertisement was placed by my Department in September to assess the potential market for RAF Hercules, should they become available for sale.

Rowallan Company

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many applicants for officer training have been referred to *(a)* Rowallan Company and *(b)* another extra training scheme, in each of the past 10 years; and what proportion in each year has been accepted at Sandhurst after this extra training.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Helicopter Training Centres

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of running each of the three rotary wing helicopter training centres; and how many personnel are employed at each centre.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

RPS Coulston

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was paid to RPS Coulston for its study proposals on the Otterburn training area.

Mr. Soames: To date, approximately £172,000, excluding value added tax, has been paid under two separate contracts to RPS Coulston for its study proposals on the Otterburn training area.

Officer Training

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many applications for officer training there have been in each of the last 10 years; and how many were rejected by the Royal Commissions Board in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Soames: The number of applications to the armed forces for officer training and the number rejected in the last 10 years, either by selection boards or beforehand, are as follows:

Year	*Royal Navy*		*Army*		*Royal Air Force*	
	Applied	*Rejected*	*Applied*	*Rejected*	*Applied*	*Rejected*
1985–86	—	—	3,473	3,569	4,723	3,843
1986–87	—	—	3,311	2,396	4,743	3,755
1987–88	—	—	2,894	2,080	4,327	3,386
1988–89	2,464	1,613	2,577	1,698	3,976	3,211
1989–90	2,347	1,414	2,629	1,806	4,322	3,511
1990–91	2,714	1,894	2,529	1,656	4,316	3,591
1991–92	2,283	1,293	2,374	1,675	3,737	3,252
1992–93	2,020	1,290	2,012	1,430	1,644	1,390
1993–94	1,536	918	1,607	1,001	1,314	1,232
1994–95	1,238	956	925	575	1,253	1,055

(to 30 September 1994)

Notes:

1. Officer applicants to the Royal Navy are interviewed by the Admiralty Interview Board, to the Army by the Regular Commissions Board, and to the Royal Air Force by the Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre.
2. Number for the Royal Navy for Financial Year 1985–86 to 1987–88 are not readily available and could not be provided without disproportionate cost.
3. Royal Naval and Royal Air Force figures include those for serving personnel seeking commissions.
4. Army figures do not include those for doctors, dentists, nurses, veterinary surgeons and lawyers as their applications are dealt with by the appropriate Corps/Service.

Helicopter Pilots

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many rotary wing helicopter pilots have been trained at each of the three training centres in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

Cruise Missiles

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the proposal to buy cruise missiles from the USA; what the estimated costs will be; and when they could become operational.

Mr. Freeman: Initial feasibility studies into the UK's acquisition of Tomahawk land attack missiles have just begun. The results of these studies will be available next year and will provide us with the means of assessing the contribution that TLAM could make to the UK's defence capability and what the cost and operational implications would be.

Tornado Jets

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if liability over the damage done to the Tornado F-3s at RAF St. Athans by Airwork has been decided; how much the repairs will cost; and when the last Tornado will again be in service.

Mr. Freeman: My Department intends to claim against the Bricom Group, the former owners of Airwork Ltd, for the cost of repairing the damage done to the Tornado F3 aircraft and for other consequential costs. In view of the pending claim, it would be inappropriate to comment on the cost of repair. A schedule for recovering the aircraft has been identified which will ensure that the RAF's operational capability is not affected.

Otterburn Training Area

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was paid to RPS Coulston for its study proposals on the Otterburn training area.

Mr. Soams: To date approximately £172,000 excluding value added tax, has been paid under two separate contracts to RPS Coulston for its study proposals on the Otterburn training area.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 25 October 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department employs six press officers, all of whom are based at the Department's headquarters in London.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Newton: No public opinion surveys have been commissioned by my Department during the period specified. I am not responsible for any agencies.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how much money was spent with foreign companies on refurbishment within the Palace of Westminster in the current financial year; and how much was spent in the same period with British firms.

Mr. Ray Powell: No contracts have been let to foreign firms by the Parliamentary Works Directorate in the current financial year for refurbishment work. However, contractors have normal commercial freedom to subcontract and purchase supplies, provided that they comply with specifications set by the Director of Works or other relevant authorities of the Palace of Westminster. Within these constraints contractors may choose occasionally to use foreign suppliers where they are competitive in quality or service. Some £10 million is forecast to be spent in the current financial year on maintaining the Palace of Westminster.

TREASURY

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Departments and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1993, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The surveys listed, commissioned by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's departments or agencies since 1 October 1992, included questions to individuals about their opinions:

Department or Agency	*Title*	*Objective*	*Timing*	*Contractor*
HM Treasury	BT3 Share Sale	Market Research	May–July 1993	MORI
HM Treasury	Electricity Generators Share Sale	Market Research	July 1994	BMRB
Customs and Excise	Travellers Charter Survey 1993	Monitor quality of service provided staff to travellers	July–August 1993	NOP (Consumer Market Research)
Department of National Savings	Advertising Tracking Study	Monitor effect of National Savings advertising	continuous	Millwood Brown
Department of National Savings	Product Features Study	Determine trade off between savings product features	November 1992	Public Attitude Surveys Ltd.
Department of National Savings	Investment Guide Research	Evaluate the launch of a new product booklet	March–May 1994	Taylor-Nelson
Inland Revenue	Shipley Accounts Office Customer Survey	Ascertain customers' views on service provided	January 19930	Line Telephone Surveys
Inland Revenue	Pensioners and their tax returns	Assess difficulties in completing returns	September 1993	CCC Research Ltd

Department or Agency	*Title*	*Objective*	*Timing*	*Contractor*
Inland Revenue	**Pensioners customer survey**	**Ascertain customers' views on service provided**	**December 1993**	**BMRB International**
Royal Mint	**Royal Mint Coinage Survey**	**Consider present United Kingdom coinage and options for change**	**September 1994**	**RSGB Omnibus via Central Office of Information**

The fees paid to contractors are matters of commercial confidentiality.

Alcohol and Tobacco

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present estimated value of revenue lost to the Exchequer because of illicit cross-border trade in alcohol and tobacco products.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Forecasting levels of illicit activity is by its nature always difficult. A broad estimate derived from amounts seized has been made of £35 million on revenue loss from all smuggling of excise goods. Work is continuing to improve estimation in this field.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average monthly revenue value of seizures made by HM Customs and Excise during 1993–94 for *(a)* all tobacco goods, *(b)* all alcohol beverages, *(c)* hand-rolled tobacco and *(d)* beer; and what is the estimated monthly revenue value of seizures for the same products for the six months to September 1994.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The average monthly revenue value of seizures made by HM Customs and Excise in the financial year ending 31 March 1994 were *(a)* £98,514 for all tobacco products, *(b)* £64,892 for all alcoholic beverages, *(c)* £77,205 for hand-rolled tobacco and *(d)* £41,091 for beer.

Details of seizures for the month of September 1994 are not currently available. The average monthly revenue value of seizure for the same products for the five months to August 1994 were *(a)* £287,467, *(b)* £93,060, *(c)* £243,949 and *(d)* £60,280 respectively.

Pay and Grading

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many negotiators are now employed in Departments and agencies following the Government's decision to delegate pay and grading; what was the equivalent number of officials employed at the treasury when pay was settled nationally; and what has been the cost of training these additional officials and the overall additional cost of pay negotiations in the revised form.

Mr. Aitken: In 1993–94, there were 242 staff in the Treasury directorate which looks after civil service management and pay. It is for those who have received pay and grading delegation to decide how to conduct their negotiations and the size and composition of their negotiating teams, and to ensure that their delegated arrangements represent value for money.

Personal Pension Sales

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress the Securities and Investments Board has made with its inquiries into sales of personal pensions.

Mr. Nelson: The Securities and Investments Board, the chief investment regulator, has today issued a statement determining how compensation is to be delivered for people who have personal pensions instead of being in an occupational pension scheme and who now face financial loss as a result of bad investment advice. I have today placed copies of the statement in the Libraries of both Houses.

Today's statement follows the initiative announced by SIB last December, when it published evidence that many sales of personal pensions appeared not to have been made in full compliance with the regulation under the Financial Services Act. Since then, with the help of experts for the life and pensions industry, the SIB has mounted an exercise to assess the problem and to prevent it recurring.

The Government are also taking action to make sure that the arrangements for redress are brought into effect as efficiently as possible. The public service pension schemes are setting other occupational schemes a good example. There is also clarification of the tax treatment of compensation payments.

It is now clear that some sales of personal pensions in the past took place on the basis of bad advice, not given in accordance with the regulatory rules then in force. SIB's statement today implements the assurance I gave in the House to the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham and my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. T. Smith) on 8 December 1993, *Official Report* column *233-34*. Anyone with a personal pension who is found to face financial damage as a result of mis-selling will be entitled to redress. The aim will be to provide this compensation by putting people in a financial position equivalent to that in which they would have been had the mis-selling not taken place.

There is at present no way of knowing the eventual total cost but there will inevitably be a substantial call on the financial services industry. Investors can be reassured that the industry as a whole can and will pay. In cases where the firm responsible has ceased trading, this will entail calling on the industry's compensation schemes.

The SIB statement sets out in detail how firms responsible for sales of personal pensions should review their cases; how they can identify mis-selling and damage to investors caused by it; and, where mis-selling leading to financial damage has occurred, how appropriate redress should be provided. The details of the review process and the formula for redress have been drawn up with the assistance of experts in the life and pensions industry and in the legal and actuarial professions. The regulators will now ensure that firms responsible for past pensions business take the necessary steps to review their casebooks. The Personal Investment Authority is setting up a pensions unit to examine cases sold by firms which are no longer in business.

The review process will be supervised by the regulators. Many people will be contacted by the firm which sold their pension, or the pensions unit, and asked for information to help decide whether further investigation is required. SIB is distributing widely an explanatory leaflet, the Investor's Guide. It will also be generally available from libraries and citizens advice bureaux.

It will take at least two years to carry out the reviews in an appropriately thorough and systematic way as the interests of both personal pension holders and other policyholders require. The cases to be reviewed first will be those where financial damage caused by mis-selling is judged most likely to have occurred and where the effect of mis-selling could have the most immediate impact. These priority groups include the cases of investors who have died or retired. In addition, any personal pension investor who seeks it will have his or her case reviewed.

These reviews will no doubt show that many people who transferred to or opted for a personal pension were given good advice. Where redress is required, its form will depend on the circumstances of the investor. In many cases, and where it is possible, it will be desirable to reinstate people in their occupational schemes. If this cannot be done, the personal pension will usually be topped up. Sometimes additional benefits may need to be provided, for example through insurance policies. Those already retired may get top-up annuities.

With these forms of redress in mind, I very much hope that occupational schemes in the private sector will follow the example of public service schemes such as those for the teachers and nurses. These schemes are allowing current employees not only to rejoin for future service but also to buy back pension rights for previous service at reasonable cost.

All these remedies are designed to put the investor in a financial position equivalent to what would have been the case if the mis-selling had not occurred. The Chancellor intends to introduce legislation in due course to ensure that an investor in that position will have the same tax bill as would have been the case had there been no payment of compensation for mis-selling of the personal pension or buyout contract.

The action announced by SIB today relates to people who bought personal pensions in preference to an occupational scheme.

There are many others who would otherwise have been contributing to the state earnings related pension scheme. The SIB is also investigating, with the help of DSS, whether there has been mis-selling to people in this position. SIB intends to publish its findings in this further review next year. If a problem is revealed, SIB will prescribe appropriate redress.

Personal pensions remain a flexible and entirely suitable way of saving to provide a secure income in retirement for a great many people. They can make it possible to combine a mobile and varied career with a good pension. These advantages will no doubt ensure that personal pensions continue to appeal to many people. I also have no doubt that they will have a significant role to play in future pension provision.

But for people to choose personal pensions with confidence, they must be able to rely on high standards of professionalism from those responsible for selling them. They must be able to trust advisers and sales staff to recommend suitable products. That is why in March the SIB defined new tougher standards for future sales of personal pensions.

As a result, investors choosing between occupational and personal pensions now get a "reason why" letter to explain each personal pension sale, backed by sophisticated analysis of their own personal circumstances. The regulators are following this up with more intensive supervision of sales. The Department of Social Security has also issued guidance to employers about the advice they may give to any of their employees considering a personal pension. These new standards are backed up by more demanding training and competence requirements. Financial services firms are already implementing the new standards. So people making decisions about whether to buy a personal pension instead of belonging to an occupational scheme can have confidence in the quality of the advice they get.

The problems addressed in SIB's statement today demonstrate how important it is that authorised firms operating in the financial services sector take these responsibilities to their customers seriously. Investors must be able to reply on their investment advisers to comply with the regulatory standards.

There can be no doubt that SIB's action to compensate investors is a success for the regulatory system. SIB has acted with commendable thoroughness and independence. I have no hesitation in concluding that the system of regulation, in which SIB takes the prime role, and which benefits from major practitioner input, is sound and working effectively to protect investors. The reforms instituted by the SIB review last year are beginning to bear fruit.

The financial services industry plays an important and growing role in a sophisticated modern economy such as ours. Increasing affluence means that people will more often have resources available for investment. They must be able to invest with confidence. A clean, well regulated market is in the interest of consumers and financial services firms alike.

Ecofin

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Council meeting of the Economic and Finance Ministers of the European Union held on 21 October.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: EC Finance Ministers met in Brussels on Friday 21 October to discuss the own resources decision and Italian and Spanish milk disallowances.

Italy, and to a lesser extent Spain and Greece, faced disallowance due to their failure to fine farmers who had exceeded EC milk quotas over the period 1989–93. Italy and Spain claimed that this was unfair, as their national quotas had been set too low to begin with. In 1992, it was agreed at a Council of Agriculture Ministers to increase Italian and Spanish milk quotas for 1993–94. Subsequently, in the course of clearing the EAGGF accounts for 1989 and 1990, the Commission decided to disallow only the amounts which would have been payable by Italy and Spain if they had had in those years the extra milk quota which had been awarded them for 1993–94. It indicated that it intended to do the same for

1991, 1992 and 1993. This would have resulted in Italy and Spain paying roughly half the amount for which they were liable at the outset.

The United Kingdom objected to this and brought proceedings before the European Court of Justice on the grounds that the Commission had exceeded its competence by backdating quota, a power which could be exercised only by the Council of Ministers. Italy and Spain also began ECJ proceedings on the grounds that the disallowance decisions were still excessively harsh and claimed that they should make no further repayments at all.

Even had we ultimately won on all aspects of our ECJ cases, on which judgment was still two years distant, the level of the fine would have been a matter for the Council to determine on the basis of a proposal from the Commission. There is no reason to believe that the Commission would then have produced any different proposal from the one that it had originally made. Therefore Italy and Spain would only have paid roughly half of the penalties for which they were theoretically liable even if we had won our cases in the ECJ on all points.

I therefore negotiated a settlement which resulted in Italy and Spain agreeing to repay much higher sums to the Community budget than they would have paid if we have not brought our action in the European Court or if we had allowed our action before the Court to take its course to a possibly successful conclusion over the next two years.

Ecofin on Friday agreed to increase total disallowance from the Commission proposal of 2·1 billion ECU or 1·6 billion to 3.2 billion ECU or £2·5 billion—an increase of 1·1 billion ECU or £860 million on the level of disallowance fixed by the Commission. This is the largest agricultural fine even levied in the history of the European Community. Payment will start in 1995.

North Sea Oil Revenue

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total income to the Exchequer from North sea oil revenue *(a)* between 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* since 1979.

Sir George Young: Government revenues raised from North sea oil and gas production between 1974–75 and 1978–79 were £930 million. Since 1979–80 they have been £75,000 million.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London and *(b)* at each other location.

Mr. Howard: The Home Office has 14 press officers in post, including the director and deputy director of information who deal with all media. There are two vacancies. All are based in London. There are a number of agencies accountable to the Department which employ Government information service press officers who are not included in these figures.

Police Authority Budgets

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out by police authority *(a)* the standard spending assessment and *(b)* the estimated or actual budget for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: The following table lists the standard spending assessment and comparable net revenue budget information for each police authority in England for 1994–95. For Wales, provision for the police is included in the overall assessment made for Welsh county councils and no separate figures are available.

1994/95	*£ million*	
Police Authority	*SSA*	*Budget Outturn*
Avon and Somerset	69·274	70·738
Bedfordshire	27·790	25·229
Cambridgeshire	28·702	29·276
Cheshire	43·087	44·475
Cleveland	33·706	34·092
Cumbria	26·638	26·262
Derbyshire	41·516	40·038
Devon and Cornwall	65·707	70·500
Dorset	29·218	35·611
Durham	31·171	31·257
Essex	71·273	73·194
Gloucestershire	26·570	26·404
Hampshire	79·134	81·076
Hertfordshire	42·413	40·908
Humberside	45·645	45·190
Kent	76·389	76·475
Lancashire	72·462	74·179
Leicestershire	41·583	38·760
Lincolnshire	27·064	32·503
Norfolk	32·450	34·969
Northamptonshire	26·705	29·557
North Yorkshire	31·821	31·373
Nottinghamshire	52·894	52·781
Staffordshire	49·707	51·588
Suffolk	27·670	28·260
Surrey	42·834	43·870
Sussex	67·155	66·757
Thames Valley	95·202	96·501
Warwickshire	23·384	23·681
West Mercia	46·071	48·452
Wiltshire	28·927	29·132
Greater Manchester	156·167	158·053
Merseyside	105·608	104·793
Northumbria	80·833	81·557
South Yorkshire	68·019	68·278
West Midlands	154·888	151·096
West Yorkshire	118·825	119·765
City of London	29·690	35·838
Metropolitan	791·008	788·515

Policing (Humberside)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the future policing arrangements for Humberside.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced today that the county of Humberside would be replaced by four unitary authorities, with the area around Goole, in the present district of Boothferry, transferring to North Yorkshire.

In the light of this announcement I shall need to consider whether to retain a separate Humberside police force, based on the four unitary authorities. Goole will be policed by the North Yorkshire force from the date of the local government reorganisation, in accordance with the provisions of section 39 of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994.

My preference is to retain a separate Humberside force but before reaching a final decision I shall wish to consult the forces, police authorities and local authorities which would be affected by the decision. I shall also ask Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary to report on the viability of a police force based on the boundaries of the four unitary authorities.

The consultation will begin immediately and I shall announce my final decision as soon as possible.

Police Core and Ancillary Tasks

Sir Ian Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the interim report of the review of police core and ancillary tasks.

Mr. Howard: I have today placed a copy of the interim report in the Libraries of both Houses.

Passports

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of British passports reported as lost or stolen in 1992; how many were in foreign countries; and what were the figures for each of the preceding five years.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Precise figures for the number of United Kingdom passports lost or stolen are not kept but it is estimated that about 70,000 are reported each year, of which about 20,000 are in foreign countries. A significant number of these passports are expired while a smaller percentage will subsequently be found having been originally misplaced.

Passport issuing within the United Kingdom is now computerised and the system allows the recording of machine-readable passports that have been reported lost or stolen. Arrangements are being considered which would provide the United Kingdom Passport Agency with statistics from the computerised records to monitor the problem.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which countries, other than the United Kingdom, the largest number of British passports were recorded as lost or stolen in 1992–93.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Figures provided by British Consulates indicate that Australia with 1,161, the United States with 1,055 and France with 1,025 recorded the highest number of United Kingdom passports reported to them as lost or stolen during 1993.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people lost or had more than one passport stolen in 1992–93 in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: No separate record is kept of the number of persons who have reported more than one passport lost or stolen during a given period.

Litter

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in England and Wales were prosecuted for dropping litter in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1989 to 1993, which is provisional, is given in the table:

*Number of defendants prosecuted for dropping litter[1] 1989–1993**

England and Wales	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993**
Prosecutions	2,409	2,543	1,673	1,639	1,170

[1] An offence under section 1 (3) of the Litter Act 1983 repealed by Section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

* Provisional

Wheelclamping

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what analysis his Department has made of the implications for policing on wheelclamping of the outcome of Total Car Park Management *v.* Dr. Colin Spink in the Oxford county court on 13 July.

Mr. Maclean: The judgment referred to related to a civil dispute and has no direct implications for the police. We are, of course, taking all relevant judgments into account while formulating policy on wheelclamping on private land.

Closed-circuit Television

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the research being undertaken by or on behalf of his Department into the use of closed-circuit television, including the subject matter of such research; who is undertaking the work; and when a report on each study is due to be provided to his Department.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office police research group is currently carrying out a study of closed-circuit television systems in town centres with the aim of identifying the characteristics of schemes which make an effective contribution to the control of crime and operational policing generally. A report will be available by Easter 1995.

The Home Office police scientific development branch is carrying out a study of the technical and operational aspects of CCTV systems aimed at setting appropriate performance standards for CCTV systems and assisting crime prevention officers. The final report will be available in July 1995.

PSDB has also commissioned a study of a number of town centre control rooms looking at the human factors associated with the monitoring of CCTV images. This is being carried out by CCD Design and Ergonomics Ltd and a report is expected before the end of the year.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of the burglaries recorded in each borough by the Metropolitan police in the year ended June were in a dwelling; and how many were in another building;

(2) how many incidents of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and of theft from a motor vehicle were recorded by the Metropolitan police in each borough in the year ended June.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 October 1994]:* The information requested has been supplied by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and is contained in the following tables:

Notifiable offences of burglary recorded by local authority borough or district
Metropolitan police district: July 1993 to June 1994

Borough/district	*Burglary in a dwelling*	*Burglary in a building other than a dwelling*	*Total burglary*
Barking	1,675	1,730	3,405
Barnet	3,478	1,566	5,044
Bexley	1,780	1,046	2,826
Brent	4,033	1,614	5,647
Bromley	3,454	1,946	5,400
Camden	4,332	2,872	7,204
Croydon	3,871	2,061	5,932
Ealing	3,000	1,238	4,238
Enfield	2,209	1,634	3,843
Greenwich	4,292	1,875	6,167
Hackney	4,879	2,088	6,967
Hammersmith	2,613	1,288	3,901
Haringey	3,251	1,300	4,551
Harrow	2,284	1,099	3,383
Havering	1,918	1,595	3,513
Hillingdon*	2,134	1,381	3,515
Hounslow*	2,560	1,536	4,096
Islington	3,026	1,695	4,721
Kensington and Chelsea	3,348	892	4,240
Kingston	1,647	1,591	3,238
Lambeth	6,220	1,719	7,939
Lewisham	5,613	2,346	7,959
Merton	1,774	1,133	2,907
Newham	4,05[illegible]	2,493	6,546
Redbridge	2,613	1,318	3,931
Richmond	1,799	969	2,768
Southwark	4,620	2,477	7,097
Sutton	2,382	1,262	3,644
Tower Hamlets	2,194	2,704	4,898
Wandsworth	4,146	1,972	6,118
Waltham Forest	2,317	1,679	3,996
Westminster	3,856	3,780	7,636
Broxbourne (part)	305	264	569
Elmbridge (part)	225	190	415
Epping Forest (part)	399	332	731
Epsom and Ewell	723	367	1,090
Hertsmere	343	327	670
Reigate and Banstead	338	128	466
Spelthorne	540	947	1,487
Welwyn Hatfield (part)	9	12	21
Heathrow Airport	4	28	32
Thames	—	—	—
Total	104,257	58,494	162,751

*These figures exclude offences reported in those parts of the borough which fall within the boundary of Heathrow airport

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime recorded by local authority borough or district
Metropolitan police district: July 1993 to June 1994

Borough/district	*Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from a motor vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Barking	1,774	2,294	4,068
Barnet	1,859	4,051	5,910
Bexley	2,167	2,731	4,898
Brent	2,117	4,083	6,200
Bromley	2,761	4,975	7,736
Camden	2,109	6,406	8,515
Croydon	2,863	5,671	8,534
Ealing	2,390	4,527	6,917
Enfield	1,970	3,454	5,424
Greenwich	3,551	4,622	8,173
Hackney	2,781	4,240	7,021
Hammersmith	1,517	5,475	6,992
Haringey	2,370	3,862	6,232
Harrow	944	2,621	3,565
Havering	2,695	2,804	5,499
Hillingdon*	1,877	4,123	6,000
Hounslow*	1,824	3,498	5,322
Islington	2,131	4,407	6,538
Kensington and Chelsea	1,179	4,642	5,721
Kingston	724	2,743	3,467
Lambeth	3,033	5,818	8,851
Lewisham	2,875	3,923	6,798
Merton	1,286	2,786	4,072
Newham	3,409	4,065	7,474
Redbridge	3,239	2,845	6,084
Richmond	689	2,591	3,280
Southwark	3,480	6,044	9,524
Sutton	1,648	2,455	4,103
Tower Hamlets	2,341	4,338	6,679
Wandsworth	2,617	5,991	8,608
Waltham Forest	2,715	3,026	5,741
Westminster	1,382	6,851	8,233
Broxbourne (part)	391	919	1,310
Elmbridge (part)	89	364	453
Epping Forest (part)	709	1,100	1,809
Epsom and Ewell	349	964	1,313
Hertsmere	358	1,171	1,529
Reigate and Banstead	208	550	768
Spelthorne	445	1,681	2,126
Welwyn Hatfield (part)	3	14	17
Heathrow Airport	72	382	454
Thames	11	8	19
Total	72,952	139,115	211,977

* These figures exclude offences reported in those parts of the borough which fall within the boundary of Heathrow airport

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is responsible for appointments to board of visitors to prisons in the West Midlands region and in Shropshire. Appointments to boards of visitors are for a maximum of three years and are renewable. Members do not receive a salary but are entitled to travelling, subsistence and financial loss allowances.

Rape

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for the last year for which information is available for each Crown court circuit, what has been the average length of sentence for those found guilty of rape after *(a)* pleading guilty and *(b)* pleading not guilty, and, for those pleading not guilty but found guilty, what has been the percentage sentenced to more than five years imprisonment.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 21 October 1994]:* Plea data is not collected centrally.

The table gives information for 1993, which is provisional, on the number of males aged 21 and over found guilty and sentenced at the Crown court for rape offences, by circuit.

Adult males found guilty and sentenced at the Crown court for rape offences[1] by circuit, average sentence length[2] and proportion sentenced to over five years imprisonment, 1993.*

Crown court circuit	*Total found guilty*	*Number sentenced to imprisonment*	*Average sentence length[2] (months)*	*Proportion sentenced to over five years imprisonment*
Midland and Oxford	78	76	75	61
North Eastern	48	48	72	56
Northern	41	39	69	49
South Eastern	112	105	87	78
Wales and Chester	38	36	76	61
Western	29	26	74	65
England and Wales	346	330	78	65

(1) Substantive rape—excluding attempts and offences under the Mental Health Act 1959.
(2) Excluding "lifers".
* Provisional.

The 1993 information given is expected to be final but has been labelled provisional until publication of the Command Paper "Criminal statistics" on 2 November.

The reply is on the same basis, as information for previous years from Crown court circuits and individual court centres previously provided to the House of Commons Library. A comparison is given in the table. The variation between years for the smaller circuits such as Wales and Chester and Western reflects the small number of persons sentenced per year.

*Average sentence length[1] in months for adult males sentenced at the Crown Court for rape offences[2] by circuit, 1990–1993**

Crown court circuit	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993**
Midland and Oxford	69	74	75	75
North Eastern	63	79	75	72
Northern	92	74	77	69
South Eastern	78	79	86	87
Wales and Chester	87	75	72	76
Western	71	66	74	74
England and Wales	76	76	79	78

[1] Excluding "lifers".
[2] Substantive rape - excluding attempts and offences under the Mental Health Act 1959.
* Provisional.

Remand Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated number of remand prisoners who have been awaiting trial *(a)* for more than three months, *(b)* for more than six months, *(c)* for more than 12 months and *(d)* for more than 18 months, at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 25 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking about the estimated number of remand prisoners who have been awaiting trial *(a)* for more than three months, *(b)* for more than six months, *(c)* for more than 12 months and *(d)* for more than 18 months, at the latest available date.

The latest available provisional data is for 31 August 1994 and is shown in the attached table.

Inmates recorded as being untried held in custody on 31 August 1994 by time on remand[1]

	Numbers
For over 3 months up to and including 6 months	1,[illegible]0
For over 6 months up to and including 12 months	1,250
For over 12 months up to and including 18 months	240
For over 18 months	200

[1] Not all of these defendants will have been in continuous prison custody since their first remand. This period excludes any time spent in non-Prison Service-Establishments (eg police cells) before reception on remand into a Prison Service establishment; it includes inmates who are waiting trial and those being tried.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Cabinet Office—Office of Public Service and Science—employs eight Government information service press officers who are normally based in London. No press officers are based in the House or at locations other than London; a regional press service is provided by the Central Office of Information. Press officers working for agencies directly accountable to the Cabinet Office are not included in this figure.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Expenditure on official hospitality by the Cabinet Office, including the Office of Public Service and Science, and executive agencies in each year since 1990 was as follows:

	(a) *Cabinent Office*[1]	*(b) Agencies*		
		HMSO[2]	COI	OPSS Agencies
	£	£	£	£
1990–91	14,300		500	1,200
1991–92	26,600[3]		4,400	1,300
1992–93	25,000	19,400	4,600	59,500
1993–94	27,700	22,000	5,900	6,100

[1] Figures for the Cabinet Office exclude expenditure by the Office of the Prime Minister, which was the subject of a separate Answer by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

[2] HMSO figures are based on their accounting year 1 January–31 December. Figures for hospitality were not recorded centrally by HMSO before 1993.

[3] In addition, £234,100 was borne by the OPSS in 1991–92 on official hospitality in respect of the 1991 economic summit.

Expenditure by OPSS agencies in 1992–93 includes some £59,000 relating to Chessington computer centre's launch as an executive agency.

Public Appoin[illegible]ents

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Cha[illegible]ellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: None.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: As at 1 October 1994, there were 5,774 industrial and non-industrial staff in the departments and agencies for which I am responsible, and in other areas which fall to the Cabinet Office vote. The proportions by standard region are:

Region	*Proportion Per cent.*
Inner London	41·5
Intermediate	0·5
Outer London	7·5
Rest of South East	8·5
East Anglia	24
South West	3
West Midlands	1
North West	7
North	0·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	1
East Midlands	1
Wales	0·5
Scotland	4
Northern Ireland	1

PRIME MINISTER

Al Yamamah Arms Deal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) of 18 October, *Official Report,* column *138,* to what *(a)* Government Department and *(b)* other authorities any evidence on impropriety in the Al Yamamah arms deal should be forwarded.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister who are the appropriate authorities *(a)* for the receipt and *(b)* the investigation of complaints made in the case of Mr. Mark Thatcher relating to British defence contracts.

The Prime Minister: Matters within the responsibility of Her Majesty's Government in relation to defence contracts should be addressed, in the first instance, to the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister to which authority the complaint from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) to the Prime Minister's Office concerning the role of Mr. Mark Thatcher in relation to defence contracts was referred; and what action was taken.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 21 October 1994]:* The complaint was referred to the Cabinet Office, which in turn consulted the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the security service.

The conclusion reached was that the document that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) had sent contained a number of clear errors, which cast doubt on its reliability. No evidence was found to support the allegations made.

Tigris and Euphrates Valleys

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Government, the United Nations, other EC countries and the Arab League about the shortage of medicine, water pumps and water filters in the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates; and which statistics are available to Her Majesty's Government on the incidence of marasmus, kwashiorkor, and other water-related diseases in the Baghdad area over the summer.

The Prime Minister: Except for the Arab League, we meet representatives of these countries and organisations at routine meetings of the United Nations department of humanitarian affairs. Reports indicate that diseases such as cholera, typhoid and malaria are increasing and that there are cases of marasmus and kwashiorkor. We have no information specific to Baghdad.

We condemn the Iraqi regime for continuing to refuse United Nations offers to allow limited oil sales to pay for humanitarian supplies. Iraq's attempts to make political capital out of avoidable suffering are cynical.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Ministerial Conduct

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the rules governing the availability of financial support from Government for Ministers in respect of libel actions arising from events which took place before they took office; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Public resources may be used to deal only with matters which arise as a direct result of the official duties of Ministers.

Cabinet Secretary's Report

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the Cabinet Secretary's report into the allegations made by Mr. Al Fayed.

The Prime Minister: The text of the report is as follows.

"On 30 September you asked me to investigate certain allegations of impropriety against members of the Government, which had been brought to you in confidence on the previous evening and which, you were told, derived from Mr. Mohammed Al Fayed.

In reporting these allegations the informant said that Mr. Al Fayed wanted a meeting with the Prime Minister, principally because of Mr. Al Fayed's wish to have the DTI Inspectors Report on the takeover of the House of Fraser revised or withdrawn. He had made a number of allegations against Government Ministers and was contemplating passing them to others.

You replied that it would be impossible for you to see Mr. Al Fayed in these circumstances. You added that, if Ministers had been guilty of wrong doing, you were not going to make any sort of deal, regardless of the cost to the Government's reputation. You said that you would consider how to proceed and suggested that in the meantime your informant should make no response to Mr. Al Fayed.

The following morning you asked me to investigate. I carried out some immediate enquiries and on the evening of 30 September your Private Secretary reported to you that some of the allegations were familiar because they had surfaced before, had been previously investigated and had been strongly denied. However, some allegations were new. You then asked me on 3 October to fol[illegible] up all the allegations, whether old or new, with the Ministers concerned.

I had conversations with the Ministers named in the allegations in the week before the Conservative Party Conference, and I reported to you the outcome of these conversations, together with the results of other inquiries I had made, on Monday 17 October on your return from Bournemouth. In the light of that report, you asked the Chief Whip and me to clarify some points so that, in the interests of natural justice, there should be no risk of your acting unfairly. On 18 October, you concluded that Mr. Smith's offer of resignation form the Government should be accepted later in the week when the Chief Whip's and my action was complete.

I should make clear that, in view of the circumstances in which the information reached you, I have not felt able to approach or interview Mr. Mohammed Al Fayed himself. I was reinforced in that view by information subsequently received that Mr. Mohammed Al Fayed has made available to others the information which was provided to you. It can therefore be assumed that if there is any further material which Mr. Al Fayed may have to substantiate his allegations it will come to light.

While the Chief Whip and I were taking the further steps agreed at your meeting on 17 October, two of the allegations passed on to you were made public in The Guardian of Thursday 20 October. These were that Mr. Neil Hamilton and Mr. Tim Smith were paid to raise questions on Mr. Al Fayed's behalf in the House of Commons.

I had previously enquired into both these matters and had asked Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Smith about them. Both sets of allegations may be the subject of other enquiries and, in the case of Mr. Hamilton, are the subject of legal proceedings against The Guardian newspaper. In these circumstances I should not deal with them in detail in this report, which I know that you envisage publishing.

Suffice it therefore to say here that Mr. Smith volunteered to me that, as he has subsequently confirmed publicly, he received payments from Mr. Al Fayed between 1987 and 1989, when he ended his activities on behalf of Mr. Al Fayed. He did not declare the necessary information in the Register of Members' Interests until just before the end of this period, and he acknowledged that he should have done so earlier. He offered his resignation from the Government.

Mr. Hamilton has emphatically denied throughout my inquiries, both in writing and subsequently in a public statement, that he received any payments deriving from Mr. Al Fayed. I have found no evidence which controverts Mr. Hamilton's assurances on these matters. He acknowledged that he had received hospitality from Mr. Al Fayed, as a private guest (as he believed), at a time well before he entered the Government. He had not thought it necessary to declare this in the Register of Members' Interests, for reasons which he explained in a letter to the Editor of the *Guardian* of more than a year ago, a copy of which he gave me. He also gave me an exchange of correspondence dated nearly a year ago in which he had amplified to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests what he had said to the *Guardian*.

When Mr. Hamilton became a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, he declared his previous interest in matters concerning Mr. Al Fayed and has stood aside from involvement as a Minister in issues involving the House of Fraser.

There were other allegations passed on to you by your informant. I have looked into all these, so far as I am able, and the Chief Whip and I have put the allegations in detail to the Ministers concerned. In some of them there are patent inaccuracies, and all have been denied explicitly, unequivocally and in writing.

I have found nothing which would cause me to throw any doubt on the validity of those denials. Moreover, the fact that there is reason to think that these allegations too have now been made available to others who have so far chosen not to publish them suggests that they too may have found that there is a lack of evidence to establish their validity.

In those circumstances, while confirming that I am confident that the allegations either are demonstrably false, or, so far as I have been able to establish, are entirely unsubstantiated as well as being denied by the Ministers concerned, I do not think it appropriate to give them further currency by listing them in this Report.

South West Water

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Prime Minister if the statement made by the hon. member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) during his recent visit to the south-west, on the possibility of making Exchequer funding available to reduce water and sewerage charges in the South West Water company area represents the policy of Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Director-General of Water Services has recently completed the first periodic review of water company price limits. The new price limits that he announced for South West Water have been referred, at the company's request, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. In the meantime, we must await the outcome of the commission's review.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Sproat: The total number of staff employed by the Department is 349, excluding casuals; all staff are employed in the London region. This figure excludes staff working in the Department's two executive agencies, the Historic Royal Palaces Agency and the Royal Parks Agency. All the staff work in London.

New Millennium Commission

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what grounds he cancelled the contract of the nominated chairman of the Millennium Commission; and how much had been paid to him in regard to severance of his contract.

Mr. Dorrell: The decision to terminate the contract of the nominated chief executive of the Millennium Commission, Mr. Nicholas Hinton, was taken by the commission, which is independent of Government. The sum of £19,125 was paid to Mr. Hinton as compensation for loss of office in accordance with his contract of employment.

Sports Council

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) when he expects to appoint management consultants to advise him on the Sports Council reorganisation;

(2) what he estimates to be the likely cost of management consultancy contracts for the Sports Council's reorganisation.

Mr. Sproat: The period of consultation on the Government's proposals ends on 31 October. I expect to announce final policy decisions and how these should be implemented shortly after that.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will extend the consultation period for the reorganisation of the Sports Council to consider the deep concern voiced by local authorities at his proposals.

Mr. Sproat: The consultation period has in effect already been extended from 30 September to 31 October through the addition of children's play to the consultation exercise. I do not propose to extend it further. I shall now be looking very carefully at the views expressed on our proposals before taking final policy decisions.

British Athletes (Income Support)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has made in respect of British athletes no longer having their income support stopped while they are competing for Britain abroad.

Mr. Sproat: I have met social security Ministers on two occasions to discuss the payment of income support to British athletes competing abroad.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Sproat: My Department currently employs seven press officers. All are based in the Department's offices in London.

EDUCATION

Class Sizes

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the average class sizes in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools; and what were the corresponding figures five, 10 and 15 years ago.

Mr. Robin Squire: The average sizes of single teacher classes in maintained primary and secondary schools in England in 1979, 1984, 1989, and 1994—provisional—are shown in the table.

Average sizes of single teacher classes in maintained primary and secondary schools in England in 1979, 1984, 1989 and 1994 (provisional) Position in January each year

	Primary	[1]Secondary
1979	25·9	*
1984	24·7	20·6
1989	25·7	20·1
1994 (prov)	26·9	21·4

[1] excludes Sixth Form Colleges which ceased to be classified as schools from 1 April 1993

* data for secondary schools excluding Sixth Form Colleges is not available.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* her agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Forth: The DFE has carried out the following public opinion surveys since October 1992.

Subject: School performance tables
Objective: To establish levels of parental awareness and understanding of the school performance tables publications
Date: December 1992 and January 1994
Company: Taylor Nelson

Subject: Grant-maintained schools
Objective: To measure changes in public awareness and understanding of grant-maintained schools
Date: May 1993, October 1993, February 1994
Company: Audience Selection

Subject: National curriculum testing of 7, 11 and 14-year-olds
Objective: To assess parental awareness and effectiveness of the publicity campaign on school testing arrangements in 1993
Date: April 1993
Company: British Market Research Bureau

Subject: National curriculum testing of 7, 11 and 14-year-olds
Objective: To assess parental awareness of testing arrangements under the National Curriculum in light of a review announced by Secretary of State for Education in May 1993
Date: May 1993
Company: Bulmershe Research

Subject: Publicity campaign for parents on national curriculum testing of 7, 11 and 14-year-olds
Objectives: To assess parental awareness and effectiveness of the publicity campaign on school testing arrangements in 1994
Dates: January 1994, July 1994
Company: British Market Research Bureau

Subject: DFE exhibition - DFE touring roadshow
Objective: To establish the communication effectiveness of the 1992, 1993 and 1994 DFE roadshows
Date: October 1992, July 1993, July 1994
Company: 1992, 1993 Martin Hamblin; 1994 Alpha Research

Subject: Further and higher education charters
Objective: To assess awareness and effectiveness of the publicity campaign for the FE and HE charters
Date: September 1993, November 1993
Company: Martin Hamblin

Subject: Educational provision for under-fives
Objective: To establish the take-up of education provision for under-fives and the parents' attitudes to different types of provision
Date: April 1994
Company: Bulmershe Research

Subject: Updated parents charter
Objective: To establish he effectiveness of the 1994 parents charter campaign
Date: June 1994, August 1994
Company: Research Society of Great Britain

Only one of the agencies of the DFE, SCAA, has carried out public opinion research since October 1992, as follows:

Subject: Public perception of the national curriculum and the relative priorities of national curriculum subjects

Objective: To establish the opinion of the general public on the national curriculum and the relative priority of subjects within it
Date: June 1994
Company: Gallup

To give the cost of the research surveys carried out by the DFE and its agencies would compromise confidential tendering procedures.

Educational Psychologists

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education to what extent an educational psychologist employed by a local education authority retains professional autonomy in determining needs under the Education Act 1993; and what guidance her Department gives on how financial constraints may be taken into account under the LEA.

Mr Forth: The conditions of employment of education psychologists are a matter for the authorities which employ them.

Under the Education Act 1993 and the Education (Special Education Needs) Regulations 1994, an authority must seek psychological advice as part of any multi-professional statutory assessment of a child with special educational needs. If, as a result of a full assessment, and of any representations made by the child's parents, it is necessary for an authority to determine the provision which the child needs, then a statement of special educational needs must be made. The statement must specify the necessary provision, and the authority must arrange that it is made, whatever the funding implications, unless the child's parent makes suitable alternative arrangements.

The code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs provides comprehensive practical guidance to LEAs and the governing bodies of all maintained schools on their responsibilities towards all children with special educational needs. All those to whom the code applies have a statutory duty to have regard to it. The code provides a framework which aims at quality and consistency of assessment, both across and within LEAs. Having regard to the code, many LEAs have issued additional guidance to schools and support services on specific criteria to be used to achieve such consistency.

Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the Further and Higher Education Council first received an application from the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute for additional funding in 1994–95; and when the application will be determined.

Mr. Boswell: I understand that the Further Education Funding Council received an application from this institute in May and a duplicate application in August. I understand that the council notified the institute of its final recurrent funding allocation for 1994–95 on 14 September.

Disruptive Pupils

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent discussions she has held concerning a strategy to deal with disruptive and troubled children in schools; and what conclusion she has reached thereon.

Mr. Forth: Following very wide consultations, the Department issued a set of circulars in May giving guidance on pupil behaviour and discipline, the education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and other subjects within the broad heading "Pupils with Problems". Children with emotional and behavioural difficulties have special educational needs and the circular complements provisions in the code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. Local education authorities must have regard to the code which came into effect on 1 September. Copies of these documents are available in the Library.

Student Grants

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the rates of university students' grants in 1978–79 and each subsequent year in cash terms, real terms and as a proportion of average earnings.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is shown in the table.

Value of The Standard Maintenance Grant and Grant Plus Loan

Academic Years	*Standard maintenance grant (cash terms) £*[1]	*Standard maintenance grant plus loan (cash terms) £*[2]	*Standard maintenance grant (real terms) £*[3]	*Standard maintenance grant plus loan (real terms) £*	*Standard maintenance grant as a percentage of average earnings*[5]	*Standard maintenance grant plus loan as a percentage of average earnings*
1978–79[4]	1,100	—	3,143	—	24	—
1979–80[4]	1,245	—	3,054	—	22	—
1980–81[4]	1,430	—	3,027	—	22	—
1981–82[4]	1,535	—	2,917	—	22	—
1982–83[4]	1,595	—	2,826	—	21	—
1983–84[4]	1,660	—	2,797	—	20	—
1984–85	1,775	—	2,856	—	20	—
1985–86	1,830	—	2,780	—	19	—
1986–87	1,901	—	2,804	—	18	—
1987–88	1,972	—	2,792	—	17	—
1988–89	2,050	—	2,742	—	16	—
1989–90	2,155	—	2,680	—	16	—
1990–91	2,265	2,685	2,540	3,011	15	18
1991–92	2,265	2,845	2,440	3,065	14	18
1992–93	2,265	2,980	2,356	3,100	12	16
1993–94	2,265	3,065	2,314	3,132	13	18
1994–95	2,040	3,190	2,040	3,190	n/a	n/a

[1] The standard maintenance grant rate is that applicable to students living away from home and studying outside London. In 1994–95 the corresponding London rate of grant is £2,560 and the parental home rate of grant is £1,615.

[2] Since 1990–91 student support has included grant and loan; the grant was frozen at the 1990–92 level (ie £2,265) until 1994–85 when it was reduced to £2,040. Figures for 1990–91 and subsequent years include grant plus full year loan for students living away from home. The full year loan for students studying in London in 1994–95 is £1,375 and £915 for those living at their parents' home.

[3] Based on the September Retail Price Index of each academic year.

[4] Up to and including 1983–84 students claimed, and were individually reimbursed, full travelling expenses; from 1984–85 a flat rate amount for travelling costs was incorporated within the main rate of grant. The rates of grant for 1983–84 and earlier years exclude the excess travelling expense element.

[5] Average annual earnings approximated from weekly earnings in April from the New Earnings Survey of full-time employees whose pay for the survey pay period was not affected by absence. This survey may not include bonuses paid at other weeks than the survey week and does not capture seasonal work. For 1979–80—1982–83 earnings are compiled on the basis of men aged 21 + and women aged 18 +. From 1983–84 earnings are compiled on the basis of employees on adult rates.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the number of press officers currently employed by her Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Forth: The Department currently employs 12 press officers at its headquarters in London. None are employed at the House or any other location.

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what quantities of low level radioactive waste have been co-disposed in landfills since 1979; and what proposals exist to increase the amounts.

Mr. Atkins: Records of the quantities of such disposals are not held centrally.

The Government's consultation paper, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions", proposed that there would be advantage in encouraging waste producers to make greater use of the controlled burial of low-level radioactive waste. Responses on this and other issues raised in the review are being carefully considered.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what contribution the United Kingdom has made to the preparation of an international convention on waste management being developed under the International Atomic Energy Agency's radioactive waste safety standards programme;

(2) what steps Her Majesty's Government plans to take to fulfil the resolutions agreed at the International Atomic Energy Agency 38th annual conference in Vienna in September calling for an assessment by IAEA member states of the impact of the sea disposal of radioactive wastes.

Mr. Atkins: The 38th general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency resolved on 21 September this year to invite the board of governors and the director general to commence preparations for a convention on the safety of radioactive waste management. It also invited them to consider further measures that would enhance international co-operation in this field, including assessment of the impact of the land and sea disposal of wastes. I expect that the United Kingdom will participate fully, as is appropriate, in such work. As regards the International Atomic Energy Agency's radioactive waste safety standards programme, which is aimed at securing international consensus on technical and regulatory aspects of radioactive waste management, the United Kingdom has participated fully, and continues to do so.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to amend the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 enabling landfill tips, including those located in Bradford, West Yorkshire, to take nuclear waste; and if he will made a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 24 October 1994]*: The Government have no plans to amend the provisions in the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 concerning the controlled burial of low-level radioactive waste in landfill sites. The consultation paper, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions", proposed that there would be advantage in encouraging waste producers to make greater use of the existing controlled burial provisions. Responses on this and other issues raised in the review are being carefully considered. There are no plans in relation to particular sites.

Waste Management

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to investigate, or to require Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to investigate the import of wastes from Germany for incineration at the Edmonton incineration plant; and if he will investigate the activities of the International Waste Consultants, brokers for the import of German waste.

Mr. Atkins: I am aware that contracts exist for the import of garage waste for disposal at the North London waste authority's incinerator in Edmonton. The circumstances surrounding these contracts are under investigation by the NLWA and the London waste regulation authority. I am sure that these authorities are taking the appropriate action to protect human health and the environment.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the paper by David Massingham of his Department, presented at the waste management forum at the Institution of Civil Engineers on 22 September.

Mr. Atkins: On 22 September, the Waste Management Forum held a half-day seminar on the Environment Select Committee's report on recycling, under the title "Recycling Reappraised". Mr Massingham of my Department attended, and was among a number of people invited to comment briefly as a focus for discussion. No formal paper was prepared for this occasion, but the main points made at the seminar are contained in the report prepared by the Waste Management forum, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many visits have been paid to the United Kingdom, and for what purpose, by the International Atomic Energy Agency's waste management advisory programme.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contracts have been issued by his Department for the assessment of the applicability to waste management policy of life-cycle analysis.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to announce that my Department has issued recently a contract to develop a methodology for the life cycle analysis of waste management options for different wastes.

This contract is the first part of a major project under the Department's waste research programme. The project will provide an analysis of the environmental costs and benefits of different wastes management options over the entire life cycles of selected wastes. The results from the project are intended to inform waste management policy at both the national and local level.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent communications his Department has had with the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee on the options for returning to countries of origin radioactive wastes arising from spent fuel reprocessed at Sellafield and Dounreay.

Mr. Atkins: The chairman of the radioactive waste management advisory committee wrote to me on 4 July with further advice on British Nuclear Fuels' proposals for waste substitution. A copy of the committee's advice was appended to the consultation document, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions", which the Department published on 5 August.

Regional Assistance, Wirral

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to change the present strategy of regional assistance as it affects the Wirral.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Government's view of the assisted areas map, which defines those parts of Great Britain eligible for regional assistance, was completed last year. The new map reconfirmed Wirral's development area status for regional assistance purposes, and the Government, do not propose to review the assisted areas again for at least two years.

Sewage Works

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the record of compliance of sewage works with their discharge consents in *(a)* 1992–93 and *(b)* 1993–94.

Mr. Atkins: The National Rivers Authority has reported that in 1992 95 per cent. of the water company sewage treatment works it monitored complied with their discharge consent standards, and that in 1993, the figure was 93 per cent. Because of new reporting procedures introduced by the NRA, the information for 1993 is not directly comparable with earlier statistics. The underlying trend is one of significant improvements in performance:

only 83 per cent. of sewage works complied in 1988. This reflects the water industry's substantial investment programmes since privatisation.

Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many houses recorded in the 1994 housing investment programme data as being empty in the *(a)* council, *(b)* housing association, *(c)* public and *(d)* private sectors; and what percentage of the overall stock this represents;

(2) how many households are recorded in the 1994 housing investment programme data collected by local authorities as being on council waiting lists *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by region.

Mr. Curry: The data provided by local authorities on their 1994 housing investment programme—HIP1—returns is still being analysed. I will write to the hon. Member when this work is complete.

Landlord and Tenant Act

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to monitor the effectiveness of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: A research report, commissioned by my Department, entitled "The Landlord and Tenant Act 1987: Awareness, Experience and Impact", was published by HMSO in 1991.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications in respect of homeless persons have been made to local authorities since 1979; and what proportion of these were accepted for rehousing as statutorily homeless.

Mr. Curry: The application figures for individual authorities, where they are reported, are published in the quarterly local housing statistics publication along with the figures for acceptances.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the position of a homeless family will differ from the current situation as a result of proposals contained in the statement on access to local authority housing and explanations of its intent given in written answers to questions 15, 20 and 27.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The court's interpretation of part III of the Housing Act 1985 has the effect of requiring local authorities to secure a tenancy for life for an eligible homeless household. Under our reform proposals the duty would be to secure accommodation for at least 12 months; that duty would recur if the household continued to be eligible for assistance.

Rents

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average weekly rent paid by people earning less than £10,000 in each year since 1990.

Mr. Curry: Estimates of the average rent paid by households in England headed by people with annual incomes less than £10,000 are as follows

Average weekly rents, before and after deduction of housing benefit

	Before deduction of HB	*£ per week* *After deduction of HB*
1990	28·10	15·60
1991	30·10	14·80
1992	35·10	16·00
1993	39·60	16·90

These figures are from the Family Expenditure Survey and are subject to sampling error.

The estimates do not take into account the income of householders other than the head of household, and information is not available to enable the calculation of average rents paid by *households* with incomes less than £10,000 per annum.

Leasehold Enfranchisement

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to monitor the take up of the leasehold enfranchisement provisions of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Leasehold enfranchisement is a private transaction between the leaseholders and the landlord, and it is therefore not possible to monitor take up comprehensively. But my Department does monitor the number of cases coming before leasehold valuation tribunals where the parties cannot agree terms. Currently 32 cases have been heard or are listed to be heard in the near future.

We are about to let a research contract to follow up the experiences and progress of those who have approached the Leasehold Advisory Service, which has been established jointly by the Department and the private sector. To date it has received about 3,000 inquiries.

Rented Properties

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties rented privately in each region are currently deemed to be unfit for human habitation under the current fitness standard.

Mr. Curry: The 1991 English house condition survey estimates that the following numbers of privately rented dwellings are unfit for human habitation under the current fitness standard, by Government office regions:

	Number
Northern	13,000
Yorkshire/Humberside	27,000
North West	58,000
East midlands	20,000
West Midlands	39,000
South West	34,000
Eastern	24,000
Greater London	56,000
South East	54,000
Merseyside	8,000
England total	333,000

Housing Corporation (Expenditure)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the expenditure by the Housing Corporation on *(a)* administration and *(b)* accommodation; and how many staff were employed by the corporation in each year since 1980.

Mr. Curry: The information is as follows:

Year ending 31 March	*Administrative Costs £ 000's*	*Accommodation Costs £ 000's*	*Numbers of Staff*
1980	6,413·0	1,457·0	649
1981	9,096·0	1,879·0	780
1982	9,014·0	2,522·0	639
1983	9,790·0	2,500·0	663
1984	10,336·0	2,700·0	715
1985	10,955·0	2,781·0	713
1986	11,657·0	2,924·0	714
1987	12,354·0	2,929·0	728
1988	13,400·0	3,100·0	720
1989	16,700·0	3,500·0	787
1990	16,600·0	3,300·0	745
1991	18,400·0	4,100·0	745
1992	20,700·0	4,500·0	734
1993	23,500·0	4,400·0	726
1994	24,600·0	4,500·0	718

Notes:

1. Figures to 1989 are for England, Scotland and Wales.

2. Figures from 1990 onwards are for England only (Housing Act 1988 and Housing (Scotland) Act 1988).

Council House Sales

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each financial year since 1981–82, the total sale price of the dwellings sold under the right to buy and the average discount for sales during the year.

Mr. Curry: The information requested on right to buy sales is not held centrally.

However, figures of receipts from sales of all council dwellings and the discounts allowed are collected by the Department. Data on the value of these sales and the average percentage discount given are shown in the table.

Value of dwellings sold by local authorities in England, 1981–82 to 1993–94[1]

Year	*Value of sales (net of discount) £ million*	*Percentage discount on sales*
1981–82	1,241	42
1982–83	1,769	42
1983–84	1,316	42
1984–85	1,108	44
1985–86	1,061	46
1986–87	1,237	46
1987–88	1,697	47
1988–89	2,653	50
1989–90	2,700	51
1990-91	1,616	52
1991–92	1,086	52
1992–93	841	51
1993–94	1,034	49

Note:

[1] Excluding receipts from block transfers.

Merseyside Port

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what role he has in connection with proposed new port facilities by the Merseyside development corporation; what effect these proposed facilities will have on sea traffic from Belfast to the north-west of England; what interests from outside the United Kingdom are involved in the provision or operation of these proposed facilities; what funding the proposed project will receive from the European Community; and if he will make a statement about these proposals by the Merseyside development corporation.

Sir Paul Beresford: Merseyside development corporation, which is sponsored by this Department, has marketed a 55-acre riverside at Twelve Quays, Birkenhead, for a business park and an in-river ro-ro terminal. I am encouraged by the interest that has been shown in the proposed ferry terminal.

MDC has given preferred developer status for the site to London and General, acting with Capital and Regional Properties, which are both United Kingdom development companies.

The corporation's disposal of the site is a matter for the MDC to determine in accordance with the Department's disposal guidelines. Any application for grant assistance that the developer may make to MDC will also be subject to approval in accordance with Departmental guidelines; similarly any application for European Community funding will be subject to the appraisal process for objective 1 funds.

Local Government Review

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest position on the local government review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have today written to Sir John Banham, chairman of the Local Government Commission for England, giving my decisions on the Commission's recommendations for Avon, Humberside Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire and Somerset as set out in its reports "Final Recommendations on the Future Local Government of Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset" and "Final Recommendations on the Future Local Government of North Yorkshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire". I announced my decision, on 1 March, to ask the Commission to undertake a further review of Gloucestershire.

AVON AND SOMERSET

Avon

I have carefully considered the Commission's recommendations for both Avon and Somerset counties and the many representations which have been made about them. I have concluded, for Avon, that abolishing Avon County Council and establishing four unitary authorities for the area (Commission recommendations 1, 2, and 3), would best reflect local identities and interests and achieve effective and convenient local government. I propose to accept Commission recommendations 8 to 12 (on strategic planning and electoral arrangements) for Avon as submitted.

I am still considering the recommendation (Commission recommendation 16) that a town council should be established for the unparished area of Weston-super-Mare. I am also still considering whether to ask the Commission to conduct a review of electoral arrangements in the area before its normal statutory periodic review. I support recommendation (Commission recommendation 18) about consultation between principal authorities and parish and town councils, but, this is for the relevant principal authorities to take forward.

Somerset

The Commission has recommended a move to a structure of three unitary authorities in Somerset (Commission recommendations 6). However, after taking account of the number and strength of the representations which I received opposing the recommendations and the lack of support for the alternative options considered by the Commission in its draft report, I have concluded that to retain the present two-tier system would best reflect local identities and interests and achieve effective and convenient local government in Somerset. I have therefore decided not to accept this recommendation. Consequently I am also rejecting recommendations 8 (in so far as it applies to Somerset) and 13 to 15. I am still considering the recommendation (Commission recommendation 17) that a town council should be established for the unparished area of Bridgwater.

Fire and Police Services

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, is making a separate announcement about the arrangements for the Fire and Police Services in Avon and Somerset (Commission recommendation 7).

Ceremonial Issues

As regards ceremonial issues (Commission recommendation 4), I do not have the power to include unitary authorities in counties where the two tier structure is to be retained. I am therefore obliged to modify some of the Commission's recommendations in this respect. The Commission recommended that the County of Avon, should for ceremonial purposes be divided between Gloucestershire and Somerset, with Bristol as a separate city and county. I propose to establish Bristol as a separate county, and to deem that for ceremonial purposes the unitary authorities of North West Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset should be part of Somerset. It is not possible to make a final decision on the nature of the ceremonial arrangements for South Gloucestershire until the outcome of the Commission's further review of Gloucestershire is known. However, I am minded that, by deeming or otherwise, the South Gloucesterhsire unitary authority and the present county area of Gloucestershire should be united for ceremonial purposes.

HUMBERSIDE, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NORTH YORKSHIRE

Humberside

In its report "*Final Recommendations on the Future Local Government of North Yorkshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire*", for Humberside, the Commission has recommended the abolition of both the County Council and the County of Humberside and their replacement with four unitary authorities (Commission recommendation 1). I have concluded that, subject to some minor modifications, effective and efficient local government and local identities and interest would best be served by accepting the Commission's main recommendation. I propose to accept the recommendation (Commission recommendation 2) that a unitary authority be established upon the present boundaries of the City of Kingston upon Hull. However, because I take the view that the present boundaries of the City may be too tightly drawn, I intend to direct the Commission to undertake a further review of the City's boundaries with the East Yorkshire unitary authority in due course. I also accept the recommendations (Commission recommendations 3, 11 and 12) for three unitary authorities covering the greater part of the rest of Humberside. However, because of my decision not to accept recommendation 8, the reasons for which are set out below, I propose that Goole, the remaining part of Boothferry, should be incorporated in Selby district in North Yorkshire.

I propose to accept the recommendations (Commission recommendations 16, 17, 21, 22 and 25) covering the electoral arrangements for authorities in Humberside. However, I am still considering whether to ask the Commission to conduct a review of electoral arrangements in the area before its normal statutory periodic review. I am also still looking at whether there should be a review to consider the scope for further emparishment in the area (Commission recommendation 24). I support the recommendation (Commission recommendation 23) about consultation between principal authorities and parish and town councils, but again, this is for the relevant principal authorities to take forward.

On Commission recommendation 4, because of my decision to abolish the County of Humberside, the statutory requirement for all authorities to be within a county area, I have decided that, for ceremonial purposes, the City of Hull and East Yorkshire unitary authorities should be included in a new county area to be known as East Riding of Yorkshire.

I have decided to accept the Commission's recommendation for no change to the existing structure in Lincolnshire, and my reasons for doing this are dealt with below. I do not have the power to include unitary authorities in counties where the two tier structure is to be retained (Commission recommendation 10). I am therefore obliged to modify some of the Commission's recommendations in this respect. However, for ceremonial and related purposes I propose to accept the Commission's recommendation that the two authorities south of the Humber should be deemed to be part of Lincolnshire.

I propose to accept the recommendations (Commission recommendations 26 and 27) for minor changes to parish boundaries.

Lincolnshire

The Commission has recommended retaining the present two-tier structure in Lincolnshire (Commission recommendation 13). I have looked closely at this recommendation. The Commission found little support for change in the County, and where there was support, no consensus about what form any change should take. This view is supported by the representations which I have received, and I have, therefore, concluded that I should accept the Commission's recommendation.

North Yorkshire

In North Yorkshire, the Commission has recommended the abolition of the County Council and that the existing eight districts should be combined to form three unitary authorities (Commission recommendations 5 to 8). I have decided to accept the recommendation that a unitary authority be established for the City of York, with its boundaries extended to include the Greater Planning Area (Commission recommendation 76). The Commission identified evidence of strong community identity amongst its residents and support for unitary status and I agree that the residents and support for unitary status and I agree that the present boundary is particularly restrictive. Because of the significant increase in the size of the City, in terms of the area it will cover, its population, and the additional functions for which it will become responsible, I have concluded that a unitary York will be considered a new and not a continuing authority. However, in the light of the strong representations which I have received opposing the Commission's recommendations for North and West Riding authorities (Commission recommendations 6 and 8), and in the absence of any consensus about alternatives, I have concluded that to retain the present two-tier system would best reflect local identities and interests and achieve effective and convenient local government in North Yorkshire outside the City of York. I have therefore decided to reject the recommendation for these two authorities and to retain the two-tier system in the remainder of North Yorkshire. A small number of district wards and county divisions would be split by the proposed boundary changes and it will be necessary to consult the authorities concerned about how the areas remaining outside York should be combined with other wards or divisions.

I have decided to accept the recommendations (Commission recommendation 19 and 25) covering the electoral arrangements for the new unitary authority for the City of York. However, as a consequence of my decision not to introduce unitary authorities elsewhere in North Yorkshire I shall not be accepting recommendations 18 and 20.

Planning

I am still considering the recommendations for planning (Commission recommendation 15) in the three counties in the light of my decisions about local government structure in the area.

Police and Fire Service

My Right hon. and Learned Friend, the Home Secretary, is making a separate announcement about the arrangements for the Fire and Police Services in these three counties (Commission recommendation 14).

Ceremonial Issues

I propose to deem the unitary authority for the City of York to be part of North Yorkshire for ceremonial and related purposes.

Implementation

In all areas where I am agreeing with the establishment of unitary authorities, I have given careful consideration to representations which I received about the implications for those services and functions currently performed on a wider basis. My decisions are based on the presumption that the authorities which are to become unitary will work together, and where relevant with existing authorities, to plan for these services and functions, and will forge effective links with other bodies such as health authorities.

Once I have had the opportunity to consult the affected local authorities, orders giving effect to the Commission's recommendations for these counties, with the aforementioned modifications, will be laid before the House. I intend that elections to unitary authorities in these counties should be held next May, with them assuming full responsibility for their new functions from 1 April 1996. A copy of my letter to Sir John Banham has been placed in the Library.

Conclusion

My decisions mean that nine further unitary authorities will be established from April 1996. Local people in these areas will enjoy the benefits which we believe that unitary local government brings; improved accountability and understanding of where responsibility for services lies; less duplication and improved cost-effectiveness; and improved quality and co-ordination of local services. Where there is to be change, I believe that the costs of change will be justified by the savings and other benefits which it will bring. Elsewhere, where I have judged that this would best provide efficient and effective local government which reflects local identities, I have decided to retain the present two-tier system. This diversity reflects our determination not to impose a uniform structure on local government in England. Instead, we wish to see the structure which works best for each area, which reflects the local preferences, history and tradition, and meets the needs and wishes of local people.

Area Cost Adjustment

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the soundness of data from the new earnings survey as the basis for area cost adjustment.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The New Earnings Survey is a well-established and comprehensive survey of earnings across the country. It is, therefore, a very suitable basis for establishing the relative wage rates paid in different regions in occupations relevant to local authorities. The sample numbers in the survey are, however, not large enough to produce reliable estimates of wage rates in individual local authorities. For this reason, the area cost adjustment is calculated at a regional level.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the effect on counties in the east midlands of removing £1·5 billion distributed through area cost adjustment to counties in the south east and dividing the proceeds to increase the general amount of the standard spending assessment of every other county and metropolitan authority outside the south east.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The table shows the effect on the standard spending assessments of counties in the East Midlands, if SSAs in 1994–95 had been calculated without applying the area cost adjustment to authorities in London and the South East, but with no other change either to the national total of SSAs, or to the detailed formulae applied to each service.

	Actual 1994–95 SSA £ million	*SSA with no area cost adjustment £ million*	*Change in SSA £ million**
Derbyshire	553	576	23
Leicestershire	561	584	23
Lincolnshire	365	380	15
Northamptonshire	364	37	15
Nottinghamshire	627	653	27

* figures may not sum due to rounding to nearest pound million

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the area cost adjustment element of standard spending assessment.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Various aspects of the area cost adjustment have been considered this year by the SSA sub-group, which is the main forum in which technical issues affecting standard spending assessments are discussed between government officials and local authority representatives. Ministers are considering the options which have been put forward and will be announcing their proposals for 1995–96 later in the year.

Standard Spending Assessment

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage increase in standard spending assessment for counties in each English region from 1989–90 to 1994–95; and what were the percentage increases for all English counties and for all local authorities in England over the same period.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The first year of Standard Spending Assessments was 1990–91. Comparative figures for 1990–91 and 1994–95 for non-metropolitan county councils, which make no allowance for changes in function, are:

	1990–91 £ million	*1994–95 £ million*	*Change*
Northern	1,029·163	1,273·801	+23·8 per cent.
North West	1,217·646	1,477·878	+21·4 per cent.
Yorkshire and Humberside	798·783	976·481	+22·2 per cent.
East Midlands	2,014·564	2,469·158	+22·6 per cent.
West Midlands	1,251·442	1,530·181	+22·3 per cent.
East Anglia	966·003	1,216·725	+26·0 per cent.
South West	2,207·561	2,757·969	+24·9 per cent.
South East (outside Greater London)	5,152·553	6,629·815	+28·7 per cent.
Total shire counties	14,637·716	18,332·008	+25·2 per cent.
All local authorities	29,805·300	37,847·700	+27·0 per cent.

Basic Credit Approvals

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what basic credit approval was given to east midlands counties in each year since 1992–93; and if he will express this as a percentage of total county basic credit approvals for these years.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The information is given in the table.

Basic credit approvals issued to east midlands counties 1992–93 to 1994–95

County	*1992-93 £ 000*	*1993-94 £ 000*	*1994-95 £ 000*
Derbyshire	18,840	16,228	8,878
Leicestershire	17,926	14,145	12,334
Lincolnshire	16,076	14,034	13,426
Northamptonshire	7,631	4,974	6,903
Nottinghamshire	12,013	9,599	7,101
Total	72,486	58,980	48,642
Percentage of total BCAs for all counties	13·1	12·6	9·7

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Sir Paul Beresford: There are currently 31 information officers employed by the Department of Environment including those employed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. All deal with the full range of information services; none are exclusively press officers. These staff are all located in London. None are employed in the House.

Additionally officers are employed in an information role in the various agencies directly accountable to the Department.

Regional services in England are provided by the Central Office of Information.

Right-to-buy Legislation

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the money realised from the sale of houses under the right-to-buy legislation has been used by local authorities to pay off their outstanding debts.

Mr. Curry: Information on the value of receipts from right-to-buy sales and on how they are used by local authorities are not held centrally by the Department.

However, figures of receipts from sales of council dwellings to sitting tenants are collected by the Department and these show that between the introduction of right to buy in 1980 and the end of March 1994 the total value of such sitting tenant sales, net of discount, is an estimated £18·5 billion.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his proposals are for extending compulsory competitive tendering to local authority information technology services and finance services.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment announced to the House the Government's decisions on proposals to extend compulsory competitive tendering to local authority and other defined authorities white-collar corporate and professional services on November 10 1992 at column *744*. He undertook that the Government would discuss details of implementing these decisions with representatives of local government and other interested parties. Since then, my officials have had very useful discussions with the local authority associations, the Audit Commission and CIPFA on a number of joint working groups, and with a number of other representative bodies.

We are today issuing two consultation documents inviting comments on the Government's detailed proposals for extending CCT to local authority Information Technology services, and to finance services.

Following consultation on CCT for legal and construction and property services, Orders were tabled before the House in June and July this year for legal and construction and property services respectively. The papers issued today on IT and finance services will be followed later this year by our detailed proposals for personnel and corporate and administrative services.

Copies of today's consultation papers will be placed in the Library. They include a definition of each service which includes the provision of a range of IT and finance services but does not capture the users of IT services and excludes financial tasks carried out as part of the normal duties of managers and other administrative staff whose primary responsibility is to a service other than a financial one.

We recognise that not all of this work is necessarily suited to competitive tendering and potential contracting out. For this reason we propose that local authorities be permitted to carry out up to 30 per cent. by value, of IT work using their own staff without going through competition, all authorities being able to retain a minimum of £300,000 worth of work in-house and free of competitive tendering. This recognises that certain work must be retained in-house both to enable an authority to fulfil its democratic responsibilities and to act as an expert client for bought-in services.

Similarly, for finance services we propose that the authorities be able to retain 65 per cent. by value of work, with a de minimis exemption of £300,000. An authority will not be able to award any of the remaining 70 per cent. of IT work or 35 per cent. of finance work, to their own staff unless they have won it in fair and open competition.

As with legal and professional construction and property services, the consultation papers also give details of modifications which we intend to make top the statutory framework for competitive tendering to ensure that authorities will continue to be able to deliver services in a way which meets their own operational objectives.

Following consideration of comments received on the proposals included in this consultation document, I will submit to the House the statutory instruments required under the Local Government Act 1988 to give effect to our proposals. I anticipate that, subject to the conclusions we draw from consultation and to parliamentary approval of the relevant order, CCT for Finance services will take effect from 1 October 1996 in metropolitan districts, London boroughs and certain other defined authorities and that CCT for IT services will come into effect one year later than originally proposed, from 1 October 1997. This will place IT CCT at the end of the extension programme, allowing authorities, if they wish, to deal with market testing of IT work once the outcome of competition for services which are the principal customers for IT is clear.

For counties and shire districts CCT for both services will take effect once the Local Government Commission's review of local authority structure has been completed and, where appropriate, changes have been made. CCT for these services for the new police authorities will be subject to separate consultation.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales are issuing separate consultation papers. The proposals contained therein follow much of what I have outlined above, although implementation dates will take account of the programme for local government restructuring in both those countries. A separate consultation exercise is currently taking place in Scotland on the timetable for Scottish authorities.

Experience with the manual services already subject to CCT has shown that competition brings not only financial savings, but also significant improvements in the management, efficiency and quality of public services. I fully expect that CCT will bring the same benefits to IT, finance and other white-collar work.

Construction Industry (Corporation Tax)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of corporation tax was paid by the construction sector in each year since 1979.

Sir George Young: I have been asked to reply.

Corporation tax paid by companies in the construction sector is as follows:

	£ million
1979–80	130
1980–81	140
1981–82	160
1982–83	200
1983–84	230
1984–85	250
1985–86	320
1986–87	370
1987–88	570
1988–89	820
1989–90	1,270
1990–91	1,240
1991–92	890
1992–93	710
1993–94	520

Notes:

Figures for 1985–86 and earlier years are estimates based on corporation tax liability.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on his plans for legislation applying the requirement to conduct environmental impact assessments under directive 85/337/EEC specifically to offshore oil and gas exploration, appraisal or production projects;

(2) in what way current United Kingdom legislation applies the requirement to conduct environmental impact assessments under directive 85/337/EEC specifically to offshore oil and gas exploration, appraisal or production projects.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answers 24 October 1994]:* Environmental assessments are required by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry before consent is given in respect of the operation of any offshore oil or gas production installation within 25 miles of the coast. In addition, beyond 25 miles, environmental assessments are required for production installations in environmentally sensitive areas identified in consultation with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statistical method is used by the Leeds development corporation in calculating the number of jobs created; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The number of jobs created is calculated annually by economic consultants employed by Leeds development corporation. Figures are derived from a survey of all completed developments, both new-build and conversions, within the urban development area, to establish how many full-time equivalent jobs have been created.

EC Directives

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what United Kingdom legislation implements the environmental impact assessments Directive (85/337/EEC) with respect to projects which do not fall within the planning process and are not governed by the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1199).

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The main regulations which implement Directive 85/337/EEC in the United Kingdom for projects which are not governed by the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1199) are as follows:

Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1221 (S. 122))

Environmental Assessment (Salmon Farming in Marine Waters) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1218)

Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1207)

Land Drainage Improvement Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1217)

Highways (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1241)

Harbour Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1336)

Harbour Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) (No. 2) Regulations 1989 (SI No. 424)

Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 (SR No. 20)

Electricity and Pipe-Line Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1990 (SI No. 442)

Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 (SR No. 226)

Harbour Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1990 (SR No. 181)

Drainage (Environmental Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1991 (SR No. 376)

Harbour Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1992 (SI No. 1421)

Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) Rules 1992 (SI No. 2902)

Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (SI No. 3160 (NI 15)) Article 67)

A number of minor amending regulations have also been issued.

"Quality in Town and Country"

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those individuals and organisations who responded to the document, "Quality in Town and Country;" and if he will place copies of these responses in the Library.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* Yes. A list of responses received, excluding any who asked that their response be confidential, will be placed in the Libraries of the House on 1 November. Copies of individual responses will be available through the Library once our analysis of them has been completed.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Sir John Wheeler: The amount spent on hospitality by *(a)* the Northern Ireland Office and NI Departments and *(b)* their agencies for each year since 1990 is as follows:

	(a) NIO and NI Departments	*(b) Agencies*
1990–91	294,819	7,443
1991–92	276,583	27,541
1992–93	503,846	36,752
1993–94	511,350	45,770

NIO records for 1990–91 and 1991–92 are unavailable as they were destroyed in a fire.

Hualon Corporation

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether his Department has yet made a full response to the points which were raised with him at his meeting on 11 August with the representatives of the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance in connection with the proposed grant to the Hualon corporation in connection with the development of new textile facilities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* My right hon. and learned Friend responded in full to the points raised at the 11 August meeting by way of letter to my hon. Friend dated 11 October 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent representations he has received concerning the proposed grant to the Hualon Corporation in connection with the development of new textile facilities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Apart from meeting the hon. Member and two representatives from Coats Viyella and Council of British Cotton textiles since July 1994, Ministers have received two written representations—both from individuals.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Guatemala

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to support the immediate resettlement of refugees returning to Guatemala under the terms of the 8 October 1992 accord, and to support the establishment and work of the Technical Commission agreed to under the 17 June 1994 accord for the resettlement of populations displaced by the armed conflict.

Mr. Baldry: We are major contributors both bilaterally and through the EU to UNHCR who continue to play an important role in the repatriation process. We have urged all sides to ensure that returnees can do so safely, to areas where adequate advance provision has been made for their reception. Together with EU partners we have made clear our intention to play a full part in supporting the peace process, including the resettlement of displaced persons.

Indonesia

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid is being allotted to Indonesia in the current financial year.

Mr. Baldry: In 1994–95 we expect to spend about £40 million in Indonesia under the bilateral aid programme.

Population and Development Conference

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he intends to take following the final resolutions of the Cairo international conference on population and development.

Mr. Baldry: We will be seeking to identify sound projects in population and reproductive health field so that by the end of next year we will have committed the £100 million of aid announced in July by my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. We will extend access to reproductive health services through intensified co-operation with the United Nations population fund and our other partners, including the private sector.

The Gambia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European counterparts regarding aid to The Gambia.

Mr. Baldry: We have had extensive discussions with our European partners. On 12 October the EU announced that, in the absence of a timetable for an early return to constitutional government, they were suspending all military co-operation and balance of payments support to The Gambia; and would review new aid projects on a case by case basis.

Rwanda

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much bilateral aid has been allocated to Rwanda since April.

Mr. Baldry: We have committed £60 million for Rwandan displaced and refugees in neighbouring countries since April 1994; £33 million of this is bilateral emergency aid and £27 million is our share of EC aid.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he is providing to the Governments of Zaire, Tanzania and Uganda to help them to cope with the influx of refugees from Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: Our emergency aid is normally provided to operational field agencies. Almost all our £33 million bilateral emergency aid has been allocated through such agencies for relief activities and to encourage the safe return of refugees to Rwanda, which is the best help that we can give to neighbouring countries.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what steps he is taking to assist with the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Rwanda;

(2) what assistance is being given to the new Government of Rwanda to assist with rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Mr. Baldry: Our present emphasis is to help create conditions within Rwanda which will encourage refugees to return. Thus we have recently provided over £2 million to NGOs involved in immediate rehabilitation, including seeds and tools provision, restarting of health care services and tracing and registration of unaccompanied children. In addition, £100,000 of equipment has been provided towards the re-establishment of the Rwanda Ministries of Health and of Rehabilitation and Social Integration.

We have also made grants to UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration, who are helping refugees return to Rwanda.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with other aid donor Governments regarding provision of financial compensation to the Government of Tanzania for the environmental degradation caused by the influx of refugees from Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: None. However, we recognise the importance of mitigating environmental degradation and have provided £35,000 to the non-governmental organisation, CARE, in support of an environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom is providing to the Government of Rwanda in re-establishing and training a civilian police force.

Mr. Baldry: In response to a request from the Government of Rwanda, a training programme, aimed at providing trainees with a basic knowledge of routine and investigative police work to enable them to address the immediate law and order problems in Kigali is now under way under UNAMIR auspices.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom is providing in the clearance of land mines in Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: In response to a UN request, we provided mine detecting equipment valued at £30,000 to assist in the training of Rwandan teams. We are awaiting the outcome of current UN assessments.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Operation Lifeline Sudan has been able to send humanitarian aid to northern Bahr al Ghazal in Sudan; and what reports he has on the physical condition of the people in the region.

Mr. Baldry: Between January and August Operation Lifeline Sudan delivered 3,741 tonnes of food aid to more than 105,000 beneficiaries in Bahr el Ghazal as well as health care, seeds, tools and fishing equipment and veterinary care to promote food security. The rains have brought good prospects for harvests and pastures.

OLS is currently assessing humanitarian needs in the region to plan future inputs. The results should be available by the end of this month.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in gaining access for international humanitarian agencies to the Nuba mountains in Sudan.

Mr. Baldry: There has been no significant change to the structure of relief aid since the answer that my hon. Friend the Under Secretary of State gave to the hon. Member on 10 May 1994 at column *79*. However, assessments of 1994–95 humanitarian needs are now taking place at several locations in the transitional zone with participation from United Nations humanitarian agencies.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to amend the procedures relating to the aid and trade provision in the light of the findings of the Foreign Affairs Committee in its third report of Session 1993–94.

Mr. Baldry: The Government set out our detailed observations in our response, Cm 2672, to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report. The Committee concluded that in principle the thrust of the reforms introduced in June 1993 following the ATP review was to be broadly welcomed, and that the ATP should continue. The Government have no immediate plans for further amendments to the procedures for operating the ATP, but they remain under constant review.

Jordan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any debts from Jordan to Britain have been written off since the Israeli-Jordanian peace accord; and what future plans there are for such writing-off.

Mr. Baldry: All aid debts owed by Jordan to Britain have been forgiven following the Washington declaration by Israel and Jordan. There are currently no plans for further forgiveness of other official Jordanian debt.

Refugee Camps, Zaire

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom is providing with security arrangements for aid workers in the refugee camps at Goma in Zaire.

Mr. Baldry: We have received no requests from aid workers for assistance in security arrangements, but we are closely monitoring situation reports from UN officials and remain in regular contact with aid organisations working in Goma.

Pergau Dam

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the consortium of British companies involved in the Pergau hydro-electric project in the light of his observations on the third report from the Foreign Affairs Committee of Session 1993–94 (Cm 2672).

Mr. Baldry: None.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Jack: The following amounts have been spent on official hospitality in each year since 1990–91:

Department[1]	
1990–91	£65,229·48
1001–92[2]	£89,014·54
1992–93	£53,542·64
1993–94	£78,436·40
1994–95[3]	£26,365·30

[1] Inclusive of agencies except where indicated in table.

[2] Higher cost reflects the launching of both the ADAS and CSL agencies.

[3] To end of September 1994.

Agencies

	PSD	*VMD*	*CVL*	*CSL*	*ADAS*
1992–93			12,928·01	4,172·15	9,672·00
1993–94	379·66	942·13	16,720·85	4,744·80	11,775·13
1994–95[3]	128·15	699·00	8,957·27	6,123·78	10,766·67

[1] Inclusive of agencies except where indicated in table.

[2] Higher cost reflects the launching of both the ADAS and CSL Agencies.

[3] To end of September 1994.

The principal items included in this expenditure were given on 27 October 1993, *Official Report*, column 659.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Jack: MAFF employs a chief press officer and six press officers, all of whom are based at the Department's headquarters in Whitehall place, London.

Milk Deliveries

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the figures for the amount of milk supplied to customers by doorstep deliveries in 1979, 1984, 1989 and the year to 30 June 1994, in terms of quantity in litres, value, and as a percentage of total milk sales.

Mr. Jack: The information for England and Wales is as follows:

Year (ending 30 June)	*Doorstep sales (million litres)*[1]	*Percentage of total household sales*[1]	*Retail value £ million*[2]
1979	5,146	89·3	1,492
1984	4,672	85·8	1,766
1989	3,808	74·3	1,869
1994	2,663	53·8	1,686

[1] National Dairy Council calculation based on Milk Marketing Board (England and Wales) estimates.

[2] National Dairy Council estimates. Absolute value.

Milk Marque

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure equity of treatment in the transitional period before vesting day for milk producers who have contracted to Milk Marque and those who have not.

Mr. Jack: In the period between now and vesting day the milk marketing scheme remains in force. It would be unlawful for the milk marketing board to discriminate arbitrarily between producers. The ministry is continuing to monitor the board's activities as required by EC regulations.

TRANSPORT

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement about the damage done to the gas main outside Wanstead station by workers on the

M11 link road and the consequences to the health of the local population of the resulting gas vapours;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of the proposed M11 link road on rights in respect of the free movement of cattle in the Whipps Cross area; what proposals he has to restrict those rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: These questions are operational matters for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 25 October 1994:

The Minister for Transport in London has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Questions about the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 Link Road since they are operational matters for the Highways Agency.

We are not intending to restrict the rights in respect of cattle in the Whipps Cross area, indeed, links across Epping Forest will be improved as a result of the Link Road. The layout of the existing Green Man Roundabout is being revised to accommodate slip roads to and from the Link Road which will pass under the junction in tunnel. As well as providing a special bridge over the Underground railway for pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists and cattle, a separate tunnel under the roundabout will allow safe passage, segregated from traffic, between the northern section of Epping Forest and Bush Wood and beyond to Wanstead Flats. This is a significant improvement on the existing situation where busy roads must be crossed. These proposals were fully discussed at the 1987 Public Inquiry into the Link Road.

In order to prevent cattle from straying on to the Link Road once it is opened, we are proposing to install cattle grids on the slip roads at the new Green Man Roundabout, having consulted the local authorities and the Conservators of Epping Forest.

The incident involving the gas pipe fracture at Mansfield Road was an unfortunate accident. The sub-contractor constructing a new sewer, was lowering a steel frame into a trench and hit a gas pipe at or close to a joint causing it to fracture. As a precautionary measure, British Gas sealed off the area, including Wanstead Station, while they repaired the pipe. It is our belief that there was little danger to the public as a result of the fracture, but we regret the inconvenience that was caused.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Norris: The information is as follows:

(a) Department of Transport

1990–91 — £204,040
1991–92 — £170,015
1992–93 — £233,762
1993–94 — £234,986
1994–95 — [1]£63,969

(b) Agencies

1990–91 — £24,114
1991–92 — £30,216
1992–93 — £45,454
1993–94 — £59,850
1994–95 — [2]£64,692

[1] To 20 October 1994 only

[2] To 30 September 1994 only

Transport Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department published the 1994 edition of "Transport Statistics Great Britain;" what were the main trends established in the report; and to whom it has been circulated.

Mr. Watts: The 1994 edition of "Transport Statistics Great Britain" was published on 28 September. Copies of the report were distributed widely, and also deposited in the Libraries of the House. The main trends established in the report were listed in the press notice which accompanied the publication of the report.

Railway Investment

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how much Railtrack will invest in track and signalling maintenance and repair in 1994–95;

(2) how much will be invested in track and signalling renewals and new build schemes on the British railway network in 1994–95.

Mr. Watts: In 1994–95 Railtrack expects to spend some £550 million on investment in track and signalling, including some £100 million for channel tunnel services; and some £800 million for the maintenance of track, signalling and telecommunications.

British Rail

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much (i) British Rail and (ii) Railtrack expect to spend this year on *(a)* lobbying Parliament and *(b)* press and public relations.

Mr. Watts: BR's headquarters public affairs department has a budget of £2·4m, but information in respect of individual business units, who have their own public affairs budgets as part of their overall management costs, is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Railtrack's headquarters press and public relations office has a budget of some £1 million. Neither has a special budget for lobbying Parliament.

Bedford-Bletchley Railway

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the use of the Bedford-Bletchley railway; and if he will give figures of the number of passengers who use the service and the profitability rating, after county council subsidy, of the cross-country link.

Mr. Watts: About 800 passengers use the Bedford-Bletchley services each weekday. No notice of any proposal to withdraw these services has been given. The financial performance of the services is a matter for the British Railways Board.

MV Derbyshire

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to undertake a complete camera inspection of the located wreck of MV 'Derbyshire'; and what assessment he has made of the relevance of such an inspection to future building and operational safety for ships of this type.

Mr. Norris: The marine accident investigation branch has been considering the sonar and video material supplied by the International Transport Workers Federation. We expect to receive a report from the chief inspector of marine accidents very soon. We will then consider what further action needs to be taken.

Night Blindness

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider making it a condition for the grant of a motor vehicle licence that the applicant should be subject to a test for night blindness.

Mr. Norris: Complete night blindness is a very rare condition, and such a general test would not be appropriate. It is notifiable under the Road Traffic Act 1988 and is normally a bar to driving. However, special tests are used to see whether a person so affected is capable of adequate vision driving at night using vehicle headlights. Night blindness is not to be confused with night myopia which is more common and not notifiable as it is normally overcome by vehicle headlights and street lighting.

Nitric Acid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 17 October, *Official Report*, columns *94–95*, if he is aware of any planned import of radioactive nitric acid by sea from the United States of America.

Mr. Norris: I understand that the United States subsidiary of British Nuclear Fuels plc has recently agreed a contract with the United States Department of Energy to recycle radioactive nitric acid from the Westinghouse Hanford site in Washington state. The acid will be carried in purpose-built containers which comply with all national and international regulations.

Channel Tunnel Link

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the reasons for not including a connection between the channel tunnel railway and crossrail in the tender documents recently issued to the four bidding consortia.

Mr. Watts: It will be for the private sector in taking forward the two railways to decide whether they want a connection and, if they do, to seek the necessary powers and to pay for it.

Traffic Regulation Orders

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the temporary traffic regulation orders for which he has authorised an extension under section 15(5) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended by the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Act 1991, stating in each case *(a)* the name of the authority making the order, *(b)* the public rights of way stopped up by the order, *(c)* the duration of the extension and *(d)* why he granted the extension.

Mr. Norris: This information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Railtrack (Safety Objectives)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will set safety objectives for Railtrack in respect of level crossings.

Mr. Watts: This is a matter for Railtrack who have undertaken to include a safety objective for level crossings in the railway group safety plan for 1995–96.

Personal Injury Accidents

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, columns *119—20*, if he will publish the latest figures for personal injury accidents involving minibuses and motor caravans by police area from 1990 to 1993.

Mr. Norris: The required information is shown in the table.

Personal injury accidents involving minibuses/motor caravans, by police force area: GB 1990–1993

Police area	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Metropolitan police	114	136	133	128
Cumbria	22	28	24	32
Lancashire	37	39	48	32
Merseyside	68	77	74	86
Greater Manchester	109	93	82	95
Cheshire	43	37	49	29
Northumbria	24	20	18	20
Durham	8	17	16	9
North Yorkshire	56	34	44	37
West Yorkshire	38	30	32	36
South Yorkshire	48	40	42	34
Humberside	28	26	25	18
Cleveland	19	11	4	8
West Midlands	51	59	55	60
Staffordshire	28	23	21	36
West Mercia	36	18	15	22
Warwickshire	8	9	14	12
Derbyshire	7	6	6	11
Nottinghamshire	32	20	16	31
Lincolnshire	40	20	27	25
Leicestershire	58	27	40	41
Northamptonshire	22	25	16	7
Cambridgeshire	32	40	33	26
Norfolk	51	39	26	31
Suffolk	11	18	15	25
Bedfordshire	13	16	17	11
Hertfordshire	22	18	16	16
Essex	42	51	49	52
Thames Valley	52	64	65	59
Hampshire	77	74	75	81
Surrey	40	26	23	25
Kent	78	79	56	91
Sussex	63	56	63	46
City of London	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	58	34	47	52
Avon and Somerset	31	48	27	27
Gloucestershire	18	23	17	18
Wiltshire	8	6	20	16
Dorset	24	27	23	29
North Wales	41	44	34	46
Gwent	24	25	19	29
South Wales	51	57	65	102
Dyfed-Powys	27	35	32	27
Northern	27	31	26	27
Grampian	40	18	22	21
Tayside	17	15	14	9
Fife	20	11	11	12
Lothian and Borders	21	36	20	18
Central	9	6	14	16
Strathclyde	122	88	76	74
Dumfries and Galloway	11	10	5	6
Total	1,926	1,790	1,711	1,801

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he plans to consider objections to the under-sea part of the proposed Scotland to Northern Ireland interconnector.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 15 July 1994]*: The Department received an application for consent under section 34 of the Coast Protection Act 1949 to the laying of an under-sea power cable from Ayrshire to Island Magee. Section 34 is only concerned with obstruction or danger to navigation. The application was advertised. No objections were received. A consent solely for the purposes of section 34 was issued on 22 February 1994.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Heseltine: *(a)* Seventeen *(b)* None *(c)* None. Some agencies directly accountable to the Department also employ full or part-time press officers.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many times during the 1993–94 Session information requested in parliamentary questions has been refused on the ground of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department has refused information requested in parliamentary questions on the grounds of commercial confidentiality on 50 occasions during the 1993–94 Session.

Lord Archer

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) who decided that his Department should make a public statement on 7 July that Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare was the subject of an inquiry into alleged insider dealing;

(2) what were the reasons for his Department's statement on 7 July that Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare was the subject of an inquiry into alleged insider dealing.

Mr. Heseltine: On 8 February 1994 I appointed two inspectors under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 to investigate possible insider dealing in relation to an agreed bid made by MAI plc for Anglia Television Group plc. On 7 July 1994 I was informed that *The Times* newspaper had informed my Department that it intended to publish the existence of the investigation and that Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare was concerned with the investigation. On the same day I was also informed that MAI plc had confirmed the existence of the investigation.

I took the decision to issue a statement in the light of these circumstances.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* total cost of the inquiry into the allegations of insider trading involving Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare.

Mr. Heseltine: It is not my Department's practice to disclose details of individuals from whom legal advice is obtained. Both the advice and its source is regarded as confidential.

Aluminium Industry

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has made to the European Commission to investigate state aids to the aluminium producers Inespal of Spain and Pechiney of France; and what response he has received.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has drawn these cases to the Commission's attention. The Commission has investigated the claims, but has so far found no evidence to substantiate them. We will continue to monitor the situation carefully.

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has made to the EFTA surveillance authority to investigate state aids to the aluminium producer Austria Metal; and what response he has received.

Mr. Eggar: Following representations from my Department, the Commission agreed to draw this case to the attention of the EFTA surveillance authority. When we have a response I will write to inform my right hon. Friend of the result.

Konver Funding

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether EU Konver funding will be available for the Doncaster area; and how this money will be administered and distributed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government's view, conveyed to the European Commission on 1 August as it requested, is that the whole of South Yorkshire, including Doncaster, should be eligible for the renewed programme of Konver grants. The Commission's decision was due on 1 October.

Before any grants can be approved, the eligible areas have to be settled, a United Kingdom operational programme document has to be sent to the Commission and approved by it, and applications examined against the terms of the document. Administrative details will be settled in good time.

Post Office

Mr. Stern: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to support the recommendations of the Institute of Directors for full privatisation of the Post Office with no protected monopoly or uniform price guarantee.

Mr. Eggar: No

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been spent by his Department on preparations for the privatisation of the Post Office since he announced his review of its ownership and structure in the House in July 1992.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]*: The Government announced their intention to privatise Parcelforce on 15 July 1992 and announced the review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office on 29 July 1992. From those dates to 24 October 1994 a total of £1,613,002·28 has been spent on consultancy advice.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been spent by the Post Office on making the case for its own privatisation since he announced his review of its ownership and structure in the House in July 1992.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* This is an operational matter for the Post Office.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines he has issued to the Post Office on expenditure incurred by it arguing for its own privatisation.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* No guidelines have been issued.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will instruct the Post Office board, with effect from the announcement of his review of the structure and ownership of the Post Office in July 1992, to embargo any moves of senior personnel from Post Office Counters to Royal Mail or Parcelforce if his plans go ahead.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* No.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the operation of the Post Office Investigation Department if he privatises Royal Mail but keeps Post Office Counters in the public sector.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Green Paper makes it clear that the future of activities which are not part of Post Office Counters, Royal Mail or Parcelforce will depend on the decisions reached overall.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account he has taken of a copy of a report by London Economics entitled "The Future of Postal Services - a critique of the Government's Green Paper", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* We have read the London Economics report with considerable interest. In the Government's view it has not fully dealt with the difficulties in its proposals, but it is a worthwhile contribution to the debate.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account he has taken of a MORI poll conducted in August on the views of the Post Office managers on privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* We have taken full account of all considered responses to the Green Paper.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many individual submissions he received from sub-postmasters on his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services"; and what account he has taken of an opinion poll conducted by MORI in August on the views of sub-postmasters about privatisation.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* We have received very few responses from individual sub-postmasters. We are aware of the opinion poll referred to.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to extend VAT to *(a)* contract parcels traffic undertaken by the Post Office and *(b)* Royal Mail letter and packet traffic.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Green Paper "The Future of Postal Services" made clear that the universal letter and parcels services, which under any option Royal Mail and Parcelforce will continue to provide, will remain exempt from VAT. It also made clear that the Government would be considering, in the light of EC law, the imposition of VAT on non-obligatory services, including contract parcels, provided by Royal Mail and Parcelforce. No decision has been taken.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has quantified the estimated value of the new commercial freedoms to be made available to Post Office Counters, outlined in his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services"; and whether this value will exceed the estimated value of the business lost by Post Office Counters over the next five years as Government Departments and the Royal Mail move business away from them.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* No. Any projections about increases in volume from new business, or increases or decreases in existing business, are an operational matter for Post Office Counters.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the response of the Mail Users National Council to his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services", and when he last met its representatives;

(2) what was the response of the Post Office Users National Council to his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services"; and when he last met its representatives;

(3) what was the response of the Periodical Publishers Association to his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services"; and when he last met its representatives;

(4) what was the response of the Direct Marketing Association to his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services"; and when he last met its representatives;

(5) what was the response of Protecting Postal services to his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services"; and when he last met its representatives.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answers 24 October 1994]:* It is for respondents to make public their views if they choose to do so. I have met none of the organisations mentioned. My hon. Friend The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Industry and Energy met representatives of the Post Office Users National Council on 8 September and of the Protecting Postal Services on 12 September.

Offshore Licensing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the organisations his Department has consulted concerning the 16th round of offshore licensing, giving dates of any meetings with environmental organisations.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Listed are the organisations which my Department has consulted over the 16th round. Those environmental organisations which officials have met are indicated on the list.

In addition, officials are arranging a joint meeting later this month with all other environmental groups who have requested a meeting or have provided substantive comments on the 16th round.

ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED OVER THE 16TH ROUND OF OIL AND GAS LICENSING

Other Government Departments:
Crown Estate
Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland
Department of Economic Development (Northern Ireland)
Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland)
Department of the Environment
Department of Transport
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Health and Safety Inspectorate
H M Inspectorate of Mines
H M Treasury
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Ministry of Defence
The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department
The Scottish Office Industry Department
The Welsh Office

Environmental organisations and groups:
Countryside Commission
Dyfed Wildlife Trust
Friends of Cardigan Bay (meeting held on 4 August 1994)
Friends of the Earth Cymru
Greenpeace
Joint Countryside Advisory Service
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (meeting held on 21 October 1994)
who in turn consult—
  English Nature (meeting held on 21 October 1994)
  Countryside Council for Wales (meeting held on 21 October 1994)
  Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (meeting held on 21 October 1994)
Scottish Natural Heritage
Sea Mammal Research Unit
Narberth Friends of the Earth
The National Trust (meeting held on 26 August 1994
RSNC Wildlife Trusts Partnership
Strangford Lough Management Committee
The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
Wildlife and Countryside Link
World Wide Fund For Nature

Local groups:
Cardigan bay Forum
Dyfed Joint Liaison Group
Gwynedd Standing Conference
North Wales Coastal Forum
Irish Sea Forum
Offshore Minerals Forum - East Coast Authorities
Standing Conference on Oil and Gas Exploration in the English Channel
Local authorities - England:
Avon County Council
Cheshire County Council
Cleveland County Council
Cornwall County Council
Cumbria County Council
Devon County Council
Dorset County Council
Durham County Council
East Sussex County Council
Essex County Council
Humberside County Council
Isle of Wight County Council
Kent County Council
Lancashire County Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Merseyside County Council
Norfolk County Council
Northumberland County Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Sefton Borough Council
Somerset County Council
Suffolk County Council
Tyne and Wear County Council
West Sussex County Council

Local authorities - Wales:
Clwyd County Council
Dyfed County Council
Gwent County Council
Gwynedd County Council
Mid Glamorgan County Council
Pembrokeshire District Council
South Glamorgan County Council
West Glamorgan County Council

Local Authorities - Norther Ireland:
Antrim Borough Council
Ards Borough Council
Carrickfergus Borough Council
Down Borough Council
Newry and Mourne District Council

Local authorities - Scotland
Borders Regional Council
Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council
Fife Regional Council
Grampian Regional Council
Highland Regional Council
Lothian Regional Council
Orkney Islands Council
Shetland Regional Council
Strathclyde Regional Council
Tayside Regional Council
Western Isles Regional Council

Fishermen's federations and organisations:
Association of Scotland Shellfish Growers
The Association of Sea Fisheries Committees of England and Wales
Firth of Forth Fishermen's Association
Federation of Highlands and Islands Fishermen
Highlands and Islands Fishermen's Association
National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
Orkney Fisheries Association
The Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation Ltd
Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Southern Seas Fisheries District Fishermen's Council
Ullerpool Boat Owners Association

Other Organisations
British Aerospace Defence Ltd
British Coal Corporation
British Telecommunication plc

Cleveland Potash Limited
Isle of Man Government Offices
Mercury Communications Limited

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on how his Department applies the Government's commitment to the precautionary principle contained in "Sustainable Development; The United Kingdom Strategy", paragraph 3.12 to licensing oil exploration, especially in environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* A central concern for United Kingdom policy with regard to sustainable development, will be to reconcile the demand for energy with the need to reduce the impact of its exploitation, generation and use on the environment. However, these concerns are not incompatible with the continued need for hydrocarbon exploration around the United Kingdom coast. The Government will apply the precautionary principle where there is a threat of serious or irreversible damage to the environment. There is no evidence to suggest that oil and gas exploration activity poses such a threat.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the environmental organisations which have made representations to him either individually or in consortia, concerning the 16th round of offshore licensing; which organisations urged a complete suspension of the round; and which urged suspension in specific areas or blocks.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Listed are the environmental organisations which have made representations to my Department concerning the 16th round. None of these has urged the complete suspension of the round. The organisations which have urged suspension of specific areas or blocks have been indicated on the list.

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS WHO HAVE MADE REPRESENTATIONS TO DTI OVER THE 16TH ROUND.

Countryside Commission
Cumbria Wildlife Trust (i)
Devon Wildlife Trust (i)
Dorset Trust for Nature Conservation (i)
Dyfed Wildlife Trust (i)
Friends of Cardigan Bay (i)
Friends of the Earth Cymru (i)
Greenpeace (i)
Joint Countryside Advisory Service
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (i) — co-ordination of the view of —
    Countryside Council for Wales
    English Nature
    Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
    Scottish Natural Heritage
    Sea Mammals Research Unit
The National Trust
North Wales Wildlife Trust (i)
North Yorkshire Moors National Park (i)
Strangford Lough Management Committee (i)
The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (i)
Wildlife and Countryside Link (i)—representation made on behalf of the following organisations (some of which have replied separately)—
    Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
    Environment Investigation Agency
    Friends of the Earth
    Friends of the Earth Cymru
    Friends of Cardigan Bay
    Greenpeace
    Marine Conservation Society
    Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
    Royal Society for the protection of Birds
    The Wildlife Trusts
    Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
    World Wide Fund for Nature
Wildlife Trusts (Royal Society for Nature Conservation) (i)
World Wide Fund for Nature (i)

(i) Organisations who have urged suspension of specific blocks or areas.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the current regulations governing the repayment by the Child Support Agency to absent parents of any overpayment made by absent parents in respect of child support maintenance.

Mr. Burt: There are no regulations that permit the Child Support Agency to repay to absent parents any overpaid maintenance. Regulation 10 of the Child Support (Arrears, Interest and Adjustment of Maintenance Assessments) Regulations 1992 does, however, provide that a child support officer may adjust the current maintenance assessment where it has retrospective effect or where there has been an underpayment or overpayment of maintenance.

"New Outlook"

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many copies of "New Outlook" were distributed direct to claimants; and what measures were taken to ensure that "New Outlook" was not sent to claimants who could not be eligible for the new child allowance;

(2) what was the total cost of preparing, printing and distributing "New Outlook".

Mr. Burt: "New Outlook", a newspaper-style compilation of information on in-work benefits and Government training schemes, was distributed to lone parents on income support with a youngest child aged nine years or over — total of 260,702 families.

"New Outlook" contained information on a wide range of help likely to be of interest to lone parents who might be thinking of returning to work. It was not intended solely to publicise the new help with childcare charges.

The total cost of preparing, printing and distributing "New Outlook" was £74,009·30 inclusive of VAT.

Pensions

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish the text of the letter currently being sent to pensioners advocating the payment of pensions through bank accounts rather than at post offices.

Mr. Arbuthnot: There is currently no letter going from this Department to retirement pensioners advocating the payment of pensions through bank accounts rather than at the post office.

People approaching retirement age are sent a pack containing a claim form covering all payment methods and leaflet AC1 explaining payment to an account, including Girobank and National Savings accounts at post offices. Copies of the pension claim form and this leaflet are available in the Library.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether it is Government policy to seek by voluntary means a reduction in the proportion of pensions paid through post offices.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Our policy is to offer pensioners the choice of receiving their benefit over a post office counter or having it paid directly into a bank or building society account, including Girobank and national savings accounts at post offices.

Incapacity Benefit

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the numbers of people who will claim incapacity benefit in 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Mr. Hague: We forecast that around 1·1 million new claims' to incapacity benefit will be made in each of the years 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Source: forecast based upon the projection of past trends in the data, rounded to the nearest 100,000.

Notes:

A "new claim" means a claim submitted at the beginning of a spell of incapacity for work. If a person has several separate spells of incapacity for work during the year, each spell is included as a new claim. The figure includes new claims which will not result in a payment of benefit.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total spending on housing benefit to the private sector in *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* to date in the current year; and what was the average amount per week of housing benefit paid in (i) the private sector, (ii) the council sector and (iii) the housing association sector.

Mr. Roger Evans: The provisional total for housing benefit paid to private tenants in 1993–94 is £3,817 million; the forecast for 1994–95 is £4,320 million.

The average weekly housing benefit at the end of May 1993 was

	£
council tenants	28·94
housing association tenants	35·75
other private tenants	46·80

Sources:

Housing Benefit Management Information System. DSS Departmental Report 1994.

The May 1994 figures are not yet available.

Disability Allowances

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of income support disability premium since April 1993 have had this premium withdrawn following a decision that they are capable of work; how many of these appealed; and in how many of these appeals the claimants were successful.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of income support in each region also receive the disability premium; and how many receive the disability premium by reason only of their incapacity to work.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information is set out in the table:

Region	*Total number on IS in receipt of the disability premium*	*Numbers in receipt of the disability premium because of incapacity*[1]
North Eastern	84,000	47,000
London North	84,000	52,000
South Western	31,000	18,000
Midlands	82,000	43,000
North Western	103,000	61,000
London South	67,000	43,000
Wales	44,000	28,000
Scotland	73,000	48,000
Total	568,000	340,000

[1] over twenty eight weeks incapacitated for work, and people who receive invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance. People who qualify because they are registered blind or are provided with an invalid carriage are also included. The figure does not include those who qualify because of receipt of disability living allowance, attendance allowance, or disability working allowance.

Source:

Income Support Statistical Enquiry November 1993.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Hague: The public opinion surveys conducted since 1 October 1992 by the Department of Social Security and its agencies are as follows:

1. Benefits Agency

(a) *Title*—1993 BA National Customer Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of BA customers with service provided
Contractor—Public Attitude Surveys Ltd
Period of Survey—October to November 1993
Cost—£187,500

2. Contributions Agency

(a) *Title*—1992 CA Customer Satisfaction Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of CA customers with the service provided
Contractor—British Market Research Bureau International
Period of Survey—November to December 1992
Cost—£75,000

(b) *Title*—1993 CA Customer Satisfaction Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of CA customers with the service provided
Contractor—BMRB International

Period of Survey—November to December 1993
Cost—£154,000

(c) *Title*—1994 CA Customer Satisfaction Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of CA customers with the service provided
Contractor—BMRB International
Period of Survey—November to December 1994
Cost—£150,000

3. Resettlement Agency

(a) *Title*—1992 Resettlement Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of RA customers with the service provided
Contractor—BMRB International
Period of Survey—December 1992
Cost—£50,000

(b) *Title*—1993 RA Customer Satisfaction Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of RA customers with the service provided
Contractor—BMRB International
Period of Survey—*October* 1993
Cost—£42,000

(c) *Title*—1994 RA Customer Satisfaction Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of RA customers with the service provided
Contractor—BMRB International
Period of Survey—October 1994
Cost—£19,500

4. Child Support Agency

(a) *Title*—1993 CSA Customer Satisfaction Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of CSA customers with the service provided
Contractor—Market and Opinion Research *International (MORI)*
Period of Survey—October to November 1993
Cost—£187,000

(b) *Title*—1994 CSA Customer Satisfaction Survey
Objective—To measure the satisfaction of CSA customers with the service provided
Contractor—MORI
Period of Survey—October to December 1994
Cost—£265,000

Adjudication Rules

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to make changes to the Social Security (Adjudication) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1994 in response to the suggestion relating to housing costs mentioned by the chief adjudication officer at paragraph 2.7 of his annual report for 1993–94.

Mr. Roger Evans: Amendments to the social security adjudication regulations were laid yesterday which will come into force on 14 November. These will enable the adjudication officer to adjudicate on those claims where they have insufficient information to decide the amount which may be allowed for items of housing costs. In those cases only those items of housing costs, if any, which can be determined immediately will be included in the applicable amount. Once sufficient information is available to enable other housing costs to be determined, the initial decision will be reviewed. The amendment makes similar provision for cases where it appears that the severe disability premium may be appropriate, but the AO needs additional information before deciding whether this premium is applicable.

Incapacity Assessment Panel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many members of the panel on assessment of incapacity have refused to have their names published; and on what grounds.

Mr. Hague: All those who participated as panel members were asked for their agreement to have their names published within the report, "The Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit".

Ten members responded in the negative.

Panel members had not been asked to give grounds for refusal and none was provided.

War Pensions

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many war pensions are being paid to former service personnel in respect of asbestos-related conditions;

(2) how many war pensions have been awarded to former service personnel since 1964 in respect of asbestos-related conditions;

(3) how many service personnel have received war pensions because of deafness since 1964.

Mr. Hague: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Roger Evans: The number of press officers currently employed by this Department is set out in the table:

	Number
The Department's headquarters in London	10
Seconded HQ press officer to the charity Motability	1
The Child Support Agency	2
The Contributions Agency	1
The War Pensions Agency	1
The Benefits Agency:	
National Press Office	8
Regional Press Office	9

This Department does not have press officers based in the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of staff currently employed by the Employment Department Group is 58,457·5. There are no standard regions in the Department. The Employment Department Group consists of four separate organisations: Health and Safety Executive, Employment Service, Employment Department and Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. Each organisation has a separate regional structure. However, the Treasury produces staffing information for standard economic planning regions, and the latest Treasury figures are as follows:

Scotland	5,064	8·66
Northern	3,155·5	5·4
Yorks and Humber	7,539	12·9
North West	8,657	14·8
East Midlands	3,593	6·14
West Midlands	4,791·5	8·19
Wales	2,701	4·62
East Anglia	1,303	2·2
London and South East	17,617·5	30·13
South West	4,036	6·9

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Employment Department Group does not commission public opinion surveys. Full details of all research commissioned by the group are published in our annual reports on research. I would be happy to provide the hon. Member with reports for the relevant period if he so wished.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed by the TECs.

Mr. Paice: Training and enterprise councils are private companies and as such are not required to provide information on the number of staff they employ.

Pregnant Workers Directive

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the deadline for incorporating into United Kingdom law the provisions of the EU's pregnant workers directive.

Miss Widdecombe: The date is 19 October 1994.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to table regulations implementing the health and safety provisions of the pregnant workers directive.

Miss Widdecombe: Draft proposals for regulations to implement the health and safety provisions of the pregnant workers directive were submitted by the Health and Safety Commission on 7 October 1994. I am currently considering these proposals with the aim of tabling regulations as soon as possible.

Career Development Loans

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications for loans under the career development scheme have been made in 1994–95 for each region and for Great Britain as a whole and how many have been rejected; how many women have been awarded loans; how many training for work participants have been awarded loans endorsed by their training and enterprise council or local enterprise company; what have been the successful course completion rates in each region; how much has been awarded in total for each region and how much has been recovered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: Information by region on the number of loans approved under the career development loan scheme; numbers of applications rejected; number of loans approved for women; the value of loans approved and the successful course completion rate are shown in the following tables. The information given is for the period 1 April 1994 to 30 September 1994.

Details of the number of training for work participants and of the amount of money repaid are not available.

Further information on career development loans can be found in the 1993–94 annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Region	*Number of loans approved*	*Rejected applications*	*Number of loans for women*
North East	171	46	49
Merseyside	107	36	53
North West	271	116	89
Yorks and Humberside	414	138	152
West Midlands	314	112	117
East Midlands	249	96	86
Eastern	358	129	130
South East	816	283	333
London	1,315	877	466
South West	494	129	192
Wales	186	44	67
Scotland	505	237	164
Great Britain	5,200	2,243	1,898

Region	*Value of loans (£)*	*Course completion rate (per cent.)*
North East	572,646	78
Merseyside	399,492	61
North West	970,014	80
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,437,740	74
West Midlands	1,009,404	71
East Midlands	757,669	67
Eastern	1,183,131	72
South East	3,041,895	82
London	4,915,906	76
South West	1,802,144	66
Wales	625,909	74
Scotland	1,502,811	86
Great Britain	18,218,761	75

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people *(a)* are currently on a course which has been supported by a career development loan, *(b)* are repaying a career development loan, *(c)* have had recovery action taken against them because they have defaulted on the loan and *(d)* have had to defer repayments of their career development loan because of hardship for each region and for Great Britain as a whole; what is the average amount of loan taken out; an if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: Information by region on the number of people currently in training supported by a career development loan and the number of people currently repaying a loan is shown in the following table.

Details of the number of people who have had recovery action taken against them because they defaulted on the loan are not available. No information is held on the number of trainees who have had to defer repayment on loans due to hardship.

At 30 September 1994, the average loan amount for loans taken out in the current financial year was £3,159.

Region	*Number currently in training*	*Number currently repaying loans*
North East	168	1,605
Merseyside	96	838
North West	272	2,502
Yorks and Humberside	413	3,304
West Midlands	328	2,548
East Midlands	273	2,320
Eastern	365	3,664
South East	842	5,184
London	1,309	8,797
South West	512	3,689
Wales	187	1,460
Scotland	545	3,736
Great Britain	5,310	39,647

Woodlee Rehabilitation Centre

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to use the Woodlee rehabilitation centre, Egham, for the vocational rehabilitation of disabled people.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Sir John Hannam, dated 25 October 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the future use of the Woodlee Rehabilitation Centre, Egham for the vocational rehabilitation of disabled people.

In keeping with the policy of delivering rehabilitation services through local providers announced in 1991 by Michael Howard, the then Secretary of State for Employment, the Woodlee Centre closed its rehabilitation services in 1992. The premises have since been used, pending their sale, to accommodate other services.

The premises were placed on the open market in August and a total of eight bids were received. I have authorised acceptance of the highest bid representing the best return to the taxpayer. That bidder is a private educational establishment and will not be using the premises for the rehabilitation of disabled people.

I hope this is helpful.

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the cost of the redevelopment of the Woodlee rehabilitation centre, Egham.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Sir John Hannam, dated 25 October 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the cost of the redevelopment of Woodlee Rehabilitation Centre, Egham.

The Employment Service has not had any plans to redevelop the Woodlee site since its closure as a rehabilitation centre in 1992. It was recently placed for sale on the open market and on 17 October I agreed acceptance of an offer from a private educational establishment.

I hope this is helpful.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Miss Widdecombe: There are currently 13 press officers employed by the Department based in London, none in the House, and one in Sheffield.

Employment Service Agency Agreement

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress the Employment Service has made in meeting the targets outlined in the 1994–95 agency agreement; and if he will list for each quarter *(a)* the total unemployed job placings and variance from targets, *(b)* the long-term unemployed job placings and variance from targets, *(c)* job placings of people with disabilities and variance from target, *(d)* inner-city job placings and variance from target, *(e)* the number of claims not pursued following initial contact and variance from target, *(f)* the number of claimants moved from unemployment benefit to another benefit and variance from target, *(g)* the number of people who withdrew their claim to benefit after contact with fraud investigators and variance from target, *(h)* the number of submissions to adjudication where there is an arguable case with supporting information to show that the claimant is not available for, actively seeking or willing to accept work and variance from target; *(i)* the number of positive outcomes for unemployed claimants invited to a 12 month advisory interview and variance from target and *(j)* the number of positive outcomes for unemployed claimants invited to a 24-month advisory interview and variance from target.

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Service is making progress against its target for 1994–95, meeting or exceeding almost all at the mid-year stage. It placed 992,100 unemployed people into jobs in the first two quarters, against an annual target of 1·7 million. This represents 133,100 more placings than at the same stage last year. Performance to date is set out in the following table. There is no target for the number of claimants moved from unemployment benefit to another benefit.

Employment Service Performance Against Target
April—September 1994

Annual performance targets	*Quarter 1*	*Quarter 2*	*Cumulative*	*Target levels*
Total placings of unemployed people in jobs	482,500	509,600	992,100	1,700,000
Long-term claimants placed into jobs as a percentage of total unemployed placings	29·5 per cent.	28·9 per cent.	29·2 per cent.	29·5 per cent.
(c) People with disabilities placed into jobs as a percentage of total unemployed placings	3·5 per cent.	3·6 per cent.	3·6 per cent.	3·3 per cent.
(d) Unemployed people in inner cities placed into jobs as a percentage of total unemployed	26·7 per cent.	27·2 per cent.	27 per cent.	26 per cent.
(e) Benefit claims not pursued following initial contact with ES (as percentage of initial enquiries	11 per cent.	10 per cent.	10 per cent.	9 per cent.
(g) People signing off as a result of action by fraud officer	21,850	22,800	44,650	70,000
(h) Adjudication submissions on availability for, actively seeking or refusal of employment (against profile)	32,900	49,000	81,900	135,000
(i) Positive Outcomes for unemployment claimants invited to a 12 month advisory interview	40 per cent.	54 per cent.	47 per cent.	50 per cent.
(j) Positive Outcomes for unemployment claimants invited to a 24 month advisory interview	34 per cent.	44 per cent.	39 per cent.	35 per cent.

Bus Building Industry

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been employed in the bus building industry in each year since 1979.

Mr. Oppenheim: Estimates for the bus building industry are not available separately. The figures are included in the estimates for "Manufacture of motor vehicles and parts". The available information is given in the following table:

Employees in the manufacture of motor vehicles and parts thereof (sic 35): Great Britain

	Thousands
1979	464
1980	434
1981	361
1982	315
1983	296
1984	278
1985	271
1986	263
1987	257
1988	268
1989	262
1990	246
1991	222
1992	226
1993	202
1994	197

Figures as at June of each year.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number of claimants who have moved directly from the unemployment register to receipt of sickness benefit in each of the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. James Wallace, dated 25 October 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of claimants who have moved directly from the unemployed register to claim sickness benefit in the last 12 months.

Unfortunately, the information you have requested is not available. At present the computer system used by the Employment Service to process benefit claims does not record details of the reasons for claim closure.

As from 2 December, enhancement of the system will enable us to provide this information, although not I am afraid retrospectively.

I hope this is helpful.

WALES

Tourism

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) of 17 October, column 12, what is the statistical basis for *(a)* numbers of tourist visits to Wales and *(b)* the amount of money spent in Wales by tourists; and how the figures distinguish between tourist and business visits and expenditure.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on domestic—that is, United Kingdom—tourists comes from the United Kingdom tourist survey commissioned jointly by the Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland tourist boards. It is based on interviews with United Kingdom residents and measures tourism trips of one night or more for any purpose.

Information on overseas visitors comes from an international passenger survey conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on behalf of the Central Statistical Office.

Survey totals estimated 7·7 million trips by United Kingdom residents to Wales and a spend of £945 million comprising £745 million on holidays, accounting for 70 per cent. of trips, with business spend at £90 million and (9 per cent. of trips)—the balance being for other purposes. Estimates of 670,000 overseas visitors with a spend of £132 million do not identify business travel.

Health Service Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of chief executives of national health service trusts in each of the last four years have been paid on a performance-related pay basis.

Mr. Richards: This information is not held centrally. NHS trusts have the freedom to set local terms and conditions of service.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has received from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the volumes of low-level radioactive waste to be committed to the Cilgwyn quarry waste disposal site for burial; and what quality control checks exist for nuclear waste disposal in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Only very small amounts of radioactive waste are disposed of at the Cilgwyn site and under individual authorisation from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. No waste from the nuclear industry are involved. Because of his appellate role under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993, my right hon. Friend cannot become involved in the specific detail of authorisation.

One of the options explored in the recent Government consultation document "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy - Preliminary Conclusions", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House, is that of encouraging waste producers to make greater use of the controlled burial of radioactive waste at suitable landfill sites. No specific sites have been identified. The views of respondents concerning the option will be carefully considered within the consultation process.

Households

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of households, at the latest available date, was economically inactive in each of the boroughs at district council areas in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested in respect of district council areas can be obtained from the 1991 census of population data on the Nomis database in the House of Commons Library.

Sheep and Beef Production

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to the European Commission concerning the interpretation of regulations governing the operation and allocation of quotas for sheep and beef production.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food normally represents the United Kingdom in negotiations with the European Commission. Several amendments to the regulations have already been negotiated which will bring welcome flexibilities in the way livestock quotas are administered.

Badgers

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many licences have been granted by the Countryside Council for Wales for interference with badger setts following the Badger Act 1991, now the Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and for which purposes listed in section 10 of the 1992 Act such licences were issued.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am advised by the Countryside Council for Wales that 82 such licences have been issued for the purposes of conservation, development and the investigation of offences.

Baglan Hospital

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money is estimated to be spent on the Baglan hospital in the current financial year; and how much in 1995–96.

Mr. Richards: It is too early in the planning of the proposed hospital to estimate spending profiles.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when it is now expected that a restart will be made on the work of constructing the Baglan hospital; in what stages; and on what dates it is now expected to go out to tender on the initial contracts.

Mr. Richards: These are matters for the West Glamorgan health authority, which has responsibility for progressing the scheme.

M4 (Traffic Volume)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of traffic volumes of the M4 from *(a)* New House roundabout to the Coldra, *(b)* the Coldra to St Julians, *(c)* Malpas to Tredegar Park and *(d)* Tredegar Park to Tonguryniais in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is given in the following table:

Predicted M4 traffic flows

	1995	*2000*		*2005*		*2010*		*2015*		*2020*	
Section		*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*
Newhouse-Magor	47,000	7,100	6,700	8,000	7,300	8,900	7,850	9,800	8,800	10,700	9,000
Magor-Coldra	54,050	63,300	60,100	71,500	65,200	79,600	70,150	87,500	78,700	95,600	80,350
Coldra-Caerleon	72,350	84,750	80,450	95,700	87,250	106,550	93,900	117,100	105,300	128,000	107,550
Malpas-Tredegar Park	87,300	100,250	95,150	113,200	103,200	126,050	111,100	138,500	124,550	151,400	127,200

Predicted M4 traffic flows

Section	1995	2000		2005		2010		2015		2020	
		High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Tredegar Park-Castleton	80,200	92,100	87,400	104,000	94,800	115,800	102,000	127,250	114,500	139,100	116,900
Castleton-Coryton	44,300	50,900	48,300	57,450	52,400	64,000	56,400	70,300	63,250	76,850	64,600

[1] All flows are 24-hour annual average daily flows. Predictions are based on current national road traffic forecasts.

[2] On the Newhouse to Magor section, predicted flows for years 2000 and beyond reflect the opening of the second Severn crossing scheme in 1996.

[3] Figures take no account of the proposed M4 relief road between Magor and Castleton.

Hill Farms

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of hill farm incomes in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Farm incomes for 1992–93 are contained in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom", published in March 1994. Estimates of hill farm incomes for 1993–94 together with forecast for 1994–95 are due to be published as part of the autumn hill review on 29 November. Final figures for 1993–94 are not yet available but on the basis of data currently analysed incomes are expected to have risen compared to 1992–93.

Sea Wall Works

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Wales region of the National Rivers Authority concerning the funding arrangements and expected start date of work on the raising of the sea wall between Newport and Cardiff.

Mr. Redwood: My Department has been liaising for some time with the Welsh region of the NRA about funding arrangements and a start of work on raising of the sea wall between Newport and Cardiff.

Agreement in principle was given on 18 October to proposals recently submitted to the Department for works to this length of sea wall.

Drugs Advice Centres

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the South, Mid and West Glamorgan health authorities concerning the setting up of street-based drop-in drug prevention advice centre.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Hospital Patients

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has in relation to amending the guidelines to the rights of health authorities and the rights of patients and their spouses or other carers in relation to *(a)* bed blocking and *(b)* transfer to private nursing or residential care homes.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office and the Department of Health have consulted widely on guidance which reaffirms health authorities' responsibilities for meeting the continuing health care needs of patients, as set out in the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. The outcome of this consultation will be known shortly.

Health Service (Complaints)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to issue the guidelines on new unified complaints procedure for the NHS patients in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The unified complaints procedure is one of the recommendations of the Wilson report on NHS complaints procedures, "Being Heard", which are being considered by the Government in the light of consultation responses received.

Rail Freight Garage Centre

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with South Glamorgan and Gwent county councils, the relevant city or borough councils and British Rail in relation to the proposed Rail Freight European garage centre for south Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I am keen to see more freight transported by rail where practicable. The Welsh Development Agency, in conjunction with local authorities and others, is considering the commercial options for a European freight terminal in south Wales. I look forward to receiving proposals soon.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the grant-maintained status schools had *(a)* deficits, *(b)* surpluses and *(c)* neither on the final date of accounts before transferring into grant-maintained status; and if he will list the subsequent transactions between the relevant schools and local authorities with respect to making the appropriate refunding arrangements.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 19 October 1994]:* The financial position of the 16 grant-maintained schools in Wales on acquiring grant-maintained status was as follows:

(a) Four schools had overspent their local management of schools allocation;

(b) Nine schools were in credit; and

(c) Three schools had neither a deficit nor a surplus.

Before the Education (Grant-maintained Schools) (Finance) (Wales) Regulations 1994 came into force on 1 April this year, it was left to local education authorities and schools to resolve any differences. Under the regulations, however, any deficit incurred or surplus accrued by a school while under any LEA control can be taken into account in calculating its annual maintenance grant for its first year as a grant-maintained school. This has applied in the case of only one school; the deficit is being repaid.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools there were in each local authority in Wales by 1 October; how many in each case had held ballots under section 61 of the Education Act 1988; how many ballots in each case resulted in votes in favour of seeking grant-maintained status; and how many ballots in each case resulted in votes against seeking grant-maintained status.

Mr. Richards: The number of LEA-maintained and grant-maintained primary and secondary schools in Wales as at 1 April 1994, the latest date for which details are available, is as follows:

	Primary	*Secondary*
Clwyd	245	32
Dyfed	313	31
Gwent	213	33
Gwynedd	191	23
Mid Glamorgan	305	42
Powys	108	13
South Glamorgan	159	26
West Glamorgan	164	27

Of these, 10 primary and 18[*] secondary schools have held ballots on whether they should apply for grant-maintained status under section 61 of the Education Reform Act 1988. In six primary and 12 secondary schools, the vote was in favour; in four primary and seven secondary schools the outcome of the ballot was against.

[*] one secondary school balloted twice.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Court of Justice

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many judges there are in the European Court of Justice from each member nation of the European Union; and how many of them were judges in their own country before their appointment to the European Court.

Mr. David Davis: The European Court of Justice consists of 13 judges, one from each member state and a 13th, appointed on rotation, who is currently from Italy. Four of the judges were judges in their own member state before their appointment to the European Court of Justice. All the judges more than meet the treaty requirement to "possess the qualifications required for appointment to the highest judicial offices in their respective countries or ... are jurisconsults of recognised competence".

North Korea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress made over the scrutiny of North Korea's nuclear capacity.

Mr. David Davis: On 21 October 1994 the United States and North Korea signed an agreement on nuclear matters in Geneva. Under this, North Korea has agreed to freeze and eventually dismantle its graphite-moderated reactors and related facilities. It has also agreed to remain a party to the non-proliferation treaty and will allow implementation of its safeguards agreement under the treaty. We hope that this will lead to a resolution of the nuclear problem in North Korea. We now look to the North Koreans to demonstrate their willingness to comply with this agreement. The United Kingdom has supported United States efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement and we welcome the agreement.

Taiwan

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations with Taiwan.

Mr. Goodlad: Although the United Kingdom has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan, we attach great importance to our commercial, cultural and educational links. United Kingdom exports for the period January–August 1994 were £448 million, an increase of 13 per cent. compared with the same period in 1993. The British trade and cultural office in Taipei is being reinforced with additional staff to develop these links.

Land Mines

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy regarding the question of the marking and mapping of all minefields.

Mr. David Davis: The United Kingdom strictly adheres to the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention and its protocols, which govern the use of mines, including the mapping and marking of minefields.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated proportion of the annual casualties world-wide caused by anti-personnel mines used *(a)* in accordance with protocol II of the 1980 United Nations inhumane weapons convention and *(b)* in breach of that protocol.

Mr. David Davis: Reliable estimates of the casualty rates world-wide caused by anti-personnel land mines are not available.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest estimate of the annual casualty rate world-wide resulting from the use of anti-personnel mines of all types.

Mr. David Davis: Reliable estimates of the casualty rates world-wide caused by anti-personnel land mines are not available.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what value is placed on the term excessive as used in protocol II of the United Nations inhumane weapons convention in respect of the relationship between loss of civilian life and military advantage.

Mr. David Davis: Article 3, paragraph 3, of protocol II of the said convention prohibits the use of land mines or booby-traps which may be expected to cause incidental civilian losses which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated. Whether any such losses might be considered excessive must depend on the individual circumstances of given cases.

Azerbaijan

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he assesses to be the cause of instability in Azerbaijan and the likely repercussions on the concessions recently granted to British Petroleum and others offshore in the Caspian sea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the fact that recent difficulties in Azerbaijan were resolved with minimal bloodshed, and stability has returned. There has been no effect on the production sharing agreement signed on 20 September between the state oil company of Azerbaijan and a consortium of western oil companies.

British Council

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the British Council

Mr. Baldry: The council has in place a range of performance measures and indicators, agreed with the FCO, through which their efficiency and effectiveness is monitored. We also receive regular reports on council activities from our diplomatic missions overseas.

Gibraltar

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was his response to the recent remarks of the Chief Minister of Gibraltar about the development of financial services and the appropriate regulatory regime.

Mr. David Davis: We support the development of financial services in Gibraltar supervised to a standard consistent with EC obligations and legislation and supervisory practice within the United Kingdom.

We welcome the passage through the Gibraltar House of Assembly in May of amendments to the Financial Services Commission Ordinance which introduce a supervisory regime designed to achieve these ends.

OECD

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom contribution towards the cost of running the OECD in cash and as a percentage of the whole for each year since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Members' contributions are based on GDP, using an average of their GDP for the previous three years. The United Kingdom's contributions to the OECD general expenditure budget are as follows:

United Kingdom contribution Year	*(£'s 000)*	*Percentage of OECD budget*
1982	2,580	6·73
1983	2,633	7·25
1984	3,304	7·67
1985	3,702	7·48
1986	4,298	7·14
1987	4,118	6·93
1988	3,710	6·48
1989	4,319	6·23
1990	4,455	6·19
1991	5,049	6·27
1992	6,306	6·33
1993	6,427	6·25

The United Kingdom is paid in French francs and therefore subject to exchange rate fluctuations. The figures are calculated using the average exchange rate for the relevant year.

The corresponding figures for 1979–1981 could not be obtained except at a disproportionate cost.

Caspian Sea

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the present participants in oil and gas exploration licences recently granted to British Petroleum and others in the Caspian sea area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: JKX are understood to hold an exploration licence for a block in the Caspian Sea offshore Daghestan. Amoco, BP/Statoil, Delta, Lukoil, McDermott, Nimir, Pennzoil, Ramco, TPAO and UNOCAL are signatories to a production sharing contract offshore Azerbaijan. AGIP, BP/Statoil, British Gas, Mobil, Shell, Statoil and Total are signatories to an exploration contract offshore Kazakhstan.

Czech Republic

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge the Government of the Czech Republic to return the property in Usti Nad-Labem that was confiscated from Karel and Jitka Lorenc of Plymouth by the former communist regime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to intervene with the Czech authorities. The restitution of property in the Czech republic confiscated by the former communist regime is a matter for Czech law; a number of laws on this subject have been passed since 1990. There have been no new developments since my letter of 20 September to the hon. Member, in which I advised that Mr. and Mrs. Lorenc should seek expert advice from a Czech lawyer on how best to pursue their case.

Iraq

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances Her Majesty's Government would authorise British forces to carry out a pre-emptive attack on Iraqi forces on Iraqi territory; and in what circumstances Her Majesty's Government would support military forces of any other country carrying out such pre-emptive military action.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any decision relating to the use of force would depend on the circumstances at the time.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for reports, submitted by Rolf Ekeus, the head of the UN Special Commission for Iraq to the UN, to be placed in the Library; what are the main conclusions of the reports submitted by Mr. Ekeus, to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The report of Ambassador Ekeus on the status of Iraqi compliance with section C of Security Council Resolution 687, UN document S/1994/1138, and the parallel IAEA report, S/1994/1151, have been placed in the Library of the House. Conclusions can be found in paragraphs 37–39, and 49 respectively.

These are thorough, comprehensive and well-balanced reports which do credit to the professionalism of the UN special commission, UNSCOM, and the IAEA in their task of uncovering Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programme, establishing current capabilities and setting up a monitoring and verification regime to ensure that no such weapons can be regenerated in the future.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Goodlad: There are nine full-time press officers employed in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, three in the Overseas Development Administration and none based permanently in the House. Overseas, each of our embassies or high commissions has at least one officer whose work is wholly or partly press-related.

Armenia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to establish a British overseas post in Armenia; if he will list those countries which are *(a)* officially represented in Armenia and *(b)* intend to be officially represented in Armenia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are at present no plans to establish a resident British mission in Yerevan. The pattern of our overseas representation is kept under review. HM ambassador in Moscow is accredited to Armenia. He and his staff visit Yerevan regularly.

We understand that Albania, Canada, China, France, Germany, Greece, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the USA are represented in Yerevan. We have no information on the intentions of any other countries.

Rwanda

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to assist with the funding and deployment of human rights monitors to encourage the return of refugees to Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: We have contributed £250,000 to the UN monitors fund and have also provided four four-wheel drive vehicles for the use of monitors in Rwanda. The EU is considering sending 50 monitors in support of UN activity. This is being pursued by the Commission.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom is providing to the Government of Rwanda in re-establishing and training the judiciary.

Mr. Baldry: Together with our EU partners we are considering what further assistance we can offer to Rwanda from EU funds. This might include help to restore their legal system, which we hope will also be a priority for the UN.

International Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution was committed by Her Majesty's Government to the International Atomic Energy Agency's annual budget at the IAEA's 38th general conference; what is the total IAEA budget; and how this is planned to be spent.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The IAEA 38th general conference approved a regular budget for 1995 of US $211·5 million of which US $202·7 million would be met by member states. This represents zero growth in real terms. The United's Kingdom's contribution was set at 5·277 per cent.

The regular budget provides for the costs of running the agency. It also provides the costs of the agency's programmes on nuclear energy and safety, on research and isotopes, and on safeguards. The regular budget has been subject to zero real growth since 1983.

Australia

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what residual constitutional powers and duties reside with *(a)* the United Kingdom Government and *(b)* the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in respect of the Australian states and for which the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia has no jurisdiction.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Australia Act 1986, and parallel legislation enacted in Australia, removed the remaining constitutional links between the United Kingdom and the Australian states, achieving complete legislative independence for Australia from the United Kingdom.

DEFENCE

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Freeman: At 1 July 1994, the Ministry of Defence employed some 120,000 full-time equivalent civil servants, excluding casual staff and locally employed civilians overseas. Of this number, 114,000 were employed in the United Kingdom: the table below gives the number and percentage employed in each economic planning region.

Economic planning region	*Number of MOD civilians*	*Percentage of UK total*
South East	45,837·5	40·2
East Anglia	2,738·5	2·4
South West	24,771·0	21·7
West Midlands	8,153·5	7·2
East Midlands	3,737·0	3·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,465·5	3·9
North West	2,641·5	2·3
Northern	2,620·0	2·3
Wales	4,864·0	4·3
Scotland	11,237·5	9·8
Northern Ireland	2,941·0	2·6
Total United Kingdom	114,007	100

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the West Midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. None of my Department's non-departmental public bodies are, however, based in either of these regions.

Indonesia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the visit by Field Marshall Sir Peter Inge to Indonesia in early October; and what military support commitments he made to the Indonesian President.

Mr. Soames: Field Marshal Sir Peter Inge's visit to Indonesia in October formed part of a programme of calls on his counterparts in the region. As is usual, details of his discussions are confidential.

Gulf War (Claims)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to establish an investigation into the claims by former Territorial Army member Kathryn Lamb, former RAF member Richard Turnbull, former Royal Artillery man Ian Dowden and former Eleventh armoured workshopman Robert Lake that they have suffered from physical ailments induced by participation in Operation Granby in the Gulf in 1990–91

Mr. Soames: These claims are already being investigated. They are among a number of potential claims for compensation notified to my Department. Arrangements have been agreed with their solicitors to invite all potential claimants to come forward for a medical assessment by a service consultant.

Service Meals

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many meals a day each service man in *(a)* the Royal Marines and *(b)* the Army is allowed.

Mr. Soames: Service personnel in both the Royal Marines and the Army are provided with three meals per day. Where they are employed on extra duties an additional meal, such as supper, is provided.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many calories the Army Catering Corps is expected to provide each soldier with on a daily basis for the sum set as a food allowance; and how many calories are actually provided on average.

Mr. Soames: Ration scales vary according to location. The home ration scale used in all United Kingdom establishments is designed to provide 2,900 kilo-calories nett—that is, after loss through preparation and cooking. The general overseas ration scale used in overseas bases includes an arduous duty allowance, to allow for climate and provides 3,400 kilo-calories nett. In field conditions, where personnel are fed from operational ration packs, 3,800 kilo-calories are provided.

It is not possible to calculate how many calories are actually provided. Most establishments offer a "self-serve" system of service and by their choice of food service personnel may marginally increase or decrease their actual calorific intake.

Asbestos (Compensation)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have received compensation for asbestos-related conditions since 1987.

Mr. Soames: None.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many MoD civilian employees have been awarded compensation for asbestos-related conditions since 1964.

Mr. Soames: Statistics have been maintained only since 1 April 1985, since when there have been 1,340 payments of compensation to civilian employees of my Department for asbestos-related conditions.

Deafness (Compensation)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian MoD employees have received compensation following deafness claims since 1964.

Mr. Soames: Statistics have been maintained only since 1 April 1985, since when there have been 4,617 payments of compensation to civilian employees of my Department for deafness.

Nuclear-related Materials

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian MoD employees have received ex gratia payments due to exposure to nuclear-related materials since 1964.

Mr. Soames: None.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have received ex gratia payments due to exposure to nuclear-related materials since 1964.

Mr. Soames: None.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Freeman: At present, the number of service personnel and civilians employed in complemented press and public relations posts in London is 39. A further 117 are employed in districts and commands at home and overseas. No staff are employed in the House.

NSA Menwith Hill

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence police are employed at NSA Menwith Hill station.

Mr. Soames: It is not our policy to comment on specific security arrangements.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which organisation employs the chief of station at Menwith Hill station; and what is its nationality.

Mr. Soames: The chief of station at Menwith Hill is employed by the national security agency of the United States.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* breaches of security, *(b)* arrests and *(c)* successful prosecutions there have been at Menwith Hill station in the last year to date.

Mr. Soames: Between 1 January and 20 October 1994 the figures are as follows:

Breaches	520
Arrests	27
Successful prosecutions	4

The figure for breaches relates to the number of incursions on MOD land. None of the reported incidents led to any entry into secure areas within the Menwith Hill station site.

Mr. Maddon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cost of the two new radomes, support buildings, roads and security fencing at Menwith Hill station; and how this cost is being met.

Mr. Soames: The cost of the two new radomes and support structures has been borne by the United States Government. The total cost is a matter for the United States authorities.

HMS Forest Moor

Mr. Madden : To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cost of the new security system at HMS Forest Moor.

Mr. Soames: It is not our policy to comment on specific security arrangements.

NSA Molesworth

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times polychlorinated biphenyls have been found in concentrations exceeding legal limits in the past year at NSA Molesworth; and how and where they have been disposed of.

Mr. Soames: There have been no confirmed cases in the past year of polychorinated biphenyls being found in equipment passed to the US defence reutilisation and marketing organisation at RAF Molesworth. However, five items received by the DRMO were suspected of containing PCBs and were therefore disposed of through an approved United Kingdom contractor licensed to dispose of PCB-contaminated equipment.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which organisation operates and controls the joint analysis centre at NSA Molesworth; and what is its nationality.

Mr. Soames: The joint analysis centre at RAF Molesworth is operated by the United States European Command. RAF Molesworth is a Ministry of Defence site made available to United States visiting forces and the facilities operate there with the full knowledge and consent of the British Government.

HEALTH

Private Finance Initiatives

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in taking forward the private finance initiative in the North West region.

Mr. Sackville: Good progress has been made taking forward the private finance initiative in North West region. Since the initiative was launched in November 1992, six projects have been approved, each with a capital value of £1 million or over. That is bringing £19 million of private sector capital to the region.

I shall place full details in the Library.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in taking forward the private finance initiative in the South Thames region.

Mr. Sackville: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member of Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) earlier today.

Breast Cancer

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to instigate a national action plan on breast cancer.

Mr. Sackville: I have no plans to instigate a national action plan specifically for breast cancer. The Chief Medical Officer's expert advisory group on cancer published earlier this year a report recommending general principles to improve all cancer services. The Department is currently evaluating comments on that report; so far those are very largely favourable.

Dental Services

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met representatives of the British Dental Association to discuss the Green Paper on dental services.

Mr. Malone: I met representatives from the British Dental Association on 29 September, when a range of matters were discussed.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received within the past 18 months from individual dental surgeons and the various professional bodies which represent them.

Mr. Malone: We received many written representations from, and held many meetings with, dentists and their representatives in the 18 months to July 1994. Since then, our consultation on the Green Paper "Improving NHS Dentistry" has increased our contacts with the profession. Officials have gone to many meetings organised by local dental committees and others to listen to dentists' views. The consultation period ends on 1 November.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under what arrangements a dentist may reclaim a proportion of the business rates from his local family health services authority by declaring their percentage NHS private income; what details she has for the last three years of the trend in private dental income for non-completely de-registered dentists; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Dentists supplying treatment under the general dental services are entitled to reimbursement of non-domestic rates under determination 9 of the statement of dental remuneration. The level of remuneration is subject to annual minimum and maximum levels and reflects the percentage of general dental services income to the dentist against his total income. No information on the individual entitlement calculations is available centrally.

Performance Tables

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the publication of performance tables in the North West region.

Mr. Sackville: Performance tables for the North West region are included in "The Patient's Charter Hospital and Ambulance Services Comparative Performance Guide 1993–94", published by the Department of Health in June, copies of which are available in the Library. Information has not been published separately for the North West region.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received regarding the availability of infertility treatment under the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: Between 1 April 1994 and 30 September 1994 we received 92 letters about the provision of infertility treatment.

Under-16s (Pregnancies)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress in limiting the rate of conception among the under 16-year-olds.

Mr. Sackville: In 1991, the rate of conceptions among under 16s fell from 10·1 per thousand to 9·3, the first fall in 10 years. The 1992 conceptions data will be available later in the year.

Junior Doctors

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctor posts which entail working more than 83 hours remain in the Trent region; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: There are no posts contracted for more than 83 hours a week in Trent region. Those had been eliminated by 1 April 1993.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctor posts which entail working more than 83 hours remain in the South West region, and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: There are no longer any posts contracted for more than 83 hours a week in the South and West region.

Community Care

Mr. William O' Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the adequacy or resources for the provision of community care in the Yorkshire and Humberside region; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have received representations about the community care resources for Wakefield and North Yorkshire. No such representations have been received about Humberside's resources.

General Practitioners

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners are fundholders in the North West.

Mr. Malone: There are currently 1,091 general practitioner fundholders in North West region, serving 34 per cent. of the population; more are preparing to join next April.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the change in the number of GPs in the London implementation group in its first two years.

Mr. Malone: The London implementation group has recently appointed two general practitioners, who practise within the capital, to provide direct advice on general practice issues. This is a shared, part-time, appointment.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the conditions and terms and budget of the early exit scheme for GPs in the London implementation zone.

Mr. Malone: There is no early exit scheme for general practioners in the London implementation zone.

Mental Health

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding her policy on the treatment of long-term mental health patients.

Mr. Bowis: Various, from a variety of sources.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names and relevant district health authority of each of the residential psychiatric hospitals *(a)* closed since 1979 and *(b)* scheduled for future closure; and if she will give for each hospital (i) the date of actual and expected closure, (ii) the numbers of sectioned and voluntary patients in each prior to any run down, (iii) the sums received for completed sales and *(c)* the maximum number of doctors or qualified nurses employed since 1979.

Mr. Bowis *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* The information available centrally will be placed in the Library and has been compiled from data collected as part of the surveys of English mental health hospitals conducted on behalf of the mental health task force. Those surveys are confined to the 130 long stay "water tower" hospitals which were open on 31 December 1960 and information is not held on other psychiatric hospitals which may have closed or be scheduled for closure.

Information has not been collected centrally on the numbers and status of patients in the long-stay hospitals before run down or on receipts from particular land sales.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effects of the weighted capitation formula on mental health services in inner city areas such as Leeds, with particular reference to the effect of the absence of any weighting for social deprivation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: A review of weighted capitation has taken place and the national formula is to be modified in a number of respects to take account of new information and better statistical techniques. The sensitivity of the formula has been improved by including a separate index of the factors which affect the need for psychiatric services. This modified formula will be applied to regions in 1995–96.

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specific analysis her Department has conducted on the cost and efficiency of introducing performance-related pay to the clinical grades in the national health service.

Mr. Malone: Implementation of local pay arrangements is for national health service trusts to determine, taking into account the individual health care objectives contained in their agreed business plans. The assessment of the cost and efficiency of schemes is also a local matter.

NHS Executive Building, Leeds

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the final cost of the new NHS Executive building in Leeds; how many staff it was designed to hold; how many staff it currently holds; and how many staff it will hold after the planned reductions.

Mr. Sackville: Quarry house houses staff of the Benefits Agency and Central Adjudication Services in the Department of Social Security, as well as the national health service executive. The final cost of the main construction contract was approximately £55·4 million. Quarry house was designed to hold around 2,000 staff. Current numbers are around 1,880. The forward staffing requirements of the NHS executive headquarters in Quarry house have not yet been decided.

Conception Rates

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 21 July, *Official Report*, column *607*, if she will give the same information on rates of conceptions for each regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library.

Measles-rubella Immunisation Campaign

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total projected cost of the schools-based measles- rubella immunisation campaign.

Mr. Sackville: The cost of the measles immunisation campaign in England has been estimated at about £20 million. This covers the cost of vaccine, syringes, other consumables, cost to the national health service of immunising children and publicity.

Children in Care

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress made in implementing the recommendations of the 1991 Utting report on children in the public care and the 1992 Warner report on choosing with care.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr Kirkwood) on 24 October, *Official Report, c. 446*.

Eating Disorders

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has given to health authorities on establishing help lines for families and sufferers of eating disorders; and what advice she has given to health authorities on establishing clinics dedicated to helping sufferers of eating disorders following the publication of the report on eating disorders published by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 1989.

Mr. Bowis: General advice to purchasing authorities on the development of local mental health services is given in the second edition of the mental illness key area handbook published last month. Eating disorders are mentioned among the disorders primarily affecting women for which appropriate provision should be made. Copies of the mental illness key area handbook are available in the Library.

Blood Supply

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are for donors to be paid for blood donation; and what plans there are for introducing charges for the supply of blood.

Mr. Sackville: There are no plans for donors to be paid for blood donation. We have always supported the principle of voluntary unpaid donation which underpins the safety of the blood supply in this country. We are justly proud of our blood service, and our system of voluntary donation, which we believe to be among the best in the world.

The National Blood Service recoups, through blood handling charges, the cost of collecting, testing, processing and transporting the blood it supplies to hospitals. There is never any charge for the blood itself which is freely given by our voluntary donors.

Pain Relief

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many specialists in pain relief there are in the NHS.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally, but all doctors receive training in pain control.

VAMP Research Database

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for the future of the VAMP research database in primary care.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health is currently reviewing the use of the general practice research database for public health monitoring and other health purposes and will decide before the end of the year whether it will contribute any funding to it beyond March 1995.

Foetal Tissue

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken as a result of the publication of the report by the Human Fertility and Embryology Authority on the use of foetal ovarian tissue for research into Parkinson's disease and other afflictions.

Mr. Sackville: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority's report relates only to the genetic material in ovarian tissue which might be used to treat women who are infertile or to produce embryos for research. The Government have welcomed the authority's conclusions. Copies of the report have been sent by the authority to all research and treatment centres licensed under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990.

Guidelines on the use of foetuses or foetal material for other purposes is set out in the report of the "Review of the Guidance on the Research use of Foetuses and Foetal Material"—the Polkinghorne report. This was distributed in 1989 to all health authorities and to private sector places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967. Copies of both reports are available in the Library.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for health (1) if she will make a statement setting out the reasons for her Department's policy in respect of the making available of alternative vaccines for parents who do not wish their children to be vaccinated with products manufactured using the tissue of aborted babies;

(2) upon what dates she received letters from the hon. Member for Congleton registering concern about the use in vaccines of tissue from aborted babies; and what action he took as a result of those warnings to ensure that alternative products were made available.

Mr. Sackville: A letter was received from the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) on 7 October 1994 about the growth of rubella vaccine on a cell line derived from cells taken from an aborted foetus in 1966. All rubella vaccine is grown in this way and so no alternative can be made available. To develop rubella vaccine grown in an alternative cell line would require full safety and efficacy testing as this would be a completely new vaccine. Even if successful, this would take seven to 10 years.

Rubella and oral polio are the only vaccines in the childhood immunisation programme which are grown in human cell lines. Where there is an alternative vaccine source which is not grown in a human cell line, it can be offered. That applies to oral polio vaccine. For rubella vaccine, there is no alternative source.

Operations

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many operations will be performed at *(a)* Ealing hospital and *(b)* other national health service trust hospitals during the current year; what were the figures for the final year before they became national health service trust hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information about prospective operations is not available centrally. Ealing hospital national health service trust had 8,070 operating theatre cases in 1992–93 compared with 7,626 in 1991–92 before its establishment as a NHS trust. Corresponding figures for the NHS in England are 3,543,119 in 1992–93 and 3,514,751 in 1991–92.

National Blood Authority

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultancies have been engaged by the National Blood Authority; for what purposes; and at what cost in each case.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority was established to tackle the acknowledged duplication of effort and inconsistency which previously existed. The authority operates with a small headquarters organisation, preferring to employ expert consultancies for limited periods to undertake particular tasks rather than increase its headquarters management posts. The following consultancies have been engaged by the headquarters of the National Blood Authority since its formation on 1 April 1993.

	£
Bain & Co. To assist with a major review of Bio Products Laboratory	350,000
Bain & Co. To assist with a major strategic review of the Transfusion Service	682,000
Butler Bloor To review the Information Technology systems in place at all Regional Transfusion Centres	20,000
CSC To assist in the formulation and implementation of a new Information Technology strategy for the Transfusion Service	152,000
Fitch & Co To assist the Authority in formulating and implementing an identity and communications review	46,000
Comind To assist with the preparation of standard operating procedures in the Transfusion Service	7,000

The proposals for the future structure of the transfusion centre network, if implemented in full, are expected to produce savings available to the National Health Service for improved blood collection and lower handling costs to hospitals for blood and blood products, for £10 million per year.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of press officers currently employed by her Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Sackville: A total of 15 press officers are currently employed in the Department. They are all based in London. None are based in the Palace of Westminster.

Care of the Elderly

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has of elderly residents of private care or nursing homes being transferred to more specialised units in the ownership of the same company some considerable distance from where they originate, when similar units exist in the ownership of other companies either in their home area or nearer to it; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: None.

Air Pollution

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the effects of air pollution from road transport on the health of people *(a)* in towns and cities and *(b)* in rural areas.

Mr. Sackville: Road transport generates a range of air pollutants including oxides of nitrogen, volatile organic compounds and particulate material. The Department of Health advisory group on the medical aspects of air pollution episodes—MAAPE—has considered the effects on health of certain traffic-related pollutants and the Department has published its reports. Those are on ozone, 1991, sulphur dioxide, acid aerosols and particulates, 1992, and oxides of nitrogen, 1993. Copies of the reports are available in the Library.

MAAPE is currently considering the health effects of combination of air pollutants. Its report is expected in the first quarter of 1995. The Department of Health expert committee on the medical effects of air pollutants is keeping the health effects of air pollutants under review, and will report on the findings of its two sub-groups, on asthma and particles respectively, in late 1994 and early 1995.

In rural areas, the air pollutant of most concern is ozone; levels in summer sometimes exceeding those at which effects upon health would be expected in some individuals.

The Transport Select Committee is publishing today its report on transport-related air pollution in London, to which the Government will respond in due course.

Asthma

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department gives to health authorities to ensure that carers for children with asthma require the best possible training; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has established a programme of chronic disease management for asthma. The objective of this programme is to make the treatment of patients with asthma more systematic. Approximately 90 per cent. of all general practitioners have been approved to take part in the programme. Those doctors give advice to the parents of children with asthma, who in turn give the vast majority of day-to-day care. To qualify, the programme must include a call and recall system from a register of patients, the education of newly diagnosed patients, or their carers when appropriate, and continued education. GPs must ensure that all patients with asthma, or their carers as appropriate, receive relevant continuing education, including supervision of inhaler technique if appropriate. GPs are also responsible for the preparation of individual management plans for each patient which are generally subject to review every six months.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will make a statement on co-operation with the Department of Education in ensuring that all schools have an active asthma policy, taking into consideration the total school environment.

Mr. Sackville: It is our joint policy that teachers should, in consultation with parents and with advice from general practitioners and the school health service, do all that is reasonable to enable children with medical conditions such as asthma to obtain maximum benefit from education and to participate as fully as possible in school life. As far as is practicable, children are encouraged to manage their own conditions.

Ministerial Meetings

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions in the past two years she or her ministerial colleagues met representatives of local authorities to discuss local health matters; on what date such meetings were held; and with which local authorities.

Mr. Bowis: The level of detail requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Ministers meet frequently with individual local authorities and with local authority associations to discuss a very wide range of issues. National health service health authorities liaise with local authorities to discuss local health matters.

Long-term Health Care

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many comments have, to date, been received on the draft guidance to health authorities on clarifying responsibilities for long-term health care; when she expects to issue final guidance to health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Some 164.

Health Care International

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of the west midlands regional health authority's plans to transfer patients awaiting treatment at west midlands hospitals to Health Care International medical centre in Glasgow analysed between *(a)* travel costs, *(b)* hospital costs and *(c)* hotel costs.

Mr. Sackville: This is a local matter. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Bryan Baker, chairman of West Midlands regional health authority, for details.

SCOTLAND

Civil Servants (Sport)

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current cost to the public purse of providing all forms of sports facilities for civil servants in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I can speak only for the Scottish Office. There is currently no direct expenditure by my Department on sports facilities for civil servants by accommodation is made available in some buildings for sports and recreational activities. The cost of this accommodation, calculated by reference to the area as a proportion of the total floor area of the building, is estimated to be, £35,000.

Forestry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he intends to make sure that the "Forestry Enterprise" framework document will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Sir Hector Monro: As is usual with framework documents, it will be placed in the Library of the House. Hon. Members will be able to raise it, like any other published document, in the House.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Lang: The total expenditure on official hospitality for the Scottish Office for the years in question is shown in the table.

Year	£
1990-91	65,123
1991-92	62,800
1992-93	94,385
1993-94	49,115
1994-95 (to date)	20,300

The total expenditure for agencies is as follows:

Year	*SASA* £	*SFPA* £	*ROS* £	*HS* £
1990-91	[1]—	[1]—	3,586	772·85
1991-92	[1]—	400	2,513	2,591·80
1992-93	3,235	300	5,536	7,778·65
1993-94	6,244	450	4,374	8,012·47
1994-95 (to date)	not available	not available	not available	8,012·47

[1] Figures for these years are included on the table for The Scottish Office hospitality.

Figures for other agencies are included in the departmental hospitality table and any other agencies were not in existence on the dates specified.

Health Care International

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the numbers *(a)* of in-patients at Health Care International in Clydebank in each week since it opened, *(b)* patients from overseas and *(c)* patients in Britain.

Mr. Stewart: Information about non-NHS patients is commercially confidential to the company. Information on NHS patients treated is not held centrally and can be obtained from individual health boards.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by whom he has been represented at Health Care International's restructuring talks; and what proposals were put on his behalf.

Mr. Stewart: Officials of Locate in Scotland and Scottish Enterprise have been involved in talks, the details of which are subject to the normal conditions of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he *(a)* was informed and *(b)* agreed that the Health Care International hospital in Clydebank should sell its equipment to its funding banks and lease the equipment back.

Mr. Stewart: The financing of any company's equipment is a matter for it to determine.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he received in respect of contracts won by the Health Care International hospital in Clydebank to treat overseas patients.

Mr. Stewart: This information is commercially confidential to the company.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have taken place between his representatives and those of the Ministry of Defence to discuss Health Care International in Clydebank; and what was the outcome of those talks.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend's officials sought and obtained confirmation from officials in the Ministry of Defence that the Department has no interest in the hospital in the context of the re-organisation of defence medical services arising out of "Front Line First", the defence costs study. There have been no other discussions.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the date of *(a)* Government and *(b)* private sector commitment to Health Care International in Clydebank.

Mr. Stewart: Negotiations for both public and private sector support for this project were concluded in July 1991.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has accepted any proposal to turn Health Care International into an NHS trust.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* No.

Health Service Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures based on current performance for the number of health service staff she expects will see earnings *(a)* fall and *(b)* rise as a result of the introduction of relating pay to performances.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposals made to staff sides and the professions who represented groups covered by NHS review bodies and included in pay offers to staff sides of non-review body groups would strengthen the links between rewards and performance of their local organisations. Such schemes would be locally determined and depend on the achievement of local objectives for the delivery of high quality services. I would expect average earnings to continue to rise.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of chief executives of national health service trusts in each of the last four years have been paid on a performance-related pay basis.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The pay of general and senior managers in the NHS in Scotland is related to performance. While the pay of a trust chief executive is determined by the remuneration committee of that trust, this is carried out within the context of the principles applying to general and senior managers' pay.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what specific analysis his Department has conducted on the cost and efficiency of introducing performance-related pay to clinical grades in the national health service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Implementation of local pay arrangements is for NHS trusts to determine, taking into account the individual health care objectives contained in their agreed business plans. The assessment of the cost and efficiency of schemes is also for local determination.

Care Homes

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce dual registration of residential and nursing homes similar to the practice in England and Wales.

Mr. Lang: The Registered Establishments (Scotland) Act 1987 amended the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938 do allow joint registration of residential care establishments which provide both nursing and social care with local authority social work departments and health boards. This is directly comparable with similar provisions which apply in England and Wales under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to establish joint health board and social work inspection and registration units for nursing and residential homes.

Mr. Lang: The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, as amended, and the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938 already allow for collaboration between local authority social work departments and health boards in the field of joint registration of residential care establishments.

M74 Contract

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the value, progress and penalties associated with the M74 contract awarded to Messrs. Castelli and Girola;

(2) which comparable projects carried out by Messrs. Castelli and Girola persuaded his Department that they were eligible for consideration as tenderers;

(3) if he will list those occasions and locations on which officials of his Department met representatives of Messrs. Castelli and Girola prior to the award of the M74 contract;

(4) if he will list the value of tenders submitted for the M74 contract which was secured by Messrs. Castelli and Girola;

(5) what steps he took to ascertain that Messrs. Castelli and Girola were competent contractors, prior to the awarding of the M74 contract.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The requirements of the European Union procurement directive have meant that our major road construction contracts are open to tenders from companies throughout the EEC. In 1992 a joint venture company formed by Castelli and Girola submitted an application for inclusion in the tender list for the contract to upgrade the A74 to motorway between Eaglesfield and Kirkpatrick Fleming.

To support their tender application they submitted considerable documentation covering numerous examples of major road contracts carried out by each firm. Scottish Office officials met representatives of the joint venture in October 1991 in Edinburgh regarding an earlier application for an A74(M) contract and satisfied themselves that they were major contractors with worldwide experience of road construction. The two companies were also subjected to the normal vetting procedures with regard to their financial standing.

The value of the successful tender submitted by the joint venture was £23,403,562. Other tenders submitted for the contract were:

£24,902,956
£26,186,241
£26,789,409
£29,517,413
£29,994,952
£30,343,045

Although well advanced, the contract is running late and the completion date next month will not be met. The penalty for late completion without mitigating circumstances is £250,000 per month.

Breast Treatment

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the average time taken in each health board area in Scotland *(a)* to provide appointments to patients who detect breast lumps, *(b)* to diagnose whether or not the lump is malignant and *(c)* to operate if the lump is a tumour.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Information requested is not centrally available in the form requested. However, the table gives details of waiting times for confirmation or treatment.

Mean and median waiting time (days for patients admitted from the waiting list and operated on for confirmation or treatment of malignant neoplasm of female breast (ICD9 174), by health board of treatment, calendar year 1993

HB Treatment	Mean Wait (Days)	Median Wait (Days
Argyll and Clyde	8·0	7
Ayrshire and Arran	12·3	8
Borders	9·4	6
Dumfries and Galloway	12·5	11
Fife	12·7	8
Forth Valley	10·9	8
Grampian	9·8	7
Greater Glasgow	14·0	11
Highland	12·9	10
Lanarkshire	10·3	7
Lothian	14·0	11
Orkney	5·8	5
Shetland	6·4	5
Tayside	18·9	15
Western Isles	6·7	4
Scotland	12·9	9

Source:
SMR1
Ref:
ISD.UNIT3.HASU, M4435
Notes:

1. Diagnostic codes are based on the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision (ICD9). Codes used in the analysis are as follows:
ICD9 174 Malignant Neoplasm of Female Breast.
2. Operation codes are based on the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 4th Revision Classification of Surgical Operations and Procedures (OPCS4). Codes used in the analysis are as follows:
OPCS4 B27-B37 Breast Operations and Procedures.
3. The table is for elective admissions from the waiting list (SMR1 TADM-1 & WAIT>0).

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the guidelines given to area health boards in setting limits on the length of time between breast lumps being detected by patients and being diagnosed as malignant or otherwise; and what are the time limits thereafter being set for operations to remove the lumps if malignant tumours are discovered.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Government-funded Scottish Cancer Co-ordinating and Advisory Committee and the Scottish Cancer Therapy Network have established a joint focus group to examine all aspects of the subject ie aetiology, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and palliation, so that the adequacy of existing arrangements may be scrutinised and best practice determined. No formal guidelines exist at present.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to increase resources available for the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The incidence, morbidity and mortality associated with breast cancer are sources of concern to the Government, and we are committed to encouraging research into the causes, diagnosis, treatment and cure of the disease. The Government also funds the Scottish breast screening programme, which aims to reduce mortality in the screened population by 25 per cent. by the year 2000. All referrals under the programme are to a designated breast surgeon, who in the majority of cases will have been nominated by the woman's health board of residence. Where more complex techniques are likely to be required, referral will be to a breast surgeon working in one of the five specialist multi-disciplinary teams in Scotland. The Scottish Cancer Therapy Network, which we have established to ensure the delivery to cancer patients of the most effective and up-to-date treatment, is forming a focus group in co-operation with the Government-funded Scottish Cancer Co-ordinating and Advisory Committee to look specifically at all aspects of breast cancer, including diagnosis and treatment.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 26 October 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of staff in the employment of the Lord Chancellor's Department and the proportion of them who are employed in the standard regions is set out in the table.

Total numbers of staff in the Lord Chancellor Department as at 18 October 1994.

The total number of staff currently employed in Lord Chancellor's Department is 12,439.

The proportion of staff employed in the standard regions

Region	*Total number of staff*
Scotland	2
Northern	502
York and Humberside	1,041
East Midlands	635
North West	1,415
West Midlands	1,031
Wales	537
East Anglia	303
South East	6,183
South West	790

These figures include part time staff who have been shown as whole numbers.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has 11 advisory committees on justices of the peace and four on general commissioners of income tax in these areas. The main function of these committees is to recommend suitable people to the Lord Chancellor for judicial appointment. The normal period of appointment is six years, so arranged that approximately half the members of a committee retire every three years. Neither chairmen or members of advisory committees receive any remuneration. If the hon. Member would like more detailed information about the membership of any particular committee or committees I should be happy to provide it if he writes to me. This answer does not include appointments which exercise judicial functions.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department has not organised any such receptions. However, in support of the Lord Chancellor's commitment to encourage applications for judicial appointment from suitably qualified women lawyers, the first of what is hoped will be a series of events for women lawyers was held in July at the Bar Council. The purpose of the event, arranged jointly by the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Bar Council and the Association of Women Barristers, was to provide information to women barristers on the opportunities available for appointments to part-time posts within the judiciary. There were no separately identifiable costs to the Department beyond those associated with the manpower involved.

Legal Costs Payments

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many individuals have received payments of over £100,000 to their legal costs in each of the last four years and in 1994–95.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table gives the information requested. For civil legal aid, the figures represent the number of individual legal aid certificates where gross payments, including VAT, have exceeded £100,000. For criminal legal aid, the figures show the numbers of cases where gross payments, including VAT, in excess of £100,000 have been made since it is not always possible to disaggregate payments relating to individuals in cases involving more than one defendant.

Year	*Civil*	*Criminal*	*Total cases*
1990–91	4	90	94
1991–92	22	66	88
1992–93	36	119	155
1993–94	54	172	226
1994 to date	41	112	153

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total amounts spent on official hospitality in the Lord Chancellor's Department each year since 1990, are given in the table. Until 1994–95, the Department had no agencies which were not separate Government Departments. The Public Trust Office, established as an agency on 1 July 1994, has no hospitality budget.

Year	*Total £*
1990–91	19,022·93
1991–92	20,894·90
1992–93	20,697·44
1993–94	20,476·67
1994–95 (to the end of September)	5,975·38

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what date he expects the team conducting the fundamental review of his Department's expenditure to make its final report to the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The review is an internal process and there are no plans to publish any of the documents produced. Any policy changes resulting from the review will be announced in the usual way and any major changes will be the subject of public consultation. However, there is no firm timetable for this at present.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Bodies

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the non-departmental public bodies to which his Department makes appointments in the Greater London area, together with the total annual budget for each body, and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the past five years.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State makes appointments to the following non-departmental public bodies whose activities relate solely to the Greater London area. It excludes those bodies, based in London, whose activities are national.

Body	*Total Annual Budget (1994–95) approx. £ million*
London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC)	116·2
London Pensions Fund Authority (LPFA)	[1]248·5
London Rent Assessment Panel (LRAP)	2·6
London Residuary Body (LRB)	[2]2·3
Stonebridge Housing Action Trust (SHAT)	1·0
Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust (THHAT)	6·9
Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust (WFHAT)	35

[1] None of this budget is directly financed by DOE. Most of the expenditure represents the cost of pensions paid to former GLC and ILEA employees.

[2] None of this budget is directly financed by DOE.

The number of appointments and re-appointments for each of these bodies for the last five years is as follows:

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994 (to date)*
LDDC					
Appointments	—	6	2	2	2
Re-appointments	—	2	4	—	5
LPFA					
Appointments	0	0	0	1	0
Re-appointments	0	0	8	0	0
LRAP					
Appointments	2	5	5	5	5
Re-appointments	28	26	26	25	29
LRB					
Appointments	1	—	—	—	—
Re-appointments	—	—	1	2	1
SHAT					
Appointments	—	—	—	—	11
Re-appointments	—	—	—	—	—
THHAT					
Appointments	—	—	—	10	—
Re-appointments	—	—	—	—	—
WFHAT					
Appointments	—	11	—	—	—
Re-appointments	—	—	—	—	—

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the de minimis figure of £100,000 for compulsory competitive tendering will be reviewed, following the proposal of a de minimis figure of £300,000 in respect of compulsory competitive tendering for legal services.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The two figures referred to by my hon. Friend are different in nature and purpose. The £100,000 de minimis relates to manual services, and represents the level of expenditure on a service below which the administrative cost of compulsory competitive tendering may outweigh the prospective savings. The other figure relates to the proposals to extend CCT to local authorities' legal services. The exemption from CCT of 55 per cent. of local authorities' legal work, or £300,000 by value, whichever is the greater, is designed to ensure that all authorities can maintain the necessary in-house legal expertise for advising on policy and strategic matters.

All CCT de minimis provisions are kept under review, but there are no immediate plans to change the present figures.

Marsham Tower

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current quantity of floor space in the Marsham tower Government building; how many persons are currently employed there; how much office space is envisaged in the outline redevelopment proposals currently before Westminster city council; and approximately how many office personnel could then be accommodated.

Sir Paul Beresford: The current building at 2 Marsham street has a gross floor area of 890,000 sq ft above ground and accommodates approximately 3,000 civil servants from the Departments of Environment and of Transport. The outline application for the site before Westminster city council proposes 690,00 sq ft of offices above ground as well as residential and retail uses and open space. It is too early to say how many people will be accommodated in this new space. This will depend on the design of the new buildings on the site and the requirements of the eventual occupiers.

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the likely timetable for the demolition of the Marsham street Government buildings and redevelopment of the 5 acre site; and what provision he is making for proper public consultation, including hon. Members, about the plans for the future of the site both as regards alternative usage and intensity of development and building design.

Sir Paul Beresford: The 2 Marsham street building will be vacated by the end of 1997. Demolition will then commence and is likely to take a minimum of 18 months. Redevelopment of the site could start in 2000 with the first building becoming available for occupation in 2002. A public exhibition of the outline proposals for the site was held following the submission of the outline planning application on 18 July 1994. It is envisaged that there will be a further opportunity for the public to view the proposals after a presentation to the Royal Fine Art Commission later this year. This is an outline application and therefore proposes uses and scale of development but not building design.

Land Searches

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his conclusions on the consultation exercise on a statutory scheme for local authority land searches.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Responses to the consultation carried out earlier this year demonstrated wide-ranging support for a 10 working days timescale for local authority responses to homebuyers' standard search inquiries. The proposals set out in the consultation document are being considered further in the light of responses, and a further announcement will be made in due course.

Water Saving

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to issuing building regulations guidelines about water saving devices for new and refurbished buildings, including sprinkler taps and showers.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The consultation document, "Using Water Wisely" issued in July 1992 outlined various ways of saving water. The Government have considered the responses to that document and propose to issue an action plan shortly. A separate consultation paper will also be issued soon on replacements for the water byelaws which expire in England in 1997. This paper will consider the scope for addressing this issue through building regulations as well as in alternative ways.

Local Government Act 1974

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will institute a public inquiry into the operation of section 26(9) of the Local Government Act 1974;

(2) what considerations underlay the Government's refusal to invoke the provisions of section 26(9) of the Local Government Act 1974 to close the loophole in the investigation of alleged breaches of the national code of local government conduct raised in the correspondence he and his predecessors have had with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe in the case of Mr. Arthur Hodgkinson.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Personnel matters are specifically excluded from the local government ombudsman's jurisdiction by schedule 5 of the Local Government Act 1974. It is not the ombudsman's responsibility to investigate breaches of the national code of local government conduct other than to include them in an investigation where there is an allegation of maladministration involving personal injustice. There is no loophole to close and my right hon. Friend will not be instituting a public inquiry into the operation of section 26(9) of the Local Government Act 1974.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the conformity with the national code of local government conduct of the action of Wigan metropolitan borough council in the case of Mr. Arthur Hodgkinson.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: None. The Secretary of State has no role in assessing the compliance of individual councillors with the code.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Gummer: My Department has not organised any receptions of this kind.

Yorkshire and Humberside Projects

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what payments have been made by his Department during the last five years to individuals or companies in Yorkshire and Humberside in support of projects which it was assumed would create employment; and how many jobs have been created in each case.

Sir Paul Beresford: Until April of this year, my Department awarded city grant to private developers in support of projects designed to create employment. On 1 April, responsibility for city grant was assumed by English Partnerships.

In the five years to April 1994, £43·75 million of city grant was awarded in Yorkshire and Humberside in support of 41 schemes, which were expected to create 6,318 new jobs.

Dearne Valley City Challenge Scheme

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what expenditure has so far been incurred in support of the Dearne Valley city challenge scheme; and how many permanent jobs have so far been created.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Dearne valley will receive £37·5 million in city challenge funding over five years from 1992–93, subject to satisfactory performance. Up to the end of September, Dearne valley city challenge has spent £15·252 million implementing its action plan. A total of 777 jobs has been created.

Air Pollution, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest information available on traffic-related air pollution in London; and what policy objectives he has for improving air quality.

Mr. Atkins: The London energy study carried out by the London research centre was published 15 September 1993, it was funded by the European Commission, London Electricity plc and the Department of the Environment. One of the principal outputs of the study was a very detailed inventory of energy use, and the resultant emissions of pollutants to the London atmosphere covering almost 2,000 sq km in and around London. The table illustrates the sources for each pollutant as well as the total for London and as a percentage of United Kingdom total emissions for 1991.

London (1991)	*Percentage of total emissions*					
	Carbon dioxide (as carbon)	*Sulphur dioxide*	*Black smoke*	*Carbon monoxide*	*Nitrogen oxides*	*Volatile organic compounds*
Road transport	33	22	96	99	76	97
Other transport	3	1	2	1	4	1
Electricity supply industry	2	0	0	0	1	0
Other industry	13	43	1	0	5	1
Domestic	30	1	0	0	6	1
Other	19	32	2	0	8	0
Total (thousand tonnes)	8,508	26	19	648	137	116
London as a percentage of United Kingdom total emissions	5·3	0·7	4·2	6·7	5·0	4·8

The term volatile organic compounds does not include methane. The evaporation of petrol from production, storage and distribution is included under other industry. Evaporation from petrol tanks and carburettors of motor vehicles is included under road transport.

Sources of volatile organic compounds given in the United Kingdom section of this table include emissions from non-energy related sources, such as industrial processes and solvents. These account for 50 per cent. of the total emissions. The sources included in the London section of the table are related only to the use of energy. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

The Government are committed to securing, throughout the United Kingdom, good air quality based on a framework of exacting standard which takes full account of health and environmental effects. They will announce later this year proposals for meetings standards efficiently and cost-effectively.

Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies have established policies to implement the Environmental Information Regulations 1992; and what procedures are in place to monitor the production and operation of these policies.

Sir Paul Beresford: Executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies that have public responsibilities in relation to the environment are under a duty to implement the environmental information regulations.

The Department of the Environment does not continuously monitor the implementation of these regulations, but in 1997 will give the European Commission a report on the experience gained in operating directive 90/313 — which required the regulations to be made — and will then ask bodies for information relating to the practical implementation of the directive.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the total expenditure to date and *(b)* expenditure in legal fees by each executive agency and non-departmental public body on the implementation of the Environmental Information Regulations 1992.

Sir Paul Beresford: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him today. The Department of the Environment does not keep centrally information of this kind.

Hadrian's Wall

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, when he will announce his decision on the proposed Hadrian's Wall path national trail.

Mr. Atkins: The Secretary of State has today decided to approve the Countryside Commission's report in respect of the Hadrian's Wall path national trail, with a modification to the route as submitted by the Commission.

In reaching this decision, careful consideration has been given to all the views expressed, including from those directly affected by the route and those concerned at its impact on the archaeology of the wall. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the Commission, in conjunction with English Heritage, has taken full account of the implications of establishing the path alongside this world heritage site.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Docklands light railway.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are to privatise the Docklands light railway in line with their 1992 manifesto commitment. The first step will be taken in 1996, when DLR operations will be franchised to the private sector for a period of about seven years. The second step will be taken at the end of the franchise period, when the aim will be to transfer the railway as a whole into the private sector.

In parallel, as part of the private finance initiative, the private sector will take responsibility for building an extension of the DLR to Lewisham, as announced by my right hon. and learned Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer last year. Detailed planning for the Lewisham extension is now complete and I have today given DLR Ltd. my consent to start the competition to select a private concession company.

DLR PRIVATISATION

Through privatisation, the Government aim to ensure that the DLR will continue to develop as a highly efficient, customer-oriented and market-driven passenger service for Docklands, with reduced dependence on public subsidy.

The DLR's operational performance has improved markedly over the last two years. Moreover, existing programmes to improve DLR's signalling and train control system are well advanced and will be complete in 1995, providing the capacity for more flexible service patterns and operating practices. The railway should return to full seven day services across the network during the first half of 1995. The franchising of DLR operations in 1996 will therefore allow private sector disciplines to be applied to consolidate the substantial improvements already made in efficiency, reliability and quality of service.

I have asked Sir Anthony Gill, chairman of the DLR, to put in hand the preparatory work required to enable franchise to be let in 1996. The private sector operator will be expected to take responsibility for marketing services, maintaining trains, stations and track, and for all DLR's operations, including train services on the new extension to Lewisham when it opens, for a period of about seven years. The franchisee will have to have a statutorily approved railway safety case in place before starting to operate train services.

DLR will be consulting its work force on the planned franchise. We expect any franchise to amount to a transfer for the purposes of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations and, if this is the case, the franchisee will assume responsibility for DLR employees.

Neither the letting of the franchise nor any subsequent sale of DLR will require legislation.

DLR LEWISHAM EXTENSION

In his Budget statement on 30 November 1993, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the private sector was to be invited to finance, build and maintain a 4·2 km extension of the DLR to Lewisham. Following the completion of detailed planning, I have today given my consent for the DLR to start the competition to select a private concession company to deliver the project. The first phase of market testing, the prequalification of bidders, will take three months. Full tendering is expected to start in February 1995, and DLR Ltd. should be in a position to award the concession contract before the end of the year. Construction should start in 1996, with the extension opening in 1999.

A year ago, the provisional indications were that the project could not be financially viable as a private sector concession if it included stations previously planned for Island Gardens and Cutty Sark. At my request, DLR Ltd. and its owners, the London Docklands development corporation, consulted local interests on the option of deleting those two stations from the project. They also appointed financial advisers to validate the financial modelling and to develop a commercial structure for the project. Further, in July 1994, the Lord Chairman of Committees in another place ruled that any decision to omit Island Gardens station would breach an undertaking given to Parliament by the promoters of the London Docklands Railway (Lewisham) Act 1993 in relation to that station.

In the light of these developments, DLR Ltd. has recommended to me that, on the basis of its latest cost and revenue forecasts, the Lewisham extension project is potentially viable financially with the new station at Island Gardens included. But it has concluded that the financial case for inclusion of a station at Cutty Sark is poor and that unless the cost of providing the station can be met by third party contributions, Cutty Sark should be omitted from the project.

I am pleased that we are able to proceed with the Lewisham extension with six stations because of the regeneration benefits this will provide both north and south of the Thames. In particular, the inclusion of a new station at Island Gardens on the Lewisham extension, close to the Thames foot tunnel, and one at Greenwich, about 700 m from the Cutty Sark and the historic waterfront, will provide dramatically improved access to the various important tourist destinations in the area.

Nevertheless, I have received a number of representations arguing for a station next to the Cutty Sark itself. I am willing to allow more time for local interest to finalise a financing package of their own. My decision therefore is that if funding is fully and unconditionally committed by the time DLR has prequalified bidders for the project next January, the project may go ahead to full tendering with Cutty Sark station included. Otherwise it will go out to tender on a six-station basis, excluding the Cutty Sark. Contributors must agree to meet the actual costs of the station, whatever they are shown to be through market testing, the current estimate being £14 million at 1994 prices. Funding pledges must be contracted and unconditional, with agreement that the cash will be provided during the construction period. There is no question of the Government's providing grant or subsidy towards a Cutty Sark station.

This arrangement will allow an extended opportunity to those who support a station at Cutty Sark to come forward with funding, whilst eliminating uncertainty and potential delay for the Lewisham extension project as a whole.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year since the introduction of housing benefit, and for *(a)* local authority tenancies, *(b)* housing association tenancies and *(c)* private tenancies, the average weekly housing benefit payable and this figure expressed as a percentage of the average income support paid per tenant household.

Mr. Roger Evans: I have been asked to reply.

The available information is set out in the tables:

Tenure Type	*Ave Weekly HB*	*HB as percentage of IS*
1990		
Local authority	22·74	67
Housing Assoc	n/a	n/a
Private*	31·35	99
1991		
Local authority	26·08	65
Housing Assoc	n/a	n/a
Private*	37·35	98
1992		
Local authority	29·88	63
Housing Assoc	35·35	80
Private	46·17	107
1993		
Local authority	32·23	66
Housing Assoc	40·22	85
Other Private	51·67	112

* Includes Housing Association tenancies.

n/a = not available.

Information for earlier years is not available.

Source:

Housing Benefit Management Information Systems annual 1 per cent. samples (with Income Support) May 90, 91, 92 and 93.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Postgraduate Research Training

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what conclusions he has drawn from the public consultation on policies for postgraduate research training announced in the White Paper, "Realising Our Potential: A Strategy For Science, Engineering and Technology"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Office of Science and Technology has consulted widely on those policies. I am most grateful to all who responded to consultation.

We need research students who are equipped with the skills and knowledge that they need to fulfil their potential in whichever sector they eventually choose to take up employment.

There was widespread support for the White Paper's objectives of improving the quality of research training in the United Kingdom, and making it more relevant to the needs of both students and their future employers.

I am asking the Director General of the Research Councils, Sir John Cadogan, to write to the research councils with further guidance on how best to work with universities and employers to achieve those objectives. In particular, he will be inviting the councils to support new, one-year master's degrees by research on a pilot basis. We estimate that some 250 students will enrol on the first pilot courses. These new courses will offer a valuable addition to the range of options open to postgraduate research students.

The way forward must be to test how effective the courses will be as a direct route into employment or as a preparation for the PhD. I welcome the initiative of universities and employers who are keen to lead the way. There will be no requirement for all research students funded by the research councils to complete a master's year. I would expect the councils to continue to fund PhD students for normally no longer than three years.

I am placing in the Library: a copy of Sir John Cadogan's letter; a list of the respondents to the consultation; the responses from the CVCP and CBI, which I believe give a helpful general summary of the views expressed by higher education and industry; and a press statement which I am also making today. Copies of consultation responses not made in confidence are available on request from the OPSS.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: No such receptions have been held.

Official Report (Price)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to enable differential pricing of the *Official Report* so as to make it cheaper for public and academic libraries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Differential pricing already exists. Under long-standing arrangements aimed at facilitating public access to Government information, public libraries are entitled to buy all HMSO publications, including the *Official Report*, at half price.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: In the Departments and agencies for which my right hon. Friend is responsible, and other areas which fall to the Cabinet Office vote, the information is as follows:

Office of public service and science

Survey	*Objectives*	*Time*	*From*
Citizen's Charter Customer Survey	(a) find out levels of awareness of Charter initiative, individual charters and what they stand for. (b) form a base-line of public opinion about various public services, against which progress in achieving improvements in quality can be measured. (c) establish how people would like service delivery to improve, both generally and by the implementation of good charter practice. (d) gain information which will help Citizen's Charter Unit determine priorities for action.	March–April 1993	ICM Research
Attitudes of University Finalists (additional questions commissioned to form part of survey)	To enable The Office of the Civil Service Commissioners to market effectively opportunities in the Civil Service	February–March 1994	MORI
Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force Survey on the views of users of public services on how public services handle complaints	(a) identify the views of public service users on how public services handle complaints (b) to inform the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force's review of public service complaints systems, and in particular its final report to Ministers in 1995.	June–November 1994	MORI
United Kingdom Technology Foresight Programme: Delphi Questionnaire	To elicit expert opinion on a range of potential market and technology developments in the next 10–20 years.	September–December 1994	A joint consortium of: The Programme for Policy Research in Engineering, Science and Technology (University of Manchester); Business and Market Research plc; and Segal, Quince, Wickstead Ltd
Department of the Environment	Researching Building Regulations	January–March 1994	Redwood Associates
Parliamentary Publications	To gauge the British public's awareness of, and interest in, Parliamentary Proceedings and publications	May 1994	MORI
Department of Trade and Industry QA Register	Primarily a customer satisfaction survey but addressing a number of side issues such as the need for sub-sets of information and scope for a European directory in paper or CD-ROM format	August–November 1994	BMRB International
Department of Health	To establish likely need for a CD-ROM of Department of Health publications	September–November 1994	McCulloch Associates
OFSTED Publications	Primarily a customer satisfaction survey but addressing a number of side issues such as alternative ways of providing the information (CD-ROM) and extending the OFSTED portfolio	October 1994–January 1995	BRMB International

The costs of the individual surveys are subject to commercial confidentiality.

Access to Public Information

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the steps he has taken to consult the Council on Tribunals with respect to the preparation of a system of external review over cases where information is withheld from disclosure under the code of practice on access to public information, as indicated at paragraph 6.16, page 48 of the White Paper on open government of July 1993, Cm. 2290.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Independent external review of the code of practice on access to Government information is already provided by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. The proposals on page 48 of the White Paper relate to access rights and not to the code of practice.

The council's initial comments on the White Paper proposals are included in the volume of consultation responses deposited in the House of Commons Library. They will be consulted further as detailed proposals are developed.

Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton Laboratories

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how the Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton laboratories will be affected as a result of the planned changes to the research councils.

Mr. David Hunt *[pursuant to the reply 11 February 1994, Official Report, c. 492–93]:*

Following an in-depth examination of the need for, management, operation, funding and other aspects of the laboratory, I have decided that, subject to parliamentary approval, the Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton laboratories should be established as an independent entity with effect from April 1995, under the terms of the Science and Technology Act 1965. The chief executive of the laboratory will be in the same relationship to the accounting officer and Director General of Research Councils within the Office of Public Service and Science as the chief executive of the six other research councils. I intend in due course to lay before both Houses a draft Order in council, which will be subject to affirmative resolution procedure.

Daresbury and Rutherford are national assets. They have been thoroughly reviewed, and my conclusion is that they should remain in public ownership. I believe that according them independent status is the right way to proceed, but with strong emphasis on operating in a commercial manner, and particularly meeting the needs of the customers.

By announcing these new arrangements now, and by aiming to introduce them as quickly as possible, we can ensure the nation gets the best return from these assets.

I am confident that we are creating the right environment for this major resource of the United Kingdom science and engineering base to flourish, and play a full part in carrying forward our White Paper objectives of wealth creation and improving the quality of life.

TRANSPORT

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by each division in his Department and for each executive agency their running costs budget for this financial year and the budget allocation for the next financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested for 1994–95 is as follows:

	Current Budget £ thousands
Headquarters Directorates in Central Transport Group	117,407
Gross Running Costs Agencies	
DVLA	177,063
The Highways Agency	89,173
Marine Safety Agency	14,806
The Coastguard Agency	24,857
Net Running Costs Agencies	
Vehicle Certification Agency	2,629
Transport Research Laboratory	17,000
Trading Fund (off Vote)	
Vehicle Inspectorate	44,600
Trading Fund (on Vote)	
Driving Standards Agency	49,3000

Budget allocations for 1995–96 have not yet been made.

British Rail Employees

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail freight services employees are being removed from York to Doncaster; and when these posts will leave York.

Mr. Watts: This is a commercial matter for British Rail. I am not aware of any such proposal.

Channel Tunnel Link

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the timetable for connections from south Wales to Waterloo to join Eurostar trains to Paris and Brussels.

Mr. Watts: The timing of the connecting services from south Wales is a matter for British Rail, in consultation with European Passenger Services. It is intended that as the Eurostar frequency builds up in 1995, the three trains from south Wales to Waterloo each weekday will connect with the Eurostar service.

Live Railtracks (Accidents)

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have *(a)* died and *(b)* been seriously injured by stepping on live railtracks in the United Kingdom in the last 10 years; and what steps are being taken to prevent such accidents from happening, with particular reference to east Dulwich station.

Mr. Watts: Details of electrocutions both fatal and seriously injured, are given in appendices 7 and 8 of the "Annual Report on Railway Safety in Great Britain" copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate is discussing with Railtrack whether any reasonably practicable measures can be taken to prevent a recurrence of the type of accident that occurred at east Dulwich on 9 July.

A249 Iwade Bypass

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision on a preferred route for the A249 Iwade bypass to Queenborough improvement scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: I am pleased to announce the preferred route for this scheme. It is the route on which the public were consulted last November.

This scheme, which includes a second crossing of the Swale on a high level bridge, will greatly assist the development and expansion of industry and commerce and increase competitiveness and employment on the Isle of Sheppey. I am confident that this much-needed improvement of the A249 will be welcomed by all those whose lives are affected daily by the existing, wholly inadequate link with the mainland and the lifting bridge across the Swale.

In choosing a route we have had the difficult task of balancing the needs of people and the local economy with important environmental considerations. I believe we have struck the right balance. The preferred route will avoid the key areas of ecological importance and make the best use of the existing road corridor.

Airports

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the differences between the current Civil Aviation Authority and the proposed joint airworthiness authority specifications concerning permissible duty hours by aircraft flight deck and cabin crew; and which specifications will be applied in the United Kingdom if there is any disparity between the joint airworthiness authority specifications and the Civil Aviation Authority specifications currently in force;

(2) on how many occasions one aircraft bound for a United Kingdom international airport has declared a low fuel emergency when its airport of intended landing has been closed to normal operations; on how many occasions two or more aircraft bound for any United Kingdom international airport have simultaneously declared a low fuel emergency when their respective airports of intended landing have been closed to normal operations; on how many occasions one aircraft bound for Heathrow has declared a low fuel emergency when Heathrow airport has been closed to normal operations; and on how many occasions two or more aircraft bound for Heathrow airport simultaneously have declared a low fuel emergency when Heathrow airport has been closed to normal operations;

(3) what procedures exist to ensure the safe landing of two or more aircraft which have simultaneously declared a low fuel emergency within any one terminal control area, control zone or control area *(a)* when all suitable airports are operative and *(b)* when a designated airport or one or more designated runways has been closed to normal operations;

(4) on how many occasions over the last five years and for what reasons *(a)* one of the United Kingdom international airports has been closed to all normal operations, *(b)* Heathrow airport has been closed to all normal operations and *(c)* more than one of the United Kingdom international airports have been closed to all normal operations at any one time;

(5) what consideration he has given to the United Kingdom to the minimum fuel advisory system as practised in the USA; and if he will make a statement;

(6) on how many occasions during the last five years a low fuel emergency has been declared by *(a)* one aircraft, bound for a United Kingdom international airport *(b)* more than one aircraft bound for any United Kingdom international airport at any one time, *(c)* one aircraft bound for Heathrow airport and *(d)* more than one aircraft bound for Heathrow airport at any one time.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Norris: No.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the past year—1 October 1993 to the present—the spouse of one Minister in this Department travelled abroad once to accompany that Minister on public duties. The total cost to public funds of the spouse's travel was £923·66. There were no occasions when such travel was undertaken at own cost.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Department who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London, *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* *(a)* Thirteen, excluding press officers employed by executive agencies directly accountable to the Department. *(b)* None. *(c)* Regional services in England are provided by the Central Office of Information.

Mineral Oil Excise Duty

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations are being carried out on EC directive 92/82; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply.

Article 10 of the directive requires that every two years, and for the first time not later than 31 December 1994, the Council, acting on the basis of a report and where appropriate, a proposal from the Commission, shall examine the rates of mineral oil excise duty laid down in the directive and, acting unanimously after consulting the European Parliament, shall adopt the necessary measures. No report has yet been produced and no proposal has yet been put forward by the Commission.

Road Surfaces

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of *(a)* the current noise comparisons between porous asphalt and whisper concrete; and *(b)* how they compare with conventional asphalt and concrete as presently used in road construction.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Richard Page, dated 26 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts MP, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning comparisons between porous asphalt, whisper concrete and conventional road surfaces.

We have in hand trials comparing whisper concrete with conventional asphalt and concrete road surfaces. Also, data is available on the comparative performance of porous asphalt and conventional asphalt and concrete road surfaces. From the trials some early indications are available of the noise performance of whisper concrete. These are that for surfaces with equivalent skidding resistance, overall noise levels for whisper concrete are slightly less than for conventional hot rolled asphalt. They are significantly less than for some of the more heavily textured concrete surfaces provided in the past.

In the case of porous asphalt as used in the United Kingdom, noise levels are about 5 dB(A) less than for a hot rolled asphalt surface initially, although this difference may reduce to about 3 dB(A) as the pores become clogged. The relative noise performance of porous asphalt compared with concrete surfaces is the same as that given above for hot rolled asphalt where skidding resistance characteristics are similar. However, the texture provided on concrete roads to date has tended to be deeper than the minimum required under the specification with the result that the difference in noise with porous asphalt would be greater in the early life of the road.

We have not made any direct comparison of the respective noise performance of porous asphalt and whisper concrete. However, from the data available so far, we can infer the likely relative noise performance of these two surfaces. The picture emerging is that traffic noise levels attributable to whisper concrete are higher than those achieved with porous asphalt.

M3/M27 Link

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the M3/M27 link to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Atkinson, dated 26 October 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the expected completion of the final section of the M3 between Bar End and Compton.

No firm date has yet been fixed for the completion of the motorway but we expect it to be ready before the end of the year. Associated work on local roads, landscaping and restoration of the old A33 Winchester Bypass will continue until early next year.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the role of independent consultants in the formulation of tourism policy since his appointment.

Mr. Dorrell: My officials are working closely with the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board on the development of a tourism strategy for the next 10 years. Consultants are assisting with the analysis.

Specialist Advisers

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what plans he has to appoint specialist advisers to his Department;

(2) if he has appointed a specialist adviser to his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department has access to specialist advice from a wide range of sources. I have no current plans to recruit a personal special advisor.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Sproat: My Department does not organise such receptions.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Dorrell: There have been no occasions on which the spouse of a Department of National Heritage Minister has travelled abroad at public expense. Such travel has been undertaken on two occasions at own cost.

PRIME MINISTER

United States (National Performance Review Team)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what contact his Government have had with Vice-President Gore's national performance review team; and will he make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, when he was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, met Vice-President Gore and members of his national performance review team. The citizens charter unit has also had discussions with the national performance review team, and continues to keep in touch with it.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how may people attend.

The Prime Minister: No such receptions have been held.

Departmental Documents

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of all documents, letters, or accounts he has signed which are written in a language he does not understand.

The Prime Minister: It is my policy to allow photographic reproductions of my signature to appear on official documents translated into languages other than English. However it is not my normal practice to place such documents in the Library.

Prevention of Terrorism Acts

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), *Official Report*, 24 October, column *492*.

Mark Thatcher

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister on what occasions Ministers in Her Majesty's Government have been informed of payments made to Mr. Mark Thatcher or to companies associated with him in relation to defence contracts.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 21 October 1994]:* As far as I am aware, no credible information of this kind has been submitted to Ministers.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cider Apple Trees

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards planting cider apple trees in set-aside areas.

Mr. Jack: The rules of the Community's arable area payments scheme do not permit the growing of food crops on land set aside under the scheme. Cider apple trees are viewed as a food crop. Crops for non-food use, such as biofuels, are allowed to be grown on set-aside land.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Jack: No receptions have been organised by this Department for people expressing an interest in public appointment.

Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of spongiform encephalopathy have been established in *(a)* kudu, *(b)* nyala, *(c)* eland, *(d)* gemsbok, *(e)* Arabian oryx, *(f)* puma and *(g)* cheetah in each of the last four years, with the age of each animal involved and the suspected cause of transmission.

Mrs. Browning: The following numbers of cases have been confirmed in Great Britain in the species listed in each of the last four years.

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Kudu	(19) 1	(37,36*) 2	—	—
Nyala	—	—	—	—
Eland	—	(27, 28) 2	(24) 1	—
Gemsbok	—	—	—	—
Arabian Oryx	—	—	—	—
Puma	—	(62) 1	—	—
Cheetah	—	—	(96) 1	(91) 1

Classification is by year of death: ages in months at the time of death are shown in brackets. Animals marked with an asterisk showed no clinical signs when they were euthanased. Disease may have spread between kudu by contact or possibly environmental contamination after being introduced in feed and transmission between eland is also possible. The puma and cheetahs were fed parts of bovine carcases, including central nervous tissue, which were deemed unfit for human consumption.

European Funding

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list in pounds sterling the allocations from PESCA for the United Kingdom and the other eligible member states and the proposed allocations to the regions in the United Kingdom which are highly dependent on fishing;

(2) what is the basis for proposed allocations of PESCA funding for *(a)* member states and *(b)* regions which are highly dependent on fishing.

Mr. Jack: The Commission has allocated PESCA funding between member states as follows:

	£ million (converted at £1 = 1·319 ecu)
Belgium	1·52
Denmark	12·3
Germany	17·44
Greece	20·55
Spain	31·46
France	21·15
Ireland	2·80
Italy	25·55
Netherlands	7·73
Portugal	19·41
United Kingdom	25·70

This breakdown is based on employment in the fisheries sector as a whole, and on the fleet reductions required by member states' multi-annual guidance programmes.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what actual or previous sums of money have been allocated to the British fishing industry under the Pesca initiative; what proportion of the total EU allocation is allocated to each of the receiving nations, approximately in each European nation; how much will be allocated per person employed in the fishing industry; and what are the funds to be made available in total and per person for Devon.

Mr. Jack: The Commission has allocated Pesca funding between member states as follows:

	£ million (converted at £1 = 1·319 ecu)
Belgium	1·52
Denmark	12·3
Germany	17·44
Greece	20·55
Spain	31·46
France	21·15
Ireland	2·80
Italy	25·55
Netherlands	7·73
Portugal	19·41
United Kingdom	25·70

This breakdown is based on employment in the fisheries sector as a whole, and on the fleet reductions required by member states' multi-annual guidance programmes.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Jack: Seven surveys seeking public opinion have been commissioned by MAFF and its agencies since 1 October 1992. Details of these surveys are as follows. It is not possible for commercial reasons to give the cost of each survey individually. However, in total these surveys cost £190,000.

Subject	*Objectives*	*Organisation*	*Period Conducted*
1. Leaflet communication Research	Response to proposed new leaflet on fridge use and maintenance	Reflections	Start: July 1993 End: December 1993
2. Foodsense Awareness Research	Response to awareness leaflet	RSGB	Start: July 1993 End: July 1993
3. Foodsense strategy Research	1. Knowledge of food hygiene issues 2. Existing anxieties regarding food hygiene 3. Awareness of existing foodsense leaflet 4. Awareness of alternative sources of information about food hygiene 5. Perceived area of uncertainty/ignorance	Andrew Irving and Associates	Start: September 1993 End: October 1993
4. Improved methods of food preference mapping	Consumer response to foods	Mobile sensory Testing Services Ltd	Start: October 1993 Expected end: October 1996
5. MAFF Exhibition Evaluation	Response to the MAFF Exhibition	Martin Hamblin	Start: June 1994 Expected end: January 1995
6. Exhibition Research	Appreciation of Exhibition at the National History Museum in South Kensington	Diagnostics	Start: August 1994 End: October 1994
7. Valuation of Non-use Benefits	1. The extent to which the surveyed population values natural areas. 2. The populations' willingness to pay for environmental benefits. 3. The socio-economic background of the population 4. The cultural and social characteristics of the population	University of Portsmouth	Start: October 1994 Expected end: October 1996

Badgers

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licences have been granted for interference with badger setts following the Badgers Act 1991, now the Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and for which purposes listed in section 10 of the 1992 Act such licences were issued.

Mrs. Browning: Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, this Department is responsible for issuing licences to interfere with badger setts for the purposes specified in sections 10(2) and 10(3).

The Badgers Act 1991 came into force in October 1991 and the first licences were issued in February 1992. The number issued since then and the purpose for which they were issued are as follows:

Licences issued to interfere with Badger Setts

Purpose for which interference licence was issued	*Number of licences issued for each period*		
	February–December 199[illegible]	*January–December1993*	*January–September 1994*
Preventing the spread of disease	—	—	—
Preventing serious damage	115	236	205
Agricultural or forestry operations	27	46	58
Maintenance etc of watercourse or drainage work	9	20	28
Controlling foxes	—	—	—

Rabbits

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on outbreaks of viral haemorrhagic disease amongst the wild rabbit population and on the availability of vaccines to treat it.

Mrs. Browning: Viral haemorrhagic disease has been confirmed as the cause of death of four wild rabbits whose bodies were found near Tenterden in Kent—one—and Exeter in Devon—three. The presence of VHD in our wild rabbit population had been suspected for some time but only recently confirmed. The disease has been notifiable in Great Britain since 1991 and a total of 50 outbreaks in domestic and commercial rabbits have been confirmed up to 24 October this year. There were 10 outbreaks in 1993.

No vaccines to protect rabbits against VHD are currently licensed for use in the United Kingdom. Two applications for licenses have however now been received by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and are urgently being assessed under the provisional licence arrangements that came into effect on 8 September 1994.

VHD is endemic in all rabbits, including wild rabbits, in much of the rest of Europe.

Research and Development

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest available figure for his Department's total research and development expenditure for 1993–94 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant terms.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer to the answer given by my predecessor on 20 July 1994, *Official Report,* column *350–51.*

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest figures available for the number of personnel employed in his Department's research and development programme for *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* the latest available date.

Mr. Waldegrave: The latest available figures are those given by my predecessor on 20 July 1994, *Official Report,* column *350.*

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Jack: Over the last year, there have been no occasions in which public funds have been used to finance the cost of spouses accompanying Ministers on overseas visits, and no occasion on which such travel took place at own cost.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Luxembourg on 24 and 25 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldergrave: This meeting of the Agriculture Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, again discussed the question of stronger rules for the protection of animals in transport. Member states' views continue to diverge substantially and no agreement was reached. I made clear the importance I attach to limits on travelling time and proper enforcement.

The Council also discussed a proposal from the Commission for a reduction in the required rate for set-aside for arable crops to be harvested in 1995. In the absence of an opinion from the European Parliament, no formal decision could be taken. But it was established that a qualified majority of the Council existed in favour of a reduction of three percentage points. I supported this reduction, which the Commission has assured the Council will be budget-neutral, and which will help to keep cereals market prices down and thus benefit the livestock sector.

The Council considered a discussion document from the Commission on reform of the support system for fruit and vegetables. I regard its ideas as a step in the right direction but hope that more radical changes can be agreed. The Commission intends to present detailed proposals shortly.

Finally, the Council adopted by unanimity various detailed amendments to the rules for granting aids of a structural nature. Among other things, these make it optional, rather than obligatory, for member states to operate schemes of aid for investment on farms.

Woodlands

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the ancient woodland inventory undertaken by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to establish a register of ancient woodland in the United Kingdom.

Sir Paul Beresford: I have been asked to reply.

An inventory of ancient woodland in Great Britain, excluding Northern Ireland, was produced by the Nature Conservancy Council between 1981 and 1991. Copies of this, arranged by county in England and Wales, and by district in Scotland, have been widely distributed to local authorities, the Forestry Commission, to conservation bodies and to landowners' representatives such as the Timber Growers Association.

Since 1991, responsibility for maintaining and revising the inventories has been passed to English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage. These bodies update the information on particular sites in the light of new survey information, including information provided by the organisations and individuals to whom the inventory has gone. Assessment of and amendments to the inventory are thus a continuous process. Information about individual sites or areas is available on request.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General whether his departments organise receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

The Attorney-General: No such receptions are organised in the departments for which I am responsible.

EDUCATION

School Meals

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the average number of school meals claimed by *(a)* local education maintained primary schools, *(b)* local education authority maintained secondary schools, *(c)* grant-maintained primary schools and *(d)* grant-maintained secondary schools in each year since 1990.

Mr. Robin Squire: The available information is as follows:

Average number of school meals taken by day pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools in England on the census date in January: 1990 to 1994 (provisional)

	LEA Maintained Primary	*Grant Maintained Primary*	*LEA Maintained* [1]*Secondary*	Grant Maintained [1]Secondary
1990	96	–[2]	274	373
1991	94	–[2]	286	363
1992	95	117	300	384
1993	97	139	321	384
1994[3]	100	123	331	422

[1] excludes sixth form colleges which ceased to be classified as schools from 1 April 1993

[2] There were no grant-maintained primary schools in 1990 or 1991

[3] provisional

Cultural and Linguistic Exchanges

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what resources the DFE devotes to assist cultural and linguistic exchanges in *(a)* the primary sector and *(b)* the secondary sector;

(2) how many language or cultural exchange arrangements exist within the state sector of education.

Mr. Boswell: DFE grant to the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges in 1994–95 is £4·2 million. Of this, some £860,000 is targeted at the primary sector and some £1·8 million is targeted at the secondary sector. The rest is targeted at the further and higher education sectors.

The services offered include school linking, foreign language assistants, international in-service training for teachers and participation in multi-lateral—including EU—programmes. It is estimated that some 130,000 state-sector pupils participated in school exchanges in 1991–92, the latest year for which data are available.

The DFE also provides funding to the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers. It is estimated that in 1993–94 some £262,000 was spent in support of primary teacher exchange; and some £230,000 on secondary teacher exchange.

Higher and Further Education Fees

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average registration fee charged to home students by higher and further education colleges in each year since 1990.

Mr. Boswell: Information on the level of registration fees is not collected centrally.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in her Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There have been no occasions in the last year when the spouse of a Minister in the Department for Education has travelled abroad to accompany a Minister on public duties.

PE Teachers

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many physical education teachers were employed by local education authorities for each year since 1979.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is only available for 1977, 1984, 1988 and 1992 from the secondary school staffing surveys. The number of full-time teachers in all maintained secondary schools in England who were teaching physical education in each of these years was as follows:

1977	41·8 thousand
1984	37·9 thousand
1988	30·3 thousand
1992	24·4 thousand

The same surveys give information on the number of teachers with a post A-level qualification in physical education regardless of whether they were teaching it. The number of full-time teachers in maintained secondary schools with a physical education qualification in each year was:

1977	33·9 thousand
1984	36·4 thousand
1988	31·6 thousand
1992	30·3 thousand

In both the above cases the 1992 figures include teachers in grant maintained schools.

No figures are available giving the number of physical education teachers in primary schools or special schools. However, the 1987 primary school staffing survey showed that 12·8,000 teachers in maintained primary schools had a qualification in physical education.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether her Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Boswell: The Department for Education does not organise receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the number of school playing fields by local education authority for *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1987, *(d)* 1992 and *(e)* the latest available date.

Mr. Robin Squire: No information is available for years before 1993. The latest available data will take a little time to assemble. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the capital receipts from the sale of school playing fields for each of the last six years by education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally.

TREASURY

Foster Carers

Ms Coffey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if allowances paid to local authority foster carers are non-taxable and are not regarded as income.

Sir George Young: To the extent that payments made to a foster carer do no more than meet the actual costs of caring for someone, no tax is payable. But if a profit arises on payments made to reward the foster carer's services in providing care, this profit is taxable.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if foster carers in receipt of boarding-out allowances and who do not receive an additional fee are not classified as self-employed.

Sir George Young: It will depend on whether or not an individual is self-employed, in particular the way in which the caring is organised. Whether a foster carer is self employed or not, to the extent that payments received do no more than meet the actual costs of caring, no tax will be payable. If a profit arises on payments made to reward the foster carer's services in providing care, this profit is taxable.

Where basic boarding allowances paid to foster carers do no more than re-imburse actual costs, no taxable profit arises.

This is reflected in National Foster Care Association guidelines, published in its leaflet NFC 2008, which has been agreed with the Inland Revenue.

Tobacco and Alcohol

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what extra measures have been taken to prevent the illegal importation of tobacco and alcohol since the opening of the single market; how much they have cost; and what is the value of the illegally imported tobacco and alcohol that has been seized and destroyed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs and Excise has allocated some 240 staff to single market excise work most of whom are specially trained excise verification officers—EVOs—whose remit is to detect and prosecute anyone attempting to defraud the Revenue in this way. The annual cost of an EVO is about £30,000. In the 20 months to August 1994 the revenue value of seized tobacco and alcohol was over £4 million. These goods either have been, or will be, destroyed.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the volume of alcohol and tobacco which has been illegally imported since the opening of the single market; and what volume has been destroyed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is by definition difficult to form a reliable estimate of the total volume of smuggled goods. In the 20–month period to August 1994 Customs seized 4,298,927 cigarettes, 22,912 cigars, 25,517 kg of other tobacco and 1,188,449 litres of alcoholic drinks. All the goods sized either have been, or will, be destroyed subject to condemnation proceedings.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated loss to the Exchequer of the illegal importation of tobacco and alcohol from the continent in each year since the opening of the single market.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is notoriously difficult to calculate the true extent of smuggling. An assumed detection rate of one in 20, in the calendar year 1993 would suggest a revenue loss of the order of £35 million. The revenue value of seizures during the eight months of 1994 was £2·4 million.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many prosecutions there have been, since the opening of the single market, for the illegal importation of alcohol and tobacco; and how many have been successful.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To 31 August 1994 Customs and Excise prosecuted 289 individuals for the illegal importation of alcohol and tobacco from other EU countries. The courts acquitted in two cases although one of these is the subject of an appeal by Customs.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the rate of excise duty, VAT or other tax on *(a)* wine, *(b)* spirits and *(c)* beer in each EU country; and what is the difference in each case for United Kingdom levels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The rates of excise duty and VAT on wine, spirits and beer in each EU country are shown in the following table.

	Spirits		*Table Wine*		*Beer*	
	£ per hl pure alcohol	*VAT rate per cent.*	*£ per hl at 11 per cent. aby*	*VAT rate per cent.*	*£ per hl at 5 per cent.*	*VAT rate per cent.*
Belgium	1,289.60	20·5	29.87	20·5	14.98	20·5
Denmark	3,070.90	25	69.31	25	34.05	25
France	1,106.23	18·6	2.69	18·6	7.63	18·6
Germany	1,066.95	15	—	15	8.05	15
Greece	400.12	18	—	18	8.28	18
Ireland	2,161.39	21	212.88	21	77.48	21
Italy	420.37	19	—	13	13.93	19
Luxembourg	852.97	15	—	12	8.12	15
Netherlands	1,236.94	17·5	40.11	17·50	17.5	17·5
Portugal	549.76	16	—	5	10.81	16
Spain	425.47	15	—	15	6.37	15
United Kingdom	1,981.00	17·5	134.77	17·5	52.25	17·5

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Departments organise receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's departments do not organise receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) of 20 October, *Official Report*, column 417, if he will make a statement on the emergency ECOFIN meetings attended on 21 October with special reference to the United Kingdom's case against the EC Commission in the European Court of Justice regarding the proposal in respect of Italian milk quotas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on 25 October.

Firearms

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the total seizures of illegal firearms for each port of entry for each month since January 1992.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs do not hold central statistics for seizures of weapons that can be broken down in this way. Such figures could be produced only at disproportionate cost. However, the table sets out the number of detections of illegal weapons by Customs and Excise per collection—regional command—for each quarter since 1 April 1993.

Collection	*Number of detections*						
	30 June 1993	*30 September 1993*	*31 December 1993*	*31 March 1994*	*30 June 1994*	*30 September 1994*	*Total*
Belfast	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Birmingham	—	—	—	2	1	—	3
Dover	26	26	5	1	22	30	110
East Anglia	3	2	5	5	5	23	43
East Midlands	—	2	1	1	3	—	7
Edinburgh	2	—	6	11	—	7	26
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	2	2	4
Leeds	2	—	—	6	2	9	19
Liverpool	8	—	—	—	—	8	16
London Airports	1	74	4	46	16	19	160
London Central	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
London North and West	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
London Port	2	8	12	—	27	17	66
London South	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Manchester	—	1	—	—	6	9	16
Northhampton	2	1	1	4	6	—	14

Collection	*Number of detections* 30 June 1993	30 September 1993	31 December 1993	31 March 1994	30 June 1994	30 September 1994	*Total*
Northern England	4	2	—	1	—	—	7
Southhampton	10	16	—	11	26	13	76
South Wales and Borders	7	1	6	7	1	—	22
South West England	2	2	2	2	3	10	21
Thames Valley	—	—	—	1	3	2	6
Total detections	70	135	43	98	123	150	619
Total firearms seized[1]	2,214	3,045	1,734	170	220	2,190	9,573

[1] Firearms includes: handguns, rifles, shotguns, gas canisters and stun guns.

Press Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of press officers currently employed by his Departments who are normally based *(a)* in the Department in London *(b)* in the House and *(c)* at each other location.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The number of press officers currently employed by the Departments responsible to the Chancellor of the Exchequer is shown in the table.

	Number
HM Treasury	7
HM Customs & Excise	4
Board of Inland Revenue	7
Department for National Savings	2
Registry of Friendly Societies	1
Crown Estate Office	2

All of these staff are based in London. None are normally based in the House. Agencies which are accountable to the Chancellor and which employ press officers are not included in the table.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Court Sentences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of people sentenced in the courts received *(a)* a custodial sentence and *(b)* a non-custodial sentence in each month of 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The 1993 information, which is provisional, on sentencing at both the magistrates' court and the Crown court is given in the tables A to C. Data provided by the Lord Chancellor's Department for committals for trial at the Crown court is given in table D.

*Table A Persons sentenced at magistrates' courts for all offences by month, type of offence and type of sentence England and Wales 1993**

Indictable Offences

	Total sentenced		*Custodial sentences*		*Non-Custodial sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
January	20,810	100	709	3	20,101	97
February	19,578	100	909	5	18,669	95
March	22,451	100	1,155	5	21,296	95
April	19,876	100	1,044	5	18,832	95
May	19,077	100	983	5	18,094	95
June	20,698	100	1,135	5	19,563	95
July	20,683	100	1,159	6	19,524	94
August	18,934	100	1,287	7	17,674	93
September	20,163	100	1,465	7	18,698	93
October	18,995	100	1,435	8	17,560	92
November	20,479	100	1,409	7	19,070	93
December	16,497	100	1,208	7	15,289	93
Total	238,241	100	13,898	6	224,343	94

Summary non-motoring Offences

	Total Sentenced		*Custodial Sentences*		*Non-custodial Sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
January	37,341	100	170	0	37,171	100
February	34,623	100	213	1	34,410	99
March	42,220	100	283	1	41,937	99
April	35,866	100	237	1	35,629	99
May	34,889	100	229	1	34,660	99
June	40,034	100	224	1	39,810	99
July	38,790	100	266	1	38,524	99
August	36,659	100	309	1	36,350	99
September	39,463	100	299	1	39,164	99
October	37,181	100	331	1	36,850	99
November	39,024	100	323	1	38,701	99
December	31,405	100	334	1	31,071	99
Total	447,495	100	3,218	1	444,277	99

Summary Motoring Offences

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
January	58,887	100	424	1	58,463	99
February	54,406	100	498	1	53,908	99
March	61,334	100	600	1	60,734	99
April	54,268	100	572	1	53,696	99
May	49,279	100	541	1	48,738	99
June	55,780	100	637	1	55,143	99
July	54,416	100	668	1	53,748	99
August	52,369	100	664	1	51,705	99
September	57,974	100	854	1	57,120	99
October	53,598	100	855	2	52,743	98
November	57,075	100	873	2	56,202	98
December	45,870	100	714	2	45,156	98
Total	655,256	100	7,900	1	647,356	99

All Offences

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
January	117,038	100	1,303	1	115,735	99
February	108,607	100	1,620	1	106,987	99
March	126,005	100	2,038	2	123,967	98
April	110,010	100	1,853	2	108,157	98
May	103,245	100	1,753	2	101,492	98
June	116,512	100	1,996	2	114,516	98
July	113,889	100	2,093	2	111,796	98
August	107,962	100	2,260	2	105,702	98
September	117,600	100	2,618	2	114,982	98
October	109,774	100	2,621	2	107,153	98
November	116,578	100	2,605	2	113,973	98
December	93,772	100	2,256	2	91,516	98
Total	1,340,992	100	25,016	2	1,315,976	98

Table B - Persons sentenced at the crown court for all offences by month, type of offence and type of sentence England and Wales 1993[1]

Indictable offences

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
January	5,831	100	2,375	41	3,456	59
February	6,111	100	2,728	45	3,383	55
March	6,942	100	3,237	47	3,705	53
April	5,677	100	2,743	48	2,934	52
May	5,369	100	2,639	49	2,730	51
June	5,251	100	2,600	50	2,651	50
July	6,266	100	3,186	51	3,080	49
August	4,567	100	2,382	52	2,185	48
September	5,265	100	2,741	52	2,524	48
October	5,481	100	2,823	52	2,658	48
November	5,521	100	2,755	50	2,766	50
December	4,699	100	2,526	54	2,173	46
Total	66,980	100	32,735	49	34,245	51

Summary non-motoring offences

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
January	213	100	26	12	187	88
February	189	100	38	20	151	80
March	208	100	33	16	175	84
April	162	100	34	21	128	79
May	174	100	32	18	142	82
June	126	100	20	16	106	84
July	159	100	30	19	129	81
August	120	100	23	19	97	81
September	137	100	33	24	104	76
October	130	100	32	25	98	75
November	141	100	38	27	103	73
December	107	100	18	17	89	83
Total	1,866	100	357	19	1,509	81

Summary motoring offences

	Total sentenced		*Custodial sentences*		*Non-custodial sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
January	118	100	28	24	90	76
February	122	100	28	23	94	77
March	91	100	33	36	58	64
April	88	100	27	31	61	69
May	84	100	24	29	60	71
June	73	100	23	32	50	68
July	93	100	24	26	69	74
August	74	100	21	28	53	72
September	80	100	21	26	59	74
October	68	100	20	29	48	71
November	88	100	23	26	65	74
December	73	100	19	26	54	74
Total	1,052	100	291	28	761	72

All offences

	Total sentenced		*Custodial sentences*		*Non-custodial sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
January	6,162	100	2,429	39	3,733	61
February	6,422	100	2,794	44	3,628	56
March	7,241	100	3,303	46	3,938	54
April	5,927	100	2,804	47	3,123	53
May	5,627	100	2,695	48	2,932	52
June	5,450	100	2,643	48	2,807	52
July	6,518	100	3,240	50	3,278	50
August	4,761	100	2,426	51	2,335	49
September	5,482	100	2,795	51	2,687	49
October	5,679	100	2,875	51	2,804	49
November	5,750	100	2,816	49	2,934	51
December	4,879	100	2,563	53	2,316	47
Total	69,898	100	33,383	48	36,515	52

Table C—persons sentenced at all courts for all offences by month, types of offence and type of sentence, England and Wales 1993[1]

Indictable offences

	Total sentenced		*Custodial sentences*		*Non-custodial sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
January	26,647	100	3,084	12	23,557	88
February	25,689	100	3,637	14	22,052	86
March	29,393	100	4,392	15	25,001	85
April	25,553	100	3,787	15	21,766	85
May	24,446	100	3,622	15	20,824	85
June	25,949	100	3,735	14	22,214	86
July	26,949	100	4,345	16	22,604	84
August	23,501	100	3,669	16	19,832	84
September	25,428	100	4,206	17	21,222	83
October	24,476	100	4,258	17	20,210	83
November	26,000	100	4,164	16	21,836	84
December	21,196	100	3,734	16	17,462	82
Total	305,221	100	46,633	15	258,588	85

Summary non-motoring offences

	Total sentenced		*Custodial sentences*		*Non-custodial sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
January	37,554	100	196	1	37,358	99
February	34,812	100	251	1	34,561	99
March	42,428	100	316	1	42,112	99
April	36,028	100	271	1	35,757	99
May	35,063	100	261	1	34,802	99
June	40,160	100	244	1	39,916	99
July	38,949	100	296	1	38,653	99
August	36,779	100	332	1	36,447	99
September	39,600	100	332	1	39,268	99
October	37,311	100	363	1	36,948	99
November	39,165	100	361	1	38,804	99
December	31,512	100	352	1	31,160	99
Total	44,9361	100	3,575	1	445,786	99

Summary motoring offences

	Total sentenced		*Custodial sentences*		*Non-custodial sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
January	59,005	100	452	1	58,553	99
February	54,528	100	526	1	54,002	99
March	61,425	100	633	1	50,792	99
April	54,356	100	599	1	53,757	99
May	49,363	100	565	1	48,798	99
June	55,853	100	660	1	55,193	99
July	54,509	100	692	1	53,817	99
August	52,443	100	685	1	51,758	99
September	58,054	100	875	2	57,179	98
October	53,666	100	875	2	52,791	98
November	57,163	100	896	2	56,267	98
December	45,943	100	733	2	45,210	98
Total	656,308	100	8791	1	648,117	99

All offences

	Total sentenced		*Custodial sentences*		*Non-custodial sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
January	123,200	100	3,732	3	119,468	97
February	115,029	100	4,414	4	110,615	96
March	133,246	100	5,341	4	127,905	96
April	115,937	100	4,657	4	111,280	96
May	108,872	100	4,448	4	104,424	96
June	121,962	100	4,639	4	117,323	96
July	120,407	100	5,333	4	115,074	96
August	112,723	100	4,686	4	108,037	96
September	123,082	100	5,413	4	117,669	96
October	115,453	100	5,486	5	109,957	95
November	122,328	100	5,421	4	116,907	96
December	98,651	100	4,819	5	93,832	95
Total	1,410,890	100	58,399	4	1,352,491	96

Table D Proportionate use of immediate custody for defendants sentenced at the Crown Court following committal for trial. England and Wales 1992–1994

Month	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
January	48	42	52
February	48	46	54
March	49	47	52
April	50	49	54
May	49	50	54
June	49	51	53
July	48	52	53
August	48	54	53
September	48	54	—
October	42	52	—
November	42	52	—
December	43	54	—

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Howard: The following is the information about expenditure on official hospitality by my Department.

Year	*Department (excluding agencies) £*	*Agencies £*
1990–1991	30,080	Nil
1991–1992	28,094	Nil
1992–1993	21,651	[2]34,000
1993–1994	15,233	[3]33,784
1994–1995[1]	7,863	[4]11,297

[1] To 30 September.

[2] Expenditure by the Fire Service college trading fund.

[3] Includes £29,771 by the Fire Service college trading fund, £307 by the Prison Service agency, £1,706 by the United Kingdom Passport agency and £2,000 by the Forensic Science Service agency.

[4] Includes £10,596 by the Fire Service college trading fund, £76 by the Prison Service agency, £225 by the United Kingdom Passport agency and £400 by the Forensic Science Service agency.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about incidents of domestic violence in each of the regions of England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: The information available has been provided by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and is in the table; 1993 was the first year that HMIC collected information on incidents of domestic violence recorded by the police in England and Wales. The HMIC is in the process of collecting more reliable data.

Domestic violence incidents recorded by the Police in England and Wales in 1993

Forces	*Year 1993*
Avon and Somerset	Not available
Bedfordshire	Not available
Cambridgeshire	2,253
Cheshire	17,918
City of London	—
Cleveland	3,448
Cumbria	654
Derbyshire	7,606
Devon and Cornwall	Not available
Dorset	5,624
Durham	3,277
Dyfed-Powys	1,223
Essex	1,724
Gloucestershire	2,401
Greater Manchester	33,988
Gwent	135
Hampshire	Not available
Hertfordshire	3,367
Humberside	8,401
Kent	5,875
Lancashire	6,090
Leicestershire	4,075
Lincolnshire	373
Merseyside	8,850
Norfolk	881
North Wales	287
North Yorkshire	15,841
Northamptonshire	2,104
Northumbria	2,071
Nottinghamshire	1,990
South Wales	3,451
South Yorkshire	482
Staffordshire	Not available
Suffolk	1,396
Surrey	3,155
Sussex	1,157
Thames Valley	9,167
Warwickshire	Not available
West Mercia	916
West Midlands	12,151
West Yorkshire	11,315
Wiltshire	1,517
Provincial Total	185,163
Metropolitan Police	11,420
England and Wales Total	196,583

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Howard: The surveys carried out by the Home Department since 1 October 1992 which have included questions on public opinion are as listed. Not all the surveys were primarily focused on public opinion. The fee paid to successful contractors is not shown as this is regarded by the Central Statistical Office as a matter of commercial confidentiality.

1. *Subject:*—1994 British Crime Survey

Objectives:—To examine the extent of criminal victimisation amongst householders. The survey includes some opinion questions.

Period:—January–May 1994 (fieldwork)

Organisation:—Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (fieldwork)

2. *Subject:*—1994 Commercial Crime Survey

Objectives:—A telephone survey to examine the extent of criminal victimisation against retail and manufacturing business premises. The survey includes some opinion questions.

Period:—April–May 1994 (fieldwork)

Organisation:—British Market Research Bureau (fieldwork)

3. *Subject:*—Equal Opportunities in the Fire Service

Objectives:—To examine the image of the fire service as a potential employer amongst women and ethnic minorities

Period:—May–August 1993

Organisation:—Harris Research

4. *Subject:*—Public Attitudes Towards the Police

Objectives:—One of a series of surveys conducted in recent years to assess the impact of the police Quality of Service Programme.

Period:—October 1993 (fieldwork)

Organisation:—Office of Population Censuses and Survey (Omnibus Survey) (fieldwork)

5. *Subject:*—Passport Agency Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Objectives:—Monthly surveys to establish the age profile and renewal habits of passport holders together with their expectations and opinions of the service provided by the Agency.

Period:—May 1992–October 1994

Organisation:—Passport Agency and Eurodata Ltd (data processing)

6. *Subject:*—Partners Against Crime Campaign

Objectives:—To assess level of support for local community crime prevention and Neighbourhood Watch.

Period:—September–October 1994

Organisation:—NOP on behalf of Public Relations Branch, Home Office

7. *Subject:*—Witness Intimidation: Strategies for Prevention

Objectives:—The aim of this postal survey was to assess the extent to which witnesses of crime were harassed and intimidated and to find out if witnesses were satisfied with the police response. Two public surveys were carried out: one by internal staff, the other by an external contractor. Both surveys were more concerned with obtained peoples' experience of intimidation than their opinions.

Period:—November–December 1993

Organisation:—Internal survey: Police Research Group, Home Office, External survey: Research Surveys of Great Britain (RSGB)

8. *Subject:*—Assessing the Expandable Side Handled Baton.

Objectives:—The aim of this project was to assess the merits expandable side handled baton as an alternative to the standard issue truncheon. Part of this project involved carrying out a small face-to-face survey to assess the attitudes of the public towards the acceptability of the new baton.

Period:—6 and 7 May 1994

Organisation:—NOP (on behalf of Touch Ross)

9. *Subject:*—CRIME PROFILING FOR RESIDENTIAL BURGLARIES

Objectives:—The aim of this project is to determine the most cost-effective procedures for investigating residential burglaries. Part of this involved carrying out face-to-face interviews with victims to assess their perceptions of the level of service they received from the police so that this information could be related to the method and outcome of the investigation.

Period:—April–October 1994

Organisation:—Operational Research Group, Birmingham University

10. *Subject:*—NORWICH CRIME LINE STUDY

Objectives:—To examine satisfaction among victims with service provided by the Norwich Crime Reporting/Advice Line (for reporting minor crime over the phone).

Period:—February–March 1993

Organisation:—Police Research Group, Home Office

11. *Subject:*—CRIME SCREENING STUDY (VICTIMS OF BURGLARY AND AUTOCRIME IN THREE POLICE FORCES.)

Objectives:—A telephone survey to obtain victims' opinions on the police's performance, and the public's priorities for investigation.

Period:—August–September 1994

Organisation:—Centre for Study of Public Order, Leicestershire University

Overstayers

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of the Russian Federation have overstayed on their visas in the last 12 months.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available.

Interception of Communications

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been made to the interception of communications tribunal challenging his Department's authorisation to intercept the communications of individuals and organisations during the period to date from 1985; how many of these applications have resulted in quashing of the relevant authorisation, destruction of copies of materials intercepted under the authorisations concerned and payment of financial compensation; on average, how long it has taken for the tribunal to consider and reach an outcome on individual applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The number of applications received by the tribunal in each year is as follows:

Year	*Number of applications received*
1986/87[1]	41
1987	32
1988	30
1989	49
1990	59
1991	58
1992	45
1993	41

[1] April 1986 to April 1987.

On no occasion has the tribunal concluded that there has been a contravention of sections 2 to 5 of the Interception of Communication Act 1985.

In 1993 the average time taken to complete a tribunal investigation was eight weeks.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Howard: No such receptions are organised.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to publish his conclusions on the consultation paper on wheel clamping on private land.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are considering what action to take in respect of wheel clamping on private land. The consultation paper referred to produced much useful information from interested parties. It did not, however produce any consensus on how to ensure that any measure introduced to prevent or deter irresponsible and heavy-handed wheel clamping on private land does not prevent sensible measures from being taken to control genuine parking problems. We will make our conclusions known as soon as possible.

Merseyside Police Authority

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the proposed changes in funding for policing for the Merseyside police authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have listened very carefully to the many concerns which have been expressed from Merseyside and elsewhere about the version of the new police funding formula which was exemplified in September. We are now revising the formula to ensure the capacity of police authorities to maintain existing levels of service.

Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (Demonstration)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reports he has received from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis concerning the events on 9 October during and after the march and rally against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Maclean: The Commissioner has provided my right hon. and learned Friend with details of the disorder which occurred.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Islington, North of 10 October requesting an inquiry into the events of 9 October after the march and rally against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend will be replying to the hon. Member's letter shortly.

Firearms

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are *(a)* the total number of firearms certificates current in London, *(b)* the number issued in the past year in London and *(c)* the number of prosecutions made in the past year in London for illegal possession of firearms.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested at *(a)* and *(b)* is published in Home Office statistical bulletin 'Firearm Certificate Statistics, England and Wales 1993' (issue 22/94), table 2, a copy of which can be found in the Library.

One hundred and eight persons were proceeded against in the area covered by the Metropolitan and City of London police forces for the offence of possessing firearms or ammunition without a licence in 1993.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the licensing of replica guns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Any imitation firearm which can be readily converted to fire live ammunition is subject to stringent licensing control. But licensing other imitation firearms would be neither feasible nor effective in combatting misuse.

The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1994 has made it an offence to possess an imitation firearm with intent to cause fear of unlawful violence. The possession of an imitation firearm in the commission of an indictable offence carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Charities Act 1992

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make any order or regulations under *(a)* section 38 and *(b)* section 39 of the Charities Act 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The deregulation task force on charities and voluntary organisations recommended, among many proposed changes to the law and regulations affecting charities, that the powers in sections 70 and 71 of the Charities Act 1993—formerly sections 38 and 39 of the 1992 Act—be used to amend the investment powers of charity trustees. The position remains, as indicated in the task force's report, that this is under review: first priority is being given to bringing into force new provisions in part II of the 1992 Act—control of fund-raising—and part VI of the 1993 Act—charity accounts, reports and returns.

Gerry Adams

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to lift the exclusion order in respect of Gerry Adams made under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts.

Mr. Howard: The exclusion order against Mr. Adams was revoked on 21 October.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Howard: Since 28 October 1993, there have been two occasions when the spouse of a Home Office Minister has accompanied the Minister on public duties overseas. The total cost to public funds was £8,317.

On both occasions the necessary approval was sought in advance of the visit and full official programmes drawn up by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, concentrating on charity work relating to Home Office interests, particularly drugs, were followed.

There was one occasion when a spouse accompanied a Home Office Minister at own cost.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of full-time equivalent section 11 posts held for each education authority in England and Wales for the current financial year.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The table lists all education authorities in England and Wales with projects approved for funding under section 11, including those which, since 1 April 1994, have received such finding from the Department of the Environment's single regeneration budget.

Authority	*Number of approved posts (FTE)*
Avon	43·6
Barking and Dagenham	16·6
Barnet	59·31
Bedfordshire	223·9
Berkshire	81·0
Bexley	7·41
Birmingham	456·89
Bolton	63·4
Bradford	411·36
Brent	[1]92·4
Buckinghamshire	91·84
Bury	35·65
Calderdale	74·54
Cambridgeshire	80·0
Camden	89·0
Cheshire	7·0
Cleveland	46·6
Coventry	133·0
Croydon	81·7
Derbyshire	85·5
Devon	[1]1·00
Doncaster	10·95
Dudley	70·6
Durham	11·0
Ealing	188·1
East Sussex	11·6
Enfield	69·5

Authority	*Number of approved posts (FTE)*
Essex	2·0
Gateshead	2·0
Gloucestershire	16·7
Greenwich	104·3
Gwent	21·0
Hackney	228·5
Hammersmith and Fulham	44·4
Hampshire	22·9
Haringey	192·28
Harrow	37·0
Havering	3·0
Hereford and Worcester	24·0
Hertfordshire	130·4
Hillingdon	23·35
Hounslow	[1]84·4
Humberside	23·4
Islington	93·0
Kensington and Chelsea	45·0
Kent	88·51
Kingston	7·88
Kirklees	215·42
Lambeth	[2]61·2
Lancashire	330·94
Leeds	129·5
Leicestershire	216·87
Lewisham	111·45
Lincolnshire	4·5
Liverpool	[2]16·7
Manchester	[1]164·28
Merton	34·28
Newcastle	17·5
Newham	141·8
Norfolk	5·65
Northamptonshire	50·91
North Tyneside	9·7
North Yorks	4·0
Nottinghamshire	99·9
Oldham	117·3
Oxfordshire	[2]58·4
Redbridge	59·57
Richmond	4·5
Rochdale	75·7
Rotherham	32·9
St Helens	1·35
Salford	6·5
Sandwell	97·5
Sheffield	137·5
Shropshire	7·0
South Glamorgan	39·9
Southwark	[1]97·1
Staffordshire	59·75
Stockport	6·52
Suffolk	22·96
Sunderland	9·29
Surrey	24·5
Sutton	3·5
Tameside	35·49
Tower Hamlets	[1]379·5
Trafford	20·5
Wakefield	22·0
Walsall	78·7
Waltham Forest	138·0
Wandsworth	86·7
Warwickshire	67·42
Westminster	96·4
West Sussex	16·89
Wigan	[2]3·5
Wiltshire	10·2
Wirral	6·0
Wolverhampton	138·5

Notes:

The number of posts shown is as at 24 October 1994 *except*

[1] to be finally confirmed with the authority.

[2] number of posts eligible for grant funding as at 1 April 1994; awaiting information from the authority about possible changes in the light of the announced reduction in funding from 1994–95.

Financial Times (Injunction)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the cost of the recent injunction obtained by him on the *Financial Times* was borne on public funds.

Mr. Howard: No

Open Government

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the review of the blanket retention of civil and home defence records announced in the White Paper on open government has been completed.

Mr. Howard: The review of the blanket retention of civil and home defence records has been completed. I am pleased to announce that with the approval of the Lord Chancellor, it has been decided not to renew the blanket provision. This is in line with the open government initiatives introduced by the Government where the emphasis is on release rather than retention of records.

Government Departments which hold records relating to civil and home defence will now review them individually on the basis of guidance provided jointly by my Department and the Cabinet Office, with a view to releasing those which are no longer regarded as sensitive.

Prison Assaults

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the number of assaults *(a)* by prisoners on prisoners, *(b)* by prisoners on staff and *(c)* other assaults which took place in each prison in England and Wales each month of 1992 and 1993;

(2) if he will list the number of assaults *(a)* by prisoners on prisoners and *(b)* by prisoners on staff, in each prison in England and Wales for each month of 1994 to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 26 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your two recent Questions asking for the number of assaults by prisoners on other prisoners and on staff and others in each prison in England and Wales for each month of 1992, 1993 and of 1994 to the latest available date.

The enclosed tables give the numbers of assaults proved at adjudication under the prison discipline system for January 1992 to September 1994. In view of their bulk, I have arranged for them to be placed in the Library of the House rather than printed in the Official Report. Information on the small number of assaults other than on staff or prisoners is included with assaults on staff in the tables; it is published separately on an annual basis by establishment in "Statistics of offences against prison discipline and punishments, England and Wales" (Cm 2411 for 1992 and Cm 2664 for 1993), copies of which are in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cuba

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the recent visit of the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology to Cuba.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I visited Cuba between 12 and 14 September 1994, as the guest of the Cuban Minister for Foreign Trade, Senor Ricardo Cabrisas. It was the first visit to Cuba by a British Minister since 1975. I was accompanied by a 15-strong team of business men and women and by the chairman and director of the Department's Caribbean trade advisory group—CARITAG. We were warmly received and had productive meetings with key Cuban Ministers and with President Castro.

Following the ending of preferential trade arrangements with the former Soviet Union, Cuba has begun to reform its economy along more market-oriented lines. The Cuban Government described this process as irreversible and the intention is to take it forward.

On this basis, United Kingdom industry can respond more positively to Cuba's welcome of trade, investment and advice from Britain. It recognises its outstanding debt as an impediment to trade on normal commercial terms. The business group and I identified opportunities for British business in the provision of advice on the management of a market economy and in longer-term joint ventures. Commercial negotiations during our visit were advanced in transport, agri-business, construction, tourism and financial services.

On 14 September, I initialled a bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement which will give further confidence to investors. Cuba is moving towards a more open trading relationship with developed market economies and this should encourage domestic reform. Subject to this process being continued and developed, I have asked CARITAG to make proposals for a private-sector-led group to co-ordinate discussion and to progress the many specific commercial and related issues raised during my visit.

Indonesia

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his criteria for proscribing trade on the basis of a country's human rights record; and if he will make a statement on their application to Indonesia.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Government subscribe to the common criteria for arms transfers agreed with EU partners at Luxembourg in 1991 and at Lisbon in 1992, and the principles governing arms transfers agreed by the forum for security co-operation of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe in November 1993. These include consideration of human rights.

No prohibition on trade has been introduced in respect of Indonesia. Export licences are required for some goods and applications are considered on a case by case basis taking into account the above criteria as appropriate.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about recent exports of British armaments to Indonesia.

Mr. Ian Taylor: It is not normal practice to divulge details of export licences, unless the requirements of confidentiality are outweighed by public interest considerations.

In this case, such considerations justify disclosing that to date in 1994 we have issued 26 export licences for goods in schedule 1, group 1 part III of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1994—the military list. The total value of these goods licensed for export is £14·69 million. Licences are valid for two years.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that the human rights record of the Indonesian Government are taken into account when deciding whether to grant an export licence for the export of tanks to Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The human rights record of a recipient country is one of a number of factors taken into account during the consideration of an application for an export licence for military and paramilitary equipment.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The total number of permanent staff employed by my Department on 1 October was 10,594—part-time staff are counted as half. The proportion employed in each standard region is shown in the following table:

Proportion by standard region	*Percentage of total*
Northern Ireland	0·05
Scotland	4·05
Wales	17·62
North	2·19
North West	3·29
Yorkshire and Humberside	2·49
East Midlands	2·10
West Midlands	4·06
South West	2·23
South East	[1]60·70
East Anglia	1·22

[1] of which London—Inner—46·06 per cent., Outer—11·94 per cent. Rest of South East—2·7 per cent.

Fuel Cell Advisory Panel

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the fuel cell advisory panel in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The fuel cell advisory panel was established in April 1992 and has met on a total of eight occasions, with three meetings in 1992–93 and four in 1993–94. Secretarial support is provided by the energy technology support unit—ETSU—which manages my Department's advanced fuel cell research and development programme, on which the panel advises. This advice, which includes the assessment of individual proposals for funding, is given through discussion at the panel's meetings, the minutes of which are not published for reasons of commercial confidentiality. As an advisory body the panel does not disburse funds itself and membership is unpaid.

The administrative costs of the panel are met from the programme management budget and published each year in a report prepared by the Cabinet Office. A copy of the latest edition, "Public Bodies 1993", is available in the Library of the House. DTI expenditure on projects within the programme amounted to £0·36 million in 1992–93 and £0·83 million in 1993–94. The budget for 1994–95 is £1 million.

The total value of projects supported by the programme to date is £14·7 million, for a DTI contribution, including future commitments, of £2·6 million. Two technical strategies, for solid polymer and solid oxide fuel cells, prepared by ETSU and endorsed by the panel, were published by ETSU this summer and I have placed copies in the Library of the House. A wide range of information on projects within the programme is also published by ETSU.

Committees

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Advisory Committee for Arbitration Law in each of the last three years.

Mr. Heseltine: The departmental advisory committee on arbitration law has met in full once a year in each of the last three years. The Committee has no dedicated secretarial or advisory staff nor does it have an allocated budget or expenditure functions. Secretarial support is provided by staff in my Department. My Department in co-operation with the committee published a consultation document on a draft Arbitration Bill in February 1994. No other submissions have been published in the last three years.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Aviation committee in each of the last three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Aviation committee will meet four times this year and met three times in each of the past two years. Secretarial and administration functions are provided by the Department and cost approximately £30,000 per annum. There is no separate budget. The advisory arrangements are that the committee may communicate its advice during meetings to officials, who attend throughout, or in writing or by making presentations to Ministers. The subjects of such advice were as follows:

1992: The Control Technology Programme
The National Strategic Technology Acquisition Plan (NSTAP)

1993: NSTAP: Report to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry Science, Technology and Engineering White Paper: relationship with NSTAP

1994: Technology Co-ordinators: Implementation of NSTAP
An Industry Strategy
The Hercules Replacement

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Standing Advisory Committee on Industrial Property in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The secretariat of the Standing Advisory Committee on Industrial Property is provided by the Intellectual Property Policy Directorate—IPPD—of the Patent Office. Expenditure on this task is not budgeted separately from IPPD's other policy work. The committee's advice is sought by correspondence and at meetings. The meetings held in the last three years are as follows:

Financial Year	*Number of Meetings*
1991–92	3
1992–93	3
1993–94	4

Cable TV

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what sanctions can be taken against cable operators who fail to adhere to the proposed guidelines designed to minimise damage to tree roots; and what body is to be responsible for administering such sanctions.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The guidelines on minimising damage to street trees now agreed by the national joint utilities group, the arboricultural industry and the Cable Communications Association, are voluntary. Like other operators of underground services, the cable industry is committed to ensuring that its contractors follow best practice, including the need to hand-dig around the roots of trees. The effectiveness of the guidelines will be reviewed after they have been in operation for six months. We welcome the increased efforts of the Cable Communications Association to meet public concerns about safety of trees.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Surveys commissioned by my Department which included questions concerning public opinion since October 1992 are given in the table. No such surveys were conducted by DTI agencies during this period. Information on the fee paid cannot be disclosed due to commercial confidentiality considerations.

DTI Surveys Including Questions About Public Opinion Since 1 October 1992

Survey	*Objective*	*Period in which conducted*	*Organisation from which commissioned*
Mountain Bike Study	Establish proportion of cyclists in population; types of bike they use; and accidents suffered	March 1994	Nottingham University Institute for Occupational Ergonomics
Metrication Survey	Assess public attitudes before implementation of EC Directive on Metric food pricing	April 1994	RSGB Ltd
Child Usage of Gas and Electrical Consumer Products	Assess the extent of children's everyday use of such appliances	November 1993	Children's Research Unit
Renewable Energy Awareness	Assess extent of public awareness of renewable energy	September 1993	RSGB Ltd

Post Office

Dr. Marek: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which Crown post offices have been closed in the last 15 years; which have been transferred from one premises to another; and what proposals the Post Office has for further closures or relocations.

Mr. Eggar: I understand from the Post Office that between March 1979 and March 1994 the number of Crown post offices has been reduced from 1,580 to 800. This is not primarily the result of office closures; of this reduction, 675 have been converted to franchise or agency offices either in the same premises or in suitable premises nearby. Such converted offices continue to offer the full range of services available at Crown offices, and in many cases offer longer opening hours and improved access. Of the remaining 105, a number have not involved closure but the merger of two neighbouring Crown offices, again continuing to provide the full range of services.

The Post Office has no plans at present to close or merge any further Crown offices. It does, however, intend to continue the Crown conversion programme, though decisions on such conversions are taken at regional management level. Where a Crown office is considered for conversion, a consultation process is undertaken with the local Member of Parliament and representative local bodies.

The records of individual Crown office closures and mergers since 1979 are not held centrally by the Post Office and collecting this information would entail disproportionate cost.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column 239, what percentage of responses were in favour of *(a)* granting the Post Office freedoms within the public sector, *(b)* a 100 per cent. share sale and *(c)* joint ownership by Government, public and employees with the Government selling 51 per cent. of shares.

Mr. Eggar: As I indicated in my answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *239*, we will make public the results of the consultation at the appropriate point.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of staff and their total salary cost employed at the Post Office headquarters for each year since 1987.

Mr. Eggar: I understand from the Post Office that the information requested is available only from 1990–91 and is as follows:

Year	*Headquarters Staff Numbers*	*Labour Costs (inc NI Contributions) £ million*
1990–91	379	8·9
1991–92	388	9·9
1992–93	359	9·3
1993–94	354	9·9

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people were employed as consultants to the Post Office; and what was their total cost in each year since 1987.

Mr. Eggar: The employment of consultants is an operational matter for the Post Office.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much corporation tax was paid by the Post Office for each year since 1979 at current prices.

Mr. Eggar: Corporation tax paid by the Post Office in each year since 1979, expressed in September 1994 prices was as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1979–80	1
1980–81	nil
1981–82	nil
1982–83	nil
1983–84	2
1984–85	3
1985–86	2
1986–87	3
1987–88	59
1988–89	40
1989–90	32
1990–91	78
1991–92	72
1992–93	87
1993–94	83

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many submissions he received on his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services", and if he will list those who responded.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* At the end of the consultation period we had received some 13,400 responses to the Green Paper. It is for respondents to make public the views they expressed if they choose to do so.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many of the submissions he received on his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services", were in favour of

the Government's favoured option; and how many were against;

(2) how many members of the public responded to his Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services", and how many of them were in favour of breaking up and privatising the Post Office.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* A wide variety of views were expressed. We will make public the results of the consultation at the appropriate point.

Electricity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contribution his Department is making to the International Atomic Energy Agency's DECADES project on the comparative assessment of the environmental aspects, economic competitiveness and technical reliability of different electricity generating systems.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The DECADES project, part of the global response to energy and environmental concerns that arose in the 1990s, is being carried out by the IAEA and eight other organisations and works on databases and methodologies for comparative assessment of different energy sources for electricity.

Results are scheduled for presentation in September 1995 at an international symposium in Vienna on electricity, health and the environment.

The International Atomic Energy Agency share of the project is mainly funded from the regular budget to which the United kingdom contributes its share in full, as we do also with the other organisations involved in the project. It would be uneconomic to enumerate the exact contribution attributable to the Uuited Kingdom amongst the nine organisations involved. The DTI has also co-ordinated the attendance of experts from industry and government from the United Kingdom at meetings being held in the framework of the project.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the capacity of each of the coal-fired power stations privatised under National Power and PowerGen.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The capacity of each of National Power's and PowerGen's coal-fired stations at privatisation is set out on pages 96 and 168 of the prospectus, published on 22 February 1991, setting out the Government's offer for sale of National Power and PowerGen shares. I am arranging for a copy of the prospectus to be made available in the Library of the House.

Taiwan

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what efforts his Department is making to improve Britain's trade with Taiwan.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My Department attaches importance to commercial links between the United Kingdom and Taiwan. The Taiwanese market is now treated in the same way as our other target markets. Taiwan has a dedicated market team in my Department supported by export promoters seconded from industry. Their work is being supported by additional resources allocated to the British trade and cultural office in Taipei.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The information requested is set out in the table.

	Financial Year			
Area	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992—93*	*1993–94*
1. DTI (excluding net controlled agencies & trading funds) see note i)	268,416	399,720	407,965	519,037
2. DTI agencies				
Accounts Services Agency	300	300	300	300
Companies House (see note ii)	n/a	5,600	11,187	11,542
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	10.625	17,685	19,519	27,122
National Engineering Laboratory	49,000	36,000	20,000	10,000
National Physical Laboratory	35,300	45,881	48,408	70,221
Patent Office	4,000	8,000	13,000	18,000
Radiocommunications Agency	23,900	21,993	27,592	33,575
Total Agencies	123,125	135,459	140,006	170,760
Total DTI	391,541	535,179	547,971	689,797

Notes

i) - Relevant expenditure for the Insolvency Service and National Weights & Measures Laboratory is included in 1 above. They are controlled gross against the DTI's main voted provision.

ii) - Figures are not readily available for the six month period prior to attaining trading fund status in October 1991.

Company Returns

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answers of 20 October, *Official Report*, column 287, on how many occasions staff of the Registrar of Companies have notified his office in relation to companies in default on their annual returns during the past 12 months or other statistically convenient period.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* Records are not kept in a way which permits a definite answer, but four such cases have been identified since 1 January 1994 involving defaults on annual accounts, annual returns, or a combination of both.

Defence Exports

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of Export Credits Guarantee Department credits related to defence exports in 1993–94; and what was their value.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The ECGD supported guarantees worth £1.96 billion in 1993–94 in respect of defence contracts. This amounted to 48 per cent. of the ECGD's support for capital goods and projects in 1993–94.

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the total Export Credits Guarantee Department credit budget was used in relation to defence contracts for *(a)* Bangladesh, *(b)* Ecuador, *(c)* India, *(d)* Indonesia, *(e)* Jordan, *(f)* Malaysia, *(g)* Nigeria, *(h)* Oman, *(i)* Pakistan and *(j)* Thailand in 1993–94; and what was (i) the value for each year and (ii) the subject matter of the contracts.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The percentage of the ECGD's total support for capital goods and projects in 1993–94 which related to contracts in respect of defence equipment in the named markets and the respective values were as follows:

	Percentage	*Value £ million*
Bangladesh	—	—
Ecuador	—	—
India	—	—
Indonesia	0·15	6·2
Jordan	—	—
Malaysia	0·46	18·7
Nigeria	—	—
Oman	8·42	343·9
Pakistan	—	—
Thailand	—	—

The subject matter of individual contracts is confidential to the contracting parties.

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the total Export Credits Guarantee Department credit budget was used in relation to defence contracts for Saudi Arabia in each year since 1980; and what was *(a)* the value for each year and *(b)* the subject matter of the contracts.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The percentage of total ECGD support for capital goods and projects since 1980 which related to defence contracts in Saudi Arabia and the related values were as follows:

	Percentage	*Value £ Million*
1982–83	0·28	23·85
1985–86	0·39	5·97
1988–89	21·77	450·00
1992–93	5·92	225·00
1993–94	18·36	750·00

In all other years the percentage and value were zero.

The subject matter of individual contracts is confidential to the contracting parties.

Official Receiver

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what legal advice he has received on the contracting out of the official receiver's work, in respect of the Insolvency Service's investigative functions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what legal advice he has received on the contracting out of the official receiver's work in respect of Insolvency Service practitioners and the rights of assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Any contracting out of functions of official receivers would be dependent on the passage of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill and on the procedures set out in it including consultation with official receivers as statutory office holders and obtaining an affirmative order of both Houses.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many cases were referred by Insolvency Service practitioners to the official receiver for investigation in each of the last three financial years.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The number of cases so referred to official receivers in the last three financial years were:

1992–93: —
1993–94: 36
1994–95: 42 (to date)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for consultation with the users of the Insolvency Service about the future of the service, following the Stoy Hayward report.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Insolvency Service has commissioned a survey of its users which it expects to complete by the end of 1994.

WALES

A465

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the transport directorate of the European Commission concerning the proposed addition of the A465 to the Trans-European road network.

Mr. Redwood: I have asked officials to pursue this. Revised proposals from the Commission show the A465 on the trans-European road network.

A55

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the consultants' study into the ecological and environmental enhancement of the A55 will be completed.

Mr. Redwood: The consultants, final report on the A55 ecological and environmental study is due to be submitted to the Welsh Office at the end of January 1995.

Health Service Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give figures based on current performance for the number of health service staff he expects will see earnings *(a)* fall and *(b)* rise as a result of the introduction of relating pay to performances.

Mr. Richards: The proposals made to staff sides and the professions who represent groups covered by NHS review bodies and included in the pay offer to staff sides of non-review body groups would strengthen the links between rewards and performance of their local organisation. Such schemes would be locally determined and depend on the achievement of local objectives for the delivery of high quality services. I would expect average pay to continue to rise.

A470

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the statutory requirements in connection with the improvement of the A470 Dolwyddel to Blaenau Ffestiniog road will be complete; when it is expected that works will commence; if the work will be in stages; how long the whole project will take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The programming of the major schemes for the improvement of the A470 in the Lledr valley between Betws-y-Coed and Blaenau Ffestiniog is set out in "Roads in Wales–1994 Review". The first of these schemes, that for the section between Cancoed to Minffordd, has recently been the subject of a local public inquiry. Depending on the outcome of that inquiry, work is expected to start on the scheme in 1995, subject to the availability of finance, and will take approximately 18 months.

Housing Grants

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to allow Housing for Wales equivalent power to implement a scheme of GRO—grants for rent and ownership—grants for individual housing projects as currently operated and administered by Scottish Homes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are at present no plans to introduce GRO grants in Wales. I continue to keep under review the Scottish experience in this field.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is as follows. In addition to the items listed, the Welsh Office consults interested groups and individuals from time to time on a wide range of issues. Executive NDPBs in Wales have not been included in the data provided. The total cost of these surveys was approximately £56,000. The cost of individual contracts is confidential.

WELSH OFFICE

1. Research into bus-back advertising
To establish the effectiveness of bus-back advertising, both in general and in response to Drink-Drive advertising campaign.
Date: February–March 1994.
Conducted by: Beaufort Research Ltd, Cardiff.

2. *Energy Efficiency Promotion in Wales*
To evaluate the effectiveness of energy efficiency promotions in Wales during 1991–92.
Date: January–November 1993.
Conducted by: William Battle and Associates, Swansea.

3. Revised Patient's Charter in Wales
To test public awareness of the Patient's Charter, and to elicit views on which standards should be included in a revised Charter.
Date: February 1993.
Conducted by: Durdle Davies Business Research.

CADW: WELSH HISTORIC MONUMENTS EXECUTIVE AGENCY

1. Visitor Survey of 10 Monuments in State Care
To provide information on visitor origins, characteristics and economic status; and to assess levels of satisfaction.
Date: 1991–94.
Conducted by: Beaufort research.

2. *Visitor Survey at 10 Monuments in State Care*
To provide up to date visitor profiles; to establish awareness of CADW; to monitor satisfaction levels.
Date: 1994.
Conducted by: Hall, Harrison and Cowley.

Wildlife and Countryside Act

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of appeals under paragraph 4 of schedule 14 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 determined in 1992 and 1993 for which the time taken from receipt of the appeal by his Department to its determination was *(a)* not more than six months, *(b)* more than six months but not more than 12 months, *(c)* more than 12 months but not more than 18 months, *(d)* more than 18 months but not more than 24 months or *(e)* more than 24 months.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Eleven appeals have been determined during the period. Details are as follows:

More than six months but not more than 12 months–2.
More than 12 months but not more than 18 months–6.
More than 18 months but not more than 24 months–3.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the budget agreed with each TEC in Wales for every financial year since its inception; broken down by programme area.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many employers in each TEC area in Wales have been given the investors in people award; how many have made a commitment to meeting the standard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The number of businesses in each Welsh TEC area making commitments to investors in people and those which have already received the award is as follows:

	Commitments	*Awards*
Gwent	48	10
Mid Glamorgan	63	18
North East Wales	25	5
North West Wales	33	6
South Glamorgan	47	10
West Wales	85	17
Powys	13	3
Wales	314	69

The Welsh Office is committed to improving the competitiveness of businesses in Wales. Training and development plays a key part in this process by ensuring the availability of the skills and expertise necessary to achieve business objectives. Investors in people aims to encourage and recognise effective training. The Welsh Office promotes the commitment to, and achievement of, the IIP award through the seven Welsh training and enterprise councils.

Tir Cymen Pilot Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many applicants were successful under the Tir Cymen pilot schemes in Wales in 1993–94; and how many were unsuccessful;

(2) how many entrants into the Tir Cymen pilot schemes there were in 1992–93; and how many applied unsuccessfully;

(3) what was the budget allocated for the Tir Cymen pilot schemes in 1992–93 and 1993–94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

Tir Cymen Entrants	
1992–93	201 (Unsuccessful—11)
1993–94	187 (Unsuccessful—14)
Budget (Grant in Aid)	
1992–93	£0·5 million
1993–94	£2·1 million.

Juvenile Drug Prevention

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what budget was allocated by the Welsh Office for juvenile drug prevention education in 1992–93;

(2) what is the budget allocated by the Welsh Office for juvenile drug use education in the current year.

Mr. Richards: Drug prevention work is undertaken by a number of agencies from both the statutory and voluntary sectors, which receive funds from various sources. In 1992–93 the Welsh Office made available some £200,000 to help fund activities concerned with the prevention of drug misuse. The budget for 1994–95 is over £350,000. Funding is also available to local education authorities for health education, including drugs, under the grants for education support and training programme.

Long-stay

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people with learning disabilities are resident in long-stay hospitals; and if he will list the long-stay learning disability hospitals still operating.

Mr. Richards: In June 1994 information from district health authorities indicated that around 750 persons with learning disabilities were resident in long-stay hospitals in Wales.

The long-stay learning disability hospitals in Wales are listed as follows:

Bryn-y-Neuadd	Gwynedd
Brynhyfryd	Powys
Llys Maldwyn	Powys
Bronllys	Powys
Pater Close	Dyfed
Llys Myddfai	Dyfed
Llanfrechfa Grange	Gwent
Ely	South Glamorgan
Hensol	Mid Glamorgan
Ystrad Mynach Bungalows	Mid Glamorgan
Gorseinon Bungalows	West Glamorgan

Juvenile Drug Prevention

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives the Welsh Office is pursuing to combat juvenile drug abuse in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The Welsh Office was fully involved with the organisation and funding of European drug prevention week in Wales. The initiative, which lasted from 15 to 22 October, targeted young people. A variety of local events and a national sixth form conference were supported by the Welsh Office.

During the week my right hon. Friend announced the setting up of a new unit to tackle drug and alcohol misuse. The development of effective prevention programmes aimed at young people will be one of the main tasks of the unit.

Playing Fields

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of school playing fields by local education authority for *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1987, *(d)* 1992 and *(e)* the latest available date.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not collected centrally.

PE Teachers

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many physical education teachers were employed by local education authorities in each year since 1979.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is available for 1984 and 1989 only. In 1984, 2,400 secondary school teachers in Wales were qualified in physical education. The corresponding figure in 1989 was 1,900.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to control the number of sheep scab cases in Wales; and what plans he now has to make sheep scab a fully notifiable disease.

Mr. Redwood: Sheep scab is a disease which can be controlled by individual farmers, who are aware of the preventive measures and procedures needed to deal with it. The Government have no plans to re-introduce sheep scab controls.

We are aware of the concerns within the industry about the number of sheep affected by scab. A comprehensive publicity campaign is being carried out this autumn aimed at all sheep farmers, encouraging treatment where scab is suspected. It will help owners recognise the disease and emphasise to farmers their welfare responsibilities. We are also stepping up our efforts to ensure that unfit animals are not presented for sale by increasing the official veterinary presence at markets. Animals suffering from scab will be removed from sale at markets and owners will face the possibility of prosecution.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Departmental Documents

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library copies of all documents, letters, or accounts he has signed which are written in a language he does not understand.

Mr. Redwood: I know of none which I have personally signed.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Redwood: None. There have been no official overseas visits by any wife of a Minister in the Welsh Office, either at public expense or her own expense.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers in Wales have not yet received payment of their advance payments with respect to the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* Of the 16,816 eligible claims received, around 13·8 per cent. remain to be paid. The majority of these involve queries or quota problems which will have to be resolved before payments are made.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *251*, whether the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency discussed with the board members of the agency his intentions to take up a directorship of Development Securities plc; and if the discussion was minuted as recommended in paragraph 35 of the Caines report mentioned in his statement of 19 October 1993, *Official Report*, column *147*.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* My understanding is that the chairman declared his interest at a WDA board meeting and this was minuted.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *251*, and with reference to the recommendations contained in paragraph 35 of the Caines report of October 1993, what proposals he has to strengthen the guidelines for directors of the Welsh Development Agency regarding the proposed directorships of property companies with property interests in Wales and other companies with possible conflict of interest implications with the work of the agency.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The rules on conflict of interest are already clear. The code of best practice for board members of public bodies, prepared by HM Treasury was issued to the agency in July of this year by my Department.

Welsh Language

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the Royal Society of Arts and City and Guilds in relation to preparation of courses and examination leading to general national vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh; and when he expects to conclude these discussions.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The position is as stated in my hon. Friend's letter to the hon. Member on 20 September 1994. Following negotiations between my officials and the GNVQ awarding bodies, the RSA and City and Guilds of London Institute have now agreed to provide GNVQ unit tests through the medium of Welsh to meet demand from schools and colleges in Wales during the 1994–95 academic year. The two awarding bodies will carry out pilots to test the systems and the quality of the qualifications.

Officials expect to be in a position to finalise contracts with the two awarding bodies within the next few weeks.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of chief executives of national health service trusts in each of the last four years have been paid on a performance-related pay basis.

Mr. Moss: The pay of NHS trusts chief executive is a matter for individual trusts to determine. Details are not held centrally but should be published in trusts' annual reports. Guidance on that will be issued shortly.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what specific analysis his Department has conducted on the cost and efficiency of introducing performance-related pay to clinical grades in the national health service.

Mr. Moss: Implementation of local pay arrangements is for health and social services trusts to determine taking into account the individual health care objectives contained in their agreed business plans. The assessment of the cost and efficiency of schemes is also for local determination.

Parades, South Down

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many parades were held in the constituency of South Down from 1 April to 30 September inclusive; and what were the locations.

Sir John Wheeler: Some 241 parades were held in the constituency of South Down during the period 1 April to 30 September 1994. This figure can be broken down as follows:

Location	*Loyalist Parades*	*Republican Parades*
Killyleagh	13	
Ballynahinch	17	
Ardglass	2	1
Crossgar	5	
Downpatrick	7	1
Saintfield	9	

Location	*Loyalist Parades*	*Republican Parades*
Ballygawley, Downpatrick	5	
Saul	1	
Raffery	3	
Hollymount, Downpatrick	1	
Toyre, Killyleagh	4	
Inch, Downpatrick	3	
Kilmore	2	
Ballyculter, Strangford	5	
Ballykilbeg, Downpatrick	1	
Woodgrange, Downpatrick	2	
Bells Hill	1	
Newcastle	2	1
Kilkeel	21	7
Castlewellan	2	1
Clough	4	
Seaforde	2	
Annalong	10	
Moneyslane	1	
Ballymartin	3	1
Benraw, Castlewellan	2	
Closkelt, Ballyward	2	
Dundrum	1	
Legananny, Castlewellan	1	
Attical, Kilkeel		1
Banbridge	23	
Dromore	18	
Rathfriland	26	
Waringsford, Dromore	3	
Corbet, Banbridge	3	
Tanvally, Banbridge	1	
Blackbridge, Poyntzpass	1	
Finnis	1	
Katesbridge	1	
Ballyroney, Rathfriland	3	
Garvaghy, Dromore	1	
Glascar, Banbridge	1	
Seapatrick, Banbridge	1	
Hilltown		1
Skeagh, Dromore	1	
Drumavaddy, Banbridge	1	
Donaghmore	4	
Warrenpoint	4	1
Rostrevor		1
Totals	225	16

Parade Statistics are recorded by RUC sub-divisional areas, which do not generally coincide with constituency boundaries. Whilst every effort has been made to correlate information from the relevant boundary maps, it is possible that some 'borderline' cases may have been wrongly included or omitted.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the estimated cost of policing parades in the constituency of South Down from 1 April to 30 September.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

IRA Ceasefire

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many attacks on individuals have taken place in Northern Ireland since the start of the IRA ceasefire which have been classified as punishment attacks by a paramilitary organisation.

Sir John Wheeler: The available information is for a period 1 September to 23 October 1994 and is as follows:

Punishment Attacks

	Number of Casualties		
	Loyalist	*Republican*	*Total*
Punishment *Assaults*	3	11	14
Punishment *Shootings*	14	—	14
			[2]28

Note:

These punishment attacks have not necessarily been claimed by a paramilitary organisation. Attribution has been decided based mainly on knowledge.

[2] With the exception of one punishment shooting, all of these attacks took place prior to the loyalist ceasefire.

Learning Disability Hospitals

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people with learning disabilities are resident in long-stay hospitals; and if he will list the long-stay learning disability hospitals still operating.

Mr. Moss: The number of people with a mental handicap resident in long-stay hospitals in Northern Ireland was 839 at 17 February 1994, including 64 patients in long-stay psychiatric hospitals.

The long-stay mental handicap hospitals which are currently operating are listed below:

Muckamore Abbey
Longstone
Tower Hill
Stradreagh

School Playing Fields

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the capital receipts from the sale of school playing fields for each of the last six years by education authority.

Mr. Ancram: There has been one such sale within the last six years. In 1991, £57,000 was received by the Belfast education and library board in respect of the sale of 8 acres of surplus school playing fields. The land was sold to a private rugby club and continues to be used as playing fields.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of school playing fields by local education authority for *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1987, *(d)* 1992 and *(e)* the latest available date.

Mr. Ancram: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, information compiled in 1989, shows that at that time there were 611 grass pitches and 950 artificial games areas for all schools in Northern Ireland.

PE Teachers

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many physical education teachers were employed by local education authorities in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ancram: Information is available only for 1989, when there were an estimated 860 physical education teachers in secondary schools in Northern Ireland.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Sir John Wheeler: To date, no Northern Ireland Department has organised a reception for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time. However, Baroness Denton, as Minister with responsibility for women's issues in Northern Ireland, recently held a reception to encourage women in public appointment. My right hon. and learned Friend and I were in attendance and those present included both women who hold public appointments and those who did not but might be encouraged to consider putting themselves forward. Senior departmental officials involved in the public appointments process were also present. Some 97 people attended and the cost of the reception was £920.

Public Information

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years to *(a)* produce public information in alternative formats for visually impaired people and *(b)* publicise the availability of accessible information among visually impaired people.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments have spent the following amounts of money in each of the last three years to produce public information in alternative format for visually impaired people:

1991–92– £2,742
1992–93– —
1993–94–£2,969

As the Royal National Institute for the Blind produces and provides the available information free of charge, the amount spent in each of the last three years on publicising the availability of accessible information amongst visually impaired people has been negligible.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate which Departmental publications are currently available *(a)* in Braille, *(b)* in large print and *(c)* on tape; and if he will indicate what efforts have been made by his Department to inform visually impaired people about the availability of publications in alternative formats to normal print.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments currently have the following publications available in:

(a) Braille

Water Quality Register Leaflet
Water Quality Standards Leaflets
Emergencies and Complaints on Water Quality Leaflet
Leaflets and publications relating to the marketing and promotion of training and employment services.
The Northern Ireland Charter for the Child Support Agency "For Parents Who Live Apart" Leaflet
"Talkback" Leaflet
The Northern Ireland Civil Service Code of Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities

(b) Large Print

Water Quality Register Leaflet
Water Quality Standards Leaflet
Emergencies and Complaints on Water Quality Leaflet
Leaflets and publications relating to the marketing and promotion of training and employment services.
The Northern Ireland Charter for the Child Support Agency "For Parents Who Live Apart" Leaflet
"Talkback" Leaflet
A Guide on Social Security benefits
RUC Charter

(c) Tape

Water Quality Register Leaflet
Water Quality Standards Leaflet
Emergencies and Complaints on Water Quality Leaflet "Orange Badge" Scheme
Leaflets and publications relating to the marketing and promotion of training and employment services.
The Northern Ireland Charter for the Child Support Agency "For Parents Who Live Apart" Leaflet
"Talkback" Leaflet
The Northern Ireland Civil Service Code of Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities
RUC Charter
"At Your Service - An A to Z Guide for Older People"

The equal opportunities officer in the Department of Finance and Personnel is in a position to inform visually impaired staff of the availability of the NICS code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities.

Departments work closely with the Royal National Institute for the Blind to help promote services and programmes which are available.

Hualon Corporation

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now make it his policy to suspend, pending the outcome of an investigation by the Public Accounts Committee, the proposed grant to the Hualon Corporation in connection with the development of new textile facilities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* I am not aware of any such plans by the Public Accounts Committee and in light of the information currently before me I can see no justification in suspending progress of the Hualon project.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Philip Layton

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the charges laid against Mr. Philip Layton of the Royal Hong Kong police at his trial; what was the outcome of the trial; how much compensation has been paid to Mr. Layton following the trial verdict; what were the surveillance duties of Mr. Layton in relation to arms traffic in Hong Kong; and whether those duties extended to the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Goodlad: Philip Layton was charged with soliciting an advantage from John Edward Picken, and with offering an advantage to Rodney John Starling, a chief inspector of police, in exchange for the future supply of confidential information. He was acquitted of these charges. He did not receive any compensation but, following a court order that he be awarded his costs, he was paid HK$3,416,601.

Mr. Layton did not have any duties in relation to arms traffic in Hong Kong.

Radioactive Nitric Acid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the trade or atomic energy counsellor at the British embassy in Washington has given British Nuclear Fuels plc in negotiating with the United States Energy Department for the import of radioactive nitric acid from Hanford to Sellafield.

Mr. Goodlad: Contractual negotiations for the proposed import of nitric acid to Sellafield are a matter for the contracting parties, British Nuclear Fuels plc and the United States Department of Energy. In keeping with the Government's normal policy and practice of supporting British companies pursuing commercial opportunities overseas, the British embassy in Washington has provided information, advice and assistance to British Nuclear Fuels plc as necessary.

Human Rights

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking, alone and in concert with the European Union, to press for the implementation of the human rights accord signed on 29 March, and for the deployment of the United Nations verification mission mandated by the human rights accord.

Mr. David Davis: We and our EU partners have made clear our intention to play a full part in supporting the peace process in Guatemala. We hope that the deployment of the United Nation human rights verification mission will encourage both sides to abide by the conditions of the human rights accord and to sign an overall peace agreement.

Armenia

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the type of nuclear reactors built for electric power production in Armenia; and when the power station is likely to be commissioned.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Armenia's only nuclear power plant is at Medzamor, 25 km south of Yerevan. The plant consists of two Soviet-built VVER 440 pressurised water reactors. Both reactors were shut down in early 1989 as a precaution following the Armenian earthquake but the Armenian Government are aiming, with Russian assistance, to bring unit 2 back into service as soon as possible, with unit 1 to follow. The Armenian Government intend to operate Medzamor for approximately seven of its remaining 20 years' design life, and in the meantime to bring alternative generating capacity on stream.

Hebron

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent exclusion of the British consul from the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Ibrahimi mosque was closed to all after the massacre in February. A representative from the British consulate-general in Jerusalem was among a group of people who were unable to enter the plateau near the mosque on 25 August 1994 because of the security measures.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which nations are represented in the United Nations peacekeeping force in Rwanda; and in what numbers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As at 30 September, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda—UNAMIR—consisted of troops, police and military observers—from Australia, 313; Austria, 16; Bangladesh, 52; Canada, 388; Chad, 130; Congo, 40; Ethiopia, 804; Fiji, one; Ghana, 899; Guinea, 15; Guinea Bissau, 39; Kenya, six; Malawi, 177; Mali, 39; Niger, 43; Nigeria, 271; Poland, three; Russian Federation, 15; Senegal, 241; Slovak Republic, seven; Tunisia, 40; United Kingdom, 595; Uruguay, 27; Zambia, 111; and Zimbabwe, 26.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current British contribution to peacekeeping forces in Rwanda.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British contingent to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda currently consists of 575 personnel all ranks. It consists of: an equipment support workshop—182; an engineer squadron—144; a field ambulance—156; a signals detachment—29; a guard platoon—44; and 20 support personnel.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Nations forces in Rwanda are now fully assembled and deployed with full logistic support.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda is fully deployed with the exception of one battalion of troops from Zambia and one battalion of troops from India. Logistic support for the mission is currently provided by a number of contingents, including the British. A contract between the United Nations and the Brown and Root company to provide logistic support has not yet been finalised.

Former Soviet Union

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the presence of Russian forces in Moldova, Georgia and Armenia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy is that Russian troops should be stationed in another former Soviet Union country only with the consent of that country's Government, and in accordance with the provisions of the conventional armed forces in Europe treaty.

We welcome the signature of an agreement between the Moldovan and Russian Governments which establishes a timetable for the withdrawal of the Russian 14th army. The Russian peacekeeping troops in Moldova, which are separate from the 14th Army, are present with the consent of the Moldovan Government.

In Georgia and Armenia, Russian troops are also present with the consent of the host Government.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the conditions for peacekeeping under the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe auspices in the Caucasus.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Arrangements to consolidate and monitor the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh, including the mandate of any peacekeeping force, and move on to negotiations for a peaceful settlement, are being discussed within the CSCE. We attach considerable importance to the principles on peacekeeping agreed by CSCE Foreign Ministers at their meeting in Rome in December 1993.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what hostage taking there has recently been of United Nations personnel in Liberia; what has been the outcome; and what representations there have been about this.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In early September, 43 United Nations military observers were detained by soldiers of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. The President of the Security Council issued a statement on 13 September condemning the detention of the observers and demanding their release. By 20 September all had been freed.

Iran

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Iran's continued abuses of human rights, and its policy of terrorism and fundamentalism; and what steps Her Majesty's Government will take concerning Iranian activities at home and abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We remain deeply concerned at Iran's human rights record and at continuing reports of its support for terrorism. We are determined to maintain pressure on Iran to improve its behaviour in these areas, both bilaterally and through the European Union, the United Nations and the G7.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the CSCE review conference in Budapest.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe—CSCE—Review Conference began on 10 October in Budapest and will end on 2 December. It will be followed by a CSCE summit on 5 to 6 December. It is our objective to develop the CSCE as the European instrument of choice in early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, especially of disputes affecting minorities. We are working for decisions at the summit which will promote security and stability in the CSCE area and strengthen co-operation between all participating states.

European Union

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of enlarging the European Union.

Mr. David Davis: A treaty of accession to the European Union was signed with four European Free Trade Association states on 24 June this year. The people of Austria and Finland have already voted in favour of joining: provided that referendums in Sweden—13 November—and Norway—28 November—are also positive, and that remaining parliamentary procedures in those countries are satisfactorily completed, all four will accede on 1 January 1995. On further EU enlargement, the Copenhagen European Council—1 June 1993—agreed that the associated countries of central and eastern Europe that so wished will join as soon as they are able to assume the obligations of membership by satisfying the economic and political conditions required. The Corfu European Council—1 June 1994—agreed that the next phase of enlargement will involve Cyprus and Malta.

Iraq

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his Security Council counterparts on the extent to which a further UN resolution would be required to authorise the use of force against Iraqi troops.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had close and regular consultations on Iraq with his French, American and Russian colleagues over the past fortnight. The extent to which a further UN Security Council resolution would be required to authorise the use of force against Iraqi troops would depend on the circumstances at the time.

Romania

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Romanian authorities about child adoption procedures.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the question of the operation of the Anglo-Romanian adoption agreement with the Romanian authorities in Bucharest in September. The Department of Health, which administers the agreement, is concerned about delays in processing applications under the terms of the agreement. We will continue to press for the proper operation of the agreement and the speedy resolution of cases.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Goodlad: The FCO does not organise receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time.

Departmental Documents

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the

Library copies of all documents, letters or accounts he has signed which are written in a language he does not understand.

Mr. Hurd: The only documents that fall into this category are treaties, true and exact English language texts of which are always signed at the same time.

Copies of all treaties entered into by the United Kingdom are published as command papers in the treaty series and laid before both Houses.

Antartic Treaty

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to be able to announce a decision on the siting of the secretariat for the Antarctic treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: Discussions continue among treaty consultative parties about the siting of the Antartic treaty secretariat. The position remains unchanged from that stated in the answer given by the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 27 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *410*.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated number of people who find permanent work as a result of the training enterprise councils.

Mr. Paice: Information is not available about the full impact of training and enterprise councils in helping people find permanent work. However, in England and Wales, 52 per cent. of those leaving youth training and 35 per cent. of those leaving training for work between April and December 1993 were in employment six months after finishing training.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons were trained by TECs in 1993–94.

Mr. Paice: During 1993–94, there were 566,100 starts on youth training and training for work in England and Wales. At the latest date for which information is available, July 1994, there were 357,000 people in training on these programmes.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the outturn expenditure given to each TEC in England in 1992–93 at 1993–94 prices; and what is the budget for each TEC in 1993–94 in total and broken down in the same way as given in the written answer of 18 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *341*.

Mr. Paice: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which TECs are using adult training credits within their training for work provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: The following English training and enterprise councils are understood to be using a form of adult training credit within their training for work provision:

South and East Cheshire TEC;
Hertfordshire TEC;
Bedfordshire TEC;
Milton Keynes TEC;
Cambridgeshire TEC.

Earnings

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the increase in earnings in cash and real terms for each socio-economic group since 1987.

Mr. Oppenheim: The closest available information to that requested is for occupations, which is published in tables 8, 9 and x3 of part A of the "New Earnings Survey" for each of the years.

The information on the retail prices index—all items—at April, to convert figures to 1994 prices, is published in table 6.4 of the *Employment Gazette* and in table 26 of the "Annual Supplement Economic Trends" for April of earlier years.

National Union of Teachers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of subscriptions paid to the NUT for each year since 1985.

Mr. Oppenheim: I understand from the certification officer, an independent statutory officer, that the level of full member subscription to the National Union of Teachers is not specified in the latest NUT rule book submitted to him with the union's annual return for the year ended 31 December 1993.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many of the NUT's members currently employed as a teacher are practising the profession;

(2) If it is possible for members of the NUT to pay lumps sums to cover a number of years' membership.

Mr. Oppenheim: I understand from the certification officer, an independent statutory officer, that this information is not available from records held by him. Nor is any such information held by the Department.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply of 27 June, *Official* Report, columns *450-51*, to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, how many members of the National Union of Teachers actually paid subscriptions for each year since 1985.

Mr. Oppenheim: I understand from the certification officer, an independent statutory officer, that the number of contributing members shown on the annual returns for the National Union of Teachers submitted to him during the period in question is shown in the following table:

	Number
1985	225,784
1986	201,444
1987	195,126
1988	189,043
1989	183,042
1990	181,557
1991	178,112
1992	176,022
1993	182,664

Job Clubs

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employemnt (1) what is the average duration of time that people spent participating in job clubs; and how many people are currently in job clubs; and what analysis he has made of the wage rates and conditions that apply to the jobs obtained by job club leavers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many people have joined job clubs; how many have left; how many leavers got jobs, and how many entered another positive outcome *(a)* in each region and *(b)* in Great Britain as a whole (i) in the year to April 1994 and (ii) since April 1994.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated 26 October 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about Jobclub performance and the wage rates and conditions for Jobclub leavers.

The attached table shows for each region and nationally the number of Jobclub entrants, leavers, job entries and other positive outcomes for the whole of 1993–94 and from 1 April to 31 August. Those who are shown as going into other positive outcomes will have moved on to either training, full-time education or self-employment.

The average length of time people spend in Jobclubs is not routinely recorded. However a sample study in March showed that 58 per cent. of clients leave within 12 weeks and a further 22 per cent. within 21 weeks.

Records of the number of people in Jobclubs at any one time are not kept. However, the attached table shows that 107,952 people joined the programme in the first five months of the 1994–95 operational year, an average of 5,140 a week.

The wage rates that apply to jobs found by Jobclub members were last examined in January 1991, based on a postal survey of individuals who joined in Autumn 1989. At that time, 26 per cent. of respondents went into jobs with a wage of up to £80 per week and a further 60 per cent. went into jobs which paid £81 to £160 per week and 15 per cent. received over £160 per week.

The Employment Service is undertaking a wide ranging evaluation of four of its placing services including Jobclub. This began in the spring and will examine, amongst other things, the wage rates of leavers going into employment. The report should be available next year.

Jobclubs continue to be both popular with the people who join and an effective way of helping them back to work. We are now able to help more members than at any time before and 45 per cent. of leavers are successful in finding jobs.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobclub Performance Information

	N	*YH*	*EME*	*LSE*	*SW*	*OW*	*WM*	*NW*	*OS*	*National*
Entrants										
April 1993 — March 1994	14,342	21,567	21,676	79,594	18,743	13,616	23,954	32,362	23,253	249,107
April 1994 — August 1994	6,602	9,426	9,439	34,214	7,972	4,774	12,026	13,413	10,086	107,952
Leavers										
April 1993 — March 1994	14,109	20,321	19,953	72,159	17,332	13,168	21,228	31,957	21,098	231,325
April 1994 — August 1994	6,777	9,498	9,604	34,084	8,217	4,650	11,461	14,324	9,771	108,386
Job Entries										
April 1993 — March 1994	5,728	9,346	9,417	31,492	8,323	7,234	10,095	13,903	10,090	105,678
April 1994 — August 1994	2,859	4,461	4,104	15,115	3,947	2,524	5,347	5,793	4,700	48,850
Other Positive Outcomes										
April 1993 — March 1994	1,515	2,779	2,616	9,286	2,404	1,875	3,272	3,465	2,780	29,992
April 1994 — August 1994	640	1,052	1,073	3,444	959	588	1,350	1,141	1,167	11,414

Abbreviations

N=Northern
YH=Yorkshire and Humberside
EME=East Midlands and Eastern
LSE=London and South East
SW=South West
WA=Office for Wales
WM=West Midlands
NW=North West
SC=Office for Scotland

Publications

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for the last 12 months the titles of papers published by his Department and by the Employment Service.

Miss Widdecombe: Command papers issued by the Department in the last 12 months are as follows:

Competitiveness 'Helping Britain to Win', Column *2563*. Published May 1994, jointly with the Department of Trade and Industry and nine other Government Departments.

"Jobseeker's Allowance", Column 2687. Published October 1994, jointly with the Department of Social Security.

Training Leavers

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many respondents to the training for work leavers survey and the youth training leavers survey were early leavers, showing the reasons for early leaving, by total and by percentage of all leavers in the survey, by total and by percentage of all leavers in the survey, for the year 1993–94, or the most recent available period, and for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, shown separately for male, female and in total;

(2) what number and percentage of those leaving *(a)* training for work and *(b)* youth training for 1993–94 for each region and for Great Britain as a whole were, six

months after leaving, *(a)* in a full-time job with their work-experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another Government training programme, *(g)* on a full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* in a job club and *(k)* doing something else;

(3) for each region and for Great Britain as a whole how many people were participating in *(a)* training for work—employment training/employment action, *(b)* community action, *(c)* learning for work, *(d)* workstart pilots, *(e)* north Norfolk action, *(f)* the business start-up allowance and *(g)* youth training in each month since March 1994, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: As the information is contained in a number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Restart Courses

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people have been referred to restart courses by employment service counsellors since April 1994 for each region and for Great Britain as a whole; how many of them were unemployed for over two years; how many attended and completed the course; what were the outcomes of the participants; how many had benefit penalties imposed for not attending or failing to complete their attendance at the restart course; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated 26 October 1994.

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Restart Courses. I have set out the information you have requested in the attached table.

It may help if I explain that in April, a new two week Restart Course programme was launched. This new course combines part time attendance with an external training provider and individual jobsearch activities in the afternoon.

The course, which builds on the success of the shorter one week Restart Course, is designed to boost confidence and job search activity and there is an emphasis on making real applications for jobs and opportunities. A log of applications is kept and used as a basis for review by Employment Service advisers after the course.

Attending a course is not an alternative to regular job search or other employment or training programmes. Essentially it provides people with the opportunity to explore all the options open to them and give them confidence to take the next step back to work.

People who have been unemployed for two years or more who refuse or fail to take up a place on an Employment Department employment or training programme at their Restart interview, are asked to attend a Restart Course. Those who fail to attend may, under Income Support regulations lose a proportion of their personal Income Support for a period not exceeding the length of the course.

I hope that this is helpful.

All Restart Course Attenders April 1994—September 1994

	Northern	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands and Eastern*	*London and South East*	*South West*	*Wales*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Scotland*	*Total*
1. Referrals to Restart Courses[1]	6,936	12,581	11,539	40,210	8,651	7,662	13,263	19,381	11,450	131,673
2. Total Starters	4,217	6,847	6,064	21,236	4,979	3,330	7,684	10,109	5,785	70,251
3. Starters Unemployed 24 months or more	3,768	5,896	5,424	17,646	4,399	2,896	6,826	8,786	5,237	60,878
4. Total completers	3,759	5,812	5,333	19,536	4,370	2,868	6,496	8,667	4,978	61,819
Completers who agreed to follow up:										
Jobs	1,384	2,475	2,534	8,831	2,074	1,140	2,483	3,443	3,065	27,429
Training for Work	579	1,235	1,075	3,566	1,119	583	1,693	1,862	944	12,656
Jobclub	240	491	692	3,028	566	406	1,095	938	803	8,259
Other employment, training and related opportunities	2,207	2,995	2,953	11,648	2,479	1,725	3,279	4,583	2,339	34,208
5. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up[2]	3,374	5,491	5,090	17,619	4,233	2,767	6,112	8,041	4,492	57,219
6. Number of decisions received from the Benefits Agency[3]	830	1,709	1,322	3,665	685	847	1,050	2,916	1,960	14,984

[1] This figure includes people who fail to attend the course(s) they are booked for who are subsequently rebooked on other events.

[2] Some people will be referred to more than one option at the end of the course

[3] This figure includes decisions where no reductions have been made (approximately 12 per cent. of decisions). Nationally around 88 per cent. of decisions lead to either a 20 per cent. or 40 per cent. reduction in personal Income Support for a period not exceeding the length of the course.

Course Referrals

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people have been referred to *(a)* jobplan workshops and *(b)* workwise and worklink by Employment Service counsellors for each region and Great Britain as a whole since April 1994; how many of them were unemployed for over one year; how many attended and completed the workshop or courses; what were the outcomes of the participants; how many had benefit penalties imposed for not attending or failing to complete their attendance at the Jobplan workshop or

Workwise/Worklink courses; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated 26 October 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Jobplan Workshops and Workwise[1]. I have set out the information you have requested in the attached tables.

Jobplan Workshops aim to help people who have been unemployed for a year or more to compete successfully for jobs and opportunities. They will be asked to attend a workshop unless they prefer to take up a place on another Employment Department programme.

In November 1993, as part of his Budget statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced two pilot initiatives to help people aged 18 to 24 who have been unemployed for a year. One of these is a four week advice, guidance and job search course called Workwise. The pilot, which provides 10,000 places and has run since April in five Employment Service regions, replaces Jobplan Workshops for people in this age group. The course has been designed to give people the knowledge, skills and motivation to decide and carry through an action plan by setting themselves realistic job goals and a route to achieve them. During the course people learn practical job search skills such as producing an up-to-date CV and where to look for job leads. They also receive individual guidance from the course leader about the other training and employment opportunities available to them. Although formal attendance on the course is part-time, participants are encouraged to put what they have learned into practice during the remaining part of the day; this includes making job applications.

Individuals who fail to attend these programmes may, under Income Support regulations lose a proportion of their personal benefit for a period not exceeding the length of the course.

I hope that this is helpful.

Job plan Attenders April 1994—September 1994

Table 1

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands and Eastern	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
1. Referrals to Jobplan[1]	15,578	22,747	22,890	91,055	17,095	12,164	23,327	35,790	25,949	266,595
2. Total starters	8,720	11,428	11,621	43,224	9,552	5,770	11,991	16,999	12,676	131,981
3. Total completers	8,188	10,514	10,689	39,884	8,793	5,294	10,968	15,715	11,559	121,604
Completers who agreed to follow up:										
Jobs	2,750	3,308	4,079	14,925	3,312	2,002	3,477	5,500	3,463	42,816
Training for work	2,437	3,155	2,576	9,914	2,766	1,260	3,467	4,286	3,645	33,506
Jobclub	887	1,400	1,433	7,046	1,490	972	2,432	1,700	1,680	19,040
Other employment, training and related opportunities	4,398	5,346	5,597	23,222	4,182	2,527	5,673	8,680	6,621	66,246
4. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up[2]	7,665	9,937	10,057	39,309	8,263	5,006	10,523	14,745	10,681	116,186
5. Number of decisions received from the Benefits Agency[3]	1,675	2,649	2,483	9,602	1,342	1,116	1,856	4,929	4,071	29,723

[1] This figure includes people who fail to attend the workshop they are booked for and are subsequently rebooked on another event. All people referred to Jobplan have been unemployed over 1 year except a small number (not obtainable) who have been unemployed for a shorter period. These people either ask to attend earlier or are from areas affected by colliery closures where special dispensation exists.

[2] Some people will be referred to more than one option at the end of the workshop.

[3] This figure includes decisions where no reductions have been made (approximately 12 per cent. of decisions). Nationally around 88 per cent. of decisions lead to either a 20 per cent. or 40 per cent. reduction in personal Income Support for a period not exceeding the length of the workshop.

Workwise Attenders April 1994–September 1994

Table 2

	Northern	*East Midlands and Eastern*	*London and South East*	*South West*	*Scotland*	*Total*
1. Referrals to Workwise[1]	424	1,836	1,617	1,599	2,183	7,659
2. Starters	218	734	700	805	951	3,408
3. Total completers	156	518	505	591	682	2,452
Completers who agreed to follow up:						
Jobs	91	365	294	351	255	1,356
Training for Work	44	198	150	225	209	826
Jobclub	5	44	55	80	46	230
Other employment, training and related opportunities	72	195	289	235	262	1,053

Workwise Attenders April 1994–September 1994

Table 2

	Northern	*East Midlands and Eastern*	*London and South East*	*South West*	*Scotland*	*Total*
4. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up[2]	122	550	535	588	556	2,351
5. Number of decisions received from the Benefits Agency[3]	85	258	225	140	538	1,246

[1] This figure includes people who fail to attend the workshop they are booked for and are subsequently rebooked on another event. All people referred to Workwise have been unemployed over 1 year.

[2] Some people will be referred to more tan one option at the end of the workshop.

[3] This figure includes decisions where no reductions have been made (approximately 10 per cent. of decisions). Nationally around 90 per cent. of decisions lead to a 20 per cent. or 40 per cent. reduction in personal Income Support for a period not exceeding the length of the workshop.

Indonesia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what reports have been received by the International Labour Organisation with respect to Indonesia's conformity with the ILO convention of 1956 ensuring the right to associate in free trade unions.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government of Indonesia ratified ILO convention No. 98 on the right to organise and collective bargaining in 1957. Since then they have frequently reported as requested by the ILO on its application of the convention. Indonesia's most recent report was submitted to the ILO in 1993.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department of Employment does not organise receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Miss Widdecombe: In the past year, there have been two occasions where a spouse has accompanied a departmental Minister on an official overseas visit. Of those, only one visit involved a cost to public funds amounting to £862·95. That occasion was an informal EC social affairs meeting held in Athens on 10 March 1994 and to which the spouses of all EC Ministers attending had been officially invited by the Greek Government.

HEALTH

Surgery

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of cold surgical interventions were carried out *(a)* in private hospitals or clinics by private practitioners, *(b)* in national health service hospitals by private practitioners and *(c)* in NHS hospitals by NHS practitioners in each regional health authority in 1979–80 and in each year since then.

Mr. Sackville: Central returns do not include numbers of operations carried out in private hospitals and clinics. Estimates of the number of elective private operations carried out in national health service hospitals in England for the years 1989–90 to 1991–92 are set out in the table. Comparative information for previous years is not available. Figures for private elective operations by regional health authority are not available.

Information about numbers of all NHS operations by regional health authority is published annually in the "Hospital Episode Statistics", volumes 1 and 2, copies of which are available in the Library.

Elective Operations: England

	1989–90	*1990–91*	*1991–92*
Private Elective Operations[1]	50,062	49,291	61,819
All NHS Elective Operations	2,402,348	2,417,252	2,626,039
Per cent. Private	2·1	2·0	2·4

[1] In NHS Hospitals

Source:
Hospital Episode Statistics—based on 25 per cent. sample.

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give figures based on current performance for the number of health service staff she expects will see earnings *(a)* fall and *(b)* rise as a result of the introduction of relating pay to performance.

Mr. Malone: The proposals made to staff sides and the professions that represent groups covered by national health service review bodies and included in pay offers to staff sides of non-review body groups would strengthen the links between rewards and performance of the local organisations. Such schemes would be locally determined and depend on the achievement of local objectives for the delivery of high-quality services.

Maternity Services

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements have been made for piloting the draft pregnancy-based clinical data set for maternity with the professions concerned; when the findings of the pilot tests will be available; and if she will place a copy of the draft minimum data set in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: Initial draft proposals for a contract minimum data set covering community, maternity and mental health services were produced in October 1993. Priority was given to the further development and piloting of the community component of this data set.

The results are about to be issued for consultation, and work has resumed on the maternity contract minimum data set. Copies of the consultation document will be placed in the Library when it is available. Arrangements for piloting will follow once the clinical profession have agreed the content of the data set.

St Bartholomew's Hospital

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the use of charitable funds by St Bartholomew's hospital on services normally funded by the Exchequer.

Mr. Malone: Use of charitable funds is a matter for the special trustees who are required to apply the funds in accordance with donors' wishes.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if the planned reduction in the hours of junior doctors will be reached by end of 1994;

(2) what further plans he has to ensure that the target of 72 hours maximum working week for junior doctors is reached by 1 January 1995.

Mr. Malone: It is hoped that reduction targets will be met. I expect reports from regional task forces for the six months to 30 September 1994 to show further good progress in reducing junior doctors' hours.

I will consider whether any further action is necessary in consultation with my ministerial group on junior doctors' hours which includes representatives of the junior doctors, consultants, the medical royal colleges and national health service management.

General Practitioners (Gifts)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is sent to general practitioners regarding the value of gifts received from drug companies.

Mr. Malone: The General Medical Council is responsible for guidance to general practitioners on gifts received from drug companies.

Female Deaths

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage of all female deaths from (i) coronary heart disease, (ii) stroke, (iii) breast cancer, (iv) cervical cancer, (v) lung cancer, (vi) malignant melanoma, (vii) other skin cancers, (viii) accidents and (ix) suicide in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library.

London Ambulance Service

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the extent of her responsibility for the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: The South Thames regional health authority is managerially responsible for the London ambulance service. South Thames RHA is accountable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the full range of its responsibilities, including the management of the London ambulance service.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost to the NHS of treating mentally disordered offenders; and how many such offenders have been treated *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by each health authority in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: Information on the cost and volume of services provided for mentally disordered offenders is not collected separately.

Trust Hospital Cars

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has given on the maximum amount to be spent on purchasing and leasing cars for individual senior managers of trust hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: None. National health service trusts have the freedom to employ staff on such terms and conditions as they think fit.

Endometriosis

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of endometriosis in each of the last 10 years by region and nationally.

Mr. Sackville: There are no precise statistics on the prevalence of endometriosis. Gynaecologists have reported the condition at laparoscopy in between 2 and 18 per cent. of women, many of whom had no symptoms.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her plans for legislation to abolish regional health authorities.

Mr. Malone: The Government's intention to abolish regional health authorities was announced on 21 October 1993. Legislation to implement the changes will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable allows.

Local Authority Contracts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many voluntary sector organisations have contracts with local authorities to provide services; and what is the value of those contracts;

(2) how many private sector organisations have contracts with local authorities to provide services; and what is the value of those contracts.

Mr. Bowis: Such contractual matters are for local negotiation and decision.

Residential and Nursing Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people receiving public funding towards residential or nursing care also had to contribute towards the cost for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by authority the number of private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes that have closed since implementation of the Registered Homes Act 1984; and how many residents have been affected.

Mr. Bowis: This information could be provided on nursing homes only at disproportionate cost and is not available on residential care homes.

Learning Disability Hospitals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of admissions to learning disability hospitals by health authority for each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is published in "Ordinary and Day Case Admissions for England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Special Transitional Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which authorities failed to spend 85 per cent. of the special transitional grant in the independent sector during the year 1993–94.

Mr. Bowis: Audited returns detailing community care spending in the independent sector by health authorities in 1993–94 must be submitted to the Department by 31 December 1994.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the proportion of the total special transitional grant spent by each authority on domiciliary care during the year 1993–94;

(2) if he will list by authority the proportion of the total special transitional grant spent in the voluntary sector during the year 1993–94.

Mr. Bowis: This is a matter for local authorities and information on it is not available centrally.

Sight Tests

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average private sight test fee currently charged by opticians.

Mr. Malone: Information about the charges made for private sight tests is not collected by the Department.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether her Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not organise such receptions.

Prozac

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the accuracy of information given to general practitioners in connection with the prescription of the drug Prozac; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Prozac is an effective and very widely prescribed anti-depressant. The data sheet for Prozac which contains prescribing information and side-effects, is produced by the manufacturer and is authorised by the licensing authority. It is included in the data sheet compendium which is sent to all doctors. The accuracy of the data sheet is kept under review by the Medicines Control Agency, and where necessary changes are made to reflect evolving knowledge of its use, effectiveness and safety.

In addition, all general practitioners regularly receive free information on drugs available in the United Kingdom through the "British National Formulary, Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin", "Current Problems in Pharmacovigilance" and the medicines resource centre. Professional advice is also available from the medical advisers support centre. Copies of the documents are available in the Library.

Foster Carers

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the number of and *(b)* the percentage of local authority foster carers who receive a fee for fostering in addition to the basic boarding-out allowance, based on the latest available information.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is not available centrally. However, I understand from the National Foster Care Association that the percentage is very small.

Food Poisoning

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of food poisoning notifications to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys *(a)* for each year since 1982 and *(b)* in 1994 to the latest available date.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Food poisoning notifications: England and Wales, 1982–1994

	Number
1982	14,253
1983	17,735
1984	20,702
1985	19,242
1986	23,948
1987	29,331
1988	39,713
1989	52,557
1990	52,145
1991	52,543
1992	63,347
1993[1]	69,955
1994[1]	[2]64,959

[1] Provisional figures.

[2] Notifications to 7 October.

There is no single explanation for the rising trend in food poisoning. A contributory factor may be a reduction in under-reporting. On 22 October 1993, my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health announced the start of a major study of infectious intestinal diseases in England. The purpose of the study is to establish the incidence, sources, causes and socio-economic costs of infectious intestinal disease. This is the most comprehensive study of its type ever attempted. It will involve more than 70 general practices and more than 20,000 volunteers. The study will be completed in mid-1995.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures available for this year of the total number of laboratory reports of salmonella in foodstuffs to the Public Health Laboratory Service in England and Wales.

Mr. Sackville: The Public Health Laboratory of Enteric Pathogens has confirmed that to the end of September, 1,152 food isolates submitted were found positive for salmonella.

General Practitioners Fundholders

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to whether fundholding general practitioners are able to prescribe drugs on the basis of patient benefit rather than cost; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Fundholding empowers general practitioners to ensure the most appropriate care for their patients whether by prescribing medicines, referring to specialist services or other treatments.

Thameside NHS Trust (Learning Disabilities Services)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will set up a further committee of inquiry into the disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust to cover the period before 1991; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will place in the Library the report of the Mental Health Act Commission in respect of client A, referred to in appendix I, paragraph 4, of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust;

(3) where Mr. H, referred to in the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust, is now working;

(4) what action has been taken in respect of the recommendation set out at paragraph 17, appendix IV of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past" relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust;

(5) what disciplinary action, warnings or counselling have been initiated in respect of senior managers or consultants referred to in the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust;

(6) what action she proposes in respect of the findings of the alleged assault against client B, referred to in appendix II of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust; and what measures have been taken by the relevant health authorities since the publications of the report to remedy the "failure to investigate" detailed at paragraph 16 of appendix II;

(7) if she will initiate a further investigation into the complaints detailed in appendix V of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust in respect of client E;

(8) if the police were informed of details of all earlier complaints in relation to the care of client C, detailed in appendix III of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust, when they investigated the circumstances surrounding the death of client C, which occurred some time between 22 March and 26 August 1991;

(9) if relatives or representatives of patients and clients were allowed to attend all hearings of the inquiry of Mr. Norman Warner, the findings of which are contained in the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trusts;

(10) if all managers, consultants or other practitioners referred to in the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust who continue to be employed by Thameside trust or other successors to the former Basildon and Thurrock health authority have been fully exonerated by the findings of the inquiry;

(11) if Mr. H, referred to in the inquiry report "Learning from the Past" relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust, has had his professional conduct examined by his professional body; and if she will make a statement;

(12) if the only disciplinary action taken in respect of matters examined by and referred to in the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust, were those detailed in paragraphs 6 and 7 of appendix V;

(13) if she will further investigate the detailed findings of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust, in respect of client D contained in appendix IV of the report; and if she will set up a seperate inquiry into the finding that he was not recognised as being a patient requiring nursing as a terminally ill patient;

(14) what action has been taken to remedy the anxiety set out in paragraphs 2·10 and 2·11 of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust;

(15) what action she proposes in respect of the findings of the assault against client A, referred to in appendix I, paragraphs 11 and 12, of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust, as detailed;

(16) what prosecution or disciplinary action has been taken against Mr. H, referred to in the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust;

(17) on what grounds Mr. H, referred to in appendix III of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust, was allowed to resign when confronted with charges of professional misconduct; and what further action the health authority took to ensure that he was not re-employed by another health or local authority in a caring capacity;

(18) if she will initiate a further investigation into the complaints detailed in appendix VI of the inquiry report "Learning from the Past", relating to aspects of learning disabilities services managed by Thameside NHS trust, in respect of client F.

Mr. Bowis: We have been sent a copy of the independent inquiry report and I understand that the local agencies are acting on its 18 recommendations.

The inquiry was commissioned by South Essex health authority in conjunction with Thameside Community Healthcare national health service trust. The hon. Member should approach those organisations for answers to detailed questions about the conduct of the inquiry and its findings. In particular, it is the health authority's role to ensure that local residents have access to services of the highest quality.

Royal Northern Hospital

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans exist for the future of the Royal Northern Hospital, Holloway road, London N19 to be retained for health use; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: The future of the Royal Northern hospital is a matter for Camden and Islington health authority.

Accident and Emergency Services

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for the closure of accident and emergency departments at the North Middlesex hospital, Royal Free hospital and the Whittington hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The provision of accident and emergency services is the responsibility of local health authorities, and is determined in the light of local needs, priorities and resources. The hon. Member may wish to contact New River health authority for details of any plans concerning the North Middlesex hospital; and Camden and Islington health authority for details regarding the Royal Free and Whittington hospitals.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she next plans to visit Ilford.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no current plans to do so.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pension Funds

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to ensure that company pensioners are represented on the board of trustees of pension funds.

Mr. Arbuthnot: We propose that occupational pension scheme members should have the right to nominate at least one third of their scheme's trustees. It is for members to decide whether they wish to select a pensioner trustee. That is in line with the recommendation of the Pension Law Review Committee. We are still considering the best way to implement our proposals on the selection and appointment of member-nominated trustees in the light of the replies to our consultation document.

Poor Families

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the worst-off 10 per cent. of families have *(a)* motor cars, *(b)* colour television sets, *(c)* telephones and *(d)* videos.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table. The households below average income report suggests that the bottom 10 per cent. of the income distribution may not represent the "worst off" 10 per cent. For this reason information is also provided for the bottom 20 per cent.

	Bottom 10 per cent.		*Bottom 20 per cent.*	
	Before housing costs	*After housing costs*	*Before housing costs*	*After housing costs*
Car or Van	51 per cent.	53 per cent.	45 per cent.	45 per cent.
Television	97 per cent.	97 per cent.	98 per cent.	98 per cent.
Telephone	74 per cent.	73 per cent.	73 per cent.	72 per cent.
Video	60 per cent.	65 per cent.	56 per cent.	57 per cent.

Notes:

1. The source data for televisions (Family Expenditure Survey 1992) does not distinguish between black and white/colour sets.
2. Information for other items is taken from Households Below Average Income 1979–1991/92, a copy of which is in the Library.

Correspondence

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report*, correspondence to the hon. Member for Bristol, East from the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People about households below average income, dated 12 August and 31 August.

Mr. Burt: The correspondence in relation to the seven questions asked by the hon. Lady is as follows.

Letter to the hon. Member for Bristol East from the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People dated 12 August 1994:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question asking what was the average equivalent income at April 1994 prices for *(a)* the poorest 10 per cent. and *(b)* the poorest 20 per cent. from the latest households below average income analysis, before and after housing costs in 1979, 1981, 1987, 1988 to 1989, 1990–91 and 1991–92 for (i) a pensioner couple, (ii) a single pensioner, (iii) a couple with children, (iv) a couple without children, (v) a single adult with children and (vi) a single adult without children.

Unfortunately at the time Alistair Burt was unable to reply and promised to write.

Information for the bottom 20 per cent. is in the tables, which follows table A5 in the latest Households Below Average Income report. Reliable information on the bottom 10 per cent. of the groups specified is not available.

All estimates are subject to sampling error which may affect the validity of comparisons between groups at a point in time. Table A4 of HBAI contains an assessment of the extent of this source of uncertainty and should be used for comparisons between 1979 and the latest year. Results for singles and couples will be affected by a discontinuity from 1990 related to cohabiting; please see Appendix 10 in HBAI 1979—1990/91 for details. A copy of this letter will be placed in the Library.

Median equivalised household income in £ per week in April 1994 prices for the bottom 20 per cent. of each of the household family types

	1979	*1981*	*1987*	*1988–89*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*
Before housing costs						
Pensioner couple	91	95	103	103	101	107
Single pensioner	91	96	99	96	98	101
Couple with children	105	94	101	104	99	100
Couple without children	131	132	123	134	141	133
Single with children	89	92	97	97	97	99
Single without children	114	111	112	111	106	103
After housing costs						
Pensioner couple	76	81	88	88	88	90
Single Pensioner	83	86	88	85	90	92
Couple with children	88	77	79	82	76	76
Couple without children	112	111	98	110	115	105
Single with children	72	76	79	74	75	76
Single without children	98	91	86	83	80	75

Letter to the hon. Member for Bristol East from the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People, dated 12 August 1994:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question asking what would have been the effect on the numbers of children in households living on incomes (a) below the 1979 bottom decile median and (b) below 50 per cent. of 1979 average income, by 1991–92, using the methodology of the latest households below average income report, if child benefit had (i) remained at its 1979 level in real terms and (ii) had been increased relative to household income.

Unfortunately at the time Alistair Burt was unable to reply and promised to write.

I regret that information is not available. Child benefit interacts with other components of household income, such as income-related benefits, and reliable assumptions cannot be made about the net effect on income of hypothetical scenarios. A copy of this letter will be placed in the Library.

Letter to the hon. Member for Bristol East from the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People, dated 12 August 1994:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question asking for an assessment of the effect of a rise in the survey response rate on the latest edition of Households Below Average Income (HBAI). You also asked for details of any research into the relationship between income and the response to Government surveys on household expenditure and income.

Unfortunately at the time Alistair Burt was unable to reply and promised to write.

The Family Expenditure Survey (FES) response rate has remained relatively stable over the period covered by HBAI, reaching 72 per cent. in 1992. Any rise or fall in the survey response rate is compensated for by the use of grossing factors, which ensure that household population totals in HBAI continue to reflect the whole population of the United Kingdom. Appendix 3 of the latest HBAI report gives further information. We have no reliable information on the income characteristics of survey non-participants to enable the effect of a rise in survey participation to be addressed.

I understand that a study is being made of the FES sample from January to June 1991 as compared with the 1991 Population Census. However, the Census contains no income information, and the study will not cover this area. The main results of this study are expected to be published in 1995. My Department is aware of extensive research literature on non-response bias and takes this into account in the preparation of HBAI. A copy of this letter will be placed in the Library.

Letter to the hon. Member for Bristol East from the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People, dated 12 August 1994:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question asking how many children were in households living on incomes (a) below the 1979 bottom decile and (b) below 50 per cent. of 1979 average income, in 1979, 1981, 1987, 1988–89, 1990–91 and 1991–92, following tables 11.1 and 11.5 of the latest households below average income report; and what was the household income in current prices of these two cut off points for each of the years in question.

Unfortunately at the time Alistair Burt was unable to reply and promised to write.

The information is in the tables.

Your request for numbers below the 1979 bottom decile has been interpreted as a request for numbers below the 1979 bottom decile median. Household income in current prices for each year in question has been taken to mean current prices in each year rather than today's prices. The real (1994) values of the thresholds specified have been included in the tables but these values will be the same for any of the years shown. This is because the thresholds relate to the income distribution in 1979 rather than to conditions in each year. A copy of this letter will be placed in the Library.

Numbers of children grossed to 1991–92 levels below fixed income thresholds (000s)

	1979	*1981*	*1987*	*1988–89*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*
(a) Below 1979 Bottom Decile Median						
BHC	750	1,110	590	730	900	770
AHC	790	1,170	890	950	1,210	1,060

Numbers of children grossed to 1991–92 levels below fixed income thresholds (000s)

	1979	*1981*	*1987*	*1988–89*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*
(b) Below 50 per cent. of 1979 Average Income						
BHC	1,130	1,640	1,020	1,070	1,250	1,160
AHC	1,310	2,090	1,680	1,590	1,900	1,850

Values of thresholds in each year (January prices except where stated)

	1979 £	*1981* £	*1987* £	*1988–89* £	*1990–91* £	*1991–92* £	*April 1994* £
(a) 1979 Bottom Decile Median							
BHC	32	43	61	67	78	83	88
AHC	29	38	52	57	64	69	74
(b) *50 per cent. 1979 Average Income*							
BHC	35	47	67	74	86	91	97
AHC	33	43	59	64	73	78	84

1. *Source:* 1979, 1981, 1987 to 1992 Family Expenditure Surveys.
2. All estimates are subject to sampling error.
3. Income values denote equivalised household incomes.
4. Income for combined years is deflated to January of the later year.
5. Total numbers of children are grossed to 1991–92 levels.

Letter to the hon. Member for Bristol East from the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People dated 31 August 1994:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question asking what was the change in real incomes by decile group, 1979 to 1991–92, including the self-employed, before and after housing costs, following table A1 and appendix 10 of the latest households below average income report; and what was the equivalised and unequivalised income per household in each decile group, for households with children. Unfortunately at the time Alistair Burt was unable to reply and promised to write.

The information is not available in the precise form requested. Reliable estimates of changes in equivalised real incomes are not available for decile groups (and so is provided in the attached tables in quintile groups). In addition, it is not possible to give unequivalised incomes for all households with children as these depend on the number and ages of children in these households. The attached tables therefore contain equivalent money values of special examples of families with children. It is important to bear in mind that the results do not track what happens to a particular set of individuals over time and are as likely to be influenced by changes in the mix of groups as changes in income levels within each group. A copy of this letter will be placed in the Library.

Percentage change in real incomes of quintile medians and the mean of families with children for the period 1979–1991/92 (Percentage change)

	Quintile 1 Bottom 20 per cent.	*Quintile 2 20–40 per cent.*	*Quintile 3 40–60 per cent.*	*Quintile 4 60–80 per cent.*	*Quintile 5 Top 20 per cent.*	*Mean*
Before Housing Costs	(—2)	(7)	22	33	51	32
After Housing Costs	(—12	(1)	20	32	49	29

Estimates in brackets ( ) are particularly uncertain; see Appendix 5 of Households Below Average Income for details of the tests applied to estimates of changes in real incomes.

Equivalised income of families with children; quintile medians and the mean for 1979 and 1991–92, in April 1994 prices.

	Quintile 1 Bottom 20 per cent.	*Quintile 2 20–40 per cent.*	*Quintile 3 40–60 per cent.*	*Quintile 4 60–80 per cent.*	*Quintile 5 Top 20 per cent.*	*Mean*
Before Housing Costs						
1979	103	138	165	198	261	180
1991–92	100	148	202	263	394	238
After Housing Costs						
1979	86	117	141	172	227	155
1991–92	76	118	169	226	339	200

All estimates are subject to sampling error.

Equivalent Money Values for Quintile Medians and the Overall mean for Different Examples of Family Types with Children
Income Before Housing Costs (Equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

	Group Medians					
	Quintile 1 Bottom 20 per cent.	*Quintile 2 20–40 per cent.*	*Quintile 3 40–60 per cent.*	*Quintile 4 60–80 per cent.*	*Quintile 5 Top 20 per cent.*	*Total Population (mean)*
1979						
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	145	195	233	279	368	254
Couple with child 3, 16 and 17	202	272	325	390	515	355
Single with child aged 3	81	109	130	157	206	142
1991–92						
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	141	209	285	370	556	335
Couple with child aged 3, 16 and 17	197	292	398	517	777	468
Single with child aged 3	79	117	160	208	311	188

All estimates are subject to sampling error.

Equivalent money values for quintile medians and the overall mean for different examples of family types with children
Income after housing costs (equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

	Group Medians					
	Quintile 1 Bottom 20 per cent.	*Quintile 2 20–40 per cent.*	*Quintile 3 40–60 per cent.*	*Quintile 4 60–80 per cent.*	*Quintile 5 Top 20 per cent.*	*Total Population (mean)*
1979						
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	122	165	199	242	321	218
Couple with child aged 3, 16 and 17	175	236	285	347	459	313
Single with child aged 3	63	85	103	125	166	113
1991–92						
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	107	166	238	319	478	282
Couple with child aged 3, 16 and 17	153	238	341	458	685	405
Single with child aged 3	55	86	123	165	248	146

All estimates are subject to sampling error.

Letter to the hon. Member for Bristol East from the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People dated 31 August 1994:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question asking for the mean disposable income of each of the family types, as listed in the latest households below average income report, of the lowest decile group, second lowest decile group, and highest decile group in *(a)* current and *(b)* April 1994 prices, as ranked according to this Department's convention of equivalised income in 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92. Unfortunately at the time Alistair Burt was unable to reply and promised to write.

The available estimates are provided in the tables.

It is important to bear in mind that the results provided cannot be interpreted as indicating that the incomes of these groups have gone up or down over the period. Any income changes will reflect shifts of the number of people in each family type group from one decile group to another. For example, if a family type's income remains unchanged but there was a shift of that particular family type from the bottom decile into the second decile, the median income of the particular family type in the bottom decile in these tables would show a fall. Conversely, if that family type's income again remains the same, but there was a shift of that family type from the second decile into the bottom decile, the median income of that particular family type in the bottom decile in these tables would show a rise. But in both these examples the real incomes amongst that family type did not change. A copy of this letter will be place in the Library.

Median net equivalised income in each of the two lowest deciles and the top decile for each family type, 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 in actual prices[1] and in April 1994 prices

Pensioner Couple (Equivalised £ per week)

Median net equivalised income in each of the two lowest deciles and the top decile for each family type, 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 in actual prices[1] and in April 1994 prices

Pensioner Couple (Equivalised £ per week)

		1979	1988–89	1991–92
Actual prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	34	73	88
	AHC	30	61	72
Second	BHC	40	89	112
	AHC	36	71	86
Top	BHC	128	416	544
	AHC	123	372	471
April 1994 prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	92	95	93
	AHC	78	79	77
Second	BHC	108	116	119
	AHC	93	93	93
Top	BHC	351	543	578
	AHC	314	485	506

[1] Actual prices for 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 refer to January 1979, January 1989 and January 1992 respectively.

Notes:

1. The estimates have been calculated by the median income of family types in each of the bottom two and top deciles of the total Households Below Average Income distribution.

2. All estimates are subject to sampling error which may affect the validity of comparisons between groups at a point in time and over time. More information about sampling errors can be found in Appendix 5 of the latest edition of 'Households Below Average Income', a copy of which is in the library.

3. For estimates of changes in real income of family types over time, see Table A4 of the latest Households Below Average Income.

Median net equivalised income in each of the two lowest deciles and the top decile for each family type, 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 in actual prices[1] and in April 1994 prices

Single Pensioner (Equivalised £ per week)

		1979	1988–89	1991–92
Actual prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	33	71	89
	AHC	31	54	61
Second	BHC	40	90	111
	AHC	37	76	91
Top	BHC	128	407	537
	AHC	131	356	485
April 1994 prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	91	93	95
	AHC	79	70	66
Second	BHC	110	118	118
	AHC	93	99	98
Top	BHC	351	531	570
	AHC	333	465	521

[1] Actual prices for 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 refer to January 1979, January 1989 and January 1992 respectively.

Notes:

1. The estimates have been calculated by the median income of family types in each of the bottom two and top deciles of the total Households Below Average Income distribution.
2. All estimates are subject to sampling error which may affect the validity of comparisons between groups at a point in time and over time. More information about sampling errors can be found in Appendix 5 of the latest edition of 'Households Below Average Income', a copy of which is in the library.
3. For estimates of changes in real income of family types over time, see Table A4 of the latest Households Below Average Income.

Median net equivalised income in each of the two lowest deciles and the top decile for each family type, 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 in actual prices[1] and in April 1994 prices

Couple with children (Equivalised £ per week)

		1979	1988–89	1991–92
Actual prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	31	67	81
	AHC	28	53	57
Second	BHC	41	88	109
	AHC	37	73	87
Top	BHC	141	397	530
	AHC	135	359	489
April 1994 prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	85	87	86
	AHC	71	69	62
Second	BHC	111	115	116
	AHC	95	95	93
Top	BHC	385	518	563
	AHC	344	469	526

[1] Actual prices for 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 refer to January 1979, January 1989 and January 1992 respectively.

Notes:

1. The estimates have been calculated by the median income of family types in each of the bottom two and top deciles of the total Households Below Average Income distribution.
2. All estimates are subject to sampling error which may affect the validity of comparisons between groups at a point in time and over time. More information about sampling errors can be found in Appendix 5 of the latest edition of 'Households Below Average Income', a copy of which is in the library.
3. For estimates of changes in real income of family types over time, see Table A4 of the latest Households Below Average Income.

Median net equivalised income in each of the two lowest deciles and the top decile for each family type, 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 in actual prices[1] and in April 1994 prices

Couple without children (Equivalised £ per week)

		1979	1988–89	1991–92
Actual prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	31	63	70
	AHC	28	48	47
Second	BHC	41	88	112
	AHC	37	71	85
Top	BHC	127	393	532
	AHC	121	349	475
April 1994 prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	84	83	75
	AHC	70	62	51
Second	BHC	111	115	118
	AHC	95	92	92
Top	BHC	347	513	565
	AHC	309	456	511

[1] Actual prices for 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 refer to January 1979, January 1989 and January 1992 respectively.

Notes:

1. The estimates have been calculated by the median income of family types in each of the bottom two and top deciles of the total Households Below Average Income distribution.
2. All estimates are subject to sampling error which may affect the validity of comparisons between groups at a point in time and over time. More information about sampling errors can be found in Appendix 5 of the latest edition of 'Households Below Average Income', a copy of which is in the library.
3. For estimates of changes in real income of family types over time, see Table A4 of the latest Households Below Average Income.

Median net equivalised income in each of the two lowest deciles and the top decile for each family type, 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 in actual prices[1] and in April 1994 prices

Single with children (Equivalised £ per week)

		1979	1988–89	1991–92
Actual prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	32	74	90
	AHC	29	56	68
Second	BHC	41	89	109
	AHC	37	73	87
Top	BHC	132	390	534
	AHC	132	353	538
April 1994 prices (of decile median				
Bottom	BHC	89	96	96
	AHC	73	73	73
Second	BHC	112	116	116
	AHC	94	95	94
Top	BHC	362	509	567
	AHC	338	461	579

[1] Actual prices for 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 refer to January 1979, January 1989 and January 1992 respectively.

Notes:

1. The estimates have been calculated by the median income of family types in each of the bottom two and top deciles of the total Households Below Average Income distribution.
2. All estimates are subject to sampling error which may affect the validity of comparisons between groups at a point in time and over time. More information about sampling errors can be found in Appendix 5 of the latest edition of 'Households Below Average Income', a copy of which is in the library.
3. For estimates of changes in real income of family types over time, see Table A4 of the latest Households Below Average Income.

Median net equivalised income in each of the two lowest deciles and the top decile for each family type, 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 in actual prices[1] and in April 1994 prices

Single without children (Equivalised £ per week)

		1979	1988–89	1991–92
Actual prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	29	64	76
	AHC	25	49	50
Second	BHC	40	89	110
	AHC	37	73	87
Top	BHC	129	393	518
	AHC	122	351	464
April 1994 prices (of decile median)				
Bottom	BHC	80	83	80
	AHC	65	64	54
Second	BHC	110	117	117
	AHC	95	96	94
Top	BHC	351	513	550
	AHC	312	458	499

[1] Actual prices for 1979, 1988–89 and 1991–92 refer to January 1979, January 1989 and January 1992 respectively.

Notes:

1. The estimates have been calculated by the median income of family types in each of the bottom two and top deciles of the total Households Below Average Income distribution.

2. All estimates are subject to sampling error which may affect the validity of comparisons between groups at a point in time and over time. More information about sampling errors can be found in Appendix 5 of the latest edition of 'Households Below Average Income', a copy of which is in the library.

3. For estimates of changes in real income of family types over time, see Table A4 of the latest Households Below Average Income.

Letter to the hon. Member for Bristol East from the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People: 31 August 1994

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question asking for the equivalent monetary value in £ per week at April 1994 prices, following table A2 of the latest households below average income report, in 1979, 1990–91 and 1991–92, before and after housing costs, of the decile means and medians of the two poorest decile groups and the richest decile group, and the total population mean of *(a)* a single adult, *(b)* a couple with no children, *(c)* a couple with one child aged three years, *(d)* a couple with one child aged 16 years, *(e)* a couple with two children aged three and eight years, *(f)* a couple with three children aged three, eight and 11 years and *(g)* a couple with three children aged 11, 16 and 17 years. Unfortunately at the time Alistair Burt was unable to reply and promised to write.

The information is not available in the precise form requested.

Reliable estimates of the means of decile groups are not available. The estimates provided therefore follow those in Table A2 of the latest Households Below Average Income report and therefore only show the median of each decile group. It is important to bear in mind that the results do not track what happens to a particular set of individuals and are as likely to be influenced by changes in the mix of groups as changes in income levels within each group. A copy of this letter will be placed in the Library.

Money values for the bottom two decile medians, the top decile median and the overall mean for different family types in April 1994 prices, including self employed

(equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

	Group medians			
Income before Housing Costs	*Decile 1 Bottom 10 per cent.*	*Decile 2 10–20 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*	*Total population (mean)*
1979				
Single adult	54	67	218	118
Couple no children	88	110	358	193
Couple with child aged 3	104	130	422	228
Couple with child aged 16	119	150	487	263
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	124	155	505	272
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	146	183	594	320
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	173	217	705	380
1990–91				
Single adult	53	71	345	159
Couple no children	87	116	565	261
Couple with child aged 3	102	137	667	308
Couple with child aged 16	118	158	769	355
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	122	164	797	368
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	144	193	938	433
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	171	229	1,114	514

Money values for the bottom two decile medians, the top decile median and the overall mean for different family types in April 1994 prices, including self employed

(equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

	Group medians			
Income before Housing Costs	*Decile 1 Bottom 10 per cent.*	*Decile 2 10–20 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*	*Total population (mean)*
1991–92				
Single adult	53	72	343	160
Couple no children	88	117	563	262
Couple with child aged 3	103	138	664	309
Couple with child aged 16	119	159	766	356
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	123	165	794	369
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	145	195	934	435
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	172	231	1,109	516

All estimates are subject to sampling error.

Money values for the bottom two decile medians, the top decile median and the overall mean for different family types in April 1994 prices, including self employed

(equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

	Group medians			
Income After Housing Costs	*Decile 1 Bottom 10 per cent.*	*Decile 2 10–20 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*	*Total population (mean)*
1979				
Single adult	41	52	173	92
Couple no children	74	94	315	168
Couple with child aged 3	87	111	371	198
Couple with child aged 16	102	130	434	232
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	104	133	444	237
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	123	157	526	281
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	149	190	636	339
1990–91				
Single adult	35	52	280	126
Couple no children	64	94	509	228
Couple with child aged 3	75	111	601	269
Couple with child aged 16	88	130	703	315
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	90	132	718	322
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	106	157	851	381
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	129	190	1,029	461

Money values for the bottom two decile medians, the top decile median and the overall mean for different family types in April 1994 prices, including self employed

(equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

	Group medians			
Income After Housing Costs	*Decile 1 Bottom 10 per cent.*	*Decile 2 10–20 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*	*Total population (mean)*
1991–92				
Single adult	34	52	281	126
Couple no children	61	94	510	229
Couple with child aged 3	72	111	602	270
Couple with child aged 16	85	129	704	316
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	86	132	719	323
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	102	157	852	382
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	124	190	1,030	463

All estimates are subject to sampling error.

Money values for the bottom two decile medians, the top decile median and the overall mean for different family types in April 1994 prices, excluding self employed

(equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

	Group medians			
Income before Housing Costs	*Decile 1 Bottom 10 per cent.*	*Decile 2 10–20 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*	*Total population (mean)*
1979				
Single adult	54	67	212	117
Couple no children	89	110	348	191
Couple with child aged 3	105	130	410	226
Couple with child aged 16	120	150	473	260
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	125	156	490	270
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	147	183	577	318
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	175	218	685	377
1990–91				
Single adult	54	71	332	156
Couple no children	89	117	544	256
Couple with child aged 3	105	138	642	302
Couple with child aged 16	121	159	740	348
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	126	165	767	361
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	148	194	903	425
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	176	230	1,072	505

Money values for the bottom two decile medians, the top decile median and the overall mean for different family types in April 1994 prices, excluding self employed

(equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

		Group medians		
Income Before Housing Costs	*Decile 1 Bottom 10 per cent.*	*Decile 2 10–20 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*	*Total population (mean)*
1991–92				
Single adult	55	72	333	157
Couple no children	89	117	545	257
Couple with child aged 3	106	139	644	303
Couple with child aged 16	122	160	742	349
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	126	166	769	362
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	149	195	905	426
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	176	231	1,074	506

Note:

All estimates are subject to sampling error.

Money values for the bottom two decile medians, the top decile median and the overall mean for different family types in April 1994 prices, excluding self employed

(equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

		Group medians		
Income After Housing Costs	*Decile 1 Bottom 10 per cent.*	*Decile 2 10–20 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*	*Total population (mean)*
1979				
Single adult	41	52	168	92
Couple no children	74	94	306	167
Couple with child aged 3	88	111	361	197
Couple with child aged 16	102	130	422	230
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	105	133	431	235
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	124	158	511	278
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	150	191	618	337
1990–91				
Single adult	38	52	271	124
Couple no children	70	95	493	225
Couple with child aged 3	83	112	581	265
Couple with child aged 16	97	131	680	310
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	99	134	695	317
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	117	159	823	375
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	141	192	995	454

Money values for the bottom two decile medians, the top decile median and the overall mean for different family types in April 1994 prices, excluding self employed

(equivalent monetary values in £s per week)

		Group medians		
Income after Housing Costs	*Decile 1 Bottom 10 per cent.*	*Decile 2 10–20 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*	*Total population (mean)*
1990–91				
Single adult	37	52	273	1,248
Couple no children	67	95	496	225
Couple with child aged 3	80	112	586	266
Couple with child aged 16	93	131	685	311
Couple with child aged 3 and 8	95	133	700	317
Couple with child aged 3, 8 and 11	113	158	829	376
Couple with child aged 11, 16 and 17	136	191	1,003	455

All estimates are subject to sampling error.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the cost of each medical examination carried out by his Department's medical officers on customers claiming sickness benefit for the first time and the cost of each subsequent medical examination of customers in receipt of sickness benefit in *(a)* the north Tyne area and *(b)* the south Tyne area for the year ending 31 March; and how many (i) first-time and (ii) other claimants' claims for sickness benefit was rejected on the basis of the examining medical officer's report in each area in that year.

Mr. Hague: The administration of sickness benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Clelland, dated 25 October 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about Sickness Benefit (SB) recipients in the north and south Tyne areas and the cost of medical examinations.

The information is not available in the format requested. This is because Benefits Agency boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries. SB recipients in the north Tyne area are dealt with by the Newcastle and north Tyneside district offices; SB recipients in the south Tyne area are dealt with by the south Tyneside district office.

For the year ending 31 March the number of customers disallowed SB following a Benefits Agency Medical Services report that they were capable of some work was as follows:

(i) first time claim (where a customer claimed SB for the first time)—5 in the Newcastle and north Tyneside Districts and 5 in the south Tyneside district.

(ii) other claimants' claims (where a customer has claimed SB in the past)—14 in the Newcastle and north Tyneside districts and 18 in the south Tyneside district.

Information on the overall cost of Benefits Agency examinations for SB is not available. However, I am able to tell you that the cost in terms of payments to doctors and nurses for each examination is approximately £22·00. The costs of the administrative overheads for SB examinations is not recorded separately from those of other benefits and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Occupational Pension Schemes

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are currently members of an occupational pension scheme; and how many men aged 65 to 69 years and women aged 60 to 64 years are currently in receipt of an occupational pension.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The most recent figures available[1] show that in 1991 there were 6·8 million male and 3·9 million female active occupational scheme members[2]. In the same year there were 0·92 million men aged 65 to 69 years and 0·39 million women aged 60 to 64 years in receipt of an occupational pension.

Notes:

[1] Occupational Pension Schemes 1991. Ninth survey by the Government Actuary.

[2] A member of an occupational pension scheme who is at present accruing benefits under that scheme in respect of current service.

Automatic Benefit Payments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the project brief for automatic benefit payments accounting systems at post offices allows for the introduction of transaction charges for *(a)* Post Office operators and *(b)* benefit claimants.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The system of charges to be paid by the Department of Social Security to Post Office Counters Ltd. for encashments under the automated system will be a matter for negotiation. The system for remunerating individual sub-post offices is a commercial agreement between Post Office Counters Ltd. and the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters.

There is no intention to introduce a transaction charge for benefit claimants.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide information on the level of bank charges paid to date by the Child Support Agency and the extent to which they have been absorbed by clients' funds temporarily held by the agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Clive Betts dated 25 October 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the level of bank charges paid by the Child Support Agency to date and the extent to which they have been absorbed by client's funds held by the Agency.

To 31 July 1994, the Agency has paid £173,400 in bank charges. The greater proportion of the Agency's expenditure on bank charges occurs when absent parents use Transcash to make cash payments of maintenance via Girobank. Charges are also made for the use of computer tapes to transfer money to the Client Funds Account. In addition, between April 1993 and March 1994, charges were also incurred in respect of the processing of computer tapes, direct debits, standing orders and the use of the Agency's bank's Head Office collection account for clearing cheques. Invoices for bank charges are received from the Agency's bankers and are paid from the Department of Social Security Administration and Miscellaneous Services Class XIV, Vote 4 account.

No bank charges have been paid from clients' funds temporarily held by the Agency.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to review the workings of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The workings of the Child Support Agency are under constant review.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the first report of the chief child support officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The report is being published today. The report's findings on the standard of adjudication in the Child Support Agency are disappointing. However, the chief child support officer, Mr. Ernie Hazlewood, recognises the exceptional pressures faced by the agency in its first year and the extremely high level of outside attention focused on staff, many of whom were new to the work. In addition, the deliberate non-co-operation of some absent parents has made the task faced by the agency a very difficult one.

The Child Support Agency is committed to raising standards of adjudication and many of the difficulties identified in the report were recognised by the agency in its annual report, published in July. The CCSO acknowledges the plans already made by managers to effect improvement. To supplement and reinforce the work already begun, he recommends extra emphasis be given to the key areas of adjudication training, recording of decisions, periodic checks and some specific parts of the formula. The agency clearly has a long way to go to reach an acceptable standard of decision making and considerable difficulties to overcome, but recent monitoring exercises indicate that improvement has already occurred.

Both the CCSO and I look forward to continuing progress in future years.

VAT Allowances

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what interdepartmental arrangements he has made to ensure that the moneys paid to pensioners and families as compensation for VAT increases are not eroded by being taken into account when other benefits are calculated; and if he will make a statement on how the Government are protecting them against the erosion of their benefits;

(2) how much money the Government have saved as a result of taking into account the allowance for VAT when other benefits are calculated.

Mr. Roger Evans: In April 1994, income-related benefits were increased to provide help with VAT on domestic fuel. In April 1995, they will be increased again. Claimants with other benefits that are taken into account in assessing entitlement to an income-related benefit therefore still receive help with the levy. The total package involves expenditure of £2·5 billion over three years.

Child Maintenance

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce legislation that will take account of absent parents who set themselves up as self-employed in order to avoid maintenance payments.

Mr. Burt: None. The formula for assessing liability for child support maintenance applies equally to employed and self-employed parents.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of women who are experiencing difficulties with the Child Support Agency regarding payment of maintenance moneys.

Mr. Burt: The information about complaints, difficulties and queries is not collated in the form requested. Some 9,542 complaints and queries relating to the Child Support Agency were recorded between 1 April and 31 August 1994. This figure represents less than 5 per cent. of the cases taken on to that date.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Hague: No such receptions are held.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Hague: On one occasion, at a cost of £538·48. Such travel has not been undertaken at a Minister's own cost.

DEFENCE

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Soames: The amounts spent by my Department on official entertainment, refreshments and protocol entertainment for each year since 1990 are:

1990–91—£3,900,000
1991–92—£4,100,000
1992–93—£4,950,000
1993–94—£4,580,000

These figures include expenditure incurred by the Ministry of Defence headquarters, by formations and establishments of the armed forces at home and abroad, and by individual officers occupying command and international appointments for which entertainment allowances are payable.

Expenditure on official hospitality by agencies is the repsonsibility of individual chief executives under the terms of their framework documents. The figures are as follows:

Hospitality Expenditure by Defence Support and Executive Agencies Since Vesting

Name of Agency	*Date of Vesting*	*Financial Year 1990–91* £	*Financial Year 1991–92* £	*Financial Year 1992–93* £	*Financial year 1993–94* £
Army Base Repair Organisation	01.04.93	—	—	—	5,984
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment	02.04.91	—	8,000	12,000	10,000
Defence Accounts Agency	02.04.91	—	670	717	452
Defence Analytical Services Agency	01.07.92	—	—	1,970	410
Defence Animal Centre	01.07.93	—	—	161	245
Defence Operational Analysis Centre	01.07.92	—	—	2,832	2,098
Defence Postal and Courier Service	01.07.92	—	—	933	1,004
Defence Research Agency	02.04.91	—	10,147	4,749	4,000
Disposal Sales Agency	03.10.94	—	—	—	—
Duke of York's Royal Military School	01.04.92	—	—	1,915	1,953
Hydrographic Office	06.04.90	810	1,602	2,876	2,914
Metreological Office	02.04.90	20,712	25,734	16,465	25,206
Military Survey	02.04.91	—	0	384	4,655
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation	01.04.92	—	—	7,000	3,000
Queen Victoria School	01.04.92	—	—	335	2,395
RAF Maintenance Group	02.04.92	—	—	0	0
RAF Training Group	01.04.94	—	—	—	—
Service Children School North West Europe	02.04.91	—	0	77	308
Total		21,522	46,153	52,414	64,624

Nerve Gas

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of nerve gas stocks have been disposed of; what locations were used for this dumping; and what monitoring has been done subsequently of these sites.

Mr. Soames: The United Kingdom has undertaken the disposal of sizeable quantities of nerve agents on three occasions since 1946. In 1946, British forces disposed of some 3,000 tons of captured German WWII munitions containing nerve agent in hulks scuttled in the Skagerrak. An additional 17,000 tons of captured German munitions were similarly dumped at sea in the north Atlantic in 1955–56. No subsequent monitoring of the Atlantic dump sites was undertaken in view of their depth—over 2,000 m—and because, on exposure to sea water, nerve agents rapidly decompose to non-toxic compounds through dilution and hydrolysis. Monitoring of the Skagerrak sites by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment in 1990 and the Swedish Maritime Department in 1992 showed no evidence of nerve agents or their decomposition products.

Finally, some 20 tons of nerve agent produced prior to 1956 was destroyed by chemical hydrolysis and dilution at the former Chemical Defence Establishment, Nancekuke, Cornwall in 1968. Following tests to ensure the hydrolysed material was harmless to the marine environment, it was discharged into the sea. Additionally, from time to time, small quantities of agents are destroyed routinely by chemical methods and incineration at CBDE, Porton Down.

Porton Down

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department, or the Chemical and Biological Defence Agency, gave the producers of the "Network First" programme, "The Secrets of Porton Down", broadcast on 11 October.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment. I have asked the chief executive of the CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 26 October 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him what assistance his Department, or the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, gave the producers of the Network First programme on the "Secrets of Porton Down", broadcast on 11 October has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The producers of the Network First programme broadcast on 11 October 1994 first approached this Establishment on 6 December 1993 to say that they had been commissioned by the ITV Network to make a one hour documentary programme looking at the history of chemical and biological warfare research in Britain for transmission in 1994. This was followed by a meeting with the Director and Associate Producer of the programme in the Ministry of Defence with the Head of News and myself. We were provided with an outline of the programme which said that it would look at the history of British research into chemical and biological warfare and defence and assess its current status. They made it clear that they felt that CBDE Porton Down had made a very significant contribution to chemical and biological defence and wished to examine the direction of such defence now that the East-West situation had relaxed and the Chemical Weapons Convention had been opened signature and steps were being taken to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

3. This was followed by a reconnaissance visit by the Director and Associate Producer to CBDE Porton Down on Friday 14 January 1994. This led to a request dated 20 January 1994 which stated that this was an appropriate moment to take stock of the history and development of chemical and biological warfare and defence, a history in which Porton Down had played a leading role for almost 80 years. Requests were made for filming facilities at CBDE Porton Down together with an interview with myself. Such filming and the interview which lasted for about three hours took place on 3 and 10 February 1994. In addition, CBDE provided on loan to the producers five CBDE films and four video tapes.

4. Our practice over the past decade has been to respond positively to requests from media for facilities at CBDE Porton Down and these have generally succeeded in giving a far wider public perception of the role of CBDE which is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons might be used against them. This improved public perception has also been aided by CBDE being a Defence Agency since April 1991 resulting in the publication of Annual Reports and Accounts. In addition, in July 1994, we launched a new brochure "Protecting Through Scientific Understanding" together with an accompanying video.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men or women have died as a result of experiments undertaken on them with chemical or biological warfare agents at Porton Down Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 26 October, 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him how many Service personnel have died as a result of experiments undertaken on them with chemical or biological warfare agents at Porton Down CBDE has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the UK Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to use service volunteers to:

> a. assess the ability of service personnel to function to function with new equipment and procedures,
>
> b. develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel and
>
> c. evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of CW agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.
>
> No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

3. Since the start of the Service volunteer programme in the 1920s, there has been a single fatality in 1953 as reported in the *Official Report* (9 June 1953, Volume 516, Column *7-8* and 22 June 1953, Volume 516, Column *105*) when Leading Aircraftsman Ronald Maddison died from the effects of asphyxia after taking part in a trial at the then Chemical Defence Experimental Establishment at Porton Down. A detailed inquiry was then held into the circumstances and following this inquiry which was carried out by eminent independent scientists, new guidelines were laid down to ensure the safety of Service volunteers. In the subsequent 40 years, there has been no fatality nor has there been any evidence that any Service volunteers have suffered deterioration in their health as a result of participating in studies at Porton Down.

Upholder Submarines

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the Government's intentions for the Upholder submarines.

Mr. Freeman: In the light of the changes in the strategic environment, the Upholder class is being withdrawn from service. HMS Unicorn, the last of the four boats, will pay off next month. We are currently examining options for their sale, lease or storage, bearing in mind the investment which they represent. No decisions have yet been taken.

Ammunition Contracts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the financial effect on the British defence manufacturing industry of the placing of ammunition contracts with foreign manufacturers by the Ministry of Defence under the advice of Mr. Gordon Foxley.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to say with any certainty what impact Foxley's corrupt activities in the field of fuse manufacture had on British defence manufacturing industry.

Contracts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all contracts tendered for, and handled in any way on behalf of, Saudi Arabia by his Department acting as agents for the Saudi Arabian Government; which firms tendered for, or were awarded, those contracts; and which business agents were appointed in connection with these contracts.

Mr. Freeman: Equipment supplied under the Al-Yamamah programme includes Tornado and Hawk aircraft and naval minesweepers along with associated equipment, support and infrastructure. Further orders for Tornado and training aircraft have been announced since January 1993. Details of the contracts are confidential between the British and Saudi Arabian Governments. The British Government have not employed business agents in connection with these contracts.

Catering

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the difference in the allowances per service man for catering purposes per day in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force; if he will set out each allowance; and what factors underlie the differences between the amounts.

Mr. Soames: The allowances per day for catering purposes are based on a ration scale costed at current prices and known as the daily messing rate. The ration scale is the same for personnel of all three services.

The scale is costed according to the supply source of food items. Where the source of supply is more expensive due to local conditions the daily messing rate is higher to take account of extra costs. For ships and submarines a slightly different scale is used to take account of their special circumstances.

A general overseas ration scale exists for overseas bases and attachments. This scale has a higher calorific value to take account of conditions such as heat, cold and humidity. The rate applicable to units abroad will also depend on prices in the local economy for food stuffs which are bought locally.

Examples of daily messing rates for October 1994 are:

	£
Army, RAF and RN Shore establishments (including Germany and Hong Kong)	1·75
RN ships and submarines	1·86
Falklands	2·03
Cyprus	1·93
Gibraltar	2·07

Where personnel are in special circumstances or performing duties which require extra energy—such as divers or members of mountain rescue teams—they are entitled to supplementary allowances.

Royal Marines

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the investment appraisals in respect of the 16 Deal-based options referred to in paragraph 8 of the consultative document dated 17 October 1994 entitled "Future Location of Royal Marines Training".

Mr. Soames: I have written to the hon. Member and a copy of the letter is being placed in the Library of the House.

RAF Finningley

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what alternative defence uses are being considered for RAF Finningley.

Mr. Soames: No alternative defence uses have yet been identified for RAF Finningley. In accordance with departmental procedures, however, a full inter-service trawl will be undertaken in parallel with the consultation period to identify any possible alternative defence uses, in the event that a decision to close RAF Finningley is taken after formal consultation.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures will be followed if the MOD decides to dispose of the RAF Finningley site.

Mr. Soames: If it is decided to dispose of RAF Finningley, standard departmental procedures would be followed. This would include discussions with the local authority on future use and the appointment of consultants to advise on a disposal strategy and optimum method of sale.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will hold discussions with Doncaster metropolitan borough council and the local regeneration partnership on how RAF Finningley could become a joint military and civilian airfield.

Mr. Soames: The proposal to close RAF Finningley will be subject to full consultation with trade unions and other interested parties. I would be happy to receive details of any substantive proposals regarding future use the site that Doncaster metropolitan borough council may wish to put forward as part of the consultation process.

Appropriation Accounts

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff were involved in the movements in the public interest which led to the expenditure recorded in the notes to class I, vote 1 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94.

Mr. Soames: Seven staff received special payments following a move in the public interest.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many countries are covered by the £20,315,000 in forgone receipts referred to in the other notes to class I, vote 1 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94.

Mr. Soames: Thirty-six countries are covered by the £20,315,000 in forgone receipts referred to in the other notes to class 1 vote 1 of the appropriation accounts 1993–94.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he proposes to take to make low flying avoidance areas public.

Mr. Soames: There are no plans to alter my Department's policy of not releasing specific details of flying restrictions in individual areas.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made to introduce flight simulators as a substitute for low flying sorties.

Mr. Soames: The use of flight simulators is an integral part of our training programme. However, the performance characteristics of current simulator technology do not provide an acceptable substitute for low flying training. We do, however, continue to monitor closely developments in this area of technology.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make all non-United Kingdom air crews included in low flying over the United Kingdom subject to the jurisdiction of the RAF police.

Mr. Soames: All foreign military aircrews operating within the United Kingdom low flying system are subject to the same flying regulations as apply to United Kingdom aircrews. The RAF police are responsible for investigating alleged breaches of the regulations, whether United Kingdom or foreign aircrews were involved. In the event that a breach of regulations is confirmed, jurisdiction, in terms of disciplinary action, rests initially with the commanding officer of the aircrew concerned or, in the case of foreign aircrew, with their relevant national authorities, not with the RAF police.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which NATO countries allow low flying training below 250 ft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member as this information is not readily available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will introduce an independent system of investigation of public complaints about alleged breaches of low flying regulations by low-flying aircraft over the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: No. We are satisfied that the existing system is impartial, effective and best placed to investigate public complaints about alleged breaches of low flying regulations, and therefore see no reason to introduce such a system.

Bird-strike Incidents

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of observed birds or intensity of bird activity specified in the bird warning movement message for the Aberlady bay area on the morning of 30 September.

Mr. Soames: There was no bird hazard warning issued for the Aberlady bay area on the morning in question.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the date, location, aircraft type, altitude and damage category for all bird-strike incidents involving military aircraft in the Forth estuary area since 1990.

Mr. Soames: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice is given to military aircrew concerning the minimum altitude at which aircraft should cross coastlines in order to reduce the risk of bird-strike.

Mr. Soames: Aircrew are advised that, wherever possible, coastlines should be crossed at a minimum height of 500 ft, but preferably 1,000 ft.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Soames: It is not my Department's practice to organise such events. Those who express an interest in public appointments without specifying a particular body are referred to the public appointments unit of the Cabinet Office who have their own arrangements for publishing the requirements and opportunities of such appointments.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Soames: Since the beginning of 1994, Ministers in my Department have been accompanied by their spouses on public duties overseas on five occasions. On each of those occasions the extra cost to the Department would have been either negligible or nil, as the spouses in question travelled on RAF aircraft which were already assigned to the visit, and on four occasions were accommodated in official residences.

On one occasion a Minister and his spouse were accommodated in a hotel but in a room that the Minister would have occupied if he had not been accompanied.

Procedures outlined in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" were followed in all cases.

Japan (Plutonium)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the proliferation risks associated with the transport of plutonium from Europe to Japan were discussed at the NATO-Japan third security conference in Brussels held on 19 to 20 October.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been asked to reply.

During its recent meeting the third NATO-Japan security conference took careful note of the requirement for maintaining the highest standards of protection for all fissile material.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Rwanda

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European counterparts regarding the provision of European Union aid for rehabilitation and reconstruction in Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed the outcome of the recent EU troika visit to Rwanda with his European colleagues at the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 4 October. There was broad agreement on the need for continuing humanitarian aid, for short-term rehabilitation programmes to encourage the return of refugees and for longer-term resumption of development co-operation.

Aid Programme

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy regarding aid funding for economically unsound projects.

Mr. Baldry: It is our policy to finance projects only after rigorous appraisal against economic, financial, technical, social and environmental criteria.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what test of economic efficiency is applied to projects seeking financial assistance under the aid programme.

Mr. Baldry: Projects should at least match the economic rate of return appropriate to the recipient country. Where no rate of return is calculated, cost-effectiveness is tested by comparing alternative ways of achieving project objectives. The methodology used in economic appraisal is set out in the ODA's publication "*Appraisal of Projects in Developing Countries—a Guide for Economists*", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requirement for economic efficiency in individual aid projects is included in the Overseas Development Administration's priority objective of promoting economic reform.

Mr. Baldry: Most aid for internationally agreed economic reform programmes has been in the form of balance of payments support. Project aid in support of reform is largely in the form of technical assistance. That is not usually susceptible to appraisal for economic efficiency, but is carefully assessed for cost-effectiveness.

Belize

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all Overseas Development Administration projects in Belize with the costs involved.

Mr. Baldry: A list of current Overseas Development Administration projects in Belize which are costed in excess of £50,000 has been placed in the Libraries of the House. In addition to those projects, the British high commission in Belize has an allocation of £100,000 to finance small projects of a developmental, social or welfare nature.

Project Title	*Commitment (£)*
Airport Terminal (Construction)	2,800,000
Big Falls Bridge	1,334,116
Northern Highway Project	563,604
Stann Creek Valley Road	7,096,000
Police Radios Project	565,094
Toledo Agricultural Research and Development Appraisal	80,000
Plant Protection Project	787,000
Tropical Forestry Action Plan	120,000
Mountain Pine Ridge Inventory	55,485
Forest Management Project	3,732,000
Land Survey; North Belize	325,527
Rural Physical Planner	117,500
Civil Aviation Authority Chief Fire Officer	120,000
Architectural Advice	150,000
Education Support In-service Project	90,000
World Bank Education Project	1,000,000
Drug Demand Reduction	134,000
Total	19,070,326

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the 1992 review of the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Baldry: The new arrangements for the administration of the aid and trade provision referred to in the reply which my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd) gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) on 17 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *675-76*, took effect on that date.

Mozambique

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he is providing for the elections in Mozambique.

Mr. Baldry: We have contributed about £2·2 million to the United Nations Development Programme's electoral assistance project, including our share of the EC's contribution. We have also contributed £500,000 to the UN Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Peace Process in Mozambique to help RENAMO transform itself into a political party.

We are providing 30 British observers for the UN and EU international election observers teams. Several United Kingdom parliamentarians are also attending under other auspices.

Iraq

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he intends to take to maintain humanitarian assistance to the Kurdish population of northern Iraq, following recent events in the Gulf region.

Mr. Baldry: Saddam's threatening actions near the Kuwaiti border have not affected our plans for aid for northern Iraq. We have committed some £4·7 million this year for medical assistance and village rehabilitation. We shall continue to keep in touch with the Kurdish administration, UN agencies, NGOs and others involved in northern Iraq.

Haiti

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what economic or other aid he plans for the United Kingdom to give to President Aristide of Haiti.

Mr. Baldry: We are ready to consider assistance for police training once security conditions have allowed the UN mission in Haiti to deploy. We have also agreed in principle to the resumption of EU aid. Haiti's national indicative programme for the period 1990–95 will be 120 mecu—£94 million—of which the United Kingdom share will be £15 million. This will be implemented as soon as the EU and Haiti agree priority sectors.

Third World Department

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer concerning third world debt.

Mr. Baldry: By long-standing convention, discussions of this nature between Departments are confidential.

Albania

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total amount of bilateral aid given by the United Kingdom to Albania in each of the last three years; and if he will list the main projects to have benefited from this aid.

Mr. Baldry: Total United Kingdom bilateral aid to Albania for the last three financial years was:

	£
1991–92	615,000
1992–93	417,000
1993–94	[1]921,000

[1] Provisional figure

A large proportion of this was emergency aid, mostly food and medicines: £615,000 in 1991–92; £371,000 in 1992–93; and £501,000 in 1993–94. The remainder, £46,000 in 1992–93 and £420,000 in 1993–94, consists of funds disbursed under the know-how fund, Britain's programme of technical assistance for the countries of central and eastern Europe. The KHF was extended to Albania in June 1992. The main projects completed or under way are:

a one year placement for a British agricultural consultant to assist the National Agency for State Farms with the process of privatisation (completed);

a two year project to assist the development of private farmers associations (ongoing);

funding of volunteers from East European Partnership (EEP) to work on a major EU PHARE business advice and training project for regional business centres (ongoing);

a two year training programme for local government finance officers to help implement new local government legislation (ongoing);

placement of a haematologist to assist the Director of the Tirana Blood Bank with the transition to a voluntary system of blood donation (ongoing);

a grant for EEP volunteers to provide training and consultancy advice at the home for Mentally Handicapped Children in Berat (ongoing);

a project to improve the quality and supply of water by Korca water company. The project will also produce a manual of good practice to be used elsewhere in Albania (ongoing);

a project to train Albanian geoscientists in coastal zone management and to help establish a Coastal Geology Unit in Albania (ongoing);

a programme of consultancy and training for the Albanian prison service, provided by Her Majesty's Prison Service (ongoing);

a series of visits to and from Albania by members of the Devon Fire Service and Albanian fire officers, culminating in a training course for 14 Albanians in Devon in November 1994 (ongoing);

a publishing seminar organised by International Book Development (IBD) Training as part of a larger World Bank programme designed to develop an approach to textbook provision appropriate to Albania (completed).

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of multilateral aid packages given to Albania in which the United Kingdom or the European Union has contributed.

Mr. Baldry: Several multilateral agencies to which Britain makes a regular contribution are active in Albania.

The EU's PHARE programme was extended to Albania in 1992. In 1992 and 1993 a total of 53 mecu—£42 million—was disbursed on a number of projects in agriculture, private sector development, health, transport, environment, public administration and higher education. Britain contributes approximately 16 per cent. of the total PHARE budget, which, in 1994, represents about £7 million for Albania.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in which the British Government have an 8·5 per cent. shareholding, has approved loans totalling 34 mecu—£26·5 million—for investment projects in Albania. It has also committed 4·7 mecu—£3·6 million—to technical co-operation projects in telecommunications, finance, energy, the environment and tourism.

Since it began lending to Albania, the International Development Association has approved a total of US$138 million in development credits, of which $87 million remained undisbursed on 30 June 1994. During the IDA 1993–94 financial year, it approved credits for housing, labour market development, social safety net development, water rehabilitation and school rehabilitation. The UK contributed 6·15 per cent. to the latest IDA replenishment—IDA–10—in July 1993.

Three UN agencies, UNICEF, the UNDP and WHO, are active in Albania. UNICEF, which received $8.5 million from Britain this financial year, has a $6 million programme for Albania covering the years 1993–95. WHO has a $50,000 programme in albania for 1994–95 and the UNDP a $6 million budget for the same period. The UK contributes approximately 5 per cent. of the annual global budget of both agencies.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Enterprise

16. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet Scottish Enterprise officials to discuss future financial allocations and priorities.

Mr. Stewart: As my right hon. Friend said in his earlier reply to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North, (Dr. Reid) he plans to meet the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Enterprise next month.

Assured Tenants

17. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many assured tenants there are in Scottish Housing Association dwellings.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at 31 March 1994, there were over 40,000 assured tenancies representing 60 per cent. of the total housing association stock.

Commercial Property Market

18. **Mr. Thurnham**: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the workings of the commercial property market in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations about the workings of the commercial property market in Scotland.

Homelessness

19. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has in respect of homelessness in Scotland.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received relating to the statutory duty on local authorities to provide permanent accommodation for homeless; and what percentage of these representations favoured retention of this statutory duty.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have received nearly 160 responses to our consultation paper. Ninety-seven per cent. of the consultees expressed strong support for the retention of local housing authorities' duty to provide permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need. We are now considering the responses to all of the questions posed and we shall announce our decisions in due course.

Manufacturing Industry

20. **Mrs. Liddell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Scottish Council of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss its manufacturing industry study.

Mr. Lang: I and my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry maintain regular contact with the Scottish Council of the CBI on a wide range of issues.

Higher Education

21. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet his European colleagues to discuss the entry qualification for higher education.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I plan to attend the next meeting of EC Education Ministers on 5 December in Brussels. Entry qualifications to higher education are not on the agenda on that occasion. The Scottish Office Education Department is represented at a Council of Europe conference beginning today on recognition of higher education qualifications.

Youth Unemployment

24. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss youth unemployment.

Mr. Lang: I have no plans to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss youth unemployment, although we correspond regularly about a range of issues.

General Practitioner Fundholding

25. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many general practitioner fundholding practices there are now in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: According to the latest information provided by health boards there are currently 107 operational fundholders in Scotland.

Local Government Reform

26. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current estimate of the costs of local government reform in Strathclyde and Lothian region.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's estimate of the costs and savings that will result from its proposals to reorganise local government in Scotland has been calculated on a Scotland-wide basis, and has not been disaggregated to individual local authority level.

Forestry Commission

27. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the future of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Munro: I have nothing to add at this stage to the statement to the House by my right hon. Friend on 19 July 1994 and the command paper "Our Forests—The Way Ahead" published in August, which explained the Government's proposals in greater detail. We have invited views on our proposals. These should be submitted by 18 November.

Economy

28. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Scottish economy.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish economy is advancing on a broad front. Output is increasing across a range of sectors and exports are at a record level. Unemployment has been falling and the September level was the lowest for three years. The latest business survey evidence points to continued confidence in virtually all sectors and to increasing investment expectations on the part of manufacturers. Business forecasts predict continuing steady growth this year and next. These positive trends are greatly to be welcomed and amply demonstrate the success of the Government's policies for the economy.

Hardwood Trees

29. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what acreage of hardwood trees is felled on average each year; and what is the rate of re-planting.

Sir Hector Monro: No record is kept of the area of broadleaved woodlands which is felled each year. Nevertheless, the felling of woodland in Britain is controlled through felling licences and the woodland grant scheme. These ensure that practically all felled woodland is replanted, and that broadleaved woodland is replanted with broadleaved trees.

Water Charges

30. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about water charges.

Mr. Stewart: Water charges have risen in recent years and will continue to do so to finance the new investment of some £5 billion needed for water and sewerage over the next 15 years or so. The new structure for Scottish water and sewerage services proposed in the Local Government etc (Scotland) Bill is designed to keep increases as low as possible. The three new public authorities will be expected to secure economies of scale and maximise operational efficiency.

Hospital Beds

31. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that the number of hospital beds in Glasgow will be sufficient for future needs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for Greater Glasgow health board in consultation with the NHS trusts in its area to assess the volume of service for the Glasgow population in consideration of a needs assessment of the current and future needs of the local population.

"Higher Still: Opportunity for All"

32. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made with regard to the implementation of the proposals contained in his document, "Higher Still: Opportunity for All".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Good progress is being made. The committee structure which will deliver the new system of courses and awards for upper secondary education in Scotland is now in place and has commenced its work. In addition, a development unit has been established to co-ordinate development activities.

Housing

33. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of tenants groups to discuss housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet tenants' organisations to discuss housing in Scotland but I often meet tenants in the course of my housing visits to local authorities throughout Scotland.

Unemployment

34. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the change in the number of unemployed in Scotland since December 1992.

Mr. Stewart: Between December 1992 and September 1994, the seasonally adjusted level of unemployment in Scotland fell by 24,000.

Rivers

35. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on measures to combat acidification of rivers in Scotland.

Sir Hector Munro: The main source of acidification of rivers in Scotland is acid rain caused by atmospheric pollution. The Government are a signatory to the recent European sulphur protocol which binds all European countries to reduce emissions of sulphur, a significant contributor to acid rain, during the next 15 to 20 years.

Our primary vehicle for achieving reductions in emissions of acid gases from major industrial sources is the United Kingdom national plan to meet the requirements of the EC large combustion plants directive. Under this plan, Scotland is separately responsible for delivering its own reductions in emissions of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen within specified overall UK limits.

Public Sector Jobs

36. **Mr. Harry Greenaway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish jobs are in the public sector; what is their cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: In 1993, public sector employment in Scotland is estimated to have been as follows: civil service 53,000; NHS 139,000; local government 304,000; HM armed forces 19,000; and national industries approximately 30,000.

The above total of 545,000 excludes employment in other central Government occupations and other public corporations. The NHS figure includes those employed in NHS trusts, but excludes medical and dental practitioners, who are treated as self-employed. The local government figures exclude those employed in further education.

An estimate of the total cost is not available

Approximately one in four workers in Scotland are in the public sector, a slightly higher proportion than in the UK as a whole. This includes part-time as well as full-time workers.

Local Government Reorganisation

37. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local government reorganisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I are scheduled to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 11 November as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters. It is likely that issues relating to local government reorganisation will be discussed at that meeting.

Ports Assistance

38. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the outcome of his representations to the European Commission on the eligibility of the ports of Cairnryan and Stranraer for assistance under various EC initiatives.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: I expect that projects to develop facilities and access at the ports of Stranraer and Cairnryan will be eligible to compete for a share of the 47 million ecu to be made available to Dumfries and Galloway under objective 5b of the structural funds over the period 1994 to 1999. This follows the Government's success in securing objective 5b status for the region. The Commission have decided that the two ports will not be eligible to receive assistance under the INTERREG community initiative.

New Town Development Corporations

39. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current position on the winding up of the new town development corporations.

Mr. Stewart: The annual report of each new town development corporation for the year ending 31 March 1994 sets out progress with winding-up. Copies of the reports are available from the Library of the House. We remain committed to achieving the wind-up of East Kilbride and Glenrothes by 31 December 1995, and the other three towns by 31 December 1996, and plans to do this are in place.

Drinking Water

40. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Water Services Association and the DOE Northern Ireland in respect of the review of the EC drinking water directive; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The water industry has made my right hon. Friend aware of its views, supported by COSLA, on the review of the EC drinking water directive. The Government will take these views into account when negotiating the revision of the directive.

Forth Bridge

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation he has carried out in respect of the environmental effects of the proposal to build a second road bridge across the River Forth.

Sir Hector Monro: The "Setting Forth" feasibility studies considered the environmental effects of a wide range of transport proposals, including a new bridge across the Forth. Full reports of the studies have been passed to Scottish Natural Heritage, local authorities and other bodies, and we look forward to receiving their detailed comments.

Traffic Regulation Orders

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the temporary traffic regulation orders for which he has authorised an extension under section 15(5) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended by the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Act 1991, stating in each case *(a)* the name of the authority making the order, *(b)* the public rights of way stopped up by the order, *(c)* the duration of the extension and *(d)* why he granted the extension.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State for Scotland has authorised an extension under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended by the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Act 1991 to one temporary traffic regulation order made by Highland regional council, which temporarily closed the U87 Wick to Noss Head road for a length of approximately 480 m for a six month period from 9 February to 9 August 1994 to allow time for him to determine the permanent Highland Regional Council (Wick Airport Road) (U87) (Stopping-up) Order 1993.

Glaucoma

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new patients with glaucoma were referred to out-patient departments for each year from 1985 until the last for which current figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not centrally available.

Health Care International

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he was first informed that Health Care International in Clydebank had financial difficulties; and what action he has taken to alleviate these difficulties.

Mr. Stewart: Officials of Locate in Scotland and Scottish Enterprise have been involved in discussions about this company's financial position over the last two months, and my right hon. Friend has been kept informed of developments.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what Government assistance has been given to Health Care International in Clydebank; and what has been its total value.

Mr. Stewart: Total assistance offered to this project amounted to some £30 million, the largest single element of which was an offer of £22 million in regional selective assistance. This relates to total investment in the project of £180 million.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie of 4 August about Health Care International in Clydebank.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State replied to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie on 21 October. I hope that he has now received that reply.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what dates in the past two years his representatives have met with, or had other contact with, representatives of Health Care International from Clydebank.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend's officials have had regular contact with the company over this period.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what way the Government's loan to Health Care International was secured.

Mr. Stewart: An unsecured loan was advanced to the company, by Scottish Enterprise, under the terms of its leg-up scheme. There has been no other loan from the Government or its agencies.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all the intended regional selective assistance has now been paid to Health Care International in Clydebank; and what is the cash value of this assistance.

Mr. Stewart: An offer of £22 million in regional selective assistance was made to the company, not all of which has been paid.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who owns the site on which Health Care International's hospital in Clydebank is situated.

Mr. Stewart: The site is owned by the company.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Health Care International has fully paid for its hospital in Clydebank.

Mr. Stewart: This is a matter for the company.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what undertakings Health Care International have given to him about its relationship with the national health service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: HCI has consistently stated that its objective is to complement and not compete with the NHS.

The authorisation of the construction of the Clydebank hospital given in 1987 by my right hon. and learned Friend, the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) the then Secretary of State for Scotland, contained conditions about staffing, reimbursement of nurse training costs and supply of blood and blood products. A copy of the authorisation is in the Library.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to send work to *(a)* Health Care International and *(b)* other private hospitals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* None. Individual health boards are free to purchase health care from HCI where the hospital can offer specific medical techniques not readily available elsewhere or where the NHS sees a need for waiting lists to be reduced more quickly than the service itself is in a position to achieve. This position applies equally for all independent providers.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received the study ordered by Health Care International from Ernst and Whinney into the size of the market for an American hospital; what conclusions he drew from its report; and when he investigated Health Care International's forecasts as to when it would achieve its capacity.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The study was undertaken in 1987 and formed part of the information on which decisions were taken concerning the hospital.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to safeguard jobs and beds at NHS hospitals in Greater Glasgow and Health Care International in Clydebank.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Greater Glasgow health board is currently preparing its strategy for acute and maternity services in Glasgow. This will outline the future level of NHS provision of services and will be subject to full public consultation. Officials of Locate in Scotland are currently engaged in unrelated discussions about the financial restructuring of HCI with a view to securing its future.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what occasions he has met the founders of Health Care International or their representatives.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend met the founders of the company or its representatives on four occasions between October 1987 and June of this year.

Investors in People Award

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many employers in each TEC area have been given the investors in people award; how many have made a commitment to meeting the standard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The operation in Scotland of Investors in People is the responsibility of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of these bodies to write to the hon. Member.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Lang: No receptions are organised for people expressing interest in public appointments.

PE Teachers

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many physical education teachers were employed by local education authorities in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information for years in which data were collected is set out in the table.

Number (full-time equivalents) of physical education teachers in Scottish education authority secondary schools

Year (at September)	*Number*
1979	2,008
1980	1,998
1981	1,934
1982	1,896
1983	[1]1,862
1984	[1]1,792
1985	not available
1986	not available
1987	1,698
1988	1,614
1989	not available
1990	1,610
1991	not available
1992	1,611
1993	not available

[1] estimated

Planning (Public Inquiries)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce his decision in the public local inquiry held under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 into the provision of a supermarket in Anstruther.

Mr. Stewart: The reporter who heard evidence at the public local inquiry into the proposed supermarket in Anstruther will shortly submit a report, with recommendations, to my right hon. Friend. Every effort will be made to issue a decision by the end of the year.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public local inquiries under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 have been held in each of the last 10 years for which information is available.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table:

Year	*Number*
1984	150
1985	147
1986	163
1987	123
1988	125
1989	132
1990	171
1991	129
1992	111
1993	215

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current establishment of the planning inquiry reporting unit of the Scottish Development Department; and what vacancies there are.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table:

Chief Reporter
Deputy Chief Reporter
Principal Reporters—2
Reporters—10
Administrative Supportive Staff—25
Secretarial and typing staff—4

These figures include the two additional reporter posts which were created and filled earlier this year.

The current complement of the panel of part-time reporters is 16 including four part-time reporters who were recruited recently. There are no vacancies at present in the Unit.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many public local inquiries held under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 in 1993 he has yet to announce a decision.

Mr. Stewart: There are at the present time four cases awaiting determination.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dates and subjects of the public local inquiries in north-east Fife held under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 in which he has yet to announce a decision.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Inquiry Dates	Subjects
16 and 22—31 March 1993	Proposed retail developments at Crawmill farm, Crail road, part of the holiday camp site and St. Andrews road, Anstruther.
31 August 1994	Proposed timeshare chalet, development at Brownhills Cottage, by St. Andrews.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the capital receipts from the sale of school playing fields for each of the last six years by education authority;

(2) if he will list the number of school playing fields by local education authority for *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1987, *(d)* 1992 and *(e)* the latest available date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not held centrally within the Scottish Office.

Food Poisoning

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of reported cases of salmonellosis in Scotland in each year since 1979; and what is the latest available figure for this year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total numbers of cases of salmonella infection reported by laboratories to the Scottish centre for infection and environmental health are as follows. These figures do not necessarily reflect the total incidence of the infection in the community, since doctors do not routinely send specimens from every case for laboratory confirmation.

Year	*Number of Notifications*
1979	1,483
1980	1,577
1981	2,526
1982	2,621
1983	2,288
1984	2,221
1985	1,690
1986	2,015
1987	2,286
1988	2,580
1989	2,578
1990	2,441
1991	2,330
1992	2,992
1993	2,919
1994[1]	2,401

[1] as at 14 October

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the number of cases of food poisoning reported in Scotland in 1994.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A total of 3,380 cases of food poisoning were reported in Scotland during the period 1 January to 14 October 1994.

Medical Appointments (Aberdeen)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of patients from *(a)* Orkney and *(b)* Shetland who have travelled to Aberdeen for medical appointments at the Aberdeen Royal Hospitals trust or the Grampian Health Care trust, and have been returned home without the appointment having taken place, in each year since 1 April 1992, and from 1 April 1994 to 30 September 1994.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, I suggest he takes it up direct with the relevant health board.

Schools

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools within each education authority area in Scotland currently have school boards; and how many (i) primary schools and (ii) secondary schools there are in each education authority area in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information, reflecting the outcome of the 1993–94 round of biennial parental elections, is as follows:

	Primary Schools		*Secondary Schools*	
	Schools	*With Boards*	*Schools*	*With Boards*
Borders	73	45	9	9
Central	116	86	18	17
Dumfries and Galloway	116	84	16	16
Fife	145	100	19	16
Grampian	274	175	38	33
Highland	199	137	27	23
Lothian	240	156	46	43
Strathclyde	887	736	172	160
Tayside	187	114	32	30
Orkney	24	13	6	6
Shetland	35	20	9	9
Western Isles	45	25	16	14
SCOTLAND TOTAL	2,341	1,691	408	376

Note:

1. Schools as at September 1993.
2. Schools with Boards in existence at 31 May 1994.

NHS Helpline

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many calls have been made to the NHS helpline for each month since its establishment; and how much the Scottish Office has spent in establishing, publicising and administering the helpline.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The cost of setting up the NHS helpline was £72,401. Since it became operational in October 1992, expenditure on administration of the service totals £303,585 and expenditure on publicity totals £108,241. The total number of calls, both interactive and non-interactive, received each month by the NHS helpline since it came into operation is as follows:

Date	*Number*
29 October—20 November 1992	759
21 November—19 December 1992	710
19 December—15 January 1993	674
16 January—12 February 1993	1,303
13 February—12 March 1993	1,140
13 March—9 April 1993	1,214
10 April—7 May 1993	834
8 May—4 June 1993	975
5 June—2 July 1993	1,128
3 July—30 July 1993	1,236
31 July—27 August 1993	861
28 August—24 September 1993	801
25 September—22 October 1993	1,059
23 October—19 November 1993	765
20 November—17 December 1993	644
18 December 1993—14 January 1994	561
15 January—11 February 1994	956
12 February—11 March 1994	1,039
12 March—8 April 1994	790
9 April—6 May 1994	1,165
7 May—3 June 1994	824
4 June—1 July 1994	1,280
2 July—29 July 1994	1,204
30 July—26 August 1994	1,056
27 August—23 September 1994	1,218
24 September—25 October	4,007
TOTAL	28,203

Water and Sewerage Boards

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures the Scottish Office has taken to recruit the chairmen and senior management of the proposed water and sewerage boards.

Mr. Stewart: Normal procedures for appointments to public bodies are being followed. Executive search consultants have been contracted to assist in the recruitment of chief executives. Additionally, invitations have been issued to Confederation of British Industry, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, National Farmers Union of Scotland, Scottish Consumer Council, Scottish Landowners Federation, and Scottish Trades Union Congress to offer suggestions for appointments to the membership of the new authorities. Suggestions from these organisations, and others, are now being considered.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which private companies the Scottish Office has engaged to advise or assist in the recruitment of the chairmen and senior management of the proposed water and sewerage boards.

Mr. Stewart: Andrew Rait Ltd. executive search consultants, has been appointed to assist in the search for the chief executives of the three water authorities.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines have been issued to health boards concerning the monitoring of standards within nursing homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office issued four sets of model guidelines between October 1989 and December 1993 covering the needs of specific client groups. The model guidelines and date of publication, are listed and copies have been placed in the Library of the House:

> Model Guidelines for the Registration and Inspection of Nursing Homes for the Elderly (October 1989)
>
> Model Guidelines for the Registration and Inspection of Independent Hospitals and Nursing Homes Providing Acute Services (March 1992)
>
> Model Guidelines for the Registration and Inspection of Nursing Homes Providing Care and Treatment for People With a Learning Disability (December 1993)
>
> Model Guidelines for the Registration and Inspection of Nursing Homes Providing Continuing Care and Treatment for People with Dementia (December 1993).

In addition to the above sets of model guidelines, a document setting out national standards for the registration and inspection of nursing homes in Scotland is currently being produced for publication next year.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* nursing homes and *(b)* residents of nursing homes there are in each health board in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information on private nursing homes as at 31 March 1994, is as follows:

Health Board	[1]Homes	Beds	[2]Residents/ Patients
Scotland			
Argyll and Clyde	32	1,150	1,044
Ayrshire and Arran	58	2,142	1,997
Borders	17	723	530
Dumfries and Galloway	13	508	360
Fife	17	795	666
Forth Valley	21	884	712
Grampian	44	1,761	1,648
Greater Glasgow	54	2,471	2,068
Highland	26	1,009	956
Lanarkshire	47	2,181	2,029
Lothian	69	2,322	2,095
Orkney	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—
Tayside	37	1,635	1,509
Western Isles	2	65	62
Total	437	17,646	15,676

Notes:

[1] Establishments registered by Health Boards under the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938 (as amended).

[2] All categories.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 27 October 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department commissioned a survey of public attitudes to the reform of the ground for divorce and procedures. This survey forms part of the Government's wider consultation on these matters and was conducted by Market and Opinion Research International Ltd. during the first quarter of 1994. A national survey of court users was commissioned from PAS Ltd. In August 1994 to gauge customer satisfaction levels in the court service and to help inform the formulation of standards for future courts charters. The cost of these surveys is regarded as commercially confidential.

Commonhold Property

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he intends to introduce legislation to provide for commonhold tenure.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government intend to introduce this legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is responsible for making:

14 appointments to executive bodies;

2,061 appointments to advisory bodies; and

20 other appointments.

He is responsible for approving 11 appointments to an advisory body.

This answer does not cover judicial appointments, the 223 quasi-judicial justices' clerks in the magistrates courts or ecclesiastical appointments. The figure for appointments to advisory bodies include 104 appointments to rule committees, where some of the membership is laid down by statute.

Senior Salaries Review Body

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how the Government intend to implement recommendation 17 of the 1994 report of the Senior Salaries Review Body.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Recommendation 17 of the 1994 report of the Senior Salaries Review Body is that the Government should seek to achieve the salary levels for the judiciary proposed in the 1992 report of the Top Salaries Review Body, plus regular uprating, by 1 April 1999. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced the findings of the Senior Salaries Review Body on 3 February 1994, *Official Report*, columns *848–49*. The Government have decided that the recommended salary levels should be achieved by spreading the increase evenly over the next five financial years, starting with 1 April 1995 and on 1 April thereafter to 1 April 1999.

DEFENCE

Army Base Repair Organisation

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on market testing in the Army Base Repair Organisation.

Mr. Freeman: A pilot market test of 18 Base Workshops at Bovington was won by the in-house bid team earlier this year. Since then, the Army Base Repair Organisation has completed a study which has concluded that there remains an excess of workshop capacity which needs to be addressed. This overcapacity results from a range of factors including the reorganisation of work load following earlier rationalisation, a reduction in the amount of equipment in the Army, increased reliability of modern equipment and improved repair techniques. The study has recommended that activity at the base workshop at Old Dalby, Leicestershire should cease, and that its work load should be transferred to other facilities. It recommended that the district workshop at Ashford, Kent should also cease operations and that its work load should be transferred either to other ABRO facilities or to industry. The study also recommended that the ABRO's wider market-testing programme should be restructured to take account of the proposed closures and to provide more scope for innovative proposals from industry.

Our intention is to begin consultation on these proposals with the relevant trade unions as soon as possible with a view to completing the ABRO withdrawal from Ashford by late 1995 and Old Dalby by late 1996. Final decisions will be taken in the light of this consultation.

If, in the event, withdrawal from the ABRO workshop at Old Dalby is confirmed after consultation, the MOD will first seek to establish whether there is another MOD use for the site and, in the event that there is not, I will seek actively, in co-operation with the local Member of Parliament, local authorities, staff representatives and the relevant local agencies to find an alternative use for the site and its facilities.

Copies of the consultation document are being placed in the Library of the House.

Trident

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the projected capital cost of the Trident programme has been *(a)* spent to date and *(b)* committed to date.

Mr. Freeman: As at the end of June 1994, £7,401 million had been spent and £8,623 million committed on the Trident programme.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest estimate of the outstanding capital cost of the Trident programme that will remain to be spent and committed by *(a)* April 1996 and *(b)* April 1997.

Mr. Freeman: At current prices and exchange rates, estimated outstanding capital spend and commitment on the Trident programme at April 1996 will be £1,416 million and £686 million respectively. It is not our practice to provide detailed forecasts of project costs more than two years in advance. By April 1997, however, we expect outstanding spend to be in the region of £1 billion and commitment to be somewhat in excess of £400 million at today's economic conditions.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest estimate of the in-service date for the *(a)* second, *(b)* third and *(c)* fourth Trident submarines.

Mr. Freeman: The second Trident submarine is due to enter service towards the end of 1995 or early in 1996, the third in the late 1990s and the fourth around the turn of the century.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total expenditure to date on the purchase of the Trident D5 missiles from the United States.

Mr. Freeman: Some £596 million has been spent by the United Kingdom on the purchase of Trident D5 missiles from the United States.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Trident D5 missiles *(a)* have been purchased to date and *(b)* remain to be purchased.

Mr. Freeman: The United Kingdom has purchased 44 Trident D5 missiles to date. Final decisions have yet to be taken on how many more missiles will be purchased.

Defence Estimates

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which conventional force elements assigned to fulfil the nuclear aspects of defence role 1, "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994", apart from the Tornado GR1s, are intended specifically to fulfil the sub-strategic role.

Mr. Soames: None.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the specific duties of the 12 regular infantry battalions assigned to the fulfilment of the nuclear role, under defence role 1, "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994".

Mr. Soames: The role of the 12 regular infantry battalions referred to under military task 1.1 is to provide protection to the nuclear deterrent in time of tension, crisis and war.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: Expenditure by my Department on postal services during the last five years is as follows:

	£
1989–90	12,090,996
1990–91	11,208,115
1991–92	8,511,910
1992–93	8,847,536
1993–94	8,537,031
1994–95	[1]3,745,595

[1] to 24 October 1994

The costs are for items sent through the Royal Mail and do not include the cost of providing an internal mail service within my Department.

The number of items of mail moved by the defence postal service in the last five years, based on average bag-fill factors, is as follows:

	Number
1990–91	56,607,788
1991–92	56,082,586
1992–93	37,567,378
1993–94	31,125,393
1994–95	[1]28,687,836

[1] estimate for whole year.

Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the maritime rescue co-ordination centre at RAF Pitreavie to transfer to RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Soames: The rescue co-ordination centre at RAF Pitreavie Castle is expected to transfer to RAF Leuchars in the first quarter of 1996.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what preparations have been made and at what cost for the transfer of the maritime rescue co-ordination centre from RAF Pitreavie to RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Soames: Planning work continues within my Department to determine the optimum accommodation, communications and information systems necessary to support the national military rescue co-ordination centre at RAF Leuchars. To date, no money has been spent on the transfer.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of the maritime rescue co-ordination centre at RAF Pitreavie.

Mr. Soames: I have nothing further to add to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on the defence costs study, "Front Line First", on 14 July, *Official Report*, column *1172*.

Headquarters Transfer

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to transfer the headquarters of the air officer commanding Scotland from RAF Pitreavie to RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Soames: We propose to transfer the post of Air Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland from RAF Pitreavie Castle to RAF Leuchars in December 1995.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Soames: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence approves 14 appointments to MOD executive non-departmental public bodies and 28 appointments to MOD advisory non-departmental public bodies. As for other public appointments not listed in "Public Bodies", I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member on 4 March, *Official Report*, column *938*.

Hercules

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will delay any decision on replacement of the Hercules fleet until the result of the full feasibility study of the future large aircraft is available.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to await the results of the full feasibility study due to be available in the first quarter of 1995 by British companies for the pending order of the RAF Hercules aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: It would not be appropriate to delay a timely and cost-effective decision on the pressing operational needs of the Royal Air Force. The FLA is already being taken into account in our assessment.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the date when he will make his decision concerning the replacement or otherwise of the Hercules transporter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I hope to make an announcement on the way forward for the first tranche of the Hercules rolling replacement programme around the turn of the year.

Appropriation Accounts

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the accommodation provided to the Council of Voluntary Welfare Work, referred to in the other notes to class I, vote 1 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94.

Mr. Soames: A list of all accommodation made available to the Council of Voluntary Welfare Workers in British forces Germany during financial year 1993–94 is provided. The following list is divided into commercial and residential accommodation respectively.

CVWW commercial accommodation financial year 1993–94

Organisation	*Location*	*Usage*	*Rental £*
Church Army	Sennelager	Canteen/Bookshop	6,269
	Herford	Office/Stores	2,359
	[1]Minden	Bookshop	706
	[1]Hildesheim	Bookshop/Flat	4,016
	Hameln	Club/Canteen	13,278
	[1]Hannover	Bookshop/Office	1,451
	Osnabrück	Bookshop	22,290
	Osnabrück	Bookshop/Canteen	2,988
Salvation Army	[1]Münsterlager	Bookshop/Canteen	903
	Herford	Office/Cellar	3,012
	Detmold	Club/Store	9,000
	Gütersloh	Club	1,499
	Iserlohn	Shop/Canteen	703
	[1]Lemgo	Shop	330
	[1]Soest	Paper stall	624
	[1]Soest	Club	1,982
TOC H	Paderborn	Accommodation	12,175
	Paderborn	Store	2,188
	Münster	Club	1,243
	Münster	Shop	649
	Münster	Club	6,180
	Herford	Offices	1,457
	[1]Verden	Bookshop	9,673
YMCA	Herford	Offices	5,952
	Bielefeld	Shop/Office/Store	4,942
	Dortmund	Shop/Office/Store	2,622
	Dortmund	Bookshop	2,733
	Celle	Bookshop	3,565
	Hohne	Bookshop/Giftshop/Canteen	21,495
	[1]Bergen	Bookshop	820
	Nienberg	Bookshop	3,475
	[1]Bunde	Bookshop	1,671

CVWW commercial accommodation financial year 1993–94

Organisation	*Location*	*Usage*	*Rental £*
	Bunde	Shops	2,785
	Osnabrück	Bookshop/Canteen	12,601
	Düsseldorf	Bookshop/Store	6,501
	Krefeld	Bookshop/Canteen	2,862
	Rheindahlen	Cardshop	2,286
	Rheindahlen	Bookshop/Canteen	26,250
	Fallingbostel	Bookshop/Canteen/Offices	19,558
	Herford	Offices	2,273
	Herford	Shop/Office/Store	8,045
CVWW	Herford	Offices	1,281
Services Central Book Depot	Herford	Store	969
Total			237,661

Note:

[1] Property handed back during financial year 1993–94

CVWW residential accommodation financial year 1993–1994

Quarter Type	*Annual Rent £*	*Number*	*Total Cost £*
Type IV	6,706	8	53,648
Type V	5,642	20	112,840
D Type	5,794	2	11,588
C Type	3,880	3	11,640
B Type	3,719	5	18,595
A Type	3,189	2	6,378
		40	214,689

Total value of waiver during financial year 1993–94: £452,350

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name the *(a)* contractor and *(b)* RAF leases which led to the extra-contractual payment referred to in the notes to class I, vote 1 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94.

Mr. Soames: It is not my Department's practice to identify individual contractors where matters of commercial confidentiality are concerned. There were no leases involved in the case in question.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* the contractors and *(b)* the circumstances which led to an extra-contractual payment of £11,750,000, as listed in the notes to class I, vote 3 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94.

Mr. Freeman: Individual contractors are not normally identified where matters of commercial confidentiality are concerned. The contractor had submitted claims against the Department in respect of alleged failures to meet obligations to supply equipment and information. These claims were disputed. However, following legal advice, the Department agreed to accept a share of responsibility for some of the delays and increased cost. The settlement, £19,000,000 payable over two years, was for approximately half the value of the total claim.

Mr. Mundie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the gifts under £100,00 value recorded in class I, vote 2 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

Number	*Description*	*Value £*	*Recipient*
30	RN Flags	10·00	Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust
3	Deck Plate, Honours Board Name Board—ex HMS *Sirius*	150·00	Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Society
50	Liferaft Plastic Shells	100·00	Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust
1	Bell—ex HMS *Scylla*	200·00	City of Aberdeen
1	Name Plate—ex HMS *Osiris*	40·00	Kent and Sharp-Shooters Yeomanry Squadron
1	Bell—ex HMS *Cleopatra*	250·00	Fleet Air Arm Museum Yeovilton
1	Honours Board—ex HMS *Ambuscade*	40·00	Borough of Crewe and Nantwich
1	Name Plate—ex HMS *Ambuscade*	40·00	Sea Cadet Corps TS Amberconwy
1	Name Plate—ex HMS *Ambuscade*	40·00	Sea Cadet Corpos TS Ambuscade

Number	*Description*	*Value £*	*Recipient*
1	Marine Anchor	450·00	The Merchant Seamans War Memorial Society
1	Name plate—ex HMS *Opossum*	40·00	St. Edmundsbury Borough Council
1	Honours Board—ex HMS *Amazon*	50·00	North Tyneside Council
1	Name Plate—ex HMS *Arrow*	40·00	Sunderland Companions Club
1	Gun Tampion—ex HMS *Arrow*	35·00	4th Regiment Royal Artillery
1	Deck Plate—ex HMS *Arrow*	50·00	Harrow Combined Cadet Force
1	Name Plate—ex HMS *Arrow*	40·00	Royal Companion of Archers
2	Ships Bell and Honours Board—ex HMS *Arrow*	300·00	City of Sunderland
1	Deck Plate—ex HMS *Arrow*	50·00	The Royal Naval Association
4	Name Board, deck Plates—ex HMS *Alacrity*	180·00	Sea Cadet Corps TS Alacrity
1	Flags—RAF and White Ensign	30·46	Gibraltar Museum
1	Anchor	600·00	Royal Burge of Culross
1	AVGAS Bowser	1,600·00	Portsmouth Naval Club
1	Admiral's Barge	6,000·00	Portsmouth Property Trust
1	ACR 430 System	10,000·00	Albania
9	Anchors	1,000·00	FIFE Enterprise
1	Humber Pig	1,000·00	Irish Museum
1	25 Pounder Gun	2,000·00	Luxembourg National Museum
1	Ammunition	84,092·00	National Rifle Association Bisley Meeting—1993
1	AR Martel Missiles	30,000·00	French Air Force
6	25 Pounder Guns	6,000·00	R A Museum
1	Harrier GR3	1,100·00	Chilean Air Force Museum
2	25 Pounder Guns	1,500·00	Military Auster Flight
1	Humber Pig	1,000·00	RAMC Museum Aldershot
1	Saladin	4,000·00	RAC Tank Museum
3	Combat Support Boats	4,500·00	WEU (Romania and Bulgaria)
1	Transport for CSBs	32,000·00	WFU (Romania and Bulgaria)
1	Medical Stores	1·00	Latvia
1	Harrier GR3	1,200·00	Belize Government
1	POL Equipment	1·00	Secondary School
2	Gliders	5,000·00	RAFGSA
1	1000 Rounds of Ammunition	375·00	Zimbabwe National Park
1	Grand Projector	150·00	RAF Museum

Number	Description	Value £	Recipient
1	Jet Provost Fuselage	150·00	RAF Museum
1	Parachute	298·00	Russian Air Forces Museum—Ryaza
2	Film Drying Drum and Meteor Fuel Pump	10·00	RAF Museum
147		£195,722·46	

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give *(a)* the name of contractor and *(b)* the circumstances which led to £1,175,000 payments as listed in the notes to class I, vote 3 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94; and what disciplinary action was taken.

Mr. Freeman: Individual contractors are not normally identified where matters of commercial confidentiality are concerned. Without admission of liability, a payment of £1,175,000, VAT included, was made to a contractor in respect of extra-contractual claims made against the Department. The claims were founded on the allegation that Government-furnished equipment had been provided late and in an unserviceable condition while Government-furnished facilities were not made available as planned. Disciplinary action was not considered to be appropriate in this case.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which naval base was involved and what was the gross cost of purchasing the property referred to in the order notices to class I, vote 1 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94.

Mr. Soames: The property referred to was purchased in connection with works at the Clyde submarine base. Some £203,500 was spent to purchase land to facilitate the construction of new mess and living accommodation at Faslane.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the type of goods which led to £1,331,000 being lost as set out in the loss statement in class I, vote 2 of the Appropriation Accounts 1993–94; and what disciplinary action was taken.

Mr. Soames: The type of goods referred to form part of the marine engineering spares inventory and are wholly or mainly manufactured of rubber. The introduction of British standard 3574 in 1987 resulted in shorter shelf and working life periods for many rubber goods held at RNSD Eaglescliffe. A review which was carried out to test all rubber components against the new British standard revealed that a number of rubber items should be classified as non-conforming stock. An exhaustive study into this matter concluded that no blame could be attached to an individual or individuals in this case.

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now set up a full public inquiry into operations at the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Freeman: No. The Health and Safety Executive Review of the AWE was comprehensive and detailed. The AWE's response was published as part of the report and actions which accord with the recommendations form part of AWE's current safety development programme. A public inquiry would divert effort from the important safety improvement work now in hand.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to remove AWE's immunity from the licensing requirements of the Nuclear Installations Acts.

Mr. Freeman: Decisions will be taken in the light of discussions with the HSE on the timing and implementation of licensing.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution about safety at AWE following review by the Health and Safety Executive of AWE; and if he will ask Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to carry out a similar review of AWE and publish the results.

Mr. Freeman: The HMIP, and also the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and, in the case of AWE Cardiff, the Welsh Office, routinely monitor AWE under the provisions of the relevant environmental legislation. They are independent regulators and judge for themselves appropriate timing for reviews and audits.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has made to the recommendation made by the director general of the Health and Safety Executive in his recent report on the safety of atomic weapons establishments in respect of Crown immunity; and when and in what form, he expects to respond to the other recommendations.

Mr. Freeman: As I said to the House on 18 October 1994 during the defence debate, *Official Report*, column 240, we accept in principle the argument for licensing AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield under the provisions of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, subject to discussions about timing the implementation. The report's other recommendations are addressed to the operating contractor, Hunting BRAE, and its response is incorporated into the HSE's report.

Rosehearty Test Range

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are for daily sound monitoring of the night-time sorties at the Rosehearty test range; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There are no plans for sound monitoring of night-time sorties at the RAF air weapons range at Rosehearty.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to extend night-time flying at the Rosehearty test range to other months of the year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There are no plans to extend night flying at the RAF air weapons range at Rosehearty beyond the period, from 1 May to 31 August, already proposed.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what actions will be taken to protect fishing vessels in the vicinity of the Rosehearty test range following the extension to the operating times of the range; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The present regulations governing the use of the air weapons range at Rosehearty allow fishing vessels to operate safely within the range danger area both during the day and at night. No further action is therefore necessary.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are for RAF officials to meet the residents of Rosehearty to discuss night-time bombing sorties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: None. Public consultation on this issue is a matter for the local council. Officials from my Department and the local council met at RAF Lossiemouth in August when the RAF requirement for extended operating hours at the air weapons range, Rosehearty, was explained in full. Council officials were given every opportunity to raise any public concerns at that meeting.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what emergency procedures have been adopted in the event of an accident at the Rosehearty test range; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The RAF requires all air weapons ranges to develop their own set of procedures for dealing with accidents in consultation with the appropriate local emergency services. Procedures in place at Rosehearty require the unit, in the event of an accident, to advise civilian emergency services and air traffic control at RAF Lossiemouth, render all possible aid at the scene of the accident and provide co-ordination assistance to the emergency and rescue services.

Pilot Training

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the possibility of simulated night-time sorties for training pilots; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: A considerable amount of night-flying training is carried out by aircrew of all three services using flight simulators. As simulator technology improves, more night training will be undertaken using synthetic training devices. However, for safety and operational reasons, the requirement for some live night-flying training will always remain.

Bosnia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outbreak of dysentery at Vitez army camp in Bosnia; whether the source of infection has been identified; and what action has been taken to eradicate it.

Mr. Soames: Between July and September 1994, some 250 soldiers in Vitez and the surrounding areas reported sick with diarrhoea. In the majority of cases no causative organism was identified, although some specimens revealed a mix of organisms including salmonella and shigella. No specific source was identified but the in-theatre British military environmental health inspector believed contributing factors to be: damaged sewage systems and inadequately maintained waste disposal facilities in the surrounding area; faecal contamination of a river running through the camp; hot water; a high incidence of disease-carrying insects; and poor hygiene practices among the troops.

As a result of his report, structural improvements were made to waste disposal systems, fly proofing was installed, food-handling and storage practices reinforced, water purification processes were checked and a theatre-wide campaign aimed at improving personal hygiene was introduced. The number of cases peaked in August and there have been no cases reported so far this month.

RAF Finningley

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the level of expenditure by RAF Finningley on supplies and services from the local area.

Mr. Soames: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the *(a)* total and *(b)* mean annual salary cost of service personnel located at RAF Finningley.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what developments, improvements, equipment upgrades or other physical works have been undertaken at RAF Finningley in the past five years; and what has been the cost of each of these works projects.

Mr. Soames: Details of works expenditure at RAF Finningley for financial years 1990–91 to 1994–95 are as follows:

	£
Property Management (including maintenance and minor works)	12,808,000
Officer Married Quarter refurbishment	5,200,000
New Air Navigation School	4,660,000
Airman Married Quarter refurbishment	4,600,000
Barrack Block refurbishment	1,242,000
Supply Hanger	772,000
New Motor Transport Facility	745,000
100 Squadron Accommodation	580,000
Station Heating upgrade	274,000
Total	30,881,000

These figures include estimated expenditure of £2,423,000 for the current financial year.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the existing facilities at RAF Finningley could be used for civilian aviation purposes.

Mr. Soames: If the proposed closure of RAF Finningley goes ahead, and the site is disposed of, the runway, taxiway, hangarage, parking and handling areas could, subject to planning approval, be used for civilian aviation purposes.

Fixtures such as radar and air traffic control equipment would be removed by the RAF prior to disposal. If the RAF continued to use Finningley as at present, and capacity for civil use of the airfield was identified, only the runway and taxiway would be available for use by civil aircraft on a regular basis.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what improvement works are required at other bases to which it is proposed that existing RAF Finningley activities will transfer in order that the facilities at RAF Finningley are matched; at which RAF stations the works are required; and what is the estimated cost of these improvement works.

Mr. Soames: The detail requested will be covered in a consultative document concerning the proposed closure of RAF Finningley. That document will fully explain the rationale behind the proposal, including financial considerations, and will be issued shortly.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

Period	*Commissioned by*	*Subject*
1992		
November	Army	ACIO Research
December	Army	Army Officer Creative Development Research
1993		
March	RAF	Recruitment Advertising Strategy Research
May	Army	Officer Advertising, Creative Development Research
December	MoD	NECL Creative Development Research
December	Army	Soldier Slogan Research
1994		
February	RN	Advertising Strategy Development Research
March	MoD	University Finalists Survey
March	MoD	NELC Research
May	Army	Slogan Confirmation and Creative Development Research
June	Army	Army Recruitment Targeting Research
June	RN	Asians Language and Communication Survey
August	MoD	NECL Tracking—Autumn 94
September	Army	Army Recruiting Advertising Tracking

The objectives of the research are to monitor the effectiveness of advertising and attitudes of members of the public towards a career in the armed forces. The cost of the studies and the name of the successful contractor is commercially confidential information.

The commissioning of public opinion surveys by my Department's agencies is a matter for the chief executives of those agencies. I can confirm, however, that none of the chief executives has commissioned such work since 1 October 1992.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to introduce height-recording equipment in all fast jets included in low-level and ultra-low level training flights.

Mr. Soames: We have no plans to introduce such equipment.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost to date for the decommissioning of each nuclear-powered submarine withdrawn from service; and what information his Department has sought from the Defence Ministries of the United States, France and Russia on their respective experience in such submarine reactor cores and hulls.

Mr. Freeman: The approximate costs of undertaking the defuelling, de-equipping and lay-up preparation process for those nuclear-powered submarines which have been taken out of service to date are as follows:

Submarine	*DDLP costs £ million*
HMS Swiftsure	11·5
HMS Warspite	11·3
HMS Churchill	11·2
HMS Conqueror	10·6
HMS Courageous	10·8
HMS Revenge (SSBN)	18·7
HMS Valiant and HMS Resolution have not started their DDLP process yet.	

Those costs do not include the costs of final disposal, the policy for which is still under consideration. It is also not possible to provide costs on the decommissioning of HMS Dreadnought, which was the first nuclear submarine to be withdrawn from service in 1982 and the information requested, in so far as it may be available, could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

A regular exchange of information between the United States and the United Kingdom Governments continues on all nuclear matters under the 1958 mutual defence agreement. No detailed discussions have taken place with France or Russia on these matters.

Gordon Foxley

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has undertaken a study of the costs to the Government arising from acts of corruption for which Gordon Foxley has been convicted.

Mr. Freeman: My Department's study of Gordon Foxley's corrupt activities has been unable to establish specific costs to the Government arising from these.

South Africa

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Government of South Africa regarding allegations of sales of arms by British companies to the former South African Government in breach of the United Nations arms embargo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Ministry of Defence Headquarters

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the costs of constructing the new MOD headquarters at Abbey Wood; and what are the expected running costs.

Mr. Freeman: The estimated works cost of the Abbey Wood development, inclusive of site acquisition, construction, fitting out, professional works management fees and VAT is £254·136 million at 1993 prices. The construction programme continues to proceed within budget and against the planned time scale, which remains tight. Phased occupation of the accommodation is targeted to commence in autumn 1995, with the aim of completing by autumn 1996.

We are in the process of inviting bids for facilities management at Abbey Wood. The core facilities management costs are projected to achieve savings in excess of 40 per cent. compared to existing accommodation, with energy costs estimated at one third of those for typical modern buildings.

Anti-personnel Mines

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what conclusions for United Kingdom policy he has drawn from the recent report commissioned by the United States Department of Defence concerning the military utility of anti-personnel mines to the United States armed forces;

(2) whether Her Majesty's Government will commission a report on the military utility of anti-personnel mines for the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: We are not aware of any specific United States Government report concerning the military utility of anti-personnel mines for the United States armed forces. The need for, and the role of, land mines for the United Kingdom armed forces is assessed as part of overall military strategy.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of Her Majesty's armed forces have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured by anti-personnel mines since 1980; in which countries, and with what effects on operations in which British armed forces have been involved.

Mr. Soames: Precise data are not available on the individual weapons systems responsible for deaths and injuries of service personnel.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research he has conducted into the impact of anti-personnel mines on civilian populations; and what conclusions he reached.

Mr. Freeman: No such research has been carried out by the Ministry of Defence. The use of anti-personnel land mines by United Kingdom armed forces is fully in accordance with the laws of war, which prohibit the use of land mines against civilians.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research he has conducted on the failure rates of anti-personnel mines with self-destruct or self-neutralising mechanisms; and if he will publish specific details of failure rates and the general conclusions of the research.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) on 18 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *416*.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research he has conducted to compare the levels of military utility to the United Kingdom armed forces of anti-personnel mines and anti-tank mines; and with what conclusions.

Mr. Freeman: Anti-personnel mines and anti-tank mines have separate roles although they are often laid within the same area. The anti-tank mine is intended to prevent physically the passage of military vehicles with consequential effect on the enemy's fighting capability. Anti-personnel mines are intended to lower the enemy's general effectiveness. Consequently, the military utility of the two cannot be compared to useful advantage.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: In respect of his ministerial responsibilities, my right hon. Friend is responsible for making 95 appointments to six executive bodies and 53 appointments on five advisory bodies. Ten further appointments to an advisory body require his approval. All of these are listed in "Public Bodies".

In respect of his non-ministerial responsibilities for the Duchy of Lancaster, the Chancellor is also responsible for 186 appointments to 21 advisory bodies, and six appointments with a historical connection. These are not listed in "Public Bodies".

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total number of public appointments made by Ministers, or requiring their approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of *(a)* appointments to executive bodies, *(b)* appointments to advisory bodies and *(c)* other appointments.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: There are 42,606 public appointments listed in "Public Bodies 1993". Of these, 4,116 are appointments to executive bodies, 10,022 are appointments to advisory bodies, and 28,468 are other appointments such as those made to tribunals and NHS bodies. Statistical information is not held centrally about other appointments not listed in "Public Bodies" which include the posts of utility regulators, and non-executive appointments to agency and departmental management boards.

Official Report

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the price per copy, in *(a)* real and *(b)* current prices of a daily copy of the *Official Report* in 1970, what it is at present; what has been the percentage change in the price since 1970; and what has been the change in the retail prices index over the same period.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The price of House of Commons daily *Hansard* in 1970 was 2s 3d, which adjusted by the percentage change in the retail prices index of 787 per cent. is equivalent to 87p today; the price since 1991 has been £7.50. The 1970 price was heavily subsidised by the taxpayer, and this is no longer the case. HMSO announced last year that prices for routine parliamentary publications, including the *Official Report*, would not be increased during the life of the present Parliament.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to meet the officers of the

Hansard Society to discuss their report on the decline in the sales of *Hansard*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I have no such plans.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to achieve maximum distribution of the *Official Report*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Market research on the prospects for increasing sales of the *Official Report* has recently been undertaken by MORI on behalf of HMSO. The findings are currently under consideration.

Telephone Information Lines

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many telephone information lines have been established under the auspices of the citizens charter; and how many of these are currently in operation.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Many public service organisations have set up and run their own telephone information lines to ensure that their customers can make easy contact with them. The Office of Public Service and Science does not hold central records of all these lines, but is aware of Government helplines in the following sectors:

AGRICULTURE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Helpline: 0645-335577. Local rates. 0900-1700 weekdays.

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

Customs and Excise Helpline: 071-202 4227. Standard rates. 0900-1700 weekdays.

EDUCATION

Department for Education Enquiries: 071-925 5555. Standard rates. 0900-1700 weekdays.

EMPLOYMENT

Dial a Job: 071-287 0100. Standard rates. 0900-1700 weekdays.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Information Centre Helpline: 0742-892345. Standard rates. 0900-1700 weekdays. *HSE Autofax:* 0742-892333. Standard rates. 24 hours a day.

Redundancy Payments Service Customer Service Unit Helpline: 0800-848489. Free. 0900-1700 weekdays.

Work Permits Information Line: 071-273 5337. Standard rates. 0900-1700 weekdays.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Energy Efficiency: 071-276 6200. Standard rates. 0900-1700 weekdays.

Energy Action Grants Agency (grants for improving energy efficiency): 0800-181667. Free. 0830-1730 weekdays.

Building Research Establishment Saving Money on Heating: 0923-664664. Standard rates. 0900-16.30 weekdays.

ENVIRONMENT

National Rivers Authority Emergency Hotline for Environmental Incidents: 0800-807060. Free. 24 hours a day.

Air Quality Information: 0800-556677. Free. 24 hours a day.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Foreign Travel Advice Unit: 071-270 4129. Standard rates. 0930-1600 weekdays.

HEALTH

Health Information Service (Information about health, local NHS services, waiting times, common diseases, conditions and treatments): 0800-665544. Free. 1000-1700 weekdays.

AIDS Helpline: 0800-567123. Free. 24 hours a day.

HOME OFFICE

General Enquiries: 071-273 4599. Standard rates. 24 hours a day.

Nationality and Citizenship Enquiries: 051-236 4723. Standard rates. 0900-1600 weekdays.

Immigration Enquiries: 081-686 0688. Standard rates. 0900-1645 Monday-Thursday. 0900-1630 Friday. 24 hour recorded information for visitors: 081-760 1600. Standard rates.

Students: 081-760 1622. Standard rates.

Work permit holders: 081-760 1644. Standard rates.

Au Pairs: 081-760 1666. Standard rates.

Home Office Publications Unit: 071-273 3072/2302. Standard rates. 0915-1700 weekdays.

INLAND REVENUE

Taxback Information Line: 0800-660800. Free. 24 hours a day.

POST OFFICE

Post Office Counters Helpline: 0345-223344. Local rates. 0815-1800 weekdays. 0830-1300 Saturday.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Freeline:

English: 0800-666555. Free. 0830-1630 weekdays.

Urdu: 0800-289188. Free. 0900-289188. Free. 0900-1600 weekdays.

Chinese: 0800-252451. Free. 0900-1630 weekdays.

Punjabi: 0800-521360. Free. 0830-1630 weekdays.

Welsh: 0800-289011. Free. 0900-1630 weekdays.

Language line: Details available from Benefits Agency local offices.

Family Credit Helpline: 0253-500050. Standard rates. 0730-1830 weekdays.

Benefit Enquiry Line for people with Disabilities: 0800-882200. Free. 0830-1830 weekdays. 0900–1300 Saturday.

Minicom: 0800-243355. Free.

Disability Living Allowance Customer Care Helpline: 0345-123456. Local rates. 0730–1830 weekdays.

Child Support Agency Enquiries: 0345-133133. Local rates. 0830–1800. weekdays.

Social Security Advice Line for Employers: 0800-393539. Free. 0900–1630 Monday–Thursday. 0900–1600 Friday.

War Pension Agency Helpline: 0253-858858. Standard rates. 0815–1715 Monday–Thursday. 0815–1630 Friday.

Minicom: 0253-859999. Standard rates.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

General Enquiries: 071-215 5000. Standard rates. 0830–1730 weekdays. Answerphone at other times.

Innovation: 0800-442001. Free. 0830–1730 weekdays. Answerphone at other times.

Business in Europe Hotline: 0272-444888. Standard rates. 24 hours a day.

DTI Services for Businesses: 0800-500200. Free. 24 hours a day.

TRANSPORT

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency Customer Enquiry Unit (Drivers): 0792-772151. Standard rates.0815–1630 weekdays.

Customer Enquiry Unit (Vehicles): 0792-772134. Standard rates. 0815–1630 weekdays.

Cones Hotline: 0345-504030. Local rates. 24 hours a day.

London Transport Travel Information: 071-222 1234. Standard rates. 24 hours a day.

The citizens charter unit has itself set up and run a number of telephone information lines:

(a) 0800 100101 sent out copies of guides to the Citizen's Charter White Paper. Calls to this line were free. The service ran from 22 July 1991 until 16 March 1994.

(b) 0345 300130 provided information about how to obtain copies of the follow-up charters produced by departments and agencies. Calls to this line were charged at a local rate. The service ran from 25 November 1992 until 16 March 1994.

(c) Charterline (0345 203040), a telephone information helpline service for local and national public services, was piloted in the East Midlands from 19 May 1993 until 6 May 1994. Calls were charged at a local rate.

(d) The Citizen's Charter Publication Line on 0345 223242 was set up on 16 March 1994 to send out copies of the Guide to Citizen's Charter White Papers; details of how to obtain the follow-up charters; the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information; Charter Mark Award Scheme information; Charter News; and Complaints Task Force information. The service is still running; calls are charged at a local rate.

TREASURY

Vineyards

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will pay a visit to an English vineyard to discuss what steps he can take to better help the commercial vineyards in the United Kingdom in relation to harmonisation of the tax regime.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to visit an English vineyard at present, but he is fully aware of the concerns of the industry.

Income Levels

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the changes in disparities in income level over the last decade.

Sir George Young: Since 1979, real incomes have increased by an average of 36 per cent. Some groups have done even better—real incomes of pensioner couples are up 56 per cent.—but there have been gains for all groups.

VAT

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to impose value added tax on private medical insurance, university or college fees, school fees, school lunches or other charges levied by the state or private schools.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I cannot anticipate the Budget statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning the extension of VAT to public transport.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer receives many representations on a wide range of issues in the run-up to the Budget.

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further plans he has to end the exemption of goods and services from VAT.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Tax changes are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor in his Budget. However, the range of goods and services which member states exempt from VAT is covered by Community law. Most are mandatory exemptions, but member states have the option to extend certain exemptions to non-profit making bodies, subject to certain conditions.

Mr. Gunnell : To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional income he will gain in a full year from increasing VAT on fuel to 17½ per cent.; and what its effect will be on the weekly household bills of a family of four.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Application of the standard rate of VAT to domestic fuel and power will yield around an additional £1·5 billion in a full year. The impact on fuel bills will depend on fuel prices and on what happens to spending patterns.

Economic Growth

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the growth of the United Kingdom economy in the first three quarters of calendar year 1994.

Mr. Aitken: In the first three quarters of 1994, gross domestic product was 3½ per cent. up on the same period a year earlier. We are now seeing a highly favourable combination of strong growth and low inflation, with underlying inflation at a 27-year low.

Financial Products

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about different fiscal treatment of financial products in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a large number of representations from organisations and individuals on a wide variety of subjects, as is customary in the run-up to the Budget.

Tax Cuts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the average amount each of the top 1 per cent. earners in the United Kingdom has received in tax cuts since 1979.

Sir George Young: A calculation of the tax change for those who are currently in the top 1 per cent. of earners would require extensive information on their income levels and tax reliefs over the period since 1979. Since such information is not centrally available it is not possible to estimate an average figure.

Demand

Sir David Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the levels of total demand in the economy.

Mr. Aitken: The most recent figures for total domestic demand relate to the second quarter of 1994. By then, demand had risen for nine consecutive quarters, to a level exceeding its previous peak in the second quarter of 1990.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross domestic product is taken by public expenditure; and what the figure was in 1979.

Mr. Aitken: General Government expenditure excluding privatisation proceeds as a percentage of GDP was 44 in 1979–80 and 44.25 in 1993–94.

Tax Burdens

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the tax burden of a married couple on average earnings, with a £30,000 mortgage and two children.

Sir George Young: Real take-home pay, after tax, for this group has increased by around £83 a week since 1978–79 compared with an increase of less than £2 a week between 1973–74 and 1978–79.

EU Budget

Ms Jowell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effects of fraud and waste in the European Union budget.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Fraud and waste in the Community budget is at an unacceptably high level and brings the Union into disrepute. It is essential that member states and Community institutions alike intensify their efforts to deal with it. The United Kingdom will continue to take the lead in the fight against fraud in the Community.

In March, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced a joint action proposal, under title VI of the treaty on European Union, to combat serious fraud against the Community budget. The Commission has also recently presented two proposals to the Council designed to reinforce the protection of the Community's financial interests. Those proposals and the United Kingdom's proposal are under consideration in the Council.

Budget Representations

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received suggesting proposals for his forthcoming Budget.

Sir George Young: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a large number of representations from organisations and individuals, as is customary in the run-up to the Budget.

Central Statistical Office

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new proposals he has to safeguard the jobs at the Central Statistical Office in London and Newport.

Mr. Nelson: The Central Statistical Office publishes annually its future staffing estimates in its "Programme Strategies". The most recent relate to the period 1994–95 to 1996–97. These plans are rolled forward each year and are revised in line with changes in expenditure provision and business needs.

Tax Changes

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between tax changes and the incidence of poverty in the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: Since 1979, real incomes have increased for all economic groups. The policies of sound finance now being pursued will produce sustained recovery, more jobs and further increases in living standards.

Postage

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nelson: Expenditure by HM Treasury on postage for 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95 to date was £67,612, £73,104 and £28,238 respectively.

The number of items posted for 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95 to date was 311,010, 355,908 and 155,602.

The information for earlier years is incomplete and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Tiger Products

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of tiger products and material containing tiger products seized by HM Customs and Excise in each of the last five years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: HM Customs and Excise made the following seizures over the period.

1989

Musk and tiger plaster— 2packets.

Tiger bone tablets—number not known.

1990

Tiger skin—1.

1991

Tiger skin handbag—1.

1992

None.

1993

Tiger skin—1 whole, 1 piece and 1 pair of shoes.

Tincture of tiger bone—2 bottles.

Tiger bone plaster—43 packets and 30 strips.

Tiger bone pills—51 boxes and 420 tablets.

Tiger bone medicine—1 packet and 3 sachets.

Tiger claws—2.

1994 (to date)

Tiger bone plasters—22.

Lion and tiger claws—13.

Tincture of tiger bone—20 x 70cl bottles.

Tiger bones—number not known.

Pension Transfers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cost of compensation to *(a)* public funds and *(b)* pension companies for pension transfers based on bad advice; what assessment he has made as to whether compensation from pension funds will be paid in full; and what representations he has received regarding the sources from which it should be paid.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on 25 October *Official Report,* columns *507–10.*

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Nelson: Expenditure by HM Treasury on official hospitality for 1990–91 was £51,424; for 1991–92, £85,873; for 1992–93, £303,523; for 1993–94, £74,007; and spend to date in 1994–95, £27,732.

The large increase in 1992–93 results from a number of one-off events including the informal meeting of the Economic and Finance Council during the United Kingdom presidency and the International Organisation for Securities Commissions conference.

Expenditure by the agencies for 1990–91 was £44,832; for 1991–92, £45,955; for 1992–93, £36,593; for 1993–94, £53,051 and for 1994–95 to date £16,600.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the public appointments for which he is responsible *(a)* in the west midlands region and *(b)* in Shropshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary.

Mr. Nelson: The Chancellor of the Exchequer is responsible for six public appointments in the west midlands region and one in Shropshire. All appointments are to VAT tribunals. The duration of each appointment is three years. Of the appointments in the west midlands region one new appointment is due on 1 October 1995; three on 1 October 1996 and two on 1 October 1997. A new appointment is due in Shropshire on 1 October 1997. All appointees are paid a daily fee when they sit, which is currently set at £149.

Tobacco and Alcohol

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the average price of *(a)* cigarettes, *(b)* cigars and *(c)* rolling tobacco in each EU country; and what percentage of that price is excise, VAT or other tax;

(2) what are the rates of excise duty and VAT on tobacco products in each EU country; and what is the difference in each case from United Kingdom levels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The most popular price category for cigarettes, cigars and hand-rolling tobacco in each EU country and the excise and VAT elements of those prices are shown in the tables. Average prices of these products in other EU countries are not available.

	MPPC £ per 1000 cigarettes	*Excise Duty as a percentage of MPPC*	*VAT as a percentage of MPPC*
Cigarettes			
Belgium	91·96	57·76	17·01
Denmark	145·94	64·56	20·00
France	82·80	59·16	16·32
Germany	100·49	58·68	13·04
Greece	60·59	56·62	15·25
Ireland	122·33	59·95	17·36
Italy	59·07	57·00	15·97
Luxembourg	65·32	57·96	10·71
Netherlands	80·43	57·00	14·89
Portugal	52·46	67·17	13·79
Spain	27·27	55·36	14·53
United Kigndom	127·00	61·20	14·89
Cigars			
Belgium	935·97	10·00	17·01
Denmark	5577·10	10·37	20·00
France	1199·98	29·26	16·32
Germany	1168·99	5·00	13·04
Greece	—	—	—
Ireland	366·88	22·06	17·36
Italy	—	—	—
Luxembourg	—	—	—
Netherlands	2449·46	5·00	14·89
Portugal	—	—	—
Spain	2528·24	10·00	14·53
United Kingdom	388·00	19·99	14·89
Hnand-rolling tobacco			
Belgium	26·29	37·55	17·01
Denmark	69·99	40·96	20·00
France	24·72	56·38	16·32
Germany	44·09	46·22	13·04
Greece	45·78	57·50	15·25
Ireland	101·43	67·33	17·36
Italy	26·48	54·28	15·97
Luxembourg	23·50	31·50	10·71
Netherlands	29·25	60·47	14·89
Portugal	11·10	30·00	13·79
Spain	22·31	30·00	14·53
United Kingdom	142·40	57·49	14·89

	Rate of Excise Duty			*Actual Tax Amounts £ per 1,000*		*Amount less than United Kingdom levels £ per 1,000*	
	Ad valorem Per cent.	*Specific per 1,000*	*VAT Rate Per cent.*	*Total exercise*	*VAT*	*Exercise*	*VAT*
Cigarettes							
Belgium	50·00	7·11	20·50	52·91	15·58	35·02	5·10
Denmark	21·22	63·26	25·00	94·22	29·19	-18·04	-12·35
France	54·95	3·49	19·50	48·98	13·51	39·63	7·63
Germany	24·80	34·04	15·00	58·97	13·11	27·37	8·23
Greece	53·39	1·96	18·00	34·31	9·24	56·45	12·56
Ireland	16·83	52·74	21·00	73·33	21·23	8·61	-2·20
Italy	53·35	2·16	19·00	33·67	9·43	58·42	12·62
Luxembourg	54·30	2·39	12·00	37·86	7·00	54·00	15·93
Netherlands	21·05	38·92	17·50	45·85	11·98	44·00	9·67
Portugal	56·00	5·86	16·00	35·23	7·24	57·77	15·73
Spain	49·00	1·74	17·00	15·10	3·96	82·53	19·72
United Kingdom	20·00	52·33	17·50	77·73	18·91	—	—
Cigars							
Belgium	10·00	0·00	20·50	93·60	159·23	N/A	N/A
Denmark	10·00	20·64	25·00	578·23	1115·42	N/A	N/A
France	29·26	0·00	19·50	351·11	188·19	N/A	N/A
Germany	5·00	0·00	15·00	58·45	152·48	N/A	N/A
Greece	26·00	0·00	18·00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ireland*	0·00	80·93	21·00	80·93	63·67	N/A	N/A
Italy	23·00	0·00	19·00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Luxembourg	10·00	0·00	12·00	N/A	N/A	NA	N/A
Netherlands	5·00	0·00	17·50	122·47	364·81	N/A	N/A
Portugal	26·21	0·00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Spain	10·00	0·00	17·00	252·82	329·77	N/A	N/A
United Kingdom*	0·00	77·58	17·50	77·58	57·79	N/A	N/A
Hand Rolling Tobacco							
Belgium	37·55	0·00	20·50	9·87	4·47	71·99	16·74
Denmark	0·00	28·67	25·00	28·67	14·00	53·19	7·21
France	56·38	0·00	19·50	13·94	3·88	67·92	17·33
Germany	18·12	12·39	15·00	20·38	5·75	61·48	15·46
Greece	57·50	0·00	18·00	26·32	6·98	55·54	14·23
Ireland	0·00	68·29	21·00	68·29	17·60	13·57	3·61
Italy	54·28	0·00	19·00	14·37	4·23	67.49	16·98
Luxembourg	31·50	0·00	12·00	7·40	3·07	74·46	18·14
Netherlands	16·53	12·85	17·50	17·69	4·36	64·17	16·85
Portugal	30·00	0·00	16·00	3·33	1·53	78·53	19·68
Spain	30·00	0·00	17·00	6·69	2·91	75·17	18·30
United Kingdom	0·00	81·86	17·50	81·86	21·21	—	—

* Duty on cigars in United Kingdom and Ireland is in £ per Kg and therefore comparison of differences in levels of Excise duty and VAT with United Kingdom are not available.

Life Expectancy

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the life expectancy for *(a)* men and *(b)* women in each year since 1979 in each EU country.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested—as far as it is available from publications of the Statistical Office of the European Communities and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—is as follows.

Life expectancy	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
(a) Males													
Belgium	70·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	72·4	72·7	72·8	73·1
Denmark	71·2	71·4	—	—	71·6	71·6	71·8	—	—	72·0	72·0	72·5	72·6
France	70·2	—	—	70·7	—	—	71·5	72·0	—	72·5	72·7	72·9	73·2
Germany	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	72·0	72·1	72·6
Greece	72·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	74·2	—	74·5	74·6	74·6
Ireland	—	70·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	71·0	72·0	72·2	72·6
Italy	70·6	—	—	71·4	71·6	—	—	—	73·2	—	73·6	73·6	—
Luxembourg	—	70·0	—	—	—	—	70·6	—	—	—	—	72·0	71·9
Netherlands	72·7	72·7	72·7	—	72·9	73·0	—	—	—	73·7	73·8	74.0	74·3
Portugal	67·7	—	68·9	—	—	—	70·2	70·7	—	70·9	70·3	70·2	70·7
Spain	72·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	73·4	—	—	73·3	73·3	—
United Kingdom	70·6	70·8	71·1	71·4	71·5	71·7	71·9	72·2	72·4	72·7	72.9	73·2	73·6
(b) Females													
Belgium	76·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	79·0	79·4	79·5	79·8
Denmark	77·3	77·4	—	—	77·5	77·5	77·6	—	—	77·7	77·7	78·0	77·9
France	78·4	—	—	78·8	—	—	79·7	80·3	—	80·7	81·0	81·1	81·5

Life expectancy	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Germany	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	78·2	78·7	79·1
Greece	76·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	77·3	—	79·5	79·8	79·8
Ireland	—	75·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	77·0	77·5	77·7	78·2
Italy	77·4	—	—	78·1	78·1	—	—	—	79·7	—	80·2	80·3	—
Luxembourg	—	76·7	—	—	—	—	77·9	—	—	—	—	79·1	78·5
Netherlands	79·3	79·3	79·4	—	79·7	79·6	—	—	—	79·9	80·1	80·1	80·3
Portugal	75·2	—	75·8	—	—	—	77·1	77·5	—	77·9	77·4	77·5	78·1
Spain	78·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	80·1	—	—	80·3	80·5	—
United Kingdom	76·6	76·8	77·0	77·2	77·4	77·5	77·6	77·9	78·0	78·0	78·5	78·6	79·0

In some cases the expectation is given for the two-year period beginning with the year in the table heading and in some cases for the three-year period centred on the year in the heading.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Nelson: No record is kept of how long it takes to adjust clocks in the Treasury. Members of staff adjust clocks in their own rooms and would spend no more than a few seconds on this procedure.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has not conducted any public opinion surveys since October 1992.

Since 1988, the Historic Royal Palaces Agency has undertaken an annual summer visitor survey, to provide valid and reliable research data to inform management decisions regarding the development of visitor facilities. In 1993 the survey was conducted by MEW Research and in 1994 by CC&C Research Ltd. In addition, HRPA has also commissioned research among visitors to monitor performance in relation to its visitors charters. In 1992–93 the research was conducted by Numbers M R Ltd. and from then on by Vital Statistics.

The Royal Parks Agency has commissioned the centre for leisure and tourism studies at the university of North London to undertake market research on all royal parks over a three-year period starting in January 1994. The survey is designed to obtain a visitor profile and seek visitors' views on services and facilities available in the parks.

The fees paid for those surveys are a matter of commercial confidentiality and therefore cannot be disclosed.

Departmental Accommodation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the cost to date to his Department of the leasing of property for his Department's use from the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Sproat: The rents paid for Government offices are a commercial-in-confidence matter between the Government and their landlords.

Since my Department was established in April 1992, we have paid £692,057 to Property Holdings in respect of service charges for all Department of National Heritage properties.

Postage

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sproat: Although my Department was established in April 1992, we did not become responsible for our own postage until we moved into our new headquarters in May 1993. Since then, a total of £51,426 has been spent on postage. On average we post about 8,000 items a month.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Newton: Expenditure by the Privy Council Office in respect of official hospitality for the years in question was as follows:

Financial year	*Expenditure £*
1990–91	4,450
1991–92	7,234
1992–93	9,776
1993–94	9,892
1994–95 to date	2,309

I am not responsible for any agencies.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Goodlad: One opinion survey has been conducted on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office since 1 October 1992. This was carried out by Gallup from 26 to 31 January 1994 and the objective was to learn about attitudes in the United Kingdom to Bosnia. The fee paid to Gallup was £1,292.50.

No surveys have been commissioned by FCO agencies.

Indonesia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure before any contracts are agreed between Her Majesty's Government and Indonesia for the procurement of any military equipment by Indonesia from the United Kingdom that inquiries are made to ascertain whether the International Labour Organisation convention of 1956 concerning the right to associate in free trade unions is being observed in Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: A country's human rights record is one of the criteria we take into account when considering licence applications for the export of military equipment. There is no ILO convention of 1956 concerning the right to associate in free trade unions.

Negative Security Assurance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals his Department intends to submit to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty extension conference regarding the strengthening of the United Kingdom's negative security assurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom, in common with other nuclear weapons states, has given a general assurance to all non-nuclear weapons states parties to the non-proliferation treaty that we will not use or threaten to use our nuclear weapons against them except in the case of an attack on the United Kingdom, its dependent territories, armed forces or allies by such a state acting in alliance with a nuclear weapons state. The same assurance applies to states not party to the non-proliferation treaty but which have made similar internationally binding commitments not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons.

In the context of the non-proliferation treaty extension conference in 1995, a number of states parties have asked that the nuclear weapon states give new and enhanced assurances. We are discussing this with the other nuclear weapons states in the hope of agreeing a common approach.

Turkey

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding *(a)* the imprisonment and trial of eight Kurdish Members of Parliament by the Turkish Government and *(b)* the six Kurdish Members of Parliament currently in exile in Brussels.

Mr. Goodlad: We have made clear to the Turkish Government our strong concern about the action taken against the Members of Parliament of the banned Democracy party. We continue to take every opportunity to remind the Turkish Government of the need for improvement in Turkey's human rights record in general. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised the issue with Mrs. Ciller in Istanbul on 14 October.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he expects will be the outcome of Turkey's application to enter the European customs union; and to what extent it will depend on Turkey's human rights practices regarding the Kurds.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom is contributing positively to the negotiations between Turkey and the EU to achieve customs union. The Turkish Government are aware of the United Kingdom concerns, shared by European partners, about human rights abuses in Turkey, but there is no direct link between the process of moving towards customs union with Turkey and Turkey's human rights record.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what outbreaks of cholera have been reported to the World Health Organisation by Turkey.

Mr. Goodlad: No cases of cholera have been reported to the World Health Organisation by Turkey for the last two years.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether future sales of miliary equipment to Turkey by NATO will be made contingent upon Turkey improving its human rights record with particular reference to Kurdish minorities.

Mr. Goodlad: Turkey is a NATO member with genuine external defence requirements. United Kingdom defence sales to Turkey are considered on a case-by-case basis. Arms which are likely to be used for internal repression are not granted licences.

Postage

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: The FCO expenditure on postage during the past five years, with ODA expenditure stated separately, has been:

Year	*FCO*		*ODA*	
	Cost £	*Number of Items*	*Cost £*	*Number of Items*
1989–90	153,767	n/a	91,867	202,638
1990–91	133,281	n/a	116,514	236,185
1991–92	154,785	n/a	161,304	303,886
1992–93	169,321	n/a	153,374	282,269
1993–94	174,104	n/a	124,904	205,300

The number of items sent by the FCO has not been recorded during the period ending 31 March 1994. Records maintained since that date show that the number of items sent to the end of September was 268,460.

British Embassies

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. (1) if he will publish the rules governing expenditure which may legitimately be incurred by British embassies on visits made abroad in a private capacity by British citizens;

(2) what expenditure has been incurred by British embassies in the last five full financial years, and in the current financial year, to date in connection with private visits by British citizens.

Mr. Baldry: British embassies incur expenditure in connection with a large range of British private visitors including commercial visitors. It is not possible to identify that proportion of an embassy's overall expenditure which is used for these purposes.

China

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise allegations of torture in prisons in China, in *(a)* the European Union and *(b)* the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: At this year's United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the European Union expressed its concern at reports of torture in China and called on China to co-operate with the special rapporteur on torture. It looks to China to fulfil its obligations under the convention against torture. We will continue to raise human rights in China with the Chinese authorities and in international forums at every suitable opportunity.

Siberian Tiger

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make resources available to the Russian Government to assist their efforts to save the Siberian tiger.

Mr. Goolad: We have not received a request from the Russian Government to assist their efforts to save the Siberian tiger.

We have, however, given TRAFFIC International—Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce—£97,500 to carry out a study of the Asian medicinal trade and its implications for the conservation of tigers. The project aims to:

—reduce poaching and smuggling of tigers and other endangered species;

—identify illegal trade routes to consumer nations and help governments halt illegal shipments; and

—identify ways to alter consumer behaviour and reduce the demand for tiger parts.

We believe that this contribution will substantially assist international efforts to stamp out the illegal trade in tigers, rhinos and other endangered species and thereby to promote their conservation.

Princess of Wales

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what were the costs to the British embassy in the USA arising from the visit of HRH The Princess of Wales in October 1994;

(2) what was the cost to his Department with particular reference to United Kingdom posts of the recent visit of the Princess of Wales to the USA.

Mr. Baldry: The recent private visit of the Princess of Wales to the USA involved costs to the embassy in Washington on entertainment, transport and staff time. The costs were part of the normal functioning of the embassy. The full costs cannot be readily identified.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he was *(a)* informed of or *(b)* authorised the expenditure incurred by the British embassy in respect of the recent visit by the Princess of Wales to the USA.

Mr. Baldry: This private visit by the Princess of Wales involved costs to the embassy, on entertainment, transport and staff time. These are part of the normal running of an embassy, within the head of mission's discretion.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is responsible for making 103 appointments, and 47 require his approval.

The breakdown requested by the hon. Member is:

Appointments to Executive Bodies
58 appointments made, 22 appointments approved

Appointments to Advisory Bodies
25 Appointments made, 25 appointments approved

Appointments to other Bodies
20 appointments made, none approved.

Taiwan

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support has been given by Her Majesty's Government to the United States Administration's decision in March to sanction Taiwan under the terms of the Pelly amendment because of that country's failure to enforce a ban on the trade in tiger products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The United States action followed the March meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which tasked a number of countries, including Taiwan, to take further measures to stamp out illegal trade in endangered species. We expect progress reports to be presented at the ninth conference of the parties to CITES to be held from 7 to 18 November. Once we have studied them, we will consider what, if any, action is necessary, in consultation with our European Union partners.

In June, at the instigation of the United Kingdom, European Union Environment Ministers expressed concern about pressure on tiger populations, condemned the illegal trade in tiger products and undertook to be particularly vigilant in enforcing CITES for that species. We are keeping the situation under close review.

Rights of Children

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government will be reporting to the United Nations Committee on progress towards implementation of the UN convention on the rights of children.

Mr. Goodlad: We submitted our initial report detailing progress made towards the implementation of the UN convention on the rights of the child in March this year. Copies were laid in the Libraries of both Houses.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 3 and 4 October.

Mr. Hurd: I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 3 to 4 October. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), also attended.

The Council discussed Commission and presidency proposals for the development of relations with the associated countries of central and eastern Europe. Ministers endorsed the principle of regular ministerial meetings with the CEEs and invited the Commission to prepare a White Paper on the approximation of laws.

Lord Owen briefed Ministers on the deployment of the international conference on the former Yugoslavia monitoring mission. Ministers welcomed this development and discussed how to take forward the peace process, reaffirming the importance of the contact group.

Over lunch, Italy announced its intention to continue negotiations with Slovenia following the Slovene declaration of its decision to harmonise property purchasing legislation with that of the EU. The Committee of Permanent Representatives was invited to finalise the negotiating mandate.

Over lunch, Ministers also discussed the EU's aid package for Albania, but were not able to reach agreement on its release.

The Council asked the Commission to examine a proposal for a further aid package to help the middle east peace process, and invited the Commission to make further funds available for the Palestinian police force. The Council agreed on the importance of concluding negotiations with Morocco, Tunisia and Israel for new agreements by the end of the year.

Ministers approved a presidency strategy paper on Ukraine and instructed COREPER and the political committee to prepare a draft common position within the common foreign and security policy procedure.

The Council agreed to resume negotiations with Belarus on a partnership and co-operation agreement and to institute exploratory contacts with Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ministers requested a report on human rights in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan before any opening of exploratory talks.

The Presidency gave an oral report of the EU/Association of South-East Asian Nations ministerial meeting in Karlsruhe.

The Council agreed the text of a draft interim agreement between the European Community and South Africa.

My Irish colleague and I briefed the Council on developments in Northern Ireland. There was a general welcome for the progress achieved and for the idea of an EU support package for the peace process.

Ministers agreed the guidelines and annex for the conference on security and co-operation in Europe review conference in Budapest — 10 October to 3 December.

Ministers agreed arrangements for the production of a report on plutonium smuggling for the Foreign Affairs Council 28 and 29 November.

The presidency reported to the Council on its discussions with the European Parliament and the Commission to resolve outstanding inter-institutional issues resulting from the implementation of a number of Maastricht provisions. These include temporary committees of inquiries, comitology, keeping the EP informed of business in the second and third pillars and the appointment of the new Commission.

In the light of the failure to agree a new global regime for outward processing trade, OPT, the Council discussed the idea—which the United Kingdom supported—of separating from the Commission's proposal those provisions allowing for the immediate exemption from the duty of OPT conducted with the CEEs. This idea did not, however, command majority support. The Council therefore invited COREPER to prepare a global regime in time for the November Foreign Affairs Council.

The Commission reported to the Council on the conclusion of multilateral negotiations on an agreement to curb subsidies to the shipbuilding sector. The Commission will bring forward a proposal for the Community to approve the agreement. A number of member states, including the United Kingdom, welcome the outcome of the negotiations, but France made clear that it had serious difficulties with the agreement as negotiated.

The Council approved the text of a draft decision to ratify the Uruguay round agreements, and agreed to seek the assent of the European Parliament on the basis of this draft. The Economic and Social Committee will also be consulted. The European Court of Justice hopes to give its opinion on the Community's competence to conclude the Uruguay round agreements by 15 November, and the aim remains to complete their national ratification procedures by the same deadline. The proposal for a code of conduct governing Community participation in the World Trade Organisation will meanwhile be considered further in COREPER: a final decision on the proposal will be taken once the European Court of Justice has ruled.

The Council also asked the Commission to prepare a report on the compatibility of the US Uruguay round implementing legislation with the World Trade Organisation agreement.

The Council endorsed the recommendations emerging from the visit of the Development Ministers troika to Rwanda and neighbouring states. These recommendations will form the basis of a common position on policy towards Rwanda.

The own-resources decision was discussed over lunch. No agreement was reached.

UN Year of Tolerance

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department will be taking to support the UN year tolerance in 1995; and what specific sums has the Government earmarked for this purpose.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 20 October 1994]:* My Department has no plans at present to engage in specific activity to mark the UN year of tolerance in 1995: specific sums have not therefore been earmarked for such a purpose. While we are content that non-governmental organisations should play an active role in the activities of the year, it is not our policy, given heavy demands on public expenditure, to commit scarce resources to the marking of UN years dedicated to specific themes.

PRIME MINISTER

Visits

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit a state-funded children's nursery.

The Prime Minister: I plan to do so on one of my forthcoming visits around the country.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Charter Advisory Panel

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Prime Minister if he will name the members of his advisory panel on the citizens charter and the charter mark assessors.

The Prime Minister: The panel of advisers on the citizens charter is made up of people who have been appointed for their expertise in their own particular fields in the private sector. The composition of the panel is currently as follows:

Sir James Blyth—Chairman.
Mrs Angela Heylin.
Neil Johnson Esq.
Dr. Madsen Pirie.
Nick Rawlings Esq.
The right Hon. Baroness Perry.
Lady Judith Wilcox.

A number of retired public servants were appointed to assess applications for the charter mark award. Some of these, together with members of the panel of advisers and staff from the citizens charter unit, were involved in visiting some of the short-listed organisations:

Charter Mark assessors	*Panel Members*	*CCU staff*
Alan Grocott	Sir James Blyth	Genie Turton
David Bower	Nick Rawlings	David Paul
John Offord	Lady Judith Wilcox	Charles Ramsden
Jim Brown	Dr. Madsen Pirie	Judith Lempriere
Tom Corrigan	The right Hon. Baroness Perry	Chris Matthews
George Georgiades		Elizabeth Hunter Johnston
Harry Nicol		Simon Lawton Smith
David Dewick		Aleck Thomson
Peter Canovan		
Vivian Emerson		
David Bromley		
Dave Keating		
Peter Cockram		
Peter Summerscale		
Ernie Dinn		
Peter Selby		
Tony Poole		
Brian Smith		
John MacDonald		
Sybil Brown		
Margaret Chiverton		

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his office.

The Prime Minister: No precise record is kept of such estimates.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: The readily available information, relating to headquarters postage expenditure by my Department and its agencies, except the fire service college, is as follows:

	£
1989–90	1,959,459
1990–91	2,047,841
1991–92	2,651,686
1992–93	2,519,033
1993–94	2,993,258

The figures for 1989–90 and 1990–91 do not include the forensic science service as that information is not available.

Information on postal expenditure by regional offices, outstations and individual establishments, and on the numbers of items posted could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Howard: Details of appointments for which I am responsible are given in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is in the Library.

I would also refer the hon. Member to my answer of 4 March, *Official Report* column *963*, when I gave details of appointments for which I am responsible in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies" including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Police Files

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to regulate the use of unused material in police files being given to the defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 24 October, *Official Report*, column *465*.

Byelaw Applications

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to speed up the processing of byelaw applications by his Department.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Home Office endeavours to deal with byelaw applications as quickly as possible. I am aware that in a particular case about which my right hon. Friend made representations recently, there had been some delay; the application is now being given priority.

Tiger Products

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken by the Metropolitan police in respect of information passed to them in August by the World Wide Fund for Nature about the sale of tiger bone products in London.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Commissioner of Police the Metropolis that an investigation is in progress.

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if individual applications for United Kingdom citizenship are defined as operational or policy matters.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: They are not categorised in this way.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times since his appointment his advice has been sought regarding individual applications for United Kingdom citizenship.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Our records show that 10 applications for British citizenship have been referred to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Ali Al Fayed

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he and his predecessors have received in regard to the granting of British citizenship to Mr. Ali Al Fayed; and when and from whom they were received.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: My right hon. and learned Friend and his predecessor have received representations from five people concerning Mr. Ali Al Fayed's application. It is not our practice to disclose details of private communications.

Firearms

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces have adopted the recommendations of best practice identified in the working group report on firearms licensing.

Mr. Maclean: All police forces are fully aware of the recommendations made by a Home Office working group in 1991. The extent to which forces follow the detail of these recommendations is regularly monitored by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. I am satisfied that they are widely complied with.

Homicide Statistics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the annual rate of infant, neonate and childhood homicide in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: The readily available information which relates to offences currently recorded as homicide for the years 1982 to 1992, where the age of the victim was under one year, from one to under five years, and from five to under 16 years is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1992" (Cm 2410), chapter 4 and table 4.6.

A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Provisional figures for 1993 are as follows:

Offences currently recorded as homicide in England and Wales

	Number
Victim aged under 1 year	28
Victim aged under 1 year and under 5 years	29
Victim aged 5 years and under 16 years	16

Fountain Pens

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what checks have been made by his Department on the importation into the United Kingdom of fountain pens that conceal a 4 inch blade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No checks are made on the importation of these items. They are not among weapons which it is an offence to import.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total expenditure per English and Welsh local authority under section 11 for each year since 1992 and the current year to date; and what proportion of this was borne by his Department and by the local authority concerned.

Mr. Nicholas Baker *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* Readily available information is shown in the table. This lists all authorities in England and Wales with section 11 projects approved for funding since 1 April 1992, including those which, since 1 April 1994, have received such funding from the Department of the Environment's single regeneration budget.

The figures for 1992–93 and 1993–94 are for grant claimed in relation to authorities' expenditure within those financial years, when grant was normally paid at a set rate of 75 per cent. of authorities' expenditure.

The figures for 1994–95 show the grant allocation which has been notified to each authority provided that the authority's own expenditure within this financial year is not less than the minimum figure indicated.

	Expenditure (grant cost)		*Allocation*	*Total minimum expenditure*
Authority	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1994–95*
Avon	761,771	818,931	615,251	885,098
Barking and Dagenham	334,550	323,379	230,860	332,114
Barnet	1,443,463	1,006,318	748,243	1,076,420
Bedfordshire	3,068,086	3,206,333	2,361,022	3,396,558
Berkshire	1,343,514	1,423,166	1,053,875	1,516,101
Bexley	92,990	161,586	100,138	144,058
Birmingham	7,432,641	5,802,182	4,046,501	5,821,282
Blackburn	57,749	68,107	49,539	71,267
Bolton	1,089,458	1,171,230	880,505	1,266,691
Bradford	5,891,883	5,717,323	4,204,150	6,048,075
Brent	2,714,377	2,496,137	1,742,385	2,506,589
Buckinghamshire	1,474,520	1,490,141	1,095,250	1,575,623
Burnley	18,356	25,772	18,774	27,008
Bury	409,210	486,477	354,547	510,050
Calderdale	1,072,798	1,165,370	853,361	1,227,642
Cambridgeshire	1,359,939	1,335,704	976,563	1,404,880
Camden	1,371,927	1,552,686	1,111,346	1,598,778
Cardiff	8,834	10,727	7,888	11,348
Cheshire	90,747	99,664	73,862	106,258
Cleveland	638,348	657,082	479,638	690,006
Coventry	2,852,760	2,836,578	2,108,375	3,033,101
Croydon	1,203,239	1,337,072	949,775	1,366,343
Derbyshire	1,070,613	1,432,669	1,046,415	1,505,369
Devon	15,596	15,816	11,949	17,190
Doncaster	111,754	137,275	100,338	144,346
Dudley	1,247,764	1,136,839	877,198	1,216,934
Durham	96,532	170,774	119,090	171,322
Ealing	2,750,445	3,476,557	2,591,454	3,728,057
East Sussex	178,051	179,216	139,412	200,558
Enfield	1,240,331	1,432,895	1,058,164	1,522,271
Essex	33,143	34,685	25,755	37,051
Gateshead	30,774	32,918	22,732	32,702
Gloucester	17,250	41,082	28,983	41,695
Gloucestershire	328,631	362,423	265,008	381,240
Greenwich	1,573,087	1,819,983	1,329,673	1,912,863
Gwent	149,533	268,583	192,662	277,163
Hackney	4,357,490	4,021,298	3,147,620	4,528,155
Hammersmith and Fulham	866,260	962,912	713,289	1,026,135
Hampshire	674,973	748,448	558,367	803,265
Haringey	2,183,264	3,214,058	2,604,874	3,747,363
Harrow	877,243	755,341	556,992	801,287
Havering	51,960	50,636	39,169	56,348
Hereford and Worcester	204,564	238,339	175,235	252,092
Hertfordshire	2,209,385	2,051,062	1,492,311	2,146,833
Hillingdon	439,974	418,911	317,055	456,114
Hounslow	1,754,451	1,899,331	1,389,502	1,998,933
Humberside	309,419	392,438	275,863	396,856
Hyndburn	17,397	23,426	17,860	25,693
Islington	1,980,042	2,032,924	1,434,673	2,063,916
Kensington and Chelsea	1,140,253	1,162,052	899,845	1,294,514
Kent	1,225,489	1,508,814	1,095,957	1,576,640
Kingston	119,547	152,223	106,742	153,559
Kirklees	3,143,316	3,288,925	2,402,511	3,456,244
Lambeth	1,259,627	1,514,744	1,109,603	1,596,271
Lancashire	5,787,041	5,955,560	4,629,966	6,660,653
Leeds	2,190,816	2,207,876	1,725,338	2,482,065
Leicester	122,641	165,214	115,597	166,297
Leicestershire	4,310,964	4,363,683	3,228,512	4,644,526
Lewisham	2,078,456	2,178,120	1,637,467	2,355,654
Lincolnshire	61,564	76,285	61,319	88,213
Liverpool	176,355	216,630	165,185	237,635
London Boroughs Grants Unit	100,766	160,067	123,071	177,050
Manchester	2,746,353	2,879,000	2,225,999	3,202,314
Merton	521,304	706,067	490,246	705,266
Middlesbrough	6,254	7,178	—	—
Newcastle	438,153	411,262	303,140	436,096
Newham	2,939,058	2,906,063	2,181,976	3,138,983
Norfolk	70,466	78,002	68,285	98,235

Authority	*Expenditure (grant cost)* 1992–93	1993–94	*Allocation* 1994–95	*Total minimum expenditure* 1994–95
North Tyneside	150,759	161,692	115,586	166,282
North Yorkshire	58,154	65,123	49,312	70,940
Northamptonshire	1,036,878	890,134	663,758	954,880
Nottingham	55,678	84,003	61,435	88,380
Nottinghamshire	2,120,817	2,030,884	1,519,199	2,185,514
Oldham	2,442,777	2,549,312	1,909,961	2,747,663
Oxford	—	7,649	3,322	4,779
Oxfordshire	825,094	871,818	684,260	984,374
Preston	14,907	18,157	12,834	18,463
Redbridge	1,182,178	1,238,587	918,005	1,320,639
Redditch	12,591	17,935	12,971	18,660
Richmond	62,850	76,799	56,225	80,885
Rochdale	1,455,121	1,581,705	1,193,213	1,716,552
Rotherham	431,632	442,280	327,313	470,871
St Albans	12,327	23,628	18,105	26,046
St Helens	10,307	18,975	14,043	20,202
Salford	62,118	64,834	47,498	68,330
Sandwell	1,512,832	1,644,471	1,228,775	1,767,711
Scunthorpe	25,687	31,615	16,103	23,166
Sheffield	2,641,874	2,397,773	1,697,662	2,442,251
Shropshire	104,866	114,218	84,104	120,992
South Glamorgan	458,378	591,518	444,978	640,144
South Yorkshire FCDA	15,158	16,649	12,751	18,344
Southampton	9,991	5,930	11,422	16,432
Southwark	2,339,236	2,542,825	1,955,157	2,812,682
Staffordshire	1,108,417	1,257,176	924,043	1,329,325
Stockport	100,051	103,265	76,079	109,447
Suffolk	297,375	317,330	237,235	341,285
Sunderland	110,656	115,825	87,284	125,566
Surrey	384,578	400,899	291,845	419,847
Sutton	56,121	62,779	46,902	67,473
Tameside	808,680	771,609	585,940	842,931
Tower Hamlets	8,890,804	9,181,040	6,826,782	9,820,985
Trafford	286,589	329,296	242,981	349,552
Wakefield	348,232	404,567	296,729	426,873
Walsall	2,049,091	2,147,295	1,579,939	2,272,895
Waltham Forest	1,893,462	2,084,056	1,585,015	2,280,197
Wandsworth	1,851,387	1,860,091	1,434,386	2,063,503
Warwickshire	994,864	1,051,670	785,021	1,129,328
West Midlands FCDA	85,142	86,633	65,241	93,855
West Sussex	304,087	280,628	212,623	305,879
West Yorkshire FCDA	119,524	129,533	95,651	137,603
Westminster	1,876,395	1,991,411	1,498,548	2,155,806
Wigan	56,170	60,071	44,078	63,410
Wiltshire	160,950	163,864	121,565	174,883
Wirral	64,145	95,393	75,839	109,102
Wolverhampton	1,973,768	2,104,031	1,575,008	2,265,801

Notes

1. Since currently approved projects came into effect on 1 April 1992, a number of schools which were previously covered by local authority projects but which have since opted for grant maintained status have chosen to set up their own project funded directly under section 11.

2. Since 1 April 1993, most further education colleges, and a small number of sixth form colleges, which previously benefited from section 11 funding paid to the local education authority have begun receiving grant direct.

3. Some projects approved with effect from 1 April 1992 were, in the light of their particular circumstances, approved for periods of 2 years or less.

4. Some projects approved with effect from 1 April 1992 were, in the light of their particular circumstances, made subject to a tapering rate of grant (ie, in the case of a 3-year project, 75 per cent. in year 1, 60 per cent. in year 2, and 40 per cent. in year 3).

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Dip

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in research to find an alternative to organo-phosphorous sheep dips.

Mrs. Browning: Alternatives to organo-phosphorous sheep dips are already licensed for use in the United Kingdom. They include flumethrin dips, as well as pour-on and injectable products. The development and marketing of alternative products is a matter for the commercial judgment of the manufacturers concerned. The veterinary medicines directorate will do all that it can to complete the assessment of any such products as quickly as possible.

Sheep Quotas

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in resolving difficulties about allocating sheep quotas to those involved or previously involved in farming partnerships.

Mr. Jack: Producers involved in partnerships will be able to lease quota within the group, for up to three years, during the second transfer and lease periods for 1993 and 1994. This will enable them to redistribute quota to match their stock holding. The second transfer and lease periods will open when all allocations from the national reserve for the relevant year have been made. For the longer term, following pressure from the United Kingdom, we expect the European Commission shortly to bring forward proposals which would, under certain circumstances, exempt transfers of quota within producer groups or partnerships from the operation of the siphon.

Bovine Semen

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what has been the cost to the United Kingdom dairy and beef cattle industry of the ban on importation of semen;

(2) if he will list those countries that prohibit the importation of semen from the United Kingdom herd; and from what date in each case the prohibition applied.

Mrs. Browning: The following countries prohibit the importation of bovine semen collected in the United Kingdom.

Country	*Effective date of prohibition or date notified*
Argentina	13 August 1991
Australia	1 December 1988
Austria	30 May 1990
Bulgaria	September 1994
China	4 September 1990
Costa Rica	23 March 1992
Indonesia	10 March 1993
Iran	26 July 1989
Jamaica	11 August 1994
Japan	July 1990
Malaysia (Sarawak only)	February 1991
Mexico	23 October 1992
Russian Federation	10 April 1990
Sweden	21 October 1988
Taiwan	21 February 1991
United Arab Emirates	30 June 1990
Uruguay	9 July 1990

It is not possible to quantify the cost to the United Kingdom dairy and beef cattle industry of these problems.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has that the BSE agent can be found in the offal of calves under the age of six months.

Mrs. Browning: There is no scientific evidence that BSE agent can be detected in offals from naturally infected calves under six months of age.

However, on 30 June 1994 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education announced preliminary results from a pathogenesis study in cattle. These showed detectable infectivity in the terminal ileum of calves six months after experimental oral challenge at the age of four months with a large dose of brain material from confirmed BSE cases. After careful consideration of these results Ministers decided, as a precautionary measure, to extend the specified bovine offals ban to include the thymus and intestine of all calves presented for slaughter for human consumption. Legislation to enact this will come into force on 2 November 1994.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to allow planting of short rotation coppice in environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Jack: Entry into the environmentally sensitive area scheme is voluntary. In cases where farmers in an environmentally sensitive area do opt to enter into an agreement with the Ministry to manage their land in an environmentally friendly way, the test of whether to allow the planting of short rotation coppice on such land would be whether its proposed extent and location would be compatible with the landscape objectives of the scheme.

Farmers within the area of a designated ESA who do not enter into such an agreement are free to plant short rotation coppice on their holding.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: Departmental, including regional service centres, expenditure on postage in the last five years has been:

Year	*£*
1989–90	1,746,325
1990–91	1,867,217
1991–92	1,984,450
1992–93	2,232,975
1993–94	2,577,039

We do not maintain records of the number of items posted. They run to many thousands per week and include individual letters, mail shots and press releases.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Jack: Information about ministerial appointments to public bodies sponsored by the Ministry are given in "Public Bodies 1993". Except where otherwise stated in that publication, appointments are made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food either solely, or jointly with the Ministers of other Departments. On appointments to bodies not listed in "Public Bodies", I have nothing to add to my reply to the honourable Gentleman of 3 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *811*.

Badger-related TB

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *260*, what progress has been made in introducing the test for tuberculosis in the live badger announced as part of a package of measures to address the problem of badger-related TB breakdowns in cattle.

Mr. Browning: We have undertaken four pilot trials of the new badger control strategy based on the live test and have discussed these with the consultative panel on badgers and bovine tuberculosis. The original proposal envisaged three approaches: no action at all against badgers; the continuation of the existing interim strategy of trapping and killing badgers on the farm or part of the farm where the disease outbreak occurred; and finally the continuation of the interim strategy on the breakdown farm and an extension beyond the farm to apply the live test and to trap and test badgers on neighbouring farms. The trapping and testing would be carried out on a sett-by-sett basis; where a sett is found to contain one or more badgers positive to TB in the test, the positive badgers and any other badgers caught from that sett will be killed. Setts which test negative will not be disturbed.

On the basis of the views expressed by members of the consultative panel, Ministers have decided that, in cases where the live test is applied on neighbouring farms it would be more appropriate to apply the live test on the breakdown farm instead of the interim strategy. The live test will be used on the same basis as on the neighbouring farms and will result in fewer badgers being killed.

The other elements of the strategy will remain. In particular no action will be taken where there is no evidence to suggest that the original breakdown in the cattle herd was related to badgers, and the policy of not killing any lactating sows which are trapped because of the resulting impact on the cubs, which are dependent on her, will also remain. The strategy on the revised basis will start to apply from 1 November.

Milk

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* those articles of treaties of the European Community and consequential regulations and directives that render illegal reintroduction of the arrangements for collection, processing, distribution and sale of liquid fresh milk extract in the United Kingdom in 1972.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* The European Court has ruled that national legislation designed to promote and encourage the establishment of a uniform producer price for milk, by agreement or by authority, at the national or regional level is, by its nature, outside the bounds of the powers given to member states and runs contrary to the principle established by Council regulation 804/68, in particular article 3, of attaining a target price for the milk sold by Community producers during the milk year on the Community market and on external markets. EC Council regulations 1421/78 and 1422/78, as an exception to this principle, provided a legal framework for the continued authorisation of the milk marketing schemes in certain defined circumstances and subject to a number of conditions. While in theory the reintroduction of a milk marketing scheme would be possible under these regulations, in practice any move in this direction would be likely to be met by a proposal from the Commission to the Council for the revocation of the regulations in question.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest figures for the numbers of cattle infected with tuberculosis shown by MAFF administrative area, and the figures for 1979, 1984, and 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Browning *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The total numbers of confirmed cases in each animal health office administrative area in 1989 and for the first six months of 1994 were as follows:

	1989	*1994 (First 6 months)*
South West England		
Cornwall	57	86
Devon	18	66
Dorset	6	6
Gloucester/Avon	27	37
Somerset	3	6
Wiltshire	9	16
Elsewhere in England		
Essex/Hertfordshire	—	2
Durham/Tyne and Wear/ Cleveland/Northumberland	3	1
Kent/East Sussex	4	—
Lancashire/ Greater Manchester/ Greater Merseyside	—	1
Leicestershire	1	1
Lincolnshire	1	—
Norfolk	1	—
Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire	—	2
Oxfordshire/ Buckinghamshire/Berkshire	4	1
Shropshire	5	—
Suffolk	1	—
Surrey/Middlesex/West Sussex	1	—
Warwickshire/West Midlands	2	—
Worcestershire/Herefordshire	—	6
Wales		
Clwyd	1	—
Dyfed	9	27
Glamorgan/Gwent	2	8
Powys	—	3
Scotland		
Aberdeen	1	—
Ayr	3	—
Dumfries	1	1
Elgin	2	—
Galashiels	1	—
Perth	1	1

The total number of confirmed herd cases in England, Scotland and Wales in 1979 was 117 and in 1984 was 114. The numbers for each administrative area for these years are not available.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Jack: No individual record is kept of such activities.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Committees

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the functions and objectives of *(a)* the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee, *(b)* the Advisory Committee for Arbitration Law, *(c)* the Aviation Committee, *(d)* the fuel cell advisory panel and *(e)* the Standing Advisory Committee on Industrial Property.

Mr. Heseltine: The Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The current functions and objectives of the departmental Advisory Committee on Arbitration Law are to examine the operation of the Arbitration Acts 1950 to 1979 in the light of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law model law on international commercial arbitration and to recommend to the Secretary of State any legislative or other steps which the committee considers should be taken to improve the system of arbitration in England and Wales.

The objective of the Aviation Committee is to advise the Department of Trade and Industry on the needs of the United Kingdom aeronautics industry so that these may be taken into account by Government when developing and implementing policies affecting the industry.

In particular, the Aviation Committee will advise the Department on:

(a) the factors influencing competitiveness at home and abroad;

(b) innovation programmes affecting the industry, including Civil Aircraft Research and Demonstration Programme (CARAD); and

(c) on the identification and pursuit of strategic market opportunities.

The terms of reference for the fuel cell advisory panel are:

(i) to advise the Department of Trade and Industry and its agent, the Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU), in developing and formulating, against programme aims and objectives set by the Department of Trade and Industry, programme plans for the Department's Advanced Fuel Cell R and D programme;

(ii) in the light of the agreed programme, to advise the Department of Trade and Industry and its agent, ETSU, on the merits of Advanced Fuel R and D proposals and to make recommendations on the funding of individual projects which are submitted to the Panel;

(iii) to monitor progress on the Advanced Fuel Cell R and D programme against agreed plans and to evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the agreed objectives;

(iv) to provide a forum for reviewing progress with the research and development of advanced fuel cells, for identifying future requirements and co-ordinating United Kingdom activity in this field.

The Standing Advisory Committee on Industrial Property advises Government on the whole range of industrial property matters. Membership of the committee is drawn from organisations representing a broad range of industrial, commercial, professional and academic interests.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee in each of the last three years.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I have been asked to reply, as responsibility for servicing the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee rested with the Science and Engineering Research Council before the committee was disbanded on 31 March 1994.

	1992	*1993*	*1994*
Number of meetings held	8	6	1
Budgeted expenditure	—	—	—
Actual expenditure	—	—	—

The AMTC was a joint committee of the Department of Trade and Industry and the SERC. It was jointly serviced by the DTI and SERC, with the DTI in the lead until 31 September 1993, and the SERC thereafter. No report was published by the committee. Its advice was channelled through the internal organisation of the DTI and the SERC.

Subsidence

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the "Coal Mining Subsidence Damage Guide to Claimant's Rights" leaflets will be revised to take account of the restructuring of the coal industry; and when he intends to appoint a subsidence adviser under the powers of the Coal Industry Act 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I announced this morning the appointment of Mr. Malcolm Webb FRICS, ACIArb. to be the subsidence adviser. Arrangements for contacting the subsidence adviser's office are included in the revised "Guide to Claimants' rights" leaflet which has been issued today; copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the total annual cost to United Kingdom industry of the non-alignment of United Kingdom time with standard European time.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My Department has made no such assessment.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff in his Department alter their hours of work or work overtime when the United Kingdom falls out of line with European time.

Mr. Taylor: My Department's rules on working hours are administered locally and provide for alternative working patterns such as flexible working hours. No central records are kept of changes local management might authorise for individuals' working patterns. The cost of collecting such information would be disproportionate.

Post Office

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will conduct a survey into the extra implications for vehicular traffic of closure of post offices.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no plans to close post offices. Such a survey would, therefore, be unnecessary.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current salary of the secretary of the Post Office board; what was the salary of Miss Morag Macdonald, former secretary of the Post Office board; and in what circumstances, and under what settlement, Miss Morag Macdonald left the Post Office board.

Mr. Eggar: Miss Macdonald has chosen to take a career break from the Post Office for further education purposes. As an employee of the Post Office both her salary and that of the new secretary of the board are the responsibility of the Post Office.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the recent report by the Post Office's corporate planning department on exclusive access by the Royal Mail to Post Office Counters.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the implications of European competition law for continued exclusive access by Royal Mail and Parcelforce to Post Office Counters following privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: We have considered the implications of European competition law for the access arrangements. Such issues have arisen on many occasions in the past and have been satisfactorily resolved. They will be fully dealt with in any proposals for the future of the three Post Office businesses.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received regarding Bridgegate Engineering and the Post Office in the last two months.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* Complaints of a commercial nature by Bridgegate Engineering against the Post Office have been brought to the notice of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, and are receiving serious attention. These are operational matters for the Post Office and I am assured that they have been considered at the very highest levels. It is my understanding that detailed discussions are in progress between lawyers acting for Bridgegate Engineering and the Post Office, who hope that a satisfactory outcome for all concerned will soon be achieved.

Investment Grants

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many companies which received Spanish Government grants as inward investments into Spain in the 1980s have since closed the operation for which those grants were received;

(2) how many companies which received Irish Government grants as inward investments into Eire in the 1980s have since closed the operations for which those grants were received;

(3) how many companies which received French Government grants as inward investments into France in the 1980s have since closed the operations for which those grants were received;

(4) how many companies which received Federal Republic grants as inward investments into West Germany in the 1980s have since closed the operations for which those grants were received;

(5) how many companies which received Italian Government grants as inward investments into Italy in the 1980s have since closed the operations for which those grants were received.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is either unavailable or could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the total costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To date the total cost of consultancy fees for the market-testing programme has been £2·7 million with other departmental support costs estimated at £3·1 million.

Job Creation Grants

Mr. Betts: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list *(a)* the grants which have been available from his Department to assist in investment or job creation in each of the past five years, *(b)* the number of grants given in each category, *(c)* the value of the grants, *(d)* the amount of investment created as a result, *(e)* the number of jobs created on the project assisted, *(f)* the criteria used in assessing the correctness of making the grants, *(h)* the procedures used in this monitoring, *(i)* the number of grants and their value which had been reclaimed for financial and legal impropriety, *(j)* the number and value reclaimed for failing to achieve the criteria set and *(k)* the number and value reclaimed for other reasons.

Mr. Eggar: Detailed information is published in the annual reports on the Industrial Development Act 1982, which are available in the Library of the House.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My Department's expenditure on postage in its headquarters buildings in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	£
1990–91	664,140
1991–92	699,303
1992–93	782,995
1993–94	934,103
1994 to date	921,962

We do not keep information on the number of items posted by the Department.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether his Department organises receptions for those expressing an interest in public appointments for the first time; how often they are held; what is the annual cost; and how many people attend.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* In 1992, as part of the Opportunity 2000 initiative, my noble Friend Baroness Denton, then Parliamentry Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms in the DTI and co-chairman of the Women's National Commission, hosted two receptions at Lancaster House for experienced professional and business women with the aim of introducing potential women candidates for public appointments to Ministers and officials. A total of 119 people attended the receptions and the cost was included in the annual budget for departmental receptions.

Replica Firearms

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total number of replica firearms imported, and from which country, for each year since 1992.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The information requested is not available, as replica firearms are not an identifiable commodity within the standard international trade classification.

Firearms

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total number of firearms imported in the past year; and from which country they came.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The information is not available, for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Bus Industry

Mr. Betts: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the number of buses *(a)* exported from and *(b)* imported into Great Britain and their value in real terms for each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The annual United Kingdom trade in buses since 1979 is given in the table. The value in real terms is not available.

United Kingdom Trade in Buses

Year	Exports Numbers	Value £ million (current prices	Imports Number	Value £ million (current prices)
1979	1,122	9·5	491	7·8
1980	673	8·3	417	6·0
1981	1,433	19·7	701	12·9
1982	2,446	8·2	1,041	31·0
1983	5,973	17·4	1,616	46·2
1984	6,654	12·5	1,301	49·4
1985	7,912	17·4	1,174	36·8
1986	5,475	14·0	1,493	35·4
1987	5,518	13·4	1,087	38·3
1988	724	11·0	1,045	58·0
1989	698	11·8	1,056	65·7
1990	2,142	21·5	665	46·2
1991	1,462	26·1	544	30·2
1992	786	19·1	713	47·2
1993[1]	1,222	23·7	905	57·4

Note:

[1] Provisional.

Sources:

SMMT World Automotive Statistics except for 1981 and 1993.
Department of Trade Overseas Trade Statistics for 1981.
CSO Business Monitors MM 20 and MQ20 for 1993.

Mr. Betts: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been *(a)* the value in real terms and *(b)* the numbers of vehicles produced by the British bus-building industry in each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The numbers of buses produced by the British bus-building industry, annually in the United Kingdom since 1979, are given in the table. The value in real terms is not available.

Production of buses in the United Kingdom

Year	Number
1979	25,531
1980	21,572
1981	12,444
1982	13,107
1983[1]	15,616
1984	16,499
1985	16,027
1986	12,340
1987	13,995
1988[1]	16,500
1989	14,858
1990	12,987
1991	9,837
1992	8,517
1993	7,639

[1] 53 weeks.

Source

SMMT

Lord Archer of Weston-Super-Mare

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the persons from whom he received advice before deciding to take no further action regarding the report into alleged insider dealing involving Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare.

Mr. Heseltine: It is not my Department's practice to disclose details of individuals from whom legal advice is obtained. Both the advice and its source is regarded as confidential.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* total cost of the inquiry into the allegations of insider trading involving Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare.

Mr. Heseltine: The total cost—including inspectors' fees, disbursements and VAT—of the investigation into alleged insider dealing in the shares of Anglia Television Group plc was £213,767. Individual inquiries are not subject to separate budgets.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give figures based on current performance for the number of health service staff she expects will see earnings *(a)* fall and *(b)* rise as a result of the introduction of relating pay to performance.

Mr. Moss: The proposals made to staff sides and the professionals who represent the groups covered by national health service review bodies, and included in pay bodies of non-review body groups, would strengthen the links between rewards and performance of the local organisations. Such schemes would be locally determined and depend on the achievement of local objectives for the delivery of high-quality services.

Bill of Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking towards the introduction of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The Government have long recognised that the protection of human rights will be considered in the context of talks necessary to create a comprehensive political settlement. It would be wrong to pre-empt the outcome of those talks.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend approves the following public appointments, which are identified in "Public Bodies 1993":

Executive Bodies—205.
Advisory Bodies—79.
Others—63.
Executive and advisory—1.

The public appointments not included in "Public Bodies 1993" that the Secretary of State is personally responsible for approving are as follows:

Executive Bodies—22.
Advisory Bodies—5.
Others—0.

With regard to the Secretary of State's approv[illegible]or those appointments not listed in "Public Bodies", I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *141*. In addition to those bodies, the Northern Ireland Regional Medical Physics Agency came into operation on 1 April 1994. The Secretary of State is responsible for the approval of the membership, comprising the chairman and one non-executive director, who are then appointed by the head of the Department of Health and Social Services.

De Lorean

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money was paid in total in grants to the De Lorean motor car company; how much of that money has to date been returned; what has been the cost of the legal proceedings to obtain that return; how many workers in Northern Ireland are currently employed by the company; and what specific changes in policy and procedure have now been implemented by his Department to ensure there is no repetition of the De Lorean affair.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd. received Government assistance amounting to some £77.3 million, including £17.76 million in preference share capital. The company is now in receivership and liquidation and has no employees. The Department of Economic Development has received in excess of £10 million from the receivership and some £5.9 million from other sources. No costs were incurred by the Government on legal proceedings to obtain these sums.

The operating arrangements and investment criteria of the Industrial Development Board were carefully worked out following a comprehensive assessment of the De Lorean case to ensure that such a project would not be supported in future. Those arrangements were reviewed following the 25th report of the Public Accounts Committee and are fully compatible with the recommendations in paragraphs 91 to 98 of that report.

As a separate issue, the Government are pursuing an action for damages against Arthur Anderson and Company in relation to its role as auditors of De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd.

Tourist Boards

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the *(a)* chairs and *(b)* non-executive directors of each tourist board, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Northern Ireland tourist board has a nine-member board consisting of a chairman and eight members.

Name	*Gender*	*Occupation*
Hon.Hugh O'Neill (Chairman)	Male	Businessman
Brian Adgey	Male	Business Consultant
Roy Bailie	Male	Company Chairman
Gerry Burns	Male	Local Government Chief Executive
Annie Courtney	Female	Health Promotion Co-ordinator
Tony Hopkins	Male	Managing Partner
Alan Lambert	Male	Director
Willian McGinnis	Male	Managing Director
Dr. Mary Peters	Female	Company Director

EDUCATION

Dearing Report

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she has received Sir Ron Dearing's report on his investigation into awarding procedures in this year's mathematics and science GCSEs; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The investigation by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority is continuing. I have, however, today welcomed interim proposals from Sir Ron Dearing to strengthen and clarify existing arrangements underpinning consistency of grading across GCSE examining groups. These measures include:

Ensuring that the rules for determining grades are clear, consistent and robust.
Improving communications between examining groups.
Producing national sets of candidates' work to help define grade standards in key subjects.
Introducing piloting of any major changes to awarding schemes.

These will start to come into effect for the winter 1994 GCSE examinations and will all be in place for examinations from summer 1995 onwards.

I have also agreed that the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority should review with the examining groups the scope for a more co-ordinated approach to syllabuses, examinations and awarding in the core subjects from 1998 in the interests of securing consistency of grading.

I am placing in the Library of the House my exchange of correspondence with Sir Ron Dearing.

Schools (Emergency Cover)

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent discussions she has had with teachers' representatives to enlist their support for the provision of adequate emergency cover in schools for children suffering acute allergic reactions and other life-threatening conditions.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not discussed this issue specifically with the teacher unions recently, but I met my right hon. Friend and members of the Anaphylaxis Campaign, whose representatives included a head teacher, on 27 September. "Consideration" is being given to further appropriate measures to deal with those concerns.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much her Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by her Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The following figures include the central spend on postage by my Department and our contracted mailing house:

Financial Year	*Cost £*
1989–90	870,558
1990–91	575,951
1991–92	674,372
1992–93	796,161
1993–94	490,906

Information is not collected about the occasional dispatches carried out on the Department's behalf by ad hoc mailing contractors. The figures for 1993–94 reflect the fact that the Office for Standards in Education has assumed financial responsibility for its own post bill. Information about the number of items posted is not held centrally.

Special Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what medical training her Department advises is necessary for escorts of children with special educational needs being transported to and from school.

Mr. Forth: It is for local education authorities to satisfy themselves that appropriate supervision is provided for the transport of children with special educational needs. The Government endorsed a Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents report in 1991 which recommended that escorts should have a knowledge and understanding of the particular disabilities of the children they escort and that they should have received adequate first aid training.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice her Department has given to local education authorities on the transport of children with special educational needs to and from school.

Mr. Forth: Transport arrangements made by local education authorities must enable pupils to travel in reasonable safety and comfort, without undue stress, strain or difficulty such as would prevent the child benefiting from the education provided at the school. Guidance on the management and safety of school transport was included in a circular letter on a range of school transport issues sent to all chief education officers in England in January 1994.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many public appointments *(a)* she is responsible for making and *(b)* require her approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if she will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is given below.

	Number of appointments the Secretary of State is responsible for making	*Number of appointments that require approval from the Secretary of State*
Executive bodies	255	1
Advisory bodies	19	—
Other bodies	87[1]	1

[1] These figures include eight appointments to the SLC made jointly by the Secretaries of State for Education and for Scotland. Further appointments can be made at the discretion of the Secretaries of State.

The Secretary of State is also empowered to establish education associations and may appoint as many members as she considers appropriate to each association.

"Our Children's Education"

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pensioner households received the publication Our "Children's Education".

Mr. Robin Squire: "Our Children's Education", the updated parents charter, was delivered to every household in England. This means that all pensioner households should have received a copy. I would expect many of them to be interested in the contents, but as taxpayers, grandparents or both.

Stratford School

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the qualifications of Mrs. Gould of Combe Hay Partnership to become a governor of Stratford school; and what fees she will receive.

Mr. Robin Squire: Mrs. Daphne Gould OBE is the former head teacher of an east London school, with particular experience of Stratford school through her previous services as the Secretary of State's additional governor. Mrs. Gould was a founder member of the National Curriculum Council, and is one of only six honorary fellows of the university of London's institute of education. Mrs. Gould will not, of course, receive fees for her duties as a governor. However, the Secretary of State has separately asked her to carry out consultancy work at the school for a period not exceeding 10 days this term, for which she will be remunerated at an appropriate rate.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout her Department.

Mr. Forth: No record is kept of such estimates.

Higher and Further Education Fees

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines she has published on the charging of registration fees to home students by higher and further education colleges.

Mr. Boswell: There are no Government guidelines on the charging of registration fees to students.

Budget Allocations

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of her Department's budget in the last year for which figures are available was spent on *(a)* nursery, *(b)* primary, *(c)* secondary and *(d)* higher and further education; and what were the corresponding figures five, 10 and 15 years ago.

Mr. Robin Squire: During this period the Department's responsibilities have changed. It has previously had responsibility for science, arts, libraries and sport. Responsibility for funding some sectors of education has passed from local education authorities to the Department. The table accordingly provides figures for expenditure on the activities in question, as a proportion of expenditure on education by the Department and by English local authorities. The percentage of expenditure on each sector reflects in part demographic trends, and also the recent rapid growth in participation in higher education. The figures are for England only, with the exception of those figures for further and higher education which include spending on mandatory student awards in Wales. Other figures for Wales, and those for Scotland and Northern Ireland, are the responsibilities of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Proportion of expenditure on sectors of education as percentage of total local and central Government education expenditure

	1994-95[1]	*1989-90*	*1984-85*	*1979-80*
Nursery[2]	—	4.2	2.6	2.1
Primary	22.1	19.5	19.2	20.3
Secondary[3]	23.3	27	29.9	28.2
Special schools[4]	5	3.5	3.3	3
Schools capital[5]	2.2	4.1	2.5	4.3
Higher and further education[6]	35.9	28.5	30.1	28.7
Other[7]	11.5	13.2	12.4	13.4

[1] Central Government element of figures based on planned expenditure. Local Authority recurrent expenditure is taken from local authority Revenue Account budget returns. Schools capital expenditure figures do not allow for Local Authorities' self-financed expenditure. The figures in this column are therefore not directly comparable with those in other columns, which report outturn expenditure.

[2] For 1989-90 only figures include rising fives in primary schools. Figures for 1994-95 have been included in figures for primary schools, as the figures available do not fully disaggregate funding on nursery provision from primary provision.

[3] Figures include expenditure on assisted places, recurrent expenditure on CTCs and music and ballet schools.

[4] Figures have been shown separately for special schools which often have pupils of both primary and secondary age.

[5] Figures showing the split of capital expenditure between primary and secondary schools are not available.

[6] Figures include expenditure on institutional recurrent and capital funding, mandatory student awards (maintenance grants and tuition fees), discretionary awards, postgraduate awards, student loans, access funds and adult education. Mandatory awards programme also covers Wales. In 1979-80, 1984-85 and 1989-90 the Department was responsible through the University Grants Committee and the Universities Funding Council for recurrent funding to universities in Scotland and Wales. The figures have been adjusted to remove this element of expenditure.

[7] Includes expenditure on administration, research programme, youth service, school meals, transport, teachers' centres, child guidance and pupil support.

TRANSPORT

A38

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends announcing his Department's preferred routes for the A38 trunk road improvement schemes Saltash-Trerulefoot and Liskeard-Bodmin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Robert Hicks dated 27 October 1994:

I have been asked by the Secretary of State for Transport to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the proposed improvement of the A38 trunk road between Saltash and Trerulefoot and between Liskeard and Bodmin. The timing of the preferred route announcements depends upon the progress of the schemes themselves, which is an operational matter for the Highways Agency.

We expect Ministers to be able to announce the preferred routes for both of these schemes in November.

The announcement on the Liskeard to Bodmin scheme has had to await detailed consideration of the A38 Action Group's suggestion that the trunk road should be improved along its existing line through the environmentally sensitive Glynn Valley.

The Saltash to Trerulefoot scheme is also sensitive. Villagers of Landrake have come out in favour of resurrecting the old route, which passes through a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a proposed Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We have wished to find ways of responding to the concerns that have led them to prefer the old route.

Other aspects of this scheme have also given concern to residents, developers and planners, not least its potential effects on the

Broadmoor Farm area which the owners and the District Council wish to develop as a business or industrial park. We have wished to ensure that all the concerns that have been expressed as a result of the Public Consultation have been properly understood and taken into account.

Rail Safety

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a survey of the safety of single line railway tracks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: No.

Non-motorised Transport

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what practical steps he is taking to improve the collection and presentation of data in respect of non-motorised transport modes.

Mr. Norris: The national travel survey is the main source of national data on walking and is a major source of national data on cycling. The survey was conducted five times at irregular intervals between 1965 and 1986, but since 1988 the survey has been expanded to collect data on a continuous basis.

The Department undertakes regular reviews of the need for all types of data but has no plans for further innovations for these modes at present.

Railway Stations

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provisions are in place or are proposed to require porters at railway stations to assist *(a)* passengers who have disabilities and *(b)* those passengers who have children in their charge while at the same time carrying luggage.

Mr. Watts: The provision of porters at stations is a matter for British Rail. I understand that British Rail tries to ensure that stations are staffed according to the expected demand.

The Rail Regulator has a statutory duty to have regard to the interests of persons who are disabled. He requires all station operators to produce and comply with a disabled people's protection policy as a condition of being granted a licence to operate.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to prohibit the charge made at mainline stations for the use of toilet facilities by passengers or to include the cost of toilet facilities in the cost of a train ticket; and what assessment he has made of the arrangements made for charging for toilet facilities by food outlets at stations.

Mr. Watts: These are matters for station operators.

Train Failure

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will inquire into the cause of a double engine failure during a rail journey between Birmingham and London on 26 April and into whether this train was in a safe condition to carry passengers.

Mr. Watts: Engine failure is an operational matter for the relevant train operating company, which has a statutory responsibility to operate its services safely. The train operating company would be required to report it only if there were personal injury or if other, specific circumstances were involved. Engine failure is not a reportable occurrence.

River Thames

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to increase the use of the Thames for commercial, industrial and leisure transport.

Mr. Norris: The River Thames working group has been examining the present transport uses of the Thames, the factors which inhibit the growth of traffic on it, and the potential for developing both freight and passenger traffic. The group will report as soon as possible.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department in each of the past five years.

Mr. Norris: My Department has spent the following sums on postage:

1991–92

£13·13 million.

1992–93

£12·93 million.

1993–94

£13·27 million.

Separate figures for the Departments for the years 1989–90 and 1990–91 are not available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Incapacity for Work Appeals

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of appeals concerning incapacity for work during *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1996–97 by claimants of (i) incapacity benefit, ii) severe disablement allowance and (iii) income support.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the format requested. Current planning assumptions are that the number of appeals which will be lodged on the question of incapacity will be in the region of 140,000 in 1995–96 and 190,000 in 1996–97.

21-hour Rule

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for changing the 21-hour rule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: The "21-hour rule" is a special provision which enables income support claimants who are unemployed to spend their time usefully in part-time study while continuing their search for work. The rules governing study on benefit are designed to allow people to undertake study, which will increase their employability, while remaining available for, and actively seeking, work. The "Jobseeker's Allowance" White Paper, which was published on 24 October, makes it clear that the Government intend to continue broadly with the same approach in JSA. Details of the JSA scheme are still under consideration.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Hague: No records are kept of such activities.

Inflation

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect on pensioner spending power on the occasion when Great Britain last had inflation over 10 per cent.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Government fully recognise the importance of maintaining low inflation in protecting pensioners' spending power.

Since October 1990, when inflation was last above 10 per cent., it is estimated[1] that pensioners'[2] average weekly incomes have risen by more than 12 per cent. in real terms.

Notes:

1. Source: Family Expenditure Surveys.
2. Measurement based on pensioner units which include single pensioners and couples where the husband is over state pension age.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Consultancy costs to date in preparation for market testing are £4,614,579 and other costs are £5,819,468.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hague: The departmental expenditure on postage in each of the last five years was:

	£
1989–90	38,515,000
1990–91	46,969,000
1991–92	59,718,000
1992–93	70,198,000
1993–94	71,320,000

The number of items posted is not available for the whole period in question. However, for the financial year 1993–94, the number of items posted via the Royal Mail was 311,043,023.

Lung Conditions

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many PD12D chronic bronchitis and emphysema cases *(a)* had been received up to 11 September, *(b)* had been processed and *(c)* were rejected on grounds of failure to meet (i) the qualification period, (ii) the FEVI test and (iii) the X-ray diagnosis of simple pneumoconiosis.

Mr. Hague: Information as at 11 September 1994 is in the table:

	Number
Claims received	43,827
Claims processed	40,338
Disallowed on prescription	1,821
Failed FEV, test	18,658
Diagnosed as Category O. pneumoconiosis	13,995

Based on a 100 per cent. count and subject to amendment.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social security how many PD12D chronic bronchitis and emphysema appeals had been heard to 11 September by *(a)* a special medical board and *(b)* a medical appeals tribunal; and how many were successful at each stage.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

Appeals	*Number*	*Processed or withdrawn*	*Appeals Upheld*
Special Medical Boards	5,913	4,813	214
Medical Appeal Tribunals	1,543	237	32

NB: Based on a 100 per cent. count and subject to amendment.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many PD12D chronic bronchitis and emphysema appeals to special medical boards up to 11 September have been against *(a)* X-ray evidence, *(b)* FEVI test and *(c)* the qualification period; and how many were successful in each category.

Mr. Hague: Information is not available in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The available information is in the table.

Criteria	*Number*	*Test satisfied*	*Test not satisfied*
Appeals to special medical boards and medical appeal tribunals			
FEV1	2,146	97	1,698
X-ray	3,333	158	2,534
Appeals to social security appeal tribunals at 11 September			
20 year rule	135	15	32

Note

Figures in both tables based on a 100 per cent. count and subject to amendment.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the PD12D chronic bronchitis and emphysema appellants to the medical appeal tribunal have been referred for fresh X-rays; and of those how many have been successful at appeal.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many successful PD12D chronic bronchitis and emphysema applicants there were up to 11 September who have been awarded benefit; and what is their average age.

Mr. Hague: At 11 September 1994, 43,827 claims had been received and 4,469 awards of benefit made.

Information on the average age of benefit recipients could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NB: Based on a 100 per cent. count but subject to amendment.

Means Testing (Limits)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the *(a)* £1,000 widow's payment, *(b)* £3,000 and £8,000 capital limits for income support and family credit, *(c)* £3,000 and £16,000 capital limits for housing benefit, *(d)* £2 per day earnings limit for unemployment benefit, *(e)* £12 earnings limit under the normal idle day rule, *(f)* £5 and £15 earnings disregards for income support, *(g)* £5, £10 and £25 earnings disregards for housing and council tax benefits, *(h)* £10 war pension disregard for income-related benefits, *(i)* £10 disregard of statutory or voluntary payments, *(j)* £20 disregard of income from a boarder, *(k)* £200 disregard of a training bonus *(l)* £15 maintenance disregard for income-related benefits other than income support, *(m)* £10 disregard of student loans, *(n)* £35 occupational pension limit for unemployment benefit, *(o)* £200 savings limit for the lower rate of voluntary unemployment deduction, *(p)* £27 (£8 if living in a hostel) protected earnings, and the £1 margin over protected earnings, where income support paid after a trade dispute is recoverable, *(q)* £52·50 rate of statutory sick pay, *(r)* £100 maternity payment from the social fund, *(s)* £500 and £1,000 capital limits for maternity and funeral payments from the social fund, *(t)* £75 limit on additional expenses included in a funeral payment from the social fund, *(u)* 25 pence age addition to retirement pension, *(v)* £10 Christmas bonus, *(w)* £2,500 exempt payments limit for recovery of benefits from compensation payments and *(x)* £30,000 vaccine damage payment were *(i)* last uprated and *(ii)* introduced; and what their present value would be if they had been uprated in each year since then in line with the increases in (A) prices and (B) average earnings.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is set out in the table.

Col. 1		*Col. 2 date of introduction*	*Col. 3 date from which current rate applicable*	*Col. 4 current value if increased in line with prices since date at Col. 3*	*Col. 5 current value if increased in line with average earnings since date at Col. 3*
(a) £1,000 widow's payment		April 1988	April 1988	1,387·40	1,523·60
(b) £3,000 and £8,000 capital limits for income support and family credit:-	£3,000	April 1988	April 1988	4,105·90	4,570·65
	£8,000	April 1988	April 1990	9,940.50	10,202·60
(c) £3,000 and £16,000 capital limits, for housing benefits:-	£3,000	April 1988	April 1988	4,105·90	4,570·65
	£16,000	April 1988	April 1990	19,881·10	20,405·15
(d) £2 per day earnings limit for unemployment benefit		July 1948	March 1982	3·75	4·80
(e) £12 earnings limit under the normal idle day rule		December 1989	December 1989	15·75	16·70
(f) £5 and £15 earnings disregards for income support:-	£5·00	April 1988	April 1988	6·85	7·65
	£15·00	April 1988	April 1988	20·50	22·90
(g) £5, £10 and £25 earnings disregards for housing and council tax benefits:-	£5	April 1988	April 1988	6·85	7·65
	£10	April 1988	April 1988	13·70	15·25
	£25	April 1988	October 1990	31·05	31·90
(h) £10 war pension disregard for income-related benefits		April 1998	April 1990	12·45	12·75
(i) £10 disregard of charitable and voluntary payments		April 1988	April 1990	12·45	12·75
(j) £20 disregard of income from a boarder (plus half of charge in excess of £20)		April 1988	April 1990	24·80	25·45
(k) £200 disregard of a training bonus		September 1988	September 1988	277·45	304·80
(l) £15 maintenance disregard for income-related benefits other than income support		April 1992	April 1992	16·10	16·20
(m) £10 disregard of student loans		September 1990	September 1990	12·45	12·75
(n) £35 occupational pension limit for unemployment benefit		April 1981	April 1981	72·60	95·00

Col. 1		*Col. 2 date of introduction*	*Col. 3 date from which current rate applicable*	*Col. 4 current value if increased in line with prices since date at Col. 3*	*Col. 5 current value if increased in line with average earnings since date at Col. 3*
(o) £200 savings limit for the lower rate of voluntary employment deduction		November 1980	April 1988	273·75	304·80
(p) £27 (£8 if living in a hostel) protected earnings, and the £1 margin over protected earnings, where income support is paid after a trade dispute is recoverable		April 1988	April 1988	36·90	41·10
(q) £52.50 rate of statutory sick pay		April 1990	April 1990	63·95	67·00
(r) £100 maternity payment from the Social Fund		April 1987	April 1990	124·25	127·55
(s) £500 and £1,000 capital limits for maternity and funeral payments from the Social Fund	£500 £1,000	April 1990 April 1990	April 1990 April 1990	621·30 1,242·60	637·65 1,275·35
(t) £75 limit on additional expenses (specifically arising from the religious fa[illegible] of the deceased) included in a funeral payments from the Social Fund		April 1987	April 1987	105·95	123·15
(u) 25 pence age addition to retirement pension		September 1971	September 1971	1·55	2·60
(v) £10 Christmas bonus		December 1972	December 1972	65·70	94·75
(w) £2,500 exempt payments limit for recover of benefits from compensation payments		September 1990	September 1990	3,043·85	3,188·30
(x) £30,000 vaccine damage payment		March 1979	April 1991	32,936·70	34,908·45

Note:

1. The figures have been rounded to two decimal places.
2. In each step of the calculation the amount has been rounded to the nearest five pence.
3. The Retail Prices Index (all items) and the Retail Prices Index (all items except housing ROSSI) as published by the Central Statistical Office have been used for the prices up-rating -ROSSI in relation to amounts which apply to income-related benefits.
4. Average Earnings Index (Whole Economy Unadjusted) as published by the Employment Department has been used to calculate the earnings up-rating.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has completed his review of the cold weather payments scheme network of temperature monitoring points; what proposals he has to announce in respect of Garve, Ross-shire, and the monitoring station on Tiree; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: This year's review of the cold weather payments scheme is complete. Amending regulations were laid on 11 October and will come into force on 1 November. No changes are to be made in respect of Garve.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much money has been spent in total on housing benefit in Scotland for private sector tenancies in each year since 1985;

(2) how much has been spent on housing benefit in Scotland in each financial year since 1985.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table.

Year	*£ thousands* *Total Private Sector Housing Benefit*	*Total Housing Benefit*
1985–86	53,693	270,098
1986–87	69,260	317,889
1987–88	85,903	367,005
1988–89[1]	81,968	380,405
1989–90[1]	103,567	434,152
1990–91	109,257	489,784
1991–92	123,753	535,526
1992–93	154,617	607,954

Note

[1] Amounts estimated as the data was not collected in the required format for these two years.

All Figures have been rounded to the nearest £,000.

Source

Final subsidy claims.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money was spent on housing benefit in each district council in Scotland in the last financial year.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information is set out in the table.

District	*Total Housing Benefit (£,000)*
Berwickshire	1.422
Ettrick and Lauderdale	2,144
Roxburgh	3,619
Tweeddale	1,036
Clackmannan	4,823
Falkirk	13,492
Stirling	7,646
Annandale and Eskdale	2,792
Nithsdale	4,814
Stewartry	1,698
Wigtown	4,149
Dunfermline	11,761
Kirkcaldy	17,800
North East Fife	4,462
Aberdeen	14,984
Banff and Buchan	5,549
Gordon	2,935
Kincardine and Deeside	1,492
Moray	5,505
Badenoch	998
Caithness	2,203
Inverness	5,518
Lochaber	1,665
Nairn	829
Ross and Cromarty	4,754
Skye and Lochalsh	1,067
Sutherland	1,138
Edinburgh	67,641
East Lothian	7,688
Midlothian	4,341
West Lothian	9,242
Argyll-Bute	7,290
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,207
Clydebank	7,666
Clydesdale	4,287
Cumbernauld	3,381
Cumnock and Doon	5,020
Cunninghame	14,410
Dumbarton	8,844
East Kilbride	1,580
Eastwood	1,455
Glasgow	178,875
Hamilton	11,825
Inverclyde	12,739
Kilmarnock	8,131
Kyle and Carrick	10,926
Monklands	14,127
Motherwell	16,710
Renfrew	23,397
Strathkelvin	5,245
Angus	5,877
Dundee	32,078
Perth and Kinross	8,837
Islands	
Orkney	1,165
Shetland	1,275
Western Isles	2,399

All figures rounded to the nearest £,000.
Source: Final subsidy claims.
Information relates to 1992—93 year.

Housing Benefit Subsidy 1992–93 Source: MPF720B (Certified)

Districts	*Housing Benefit Subsidy*
Berwickshire	1,422,031
Ettrick and Lauderdale	2,144,030
Roxburgh	3,618,630
Tweeddale	1,035,930
Clackmannan	4,822,713
Falkirk	13,492,425
Stirling	7,646,014
Annandale and Eskdale	2,791,643
Nithsdale	4,814,403
Stewartry	1,697,878
Wigtown	4,148,971
Dunfermline	11,761,442
Kirkcaldy	17,800,067
North East Fife	4,462,196
Aberdeen	14,984,313
Banff and Buchan	5,548,947
Gordon	2,934,543
Kincardine and Deeside	1,492,313
Moray	5,504,803
Badenoch	997,785
Caithness	2,202,847
Inverness	5,518,241
Lochaber	1,664,894
Nairn	828,642
Ross and Cromarty	4,753,973
Skye and Lochalsh	1,066,843
Sutherland	1,138,487
Edinburgh	67,640,909
East Lothian	7,688,208
Midlothian	4,341,099
West Lothian	9,242,218
Argyll-Bute	7,289,821
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,206,648
Clydebank	7,666,228
Clydesdale	4,287,072
Cumbernauld	3,381,167
Cumnock and Doon	5,019,841
Cunninghame	14,409,820
Dumbarton	8,844,003
East Kilbride	1,579,816
Eastwood	1,455,284
Glasgow	178,875,469
Hamilton	11,825,268
Inverclyde	12,738,576
Kilmarnock	8,131,272
Kyle and Carrick	10,926,069
Monklands	14,127,309
Motherwell	16,709,628
Renfrew	23,397,271
Strathkelvin	5,245,087
Angus	5,877,088
Dundee	32,077,629
Perth and Kinross	8,837,355
	603,115,159
Islands	
Orkney	1,164,576
Shetland	1,275,119
Western Isles	2,398,951
	4,838,646

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the highest values of rent eligible for housing benefit in *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* the public sector, in each financial year since 1985.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information for Scotland is set out in the table. It gives the maximum eligible rent and the 99th percentile eligible rent for the years for which the information could be extracted.

Enquiry date	*Public sector tenancies Maximum eligible rent £*	*Private sector tenancies 99th percentile eligible rent £*	*Maximum eligible rent £*	*99th percentile eligible rent £*
May 1989	46·42	27·02	87·94	51·50
May 1990	107·97	32·72	96·92	80·77
May 1991	124·45	39·81	105·00	81·89
May 1992	250·37	42·64	115·38	95·00
May 1993	170·2	43·63	150·00	98·08

Source:
Housing Benefit Management Information System annual one per cent. inquiries.

Note:

[1] As the figures are from a one per cent. sample of recipients of Housing Benefit, the maximum quoted above may not be the actual maximum eligible rent.

[2] The 99th percentile eligible rent (that is, the eligible rent which represents the boundary between the top one per cent. of eligible rents and all other eligible rents) has been quoted as a more reliable indicator of the highest values.

[3] The private sector includes Housing Association tenancies.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many housing benefit claims have been awarded for each district council area in Scotland in each year since 1985.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information is set out in the table.

Average Housing Benefit Caseload for each District in Scotland 1988-1993

	Average Housing Benefit Caseload					
District	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Aberdeen	16,758	17,615	17,806	16,584	16,046	16,163
Angus	6,959	6,860	6,739	6,537	6,562	6,736
Annandale and Eskdale	3,552	2,759	2,356	2,373	2,412	2,515
Argyll-Bute	5,064	4,655	4,698	5,094	5,115	5,414
Badenoch	863	715	651	667	734	780
Banff and Buchan	5,525	5,568	5,499	5,379	5,318	5,468
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,047	1,018	942	901	900	917
Berwickshire	508	1,350	1,310	1,287	1,298	1,346
Caithness	2,106	1,936	1,929	1,901	1,940	2,010
Clackmannan	4,846	7,320	7,110	7,019	6,872	6,570
Clydebank	7,308	6,948	6,871	6,692	6,625	6,709
Clydesdale	4,534	4,336	4,266	4,278	4,420	4,474
Cumbernauld	2,260	2,313	2,338	2,494	2,591	2,711
Cumnock and Doon	5,142	4,937	4,871	4,895	5,130	5,358
Cunninghame	15,019	13,266	12,317	12,398	12,904	13,358
Dumbarton	7,256	7,116	6,998	6,879	6,697	7,232
Dundee	24,289	23,372	23,600	23,108	22,741	23,043
Dunfermline	10,579	10,694	10,363	10,488	10,701	10,936
East Kilbride	880	861	922	963	1,062	1,151
East Lothian	8,018	7,667	7,072	7,005	6,978	6,983
Eastwood	1,109	1,079	1,033	1,014	1,119	1,198
Edinburgh	48,640	45,318	42,869	40,000	39,934	41,203
Ettrick and Lauderdale	607	2,102	1,984	1,786	2,139	2,231
Falkirk	14,899	14,951	14,498	14,273	14,150	14,306
Glasgow	122,020	121,430	124,966	122,018	123,314	122,577
Gordon	1,866	2,655	2,501	2,282	2,578	2,644
Hamilton	11,969	11,659	11,278	11,168	11,133	11,297
Inverclyde	15,502	11,978	11,899	11,205	11,018	11,312
Inverness	5,167	6,099	6,235	6,002	5,248	4,353
Kilmarnock	9,744	9,380	9,052	9,015	8,746	8,709
Kincardine and Deeside	1,266	1,405	1,463	1,439	1,490	1,595
Kirkcaldy	13,876	13,841	13,833	13,584	14,141	14,500
Kyle and Carrick	10,582	10,146	9,849	9,664	9,443	9,783
Lochaber	2,069	1,686	1,442	1,380	1,349	1,572
Midlothian	6,176	5,815	5,190	4,928	5,721	4,931
Monklands	15,804	14,935	14,184	14,240	12,879	13,283
Moray	5,718	5,616	5,413	5,236	6,725	5,401
Motherwell	20,336	18,629	17,916	17,782	15,813	18,305
Nairn	806	785	680	638	1,058	748
Nithsdale	5,150	4,269	3,959	3,860	4,120	4,321
North East Fife	4,446	4,247	4,091	3,556	3,330	3,747
Orkney Isles	1,269	996	829	844	1,730	919
Perth and Kinross	7,964	7,850	7,758	7,698	9,346	7,998
Renfrew	21,959	20,294	18,553	19,877	17,949	20,945

Average Housing Benefit Caseload for each District in Scotland 1988-1993

	Average Housing Benefit Caseload					
District	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Ross and Cromarty	3,648	3,540	3,396	3,455	3,598	4,039
Roxburgh	827	2,863	2,742	2,705	2,697	3,113
Shetland Isles	1,501	1,020	967	963	962	1,043
Skye and Lochalsh	1,063	1,165	1,388	678	822	753
Stewartry	2,174	1,504	1,317	1,343	1,892	1,410
Stirling	8,240	7,487	6,442	6,334	5,795	6,666
Strathkelvin	5,383	4,887	4,617	4,363	4,290	4,341
Sutherland	973	942	947	947	926	981
Tweeddale	156	737	919	892	933	953
West Lothian	10,317	9,802	9,344	9,560	9,368	9,440
Western Isles	4,405	1,786	1,143	1,198	1,551	1,568
Wigtown	3,930	3,182	3,042	2,899	3,084	3,170

Source

Housing Benefit Management Information System*Notes*

(1) The above figures are benefit units. A benefit unit may be a single person or a couple.

(2) The average caseload is based on 100 per cent. enquiries taken at the end of February, May, August and November of each year.

(3) When the Local Authorities have failed to send in a return, figures have been estimated.

(4) Prior to April 1989 the average caseload includes rate rebate cases.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the total cost and number of recipients of housing benefit in the current year; and what were the equivalent figures for 1982.

Mr. Roger Evans: *pursuant to his reply, 24 October, Official Report, column 425]:* The figures for rent allowance and rent rebate caseload had been transposed.

The correct information is set out in the table.

Great Britain		*Housing Benefit only*		*Housing Benefit plus an estimate for the number of people on Supplementary Benefit who get help with housing costs*	
		Spending £ (millions)	*Caseload (thousands)*	*Spending £ (millions)*	*Caseload (thousands)*
1982–83[1]	Rent rebate	929	3,050	1,777	3,580
	Rent allowance	74	260	351	851
1994–95[2]	Rent rebate	5,659	3,186	—	—
	Rent allowance	4,320	1,432	—	—

Note

1982–83 caseload and expenditure figures include estimates for people whose Supplementary Benefit payments included help with their housing costs.

[1] Information taken from Public Expenditure papers.

[2] "Government's Expenditure Plans 1994–95 to 1996–97". Caseload information extrapolated from figures in same report.

Personal Injury Claims

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total value of all benefits recovered from claimants awarded damages for personal injury claims in each year since 1979 expressed in constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Roger Evans: The compensation recovery scheme came into force on 3 September 1990. No records are held of the amounts of benefit recovered by compensators before that date because the Department was not involved in the process. The amounts recovered since 3 September 1990 in 1994–95 prices are as follows:

1990–91	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
4·35	27·96	54·55	84·36	47·50

Notes

1. All figures are in £ millions.
2. Figures exclude recoveries from awards that do not exceed £2,500. Compensators may exercise the right to offset such awards by half the value of benefits payable, but the Department is not involved in the process. Accordingly, no records are held of these recoveries.
3. Figures for 1994–95 are to 30 September 1994 only.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who were the members of the group of experts who were asked to advise on the procedures for assessing the effects of mental health problems in relation to incapacity benefit.

Mr. Hague: Panel members who agreed to have their names published are listed in the report "The Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit", copies of which are in the Library. Ten members of the panel, including some members of the sub-group which advised on the mental health assessment, did not want their names published. We do not have the consent of any panel member to disclose his involvement in a particular part of the work, such as the mental health assessment. The sub-group which advised on the mental health assessment included panel members with experience in psychological medicine, occupational health and general practice.

WALES

Rough Sleepers Initiative

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to launch a rough sleepers initiative in Wales to alleviate the problems caused by homeless people sleeping overnight in open-air locations in the Principality.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office continues to devote considerable resources to the prevention and alleviation of homelessness. In 1994–95 some £5,000,000 was available to local authorities for capital schemes addressing homelessness or under-occupation; £500,000 revenue funding is also being directed to voluntary bodies.

To tackle a specific identified problem of single vulnerable young homeless people, £800,000 is being provided for a three-year pilot project in Cardiff.

Traffic Regulation Orders

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the temporary traffic regulation orders for which he has authorised an extension under section 15(5) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1994 as amended by the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Act 1991, stating in each case *(a)* the name of the authority making the order, *(b)* the public rights of way stopped up by the order, *(c)* the duration of the extension and *(d)* why he granted the extension.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is given in the table:

Local authority	*Public right of way*	*Duration*	*Reason for extension given by local authority*
Powys county council	Bridleways Nos. 6 and 7 in Craig DDU Forest, Penybontfawr	12 weeks	Completion of road construction by the Forestry Commission
	Footpath No. 1 at Sychpwll, Llandrinio	1 month	Rebuilding of a flood bank
	Footpath No. 33 near Carreghofa Hall, Carreghofa Llanymynech	38 weeks	To repair an unsafe bridge abutment
	Footpath No. 17 at Nant-Y-Wiber footbridge, Penygarnedd	42 weeks	Unsafe footbridge—likely to be replaced
	Footpath No. 53 and bridleway No. 54 at old lead mine, Van, Llanidloes	33 weeks	Completion of reclamation works
	Bridleway No. 22 at bridge No. CB 4137 Near Blaen Glyn, Glyn Tarell	11 weeks	Public safety owing to weaknesses in the bridge structure
	Bridleway No. 22 at bridge No. CB 4137 near Blaen Glyn, Glyn Tarell	39 weeks	Reconstruction of bridge
	Public footpath No. 1 at Festival footbridge near Aberhafesp	8 weeks	Essential maintenance works to footbridge
	Public footpath No. 65 at Trederwen outfall near Arddleen	35 weeks	Reconstruction of outfall
Gwent county council	Public footpath No. 55 at Rogerstone power station	26 weeks	Infrastructure works on sides of Ebbw river
	Public footpath No. 10 at Garn-Y-Rerw, Blaenavon	130 weeks	Mineral workings
	Public footpath No. 14 at Langstone/Cats Ash	26 weeks	Residential development of adjacent land
	Public footpaths Nos. 36, 38, 39, and 40 at Cats Ash—Celtic Manor golf course	26 weeks	Public safety during construction of golf course
	Public Footpath No. 247 at Pennar farm Newbridge-Maesycwmmer	26 weeks	Construction of bypass route A472
South Glamorgan county council	Footpath linking Ewenny close and Dynallt road, Barry	22 weeks	Public safety during construction work nearby
	Footpath under Eastern avenue at The Nant Pontprennau subway, Cardiff	78 weeks	Public safety during construction of nearby link road
	Footpath No. 14 at Barry	13 weeks	Public safety during residential development of adjacent land
Clwyd county council	Public footpaths Nos. 102 and 108 at Cerrigydrudion	14 weeks	To facilitate repairs to dam bridge

Selective Financial Assistance

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the companies which received selective financial assistance in 1992, 1993 and 1994 to the latest date; and what were the total sums paid in selective assistance for each year.

Mr. Redwood: Details of companies receiving regional selective assistance offers of £75,000 or more are published quarterly in the *Employment Gazette*, while summarised information relating to regional assistance is published each year in the Industrial Development Act 1982 annual reports. Copies of both publications are available in the Library of the House.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of people employed in his Department; and under what subject headings they work.

Mr. Redwood: The total full-time equivalent number of permanent staff employed by the Welsh Office at the beginning of October 1994 was 2,334. They work in the following broad subject areas:

	Number
Ministers' offices	29
Permanent secretary's office	2·5
Deputy secretaries' offices	5
Economic development	82·5
Industry and training	176·5
Agriculture	445
Health	210
Local government finance, housing and social services	113
Transport, planning and environment	595·5
Local government reorganisation	23
Education	85·5
Legal	66·5
Accommodation and management services	199
Personnel and central services	91
Statistics, information and library	96·5
Finance	94
Total	2,224·5

Note

In addition, there are 109·5 staff on maternity leave, unpaid career breaks, and so on.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total and proportion of his staff of his Department employed on agricultural duties in each of the past 14 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Redwood: The total number and proportion of permanent staff in my Department employed on agricultural duties in each of the last 14 years is as follows:

Year	*Number of staff employed on agricultural duties (full-time equivalents)*	*Proportion of Welsh Office staff (per cent.)*
1980 (December)	623	26·4
1981 (December)	598	26·2
1982 (December)	585	26·6
1983 (December)	564	25·9
1984 (December)	553	25·0
1985[1]	543	23·8
1986 (December)	509	22·6
1987 (December)	480	21·7
1988 (November)	480	22·0
1989 (October)	463	20·8
1990 (October)	477	20·3
1991 (July)	455	19·0
1992 (July)	389	16·0
1993 (December)	416	15·6
1994 (October)	445	19·0

[1] Figure relates to January 1986. Information for 1985 is available only at disproportionate cost.

Acid Rain

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to reduce the effects of acid rain on Welsh rivers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In June the Government signed a significant new international agreement within United Nations Economic Commission for Europe aimed at achieving substantial reductions in emissions of sulphur dioxide, one of the main contributors to acid rain. This represents the latest step in the Government's wide-ranging programme of measures to reduce the effects of acid rain in Wales and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, including tighter controls on emissions from industry and vehicles. As part of this, the Welsh Office is sponsoring studies with the National Rivers Authority on the effectiveness of liming of river catchments in Wales.

Quangos

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to improve the accountability of Welsh quangos.

Mr. Redwood: My ministerial colleagues and I hold regular review meetings with each Welsh executive non-departmental public body to consider targets and performance; and NDPBs are to be provided with clear statements of their responsibilities and the roles of the board and its staff and of the Department. I also expect each NDPB to adopt, with such adaptations as are appropriate to its circumstances, the recently published "Code of Best Practice for Board Members of Public Bodies", which requires public bodies and their boards:

> To observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to their stewardship of public funds.
>
> To comply with Government policy on openness and to respond to all reasonable requests for information.
>
> To be accountable to Parliament, users of services, individual citizens and staff for the activities of the bodies concerned, their stewardship of public funds and the extent to which key performance targets have been met.
>
> To maximise value for money by ensuring that services are delivered in the most efficient and economical way.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of appointments made to quango boards by himself and each of his predecessors since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The information is not available in the form requested. However, I have appointed 46 people to executive non-departmental public bodies since 1 September 1993.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the quangos set up by himself and each of each predecessors since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The following executive non-departmental public bodies have been set up since 1979:

	Year
Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting	1983
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	1987
Housing for Wales	1989
Countryside Council for Wales[1]	1991
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales	1992
Further Education Funding Council for Wales	1992
Wales Youth Agency	1992

	Year
Welsh Language Board[2]	1993
Arts Council for Wales	1994
Curriculum and Assessment Authority	1994

[1] Assumed the function of the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservation Council in Wales.

[2] Replaced an advisory body.

Central Statistical Office

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new regional aid proposals he has to safeguard the jobs at the Central Statistical Office in Newport.

Mr. Redwood: Policy in relation to the Central Statistical Office is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood: Expenditure from my Department's postage budget in each of the last five years was;

Financial year	£
1989–90	394,750
1990–91	440,779
1991–92	556,659
1992–93	541,539
1993–94	486,614

Figures for the number of items are not available.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what medical training his Department advises is necessary for escorts of children with special educational needs being transported to and from school.

Mr, Richards: It is for local education authorities to satisfy themselves that appropriate supervision is made for the conveyance of children with special educational needs. The Government endorsed a Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents report in 1991 which recommended that escorts should receive adequate first aid training.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice his Department has given to local education authorities on the transport of children with special educational needs to and from school.

Mr. Richards: Local education authorities are obliged to transport pupils in reasonable safety and comfort. Transport should be non-stressful, such as to enable a child to travel to and from school without undue stress, strain or difficulty such as would prevent the child benefiting from the education provided at the school. The advice was included in a draft circular issued for consultation earlier in the year, the final version of which should issue shortly.

Redundant Churches and Chapels

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress in establishing redundant churches and chapels funds for Wales; and what comparisons he has drawn with arrangements elsewhere.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Responsibility for issues relating to redundant churches and chapels has been delegated to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E.A.J. Carr to Mrs. Ann Clwyd, dated 26 October 1994:

> The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about progress towards establishing redundant churches and redundant chapels funds in Wales.
>
> In its response to the Welsh Affairs Committee report, "The Preservation of Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments", the Government indicated that it was prepared to fund 70 per cent. of the costs of mechanisms to care for the best redundant religious buildings for which no other arrangement could be made.
>
> Cadw is making good progress with the Representative Body of the Church in Wales and the Friends of Friendless Churches in identifying arrangements to care for redundant churches of the Church in Wales. The Friends has a proven track record in caring sympathetically for redundant churches in Wales and already has four in its hands. Most recently, a wider package of financial support has been offered to the Friends, whose founder died last year meaning the organisation has had to regroup, opening the way for its care to be further extended. Our detailed discussions are continuing on how it is to be done.
>
> The position with redundant chapels is rather different. There is no obvious mechanism which might be grant-aided to care for these and our aim is to stimulate the establishment of a body, in the voluntary sector, on the lines of the Historic Chapels Trust in England. To encourage a wider interest in the issue, Cadw has asked the Wales Council for Voluntary Action to organise a conference which will be held at the Norwegian Church, Cardiff on 29 November. The aim is to discuss the problems that such a mechanism might address and to promote the involvement of interested people.

"Our Children's Education"

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pensioner households received the publication "Our Children's Education".

Mr. Richards: This publication was distributed in England only and is therefore a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Playing Fields

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the capital receipts from the sale of school playing fields for each of the last six years by education authority.

Mr. Richards *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Associations

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for the latest year for which figures are available total annual rent roll and the total annual staff salaries bill for the top 100 housing associations.

Mr. Curry: The latest available information is for the financial year 1992–93 and is set out below.

The annual rent roll has been provided for the top 100 associations and includes rents collected from both self-contained accommodation and from shared housing developments such as hostels.

Information on staff salaries is available only for the top 50 associations, based on a special exercise mounted by the Housing Corporation earlier this year.

Name of Housing Association	*HA Type*	*Rents (£'000s)*
Anchor	GENF	79,651
North British	GENF	43,281
North	GENF	37,009
London & Quadrant HT	MIXD	31,877
Sanctuary	GENF	25,392
Hyde	MIXD	24,010
Peabody Donation Fund	GENF	23,257
Guinness Trust	MIXD	23,082
Sutton HT	MIXD	22,250
Northern Counties	GENF	21,100
English Churches	MIXD	20,143
Notting Hill	GENF	19,923
Merseyside Improved	GENF	18,419
Paddington Churches	MIXD	17,837
Bradford & Northern	MIXD	17,535
Hanover	GENF	17,284
Circle 33	GENF	16,316
Focus	MIXD	16,162
Servite	MIXD	14,223
Network	GENF	13,802
Tonbridge & Malling	LSVT	13,413
Orbit	GENF	13,224
South London Family	GENF	12,712
Ealing Family	GENF	12,532
Stonham	MIXD	12,364
Shaftesbury	GENF	12,163
Bedfordshire Pilgrim	LSVT	11,656
Swale	LSVT	11,620
Metropolitan HT	GENF	11,355
High Weald	LSVT	11,193
West Kent	LSVT	10,953
East London	MIXD	10,791
Sovereign	LSVT	10,635
Family	MIXD	10,564
Knightstone	GENF	10,055
Samuel Lewis Found	MIXD	10,012
Jephson Homes	GENF	9,789
New Islington & Hackney	MIXD	9,414
United Kingdom HT	MIXD	9,331
Liverpool HT	MIXD	9,116
Springboard	MIXD	8,848
Raglan	GENF	8,533
Chiltern Hundreds	LSVT	8,085
Touchstone 2	MIXD	7,666
Richmond Churches	GENF	7,527
Manchester and District	GENF	7,379
Mid Sussex	LSVT	7,356
Devon & Cornwall	GENF	6,905
Warden	GENF	6,388
Salvation Army	MIXD	6,386
Beacon	LSVT	6,316
Liver	GENF	6,026
Downland	MIXD	6,017
Grosvenor	GENF	5,951
Johnnie Johnson HT	GENF	5,877
Wherry	LSVT	5,696
James Butcher	MIXD	5,644
Midland Area	GENF	5,548
Portico	GENF	5,533
Bromford	GENF	5,490
Yorkshire MET	GENF	5,470
Leicester	GENF	5,420
Threshold	GENF	5,222
Medina	LSVT	5,210
Ryedale	LSVT	5,176
Family HA Manchester	MIXD	4,867
YWCA of GB	MIXD	4,829
Shepherds Bush	MIXD	4,776
Irwell Valley	GENF	4,669
Bourneville Village	GENF	4,651
Leeds Federated	MIXD	4,580
Kensington HT	GENF	4,422
Brunel & Family	GENF	4,372
Thames Valley	GENF	4,317
Kelsey	GENF	4,289
East Dorset	LSVT	4,287
St. Pancras	GENF	4,278
Portsmouth	GENF	4,257
Touchstone	GENF	4,203
Collingwood	GENF	4,180
City and Counties	MIXD	4,176
Airways	GENF	4,168
Guardian	GENF	4,164
Milton Keynes	LSVT	4,102
Accord HSG Management	MIXD	4,091
Moat HS	GENF	4,061
Aldwyck	MIXD	3,952
Habinteg	MIXD	3,934
West Country	MIXD	3,929
Swaythling	GENF	3,911
South Yorkshire	GENF	3,769
Muir Group	GENF	3,642
Newlon	GENF	3,641
Western Challenge	GENF	3,558
Community	MIXD	3,543
South Wight	LSVT	3,509
Cheviot	GENF	3,496
Walbrook	MIXD	3,476
West Hampstead	GENF	3,457
Nene HS	MIXD	3,432

Name of Housing Association	*Type HA*	*Staff Costs (£'000s)*
Anchor	GENF	30,869
North British	GENF	13,813
English Churches	MIXD	9,728
Peabody Donation Fund	GENF	9,217
Sanctuary	GENF	8,411
North	GENF	8,060
Sutton HT	MIXD	7,513
Guinness Trust	MIXD	7,273
London & Quadrant HT	MIXD	7,203
South London Family	GENF	7,064
Paddington Churches	MIXD	6,751
Bradford & Northern	MIXD	6,666
Northern Counties	GENF	6,640
Merseyside Improved	GENF	6,522
Notting Hill	GENF	6,363
Focus	MIXD	5,794
Circle 33	GENF	4,952
Orbit	GENF	4,693
Shaftesbury	GENF	4,690
Metropolitan HT	GENF	4,661
Hyde	MIXD	4,494
Network	GENF	4,283
East London	MIXD	3,700
Hexagon	GENF	3,431
Family HA	MIXD	3,357
Knightstone	GENF	3,327

Name of Housing Association	Type HA	Staff Costs (£'000s)
West Berkshire	LSVT	3,267
New Islington & Hackney	MIXD	3,231
Samuel Lewis HT	MIXD	3,137
Ealing Family	GENF	3,098
Leicester	GENF	2,784
Manchester & Dist.	GENF	2,713
Jephson Homes	GENF	2,503
Raglan	GENF	2,500
Threshold	GENF	1,857
East Midlands	MIXD	1,824
Devon & Cornwall	GENF	1,636
Aldwyck	MIXD	1,585
Bromford	GENF	1,566
Moat HS	GENF	1,365
Ujima	MIXD	1,272
Thames Valley	GENF	1,254
Wandle	GENF	1,079
Swaythling	GENF	965
West Country	MIXD	687
Asra Greater London	GENF	582
Metropolitan HO	SALE	446
Islington & Shoreditch	GENF	439
Tower	SALE	425
Notting Hill HO	SALE	421

Rivers

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to the Office of Water Services and the water companies to ensure that river sites of special scientific interest are protected from deterioration due to sewage effluent during the period 1995–2000.

Mr. Atkins: In an answer to my hon. Friend on 6 July, *Official Report,* columns *241–42,* my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced £522·3 million of spending in the period 1995 to 2000, specifically to improve river quality where such improvements would not otherwise be required. This was taken into account by the Director General of Water Services when he determined the water companies' new price limits, announced on 28 July. The National Rivers Authority will decide in consultation with the water companies how this spending should be prioritised.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for 1992–93 and 1993–94, the amount spent in each London borough, with totals for each training and enterprise council area, under each of the programmes now incorporated into the single regeneration budget, regardless of whether the sums were paid to the borough council, and the amount allocated to be spent in 1994–95 on the same basis.

Sir Paul Beresford: The information requested has been placed in the Library. The figures cover the support given to projects under the programmes, or parts of programmes, which now form the single regeneration budget. The total expenditure on several of the programmes will be higher, reflecting contributions from local authorities, the private sector and so on.

Rights of Way

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the number of public rights of way that have been blocked or otherwise obstructed by landowners since 1984.

Mr. Atkins: The Countryside Commission carried out a major sample survey of the condition of the network in 1988 and estimated that more than 39,000 km of rights of way were blocked and unusable, about half of which were thought to be the responsibility of landowners. The commission, which gave up responsibility for Wales in 1991, has a further sample survey in hand.

Opencast Mines

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that fresh planning applications by the new mining companies for opencast coal mines on sites which the local planning authority has previously rejected will not be entertained and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: No. Each case must be considered on its merits. Where a development plan is material to the proposal, application must be determined in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. However, section 70A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as inserted by section 17 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, provides that a local planning authority may decline to determine an application if within the period of two years ending with the date on which the application is received the Secretary of State has refused a similar application referred to him under section 77 of the 1990 Act or has dismissed an appeal against the refusal of a similar application; and there has been no significant change since the decision in the development plan, so far as it is relevant, or in any other material considerations.

Wildlife and Countryside Act

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of appeals under paragraph 4 of schedule 14 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 determined in 1992 and 1993 for which the time taken from receipt of appeal by his Department to its determination was *(a)* not more than six months, *(b)* more than six months but not more than 12 months, *(c)* more than 12 months but not more than 18 months, *(d)* more than 18 months but not more than 24 months or *(e)* more than 24 months.

Mr. Atkins: Statistics on appeals under paragraph 4 of schedule 14 are not collected in the form requested. However, the table shows on a regional basis the average time taken for the cases determined in each year.

Appeals under paragraph 4, schedule 14 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

	1992		1993	
Regional offices	Number of cases	Average time (months)	Number of cases	Average time (months)
Northern	—	—	—	—
North Western	3	16	11	20
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	—	5	13
West Midlands	—	—	—	—
East Midlands	6	8	1	9
Eastern	11	12	9	6
South Eastern	14	26	19	11
South Western	7	21	24	15
London	1	13	1	22

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how long he allows surveying authorities to comment on appeals under paragraph 4 of schedule 14 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Atkins: Surveying authorities are given eight weeks to comment on the appellant's grounds of appeal and to submit a statement of case. If no response is received, a reminder is sent and a further two weeks allowed before the appeal can proceed: extensions of time are granted where appropriate. The authority is then given three weeks to comment on each occasion the appellant or third party makes further representations.

Renewal Programmes

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on his policy towards urban renewal programmes based upon area schemes;

(2) how many renewal areas have been designated each year under the provisions of Local Government and Housing Act 1989

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We encourage local authorities to declare renewal areas where the appropriate circumstances exist. The number that have been notified to the Department each year since introduction of the 1989 Act is:

	Number
1990	9
1991	27
1992	18
1993	21
1994	[1]5
Total	80

[1] To date.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to announce the result of his consultation on private housing renewal programmes;

(2) What study he has made of the adverse effect on area renewal programmes in urban areas by a shift towards pepper potting of individual properties.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We are considering the responses to the consultation paper, many of which addressed the effect of the demand-led arrangements that we have at the moment on the ability of local authorities to develop renewal strategies for their areas. An announcement on the outcome of this review will be made in due course.

Correspondence

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will respond to the letter of 26 September from the hon. Member for Leicester, East.

Sir Paul Beresford: I replied to the hon. Member's letter yesterday.

Rented Accommodation

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of private rented accommodation has *(a)* two rooms or fewer or *(b)* three rooms or more; and what plans he has to produce guidelines concerning suitable accommodation for households in the private rented sector.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Some 15 per cent. of households renting privately in England have two rooms or fewer, and 85 per cent. have three rooms or more. These proportions are from the 1993–94 survey of English housing and are subject to sampling error.

The Department has issued guidance to local authorities in support of their powers to enforce adequate standards of safety and amenity in houses in multiple occupation. Certain general standards relating to fitness and overcrowding are set out in primary legislation. But otherwise it is for landlords and tenants to agree the suitability of accommodation. We have no plans to issue further guidelines.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what payments have been made by his Department during the last five years to individuals or companies in Yorkshire and Humberside in support of projects which it was assumed would create employment; and how many jobs have been created in each case.

Sir Paul Beresford *[pursuant to his reply, Wednesday 26 October 1994, column 76]:* Until last November my Department awarded city grant to private developers in support of projects designed to create employment. On 10 November 1993, responsibility for city grant was assumed by English Partnerships.

In the five years to April 1994, £43·75 million of city grant was awarded in Yorkshire and Humberside in support of 41 schemes, which were expected to create 6,318 new jobs.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Sir Paul Beresford: Adjusting clocks forms part of the normal day-to-day maintenance of my Department's buildings. No separate records are kept of the time spent on this.

Butterfly Conservation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has to improve butterfly conservation.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc.) Regulations 1994, implementing the EC habitats directive, take effect on 30 October. Of native species, the marsh fritillary—euphydryas aurinia—is included on annexe II of the directive, which lists those species whose conservation requires the designation of special areas of conservation; the large blue butterfly—maculinea arion—is included in annexe IV, for species requiring strict protection.

English Nature's species recovery programme is enjoying some success with the large blue butterfly. Adult butterflies have emerged on five sites and a sixth site is being prepared for next year.

The development of targets for species conservation for publication in 1995 was announced in "Biodiversity : The United Kingdom Action Plan". We expect these to include butterflies.

A34

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has received from the European Commission regarding the application of directive 85/337 to the proposed A34 Newbury bypass.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State for the Environment has received no advice from the European Commission regarding the application of directive 85/37 to the proposed A34 Newbury bypass. The European Commission did, however, send informal letters of inquiry about this project, to which we replied, in 1991 and 1993. No further communication has been received.

Dormice

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made as to whether the provisions of the Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations are adequate to comply fully with the United Kingdom Government's obligation to protect the habitats of dormice, under the European habitats directive.

Sir Paul Beresford: The regulations were drafted to afford the requisite level of protection for all animal species listed on annexe IVa of the EC habitats directive, including the dormouse—muscardinus avellanarius. Regulation 39(1)(d) makes it an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal, reflecting article 12(1)(d) of the directive. Derogations under licence from these provisions for specified purposes are allowed where the authorities are satisfied that there is no satisfactory alternative and that the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

Air Pollution

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has to improve knowledge on the effects on the air quality of pollution by *(a)* PMIOs *(b)* Aramatis, *(c)* oletins, *(d)* formaldehydes and *(e)* oxides of nitrogen and photochemical smog.

Mr. Atkins: As announced on 3 October, £5 million is to be made available to the Institute of Environment and Health to investigate links between air pollution and respiratory disease. This is in addition to annual expenditure of over £9 million by my Department on air quality research and monitoring.

The expert panel on air quality standards has published recommendations on benzene and ozone, and will be publishing recommendations on carbon monoxide and 1,3-butadiene in the near future. It is at present considering particulates and NO_2 and expects to make recommendations in due course. The quality of urban air review group and the photochemical oxidants review group continue to provide advice on wider air quality issues.

I hope to make an announcement later this year on the Government's response to the consultation paper "Improving Air Quality".

Bats and Rodents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has to improve the conservation of native British bats and rodents.

Sir Paul Beresford: In addition to the protection afforded by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to all native bat species and two species of rodent, the Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994, which take effect on 30 October, will further strengthen the conservation of many bat species and one species of rodent.

English Nature's species recovery programme, which has already enjoyed some success with the common dormouse and the red squirrel, includes a new three-year project to assist the greater horseshoe bat.

Canals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has to increase the use of canals for commercial, industrial and leisure transport.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce new proposals regarding increasing the use of canals. However the new chairman of British Waterways, Bernard Henderson CBE, has been asked to consider ways in which the use of canals for which he is responsible may be increased in the national interest, especially for leisure and tourism.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Sir Paul Bereford: My Department has spent the following sums on postage:

1989–90 — £ 0·440 million
1990–91 — £ 0·687 million
1991–92 — £ 0·755 million
1992–93 — £ 0·883 million
1993–94 — £ 1·121 million
1994–95 — £ 0·529 million (Year to September)

Figures on the number of items posted are kept only for mail from the Department's main London headquarters buildings. Figures are available only from 1991–92 and are as follows:

1991–92 — 937,096 items
1992–93 — 947,536 items
1993–94 — 962,940 items
1994–95 — 457,267 items (Year to September)

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State is responsible for the following public appointments[1]:

	Numbers
to executive bodies	438
to advisory bodies	166
to other bodies	418

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[1] includes appointments made by Her Majesty The Queen on the advice of the Secretary of State.

There are no appointments which require his approval but for which he is not responsible.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the outcome of the triennial review of Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Atkins: Ordnance Survey was established as an executive agency on 1 May 1990. In 1993, an evaluation report concluded that agency status had been a spur to significant improvements in performance. In particular, the acceleration of the conversion of the basic scales mapping archive to a computerised database, the good trading results in a difficult trading period and the attainment of challenging quality–of–service and output targets were important achievements in a highly creditable performance. These improvements and other innovations were recognised in 1993 by a chartermark award.

In order to supplement a review undertaken by officials, consultants were appointed to look at options for the future status of Ordnance Survey. They assessed that Ordnance Survey would continue to progress well in its current status as an executive agency. They also believed that privatisation of Ordnance Survey offers potential benefits. The consultants found that various obstacles preclude this change of status in the immediate future and were also unable, at present, to quantify the full costs and benefits of privatisation.

The consultants further concluded that contractorisation was the worst of the options examined. The Government accept these conclusions and recognise that a final decision to privatise is not yet possible. Ordnance Survey will therefore continue as an executive agency for a further four years. A new framework document will be drawn up to cover the period. During this time the obstacles to privatisation will be investigated thoroughly with a view to clarifying and overcoming them so that the costs and benefits can be established. A further announcement and, if necessary, public consultation, will take place following this major review. The consultants also recommended that a move to trading fund status would be beneficial for Ordnance Survey, whether or not privatisation was pursued eventually. This recommendation is accepted and we will be seeking to move Ordnance Survey to a trading fund basis from April 1996. Over the next four years, Ordnance Survey will continue to develop its revenue-generating activities. Ordnance Survey will also continue to improve its efficiency in order to reduce further its costs to the taxpayer through contracting out wherever there is economic benefit, through collaborations with the private sector wherever appropriate and through innovative management. In addition, Ordnance Survey will seek to achieve all this without any diminution of the quality of its products and services which underpin many key activities of Government and commerce in Britain.

A summary of the consultants' report has been placed in the Library.

Petrol

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he plans to give to the public on the use of leaded and unleaded petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Government advice to motorist remains firm:

> Those whose cars can run on unleaded petrol and who are not using it should start doing so.
>
> Those already using unleaded petrol should not switch back to using leaded petrol.

The Government do not accept criticism of Government policy on unleaded petrol contained in the Transport Select Committee report on transport-related air pollution in London.

These is no credible evidence of any significant differences in emissions of benzene between non-catalyst cars running on leaded and premium unleaded petrol.

There is no evidence that use of super-unleaded petrol contributes significantly to total ambient concentrations of benzene. Super-unleaded petrol comprises only 5 per cent. to 6 per cent. of the market, and that share is declining. We are, however, keeping its use under review.

Benzene levels in the United Kingdom are below the five part per billion level recommended to Government by the expert panel for air quality standards, and are likely to fall as more catalyst-equipped cars enter the national fleet.

Health advice is that there are much stronger grounds for concern regarding small increases in blood-lead concentrations than regarding small changes in ambient concentrations of benzene. It is hoped that publicity given to the Transport Committee report will not lead to increased emissions of lead from road transport.

HEALTH

Health Statistics

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will update the information published in appendix G on pages 31–32 of the minutes of evidence taken before the Health Select Committee on "The Responsibilities of the Director of Statistics and the Director of Research and Development", HC 1992–93, 624, by giving the corresponding tabulations from the hospital episode system for 1991–92 and 1992–93.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested from 1991–92 will be placed in the Library. The analysis for 1992–93 is not yet available.

Water

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made on the effect on public health of restricted use of water for general household purposes;

(2) what discussions she has had with the Medical Officer of Health about the benefits or disbenefits to public health of restricting the use of water for general household purposes.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Renal Replacement Therapy

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the rate of acceptance of new patients for renal replacement therapy by district health authorities and regional health authorities in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The available information will be placed in the Library.

Breast Screening

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women between the ages of 50 years and 64 years have been invited for breast screening in each year since 1990, by *(a)* district health authority, *(b)* family health services authority and *(c)* region; and how many women were actually screened in each case.

Mr. Sackville: Information on breast cancer screening has been collected centrally since financial year 1988–89, but 1991–92 was the first year for which the data were of sufficient quality to allow any analysis. Regionally based information on estimated percentage uptake of screening invitations for 1991–92 and 1992–93 is shown in the table. Information is not available centrally at district or family health services authority level.

Region	*1991–92 per cent.*	*1992—93 per cent.*
England (Total)	72	72
Northern	75	75
Yorkshire	74	72
Trent	78	78
East Anglia	81	79
North West Thames	58	61
North East Thames	61	61
South East Thames	71	70
South West Thames	66	68
Wessex	79	76
Oxford	77	76
South Western	75	77
West Midlands	72	70
Mersey	69	72
North Western	73	76

Information on the number of women screened by regional health authority is published in breast cancer screening summary information from Form KC62 England. The 1992–3 data are to be distributed shortly and an advance copy will be placed in the Library.

Learning Disability Hospitals

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people with learning disabilities are resident in long-stay hospitals; and if she will list the long-stay learning disability hospitals still operating.

Mr. Bowis: Information on residents by type of hospital is not available centrally. The figure for people with a length of stay of one or more years in national health service hospitals under the mental handicap, learning disability specialty, in England, as at 31 March 1993 is 13,500.

A list will be placed in the Library of NHS trusts and directly managed units that have beds designated as being for long-term learning disability patients.

Calman Report

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made on the proposals in the Calman report.

Mr. Malone: Substantial progress has been made and a programme to implement the report's recommendations is outlined in EL(94)71, "Implementation of the Report of the Working Group on Specialist Medical Training—Hospital Doctors: Training for the Future". Copies of the national health service executive letter, which was issued on 22 September 1994, are available in the Library.

Mental Health Budget

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current mental health budget *(a)* per head of population and *(b)* in total (i) in each region and (ii) for the London implementation zone.

Mr. Bowis: Decisions about spending on hospital and community health services for mentally ill people are taken locally by district health authorities and general practitioner fundholders based on their assessment of the needs of mentally ill people living in the district or on the practice's list. Information on this expenditure is not available centrally. It is not possible to identify separately the element of family health services expenditure which relates to mentally ill people.

General Practitioner Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conditions are attached to general practitioner fundholder savings used to improve or build surgeries owned by the general practitioners.

Mr. Malone: Fundholding general practitioners' savings are to be used for the benefit of patients of the practice. In approving proposals for the use of savings, family health services authorities are expected to consider carefully any plans to extend surgery premises for the benefit of patients.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether general practitioner fundholders can use their savings to employ a general practitioner assistant.

Mr. Malone: A medical practitioner may be employed from fundholder savings only to provide approved fundholding procedures and may not be employed to provide general medical services.

Asthma

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children *(a)* had asthma and *(b)* were admitted to hospital with asthma in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Sackville: It is estimated that between 4 and 6 per cent. of children suffer from asthma sufficiently seriously to require medical supervision. Numbers of hospital in-patient cases of children suffering from asthma are available from hospital episode statistics for the years shown in the table. Figures for earlier years are not available.

Finished Consultant Episodes—England

Thousands

	1988–89	1989–90	1990–91	1991–92
0–14 age group	61·7	51·5	49·1	50·7

Source:

Hospital episode statistics

Refugee Children

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those local authorities that provide care and support for 50 or more unaccompanied refugee children under the provisions of the Children Act 1989; and what financial assistance has been given by central Government to those local authorities since 1990.

Mr. Bowis: Information about whether children looked after by local authorities have refugee status is not available centrally. Financial assistance totalling £4,197,698 has been given through a Department of the Environment special grant to local authorities caring for unaccompanied refugee children in respect of 1993–94.

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many unaccompanied refugee children were being supported by the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea *(a)* on 1 April 1991 and *(b)* at the latest available date; and by how much the children's services block in the standard spending assessment has increased in the same period.

Mr. Bowis: Information about whether children looked after by local authorities have refugee status is not available centrally.

In 1990–91, the children's services sub-block of the personal social services standard spending assessment for Kensington and Chelsea was £11·945 million. In 1994–95, following a comprehensive review of the standard spending assessment formulae, and the first full use of data from the 1991 census, the equivalent figure is £11·926 million.

Private Patients

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total income generated from private patients in 1993–94, and for each trust.

Mr. Sackville: This information will not be available until December 1994.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS hospital trusts have dedicated private bed units.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 26 May, *Official Report*, column *303*.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the NHS activity figure for private patients by region in 1992–93 and 1993–94.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for 1992–93 will be published shortly in "Hospital Episodes Statistics, Volume 1, England 1992–93", copies of which will be placed in the Library. The 1993-94 figures are not yet available.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what limits there are on the number of private beds as percent private work that NHS trusts can do.

Mr. Sackville: None, providing there is no significant interference with the performance of the trust of its obligations under national health service contracts. That statutory requirement prevents NHS patients from being disadvantaged by private practice within the health service.

Alcohol (Women)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women drank more than 14 units of alcohol per week in each year since 1986.

Mr. Bowis: The available information, derived from the general household survey, is shown in the table.

Percentage of women aged 18+ drinking over 14 units of alcohol weekly (England)

Year	*Percentage*
1986	10
1988	11
1990	11
1992	12

Notes:

1. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole figure.

2. The General Household Survey collects data on alcohol consumption in alternate years only.

Community Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has that the objectives of the community care policies are being met.

Mr. Bowis: We have an extensive monitoring programme in place. This has shown that local authorities have made a good start with the implementation of community care in the first year. This view has also been confirmed by reports from the Audit Commission and the Association of Directors of Social Services.

Pain

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of medical schools offer tuition in pain control.

Mr. Malone: A total of 100 per cent.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the number of people suffering from chronic pain.

Mr. Sackville: The prevalence of chronic pain is not known.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has commissioned on the chief causes of chronic pain; and with what results.

Mr. Sackville: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The MRC is an independent body deciding what research to support on its own expert judgment.

In 1992–93, the latest year for which figures are available, the MRC spent £237,000 on research into pain.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent pain relief is included in undergraduate medical training.

Mr. Malone: Knowledge and understanding of the relief of pain is taught in all university medical schools. They determine the extent of this teaching in the light of recommendations from the education committee of the General Medical Council, which has the statutory authority to determine the extent of the knowledge and skill required for the granting of primary medical qualifications in the United Kingdom.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of district health authorities have pain relief clinics.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally. It is for individual health authorities to commission hospital services that meet local needs including services for people with acute or chronic pain.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if pain relief is recognised as a specialty by her Department.

Mr. Sackville: No. This is primarily a matter for the medical profession in discussion with the Department.

Blood Transfusion

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to develop autologous blood transfusion.

Mr. Sackville: We are aware of the value of autologous transfusion for those patients where the procedures are applicable. In appropriate cases it can provide a useful supplement to the supply of blood from voluntary donors which the National Blood Service supplies to our hospitals. The medical profession is aware of autologous transfusion and advice is available from medical staff of the National Blood Service and hospital consultant haematologists. Selection of patients for this procedure has to be undertaken with extreme care to avoid any possible clinical risk to that patient.

Help us to Help You Campaign

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on the help us to help you campaign; and how effective the campaign has been.

Mr. Malone: The total cost of the help us to help you initiative has been £91,870. Monitoring to assess the effectiveness of local campaigns is a local responsibility. The national health service executive has found that help us help you messages are now widely featured in national health service information literature.

Adoption

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to set up an international adoption agency in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bowis: Our role is to receive applications from voluntary organisations for approval under section 3 of the Adoption Act 1976. We have not yet received any such application.

Performance-related Pay

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the annual administrative cost of performance-related pay for consultants;

(2) what savings on the total consultant staff budget will come from performance-related pay.

Mr. Malone: Our proposals are for the introduction of local pay arrangements in the national health service, not performance-related pay. The size of the consultants' pay bill depends on a number of factors including consultant expansion. It is for trusts to determine the cost of local schemes.

Mental Illness

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people *(a)* in the London implementation zone and *(b)* in each region suffer from mental illness.

Mr. Bowis: The information is not currently available centrally. A national survey assessing the extent of psychiatric morbidity in Great Britain is being carried out for the Department of Health by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The results of the first part of the survey, covering the private household population, are due to be published later this year and will provide information both nationally and regionally on the nature and extent of mental illness among adults.

Hospitality Budgets

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the hospitality budget for her Department, the national health service executive and regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities and trusts in *(a)* 1993–94 *(b)* 1991–92 and *(c)* 1979–1980.

Mr. Sackville: Information on hospitality expenditure for regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities and trusts is not available centrally. Figures for the Department of Health are shown in the table.

	1993–94 £	*1991–92* £
Department of Health	218,995	168,151
National Health Service Management Executive	88,846	35,803

Notes:

[1] Figures are not available prior to 1990–91.

[2] Figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

[3] Departmental figures include the Management Executive figures.

[4] Management Executive figures are not directly comparable from year to year because of organisational changes.

Cleveden Services

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contracts her Department, the national health service executive, regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities or trusts had with Cleveden Services.

Mr. Sackville: We have no records of any contracts between the Department of Health or the national health service executive and Cleveden Services.

Information on contracts held with individual contractors by regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities or trusts is not available centrally.

Sandwell General Practitioner Consortium

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to investigate Sandwell family health services authority, the general practitioner consortium and the limited company that ran it.

Mr. Malone: West Midlands regional health authority published the results of an investigation into the setting up of the Sandwell general practitioner consortium in May this year. Sandwell family health services authority is currently investigating the decision by general practitioners to leave the consortium.

Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for ethnic monitoring of the merit award system for consultants.

Mr. Malone: Ethnic monitoring is one of the issues to be addressed in the review of distinction awards.

Patient Records

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the guidance on confidentiality on patient records is to be published; and when guidance was initially drafted.

Mr. Sackville: Draft guidance on the confidentiality, use and disclosure of personal health information was issued for consultation on 10 August 1994, and copies of it are available in the Library. The consultation period ends on 9 December, and a final version will be published when we have considered the comments received. Work on drafting guidance on confidentiality first began in 1989.

Footwear

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the number of hospital referrals each year directly related to use of poor footwear.

Mr. Sackville: There is no information available on which to base such an estimate.

EU Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors from other EU countries have practised in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Malone: The available information is shown in the table. Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Comparable information is not available for general practitioners.

Hospital and community health service medical staff from European Union countries (by countries of birth) other than UK who were practising in England as at 30 September 1989–1993 (whole time equivalents)

	Number
1989	1,830
1990	1,740
1991	1,870
1992	1,900
1993	2,010

Figures are rounded to nearest 10.

Opportunity 2000

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to have the monitoring data for the Opportunity 2000 targets to be achieved by the end of the current year.

Mr. Sackville: Monitoring arrangements are in hand. The main findings will be published in 1995.

Ethnic Minority Health Unit

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the planned closure of the regional ethnic minority health unit.

Mr. Sackville: The closure of any regional unit would be the responsibility of the relevant regional health authority. The national health service ethnic health unit was established this year for a three-year period; it is located in Leeds and will cover ethnic health issues across the whole of the NHS in England.

Passive Smoking

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to limit the dangers of passive smoking.

Mr. Sackville: The Government will continue to publicise the dangers of passive smoking and to encourage the introduction of smoking policies in public places, public transport and the workplace. Good progress is being made in all those areas.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths were caused by passive smoking in each of the last five years; and what research findings she has on the illnesses caused by passive smoking.

Mr. Sackville: On the available data it is not possible to estimate a figure for all deaths attributable to passive smoking.

The available evidence on the health effects of passive smoking is summarised in paragraph 2·13 of "Smoke Free for Health" which was published in February 1994, copies of which are available in the Library.

The Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health is reviewing the available research findings on this issue.

Hospital Patient Statistics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to collect data on the patient readmission rates of each hospital.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Ambulance Service, London

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to improve the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: Mr right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in December 1993 an additional £14·8 million investment in the London ambulance service for 1994–95, which the LAS is using to purchase new accident and emergency vehicles, to increase ambulance staff, provide additional paramedic training and make other improvements to services. This additional funding was linked to firm targets for improved response times—80 per cent. of emergency calls to be responded to within 14 minutes by September 1994 and 85 per cent. by April 1995 as interim stages to meeting the national standard of responding to 95 per cent. of calls within 14 minutes.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked Mr William Wells, the chairman of South Thames regional health authority, to produce a report into the LAS. The report will look into what changes need to be made in terms of:

working practices, including staff deployment and rostering systems
the use of resources
management/staff relation
management and staff training

The report will be made to Ministers before Christmas and will be made public.

Home Visits

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the opportunities for patients to speak to a doctor prior to a home visit by that doctor.

Mr. Malone: In general, there should be no difficulty in speaking to a doctor before a home visit. However, it is for individual general practitioners to decide how to organise their patient contacts.

Caesarean Sections

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the rate of caesarean sections in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: I refer to the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on 18 May, *Official Report*, column *519*.

Figures for 1992–93 are not yet available.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to discipline consultants who continue to allow their junior doctors to work longer hours than those targets in her new deal for junior doctors.

Mr. Malone: None. I expect consultants to work with managers and junior doctors to help achieve the new deal targets.

Toxoplasmosis

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the incidence of *(a)* toxoplasmosis and *(b)* congenital toxoplasmosis in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The number of laboratory reports of toxoplasmosis in England and Wales during the past 10 years is shown in the table. It should be noted that those reports are not necessarily of new infections; some may be of chronic infection or represent results from repeat test on the same patient.

Information on the incidence of congenital toxoplasmosis each year is not routinely available.

Laboratory reports to the Public Health Laboratory Service, England and Wales, 1984–1993

Year	*Laboratory reports*
1984	759
1985	842
1986	762
1987	849
1988	825
1989	852
1990	704
1991	636
1992	580
1993[1]	454

1993[1] data provisional

Mental Health

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the mental health activity figures for each of the last five years for *(a)* the London implementation zone and *(b)* by region, per head of population.

Mr. Bowis: Information on in-patient activity is given in the "Ordinary and day case admissions for England, Financial Year 1992–93" copies of which are available in the Library.

Information available on rates per head of population is shown in the tables. The numbers are based on ordinary admissions and day cases. It should be noted that the figures relate to finished consultant episodes and not individual patients, as an individual may be admitted and discharged more than once.

Ordinary and day case admissions for England, 1988–89 to 1992–93 Mental illness, rates per head of population

	1988–89	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*
London implementation zone	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·006
Northern	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·005
Yorkshire	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·004	0·005
Trent	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·005
East Anglian	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004
North West Thames	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004
North East Thames	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·005	0·005
South East Thames	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004
South West Thames	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·005
Wessex	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·006	0·005
Oxford	0·003	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004
South Western	0·006	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·005
West Midlands	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004	0·004
Mersey	0·005	0·006	0·006	0·006	0·006
North Western	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·005	0·006

Notes:

The following DHAs are all part of the London implementation zone: Barnet, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Spelthorne, Ealing, Riverside, Parkside, Barking Havering and Brentwood, Hampstead, City and Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Enfield, Haringey, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Bloomsbury and Islington, Bexley, Greenwich, Bromley, West Lambeth, Camberwell, Lewisham and North Southwark, Croydon, Kingston and Esher, Richmond Twickenham and Roehampton, Wandsworth, Merton and Sutton and all SHAs.

Sources:

Ordinary and day case admissions for England, Financial Year 1992–93.

OPCS Monitor PP1 93/3 Mid 1991 and mid-1992 population PP1 94/1 Revised population estimates for 1988 to 1990.

Family Planning

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will list the family planning initiatives taken by her Department in the last 10 years which are aimed at men.

Mr. Sackville: The "Health of the Nation" strategy includes the clear objective for the national health service to ensure the provision of well-publicised and effective family planning services for those people who want them. That applies equally to men as to women.

The Department of Health funds a number of voluntary organisations which are working to ensure that the needs of men are addressed along with those of women.

Resources (Allocation)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what financial year she intends to start allocating resources for NHS hospital and community health services direct to district health authorities; and whether it is her policy for such allocations to reflect district data on *(a)* housing tenure, *(b)* the age structure of the population, *(c)* ethnic origin, *(d)* standardised mortality ratios, *(e)* socio-economic status, *(f)* unemployment or *(g)* self-reported sickness;

(2) on what date she received the report commissioned by her Department from York university on "A formula for Distributing NHS Revenues Based on Small Area Use of Hospital Beds"; whether she intends to base the formula for distributing NHS resources to district health authorities on its findings; and when she intends to announce her proposals for the funding formula for district health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: We received the results of a study we commissioned from York university in March 1994 and its report in July 1994. A modified formula based on the York analysis is to be used to inform allocations to regional health authorities in 1995–96. It will be for RHAs to decide which formula to use for their district health authorities.

In 1996–97, subject to legislation, there will be new health authorities embracing the functions of DHAs and family health services authorities. Work is in hand to look at an approach appropriate to those new circumstances.

The modified formula takes account of district data on age distribution and a wide range of health and socio-economic factors. Those include the categories to which the hon. Member refers with the exception of housing tenure which was included in the York analysis but not found to be statistically significant.

Variations in Health

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the terms of reference and list the membership, of the sub-group on variations in health established in her Department; when it was established; how often it has met; and when it will complete its work.

Mr. Sackville: The terms of reference of the sub-group on variations in health are:-

"For the current Health of the Nation Key Areas

> By Spring 1995 to prepare a report for the Chief Medical Officer as to how the Department of Health, and the National Health Service can make best use of existing information in tackling ethnic, geographical, socio-economic and gender variations in health status, with particular reference to the strength of observed relationships and evidence about the effectiveness of interventions.
>
> By the end of 1994 prepare a report for the Departmental Research Directorate on areas in which new epidemiological and research information is needed to inform the targeting of interventions for high risk groups of the population and further understanding of underlying processes relevant to policy on longer term intervention to support the public health information strategy with health variations aspects of its work".

The members of the sub-group are:-

Chairman:

Dr. Jeremy Metters—Deputy Chief Medical Officer

Members:

Dr. S. Adam
Director of Public Health, North Thames Region

Dr. J. Chambers
Director of Public Health, North Birmingham Health Authority

Prof. M. Marmot
Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College, London

Prof. M. Pringle
Department of General Practice, The Medical School, Nottingham

Dr. J. Fox
Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys

Prof. S. McIntyre
Medical Research Council Medical Sociology Unit, Glasgow

Prof. P. Fonagy
Psychoanalysis Unit, University College London

Dr. K. Kelleher
Director of Public Health, Wolverhampton Health Executive

Mr. D. Benton
Director of Quality and Human Relations, East London and City Health Authority

Observers from the Medical Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Department [illegible] Health and Social Security, Northern Ireland, together with Department of Health officials also attend.

The sub-group was established in October 1993 and met for the first time on 17 May 1994. Since then it has met on two occasions. It expects to report to the timetable established in the terms of reference.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not keep records of the time taken to adjust clocks.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grant she has given to organisations of and for disabled people for their international work in each of the last five years; for what purposes this money has been expended; if the payments made five years ago have retained their value; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The Department makes grants available to a range of organisations for their work in representing the interests of disabled people within Europe and worldwide.

Grant aid is given as follows to the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People to cover affiliation fees to international bodies and to help with the expenses of other international work. Other organisations in receipt of funds from the Department of Health may, of course, spend part of these on international work.

Grant Year	*Grants Paid* £	*At 1990–91 prices* £
1990–91	25,000	25,000
1991–92	29,000	26,248
1992–93	30,000	26,301
1993–94	31,000	26,384
1994–95	32,000	26,316

Financial support is also given to the United Kingdom Helios Forum and to the national co-ordinating centres for work in connection with Helios, the European Union's disability programme as follows:

Grant year	*Grants paid* £	*At 1990–91 prices* £
1990–91	—	—
1991–92	235,000	212,699
1992–93	298,000	271,777
1993–94	290,000	246,819
1994–95	194,000	159,546

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much her Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by her Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure on postage for 1990–91 to 1993–94 is shown in the table. Figures for 1989–90 are not available. Details of how many items have been posted in each of the last five years are not available.

	£
1990–91	1,361,389
1991–92	1,266,438
1992–93	1,347,109
1993–94	1,353,998

Figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

Figures for the Department include the national health service executive but do not include the Department's agencies.

Medical Records

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure speedy access to medical records for people making medico-legal claims against health authorities.

Mr. Malone: Long-standing guidance advises national health service bodies to deal helpfully with requests for access to health records by patients engaged in legal proceedings. In addition, patients, or their representatives, have a legal right of access to their records under the Access to Health Records Act 1990. Discussions are currently taking place with the Law Society to see whether the arrangements for handling medico-legal claims in the national health service can be improved.

Richard Miles

Mr. Purchase : To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when she or any of her predecessors were informed of the case of Richard Miles and New Cross hospital, Wolverhampton; and what advice was offered by her Department to the local health authority;

(2) what costs have been incurred by the Wolverhampton health authority since 1980 in the case of Richard Miles, excluding the value of the compensation awarded to him.

Mr. Malone: A local health authority would not be expected to contact the Department of Health in respect of a medical negligence claim of this type until after the claim had been settled. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. R. M. [illegible], chairman of Wolverhampton health authority, for details of any costs incurred by the authority.

Medical Negligence

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now consider bringing forward plans for a no-fault compensation scheme for victims of medical negligence.

Mr. Malone: We have no plans to introduce such a scheme in the national health service.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many public appointments *(a)* she is responsible for making and *(b)* require her approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if she will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993", which details those public appointments that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or Ministers acting on her behalf are responsible for making. I refer him to the reply I gave him on 7 March, *Official Report*, columns *80–81* for details of other appointments that are not identified in "Public Bodies".

Ampleforth School

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what contact she has had with the headmaster of Ampleforth school on the issue of prevention of measles and other diseases.

Mr. Sackville: The Government's Chief Medical Officer wrote to the headmaster of Ampleforth college on 26 October reminding him of the serious consequences to public health of rubella infection and issued a press release containing the text of his letter.

EMPLOYMENT

Investors in People Award

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers in each TEC area in England have been given the investors in people award; how many have made a commitment to meeting the standard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: The latest figures, at 11 September 1994, for employers in each training and enterprise council area in England who are either formally committed to or have been recognised as achieving the investors in people standard, are shown in the tables.

I am pleased that an increasing number of companies are recognising the benefits to their business performance of working towards the investors in people standard. Investors in people is a key initiative to encourage employers of all sizes, and in all sectors, to invest effectively in the skills that their businesses need. It plays a major role in improving Britain's competitiveness.

Region	*TEC Name*	*Commitments*	*Recognitions*
East Midlands	Greater Nottingham TEC	172	8
	Leicestershire TEC	115	12
	Lincolnshire TEC	216	6
	North Derbyshire TEC	82	12
	North Nottinghamshire TEC	124	15
	Northamptonshire TEC	257	14
	Southern Derbyshire TEC	129	24
Eastern	Bedfordshire TEC	108	11
	CAMBSTEC	44	5
	Essex TEC	181	9
	Gtr Peterborough TEC	25	1
	Hertfordshire TEC	124	8
	Norfolk and Waveney TEC	91	17
	Suffolk TEC	96	6
London	AZTEC	111	7
	CENTEC	300	14
	CILNTEC	83	4
	London East TEC	127	5
	North London TEC	149	5
	North West London TEC	67	8
	SOLOTEC	101	6
	South Thames TEC	157	4
	West London TEC	151	6
Merseyside	CEWTEC	45	16
	Mersyside TEC	192	30
	QUALITEC (St Helens) Ltd	53	4
North West	Bolton Bury TEC	95	10
	Cumbria TEC	93	6
	ELTEC LTD	171	23
	LAWTEC	142	8
	Manchester TEC	263	15
	METROTEC (Wigan) Ltd	71	7
	NORMIDTEC (North and Mid Cheshire)	94	22
	Oldham TEC	37	5
	Rochdale TEC	26	3
	S and E Cheshire TEC	144	16
	Stockport/High Peak TEC	95	7
Northern	County Durham TEC	77	18
	Northumberland TEC	59	8
	Teesside TEC	107	16
	Tyneside TEC	127	25
	Wearside TEC	30	7
South East	Hampshire TEC	240	29
	Heart of England TEC	87	15
	Kent TEC	338	10
	Milton Keynes & North Bucks	48	4
	Surrey TEC	94	15
	Sussex TEC	361	14
	Thames Valley Enterprise	125	37
	Wight Training and Enterprise	34	1
South West	Avon TEC	228	27
	Devon and Cornwall TEC	130	37
	Dorset TEC	102	33
	Gloucestershire TEC	386	85
	Somerset	128	10
	Wiltshire TEC	114	16
West Midlands	Birmingham TEC	97	14
	Central England TEC	92	14
	Coventry and Warwickshire TEC	118	15
	Dudley TEC	61	6
	HAWTEC	102	9
	Sandwell TEC	72	1
	Shropshire TEC	116	7
	Staffordshire TEC	127	8
	Walsall TEC	75	4
	Wolverhampton TEC	48	6
Yorkshire and Humberside	Barnsley/Doncaster TEC	92	16
	Bradford and District TEC	84	5
	Calderdale/Kirklees TEC	79	4
	Humberside TEC	239	26
	Leeds TEC	119	12
	North Yorkshire TEC	102	16
	Rotherham TEC	60	10
	Sheffield TEC	101	7
	Wakefield TEC	47	3

Training

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of *(a)* fatal, *(b)* major and *(c)* minor accidents on youth training and on training for work, shown by region, for the periods July to September 1993, January to March 1994, April to June 1994 and July to September 1994.

Mr. Paice: Table A gives the latest accident figures for youth training.

Table B gives the equivalent figures for training for work.

Notes:

(a) Employment Department figures for accidents to trainees have been compiled on a similar basis to those for employees prepared by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). However, these figures include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments, and road traffic accidents which would not have been reportable to HSE for employees.

(b) Major and minor injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

(c) North West Region and North West (Greater Manchester) Region were restructured in the quarter ending 30 June 1994 to form part of the Government Offices for the North West and for Merseyside. At the same time, Northern Region became part of the Government Offices for North East.

(d) Accidents figures requested for the period July to September 1994 are not yet available.

Table A: Youth Training

Region	*Fatal*	*Major*	*Minor*
Accidents for the quarter July to September 1993			
East Midlands	—	3	26
North East	—	6	36
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	12	71
North West	—	10	49
West Midlands	—	6	28
South West	—	4	39
South East	—	3	23
London	—	4	8
Eastern	—	5	24
North West (Greater Manchester)	—	3	21
Regional Totals	1	56	325
Accidents for the quarter January to March 1994			
East Midlands	—	3	34
North East	—	9	49
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	9	85
North West	—	12	39
West Midlands	—	8	33
South West	—	4	23
South East	—	4	29
London	—	1	17
Eastern	—	4	21
North West (Greater Manchester)	—	6	22
Regional Totals	—	60	352
Accidents for the quarter April to June 1994			
East Midlands	—	4	21
North East	—	8	56
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	5	50
North West	—	12	39
West Midlands	—	3	31
South West	—	5	20
South East	—	1	16
London	—	1	8
Eastern	—	3	28
Merseyside	—	1	11
Regional Totals	—	43	280

Table B: Training for work

Region	*Fatal*	*Major*	*Minor*
Accidents for the quarter July to September 1993			
East Midlands	—	3	15
North East	—	3	15
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	6	35
North West	—	—	13
West Midlands	—	—	11
South West	—	1	8
South East	—	5	2
London	—	—	2
Eastern	—	4	4
North West (Greater Manchester)	—	—	5
Regional Totals	1	22	110
Accidents for the quarter January to March 1994			
East Midlands	—	2	10
North East	—	2	13
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	5	20
North West	—	5	12
West Midlands	—	2	4
South West	—	3	10
South East	—	3	6
London	—	—	2
Eastern	—	—	9
North West (Greater Manchester)	—	—	7
Regional Totals	—	22	93
Accidents for the quarter April to June 1994			
East Midlands	—	1	4
North East	—	3	22
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	3	24
North West	—	4	2
West Midlands	—	5	13
South West	—	—	6
South East	—	—	10
London	—	1	1
Eastern	—	4	8
Merseyside	—	—	2
Regional Totals	—	21	92

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the contribution from the European social fund towards *(a)* youth training/YTS, *(b)* training for work/employment training/employment action, and the previous programmes they replaced, *(c)* the business start-up allowance/enterprise allowance scheme, *(d)* non-advanced further education, *(e)* high technology national training, *(f)* employment rehabilitation centres and *(g)* jobstart allowances and other employment subsidy schemes, and the proportion of programme expenditure that represented in each year since 1991; what amount of support ESF will be providing to each programme in 1994–95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: The information available about European social fund support for eligible Government training programmes between 1991 and 1993 is provided in the table. Plans for ESF support for Government programmes in 1994 have yet to be finalised.

	YT/YTS		*TfW/ET/HTNT*		*EAS/BSU*		*Jobplan interviews*		*Restart*	
	ESF Support £ million	*per cent.*	*ESF support £ million*	*per cent.*	*ESF support £ million*	*per cent*	*ESF support £ million*	*per cent.*	*ESF support £ million*	*per cent.*
1991	[1]15·81	2·06	[1]156·62	18·72	[1]20·85	18·59	—	—	—	—
1992	[1]14·78	2·28	[1]141·17	18·47	[1]12·98	15·80	—	—	—	—
1993	[2]33·04	4·80	[2]163·58	21·02	[2]14·55	18·93	[2]10·23	33·80	[2]2·98	39·60

1991: amounts claimed for programmes in Great Britain

1992: amounts claimed for programmes in England and Wales

1993: amounts applies for for programmes in England

Responsibility for claiming ESF support for programmes in Scotland and Wales was transferred to the Scottish and Welsh Offices with effect from 1992 and 1993 respectively.

[1] Amounts provided are final ESF claim totals.

[2] Amounts provided are ESF applications totals and may be subject to change at final claims stage

Minimum Wages

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what analysis he has made of the studies produced since 18 February 1993 which show a positive link between the existence of statutory minimum pay rates and the loss of or failure to create jobs; and of studies which show the reverse effect or no effect at all.

Mr. Oppenheim: Recent reports by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund support the Government's position that minimum wages cost jobs. This view was also acknowledged in the European Commission's White Paper on competitiveness. Studies by Machin and Manning which suggest otherwise have been criticised on the grounds of their approach.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were in employment *(a)* at the latest available date, *(b)* 10 years ago and *(c)* 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information is given in the table:

Workforce in Employment: United Kingdom

	Thousands
June 1974	25,280
June 1984	24,399
June 1994	25,232

Job Creation Grants

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the grants which have been available from his Department to assist in investment or job creation in each of the last five years, *(b)* the number of grants given in each category, *(c)* the value of the grants, *(d)* the amount of investment created as a result, *(e)* the number of jobs created on the project assisted, *(f)* the criteria used in assessing the correctness of making the grants, *(g)* the criteria used in monitoring the sources of the grants, *(h)* the procedures used in this monitoring, *(i)* the number of grants and their value which had been reclaimed for financial or legal impropriety, *(j)* the number and value reclaimed for failing to achieve the criteria set and *(k)* the number and value reclaimed for other reasons.

Mr. Paice: No such grant assistance has been available from the Employment Department.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Miss Widdecombe: Information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the Department's expenditure on postage in the last three financial years is shown in the table:

1991–92	£10·7 million
1992–93	£11·9 million
1993–94	£13·0 million

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is responsible for 2,940 appointments listed in "Public Bodies 1993", including some which require his approval; 110 of these are to executive bodies, 782 to advisory bodies and 2,048 to other appointments.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is also responsible for making 19 appointments not listed in "Public Bodies", of which 12 are to advisory bodies and the rest to other bodies.

Heathrow Tunnel

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself about the health and safety aspects of the tunnelling techniques being used for the Jubilee line extension near Heathrow airport; if these have previously been used in clay substrata; and if he will make a statement on these matters in relation to risk to lives and adjacent buildings;

(2) if he will make a statement on the collapse of the Heathrow express tunnels adjacent to Heathrow airport.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what tests were carried out on the suitability of the new Austrian tunnelling method for London ground conditions before approval was given to use this technique on both the Heathrow express and Jubilee line extension projects;

(2) what steps are being taken to reinforce those sections of the Jubilee line extension and the Heathrow express projects being built using the new Austrian tunnelling method;

(3) if he will list the transport projects in which the new Austrian tunnelling method is being used in the United Kingdom, identifying the specific areas affected;

(4) what steps are being taken to prevent the risk of further subsidence at Heathrow central terminal area;

(5) What evidence he has of ground movement at any of the other sites on Heathrow express and Jubilee line extension projects being built using the new Austrian tunnelling method;

(6) what checks have been carried out on the Jubilee line extension tunnels being constructed using the new Austrian tunnelling method following the collapse of the Heathrow express tunnel;

(7) what trial bores using the new Austrian tunnelling method in London clay were undertaken before its adoption for sections of the Heathrow express and Jubilee line extension projects;

(8) what has been the effect on the Piccadilly line of the collapse of the Heathrow express tunnel;

(9) what evidence his Department has received on the cause of the collapse in September 1994 of the tunnel in Munich being constructed with the new Austrian tunnelling method;

(10) when he expects to receive a report on the causes of the tunnel collapse at Heathrow on 21 October; and if he intends to make this report available to the public;

(11) when he expects the Piccadilly line between Heathrow terminal 1, 2 and 3 and Heathrow terminal 4 to resume normal service;

(12) what evidence he has on *(a)* the use of the new Austrian tunnelling method in ground conditions similar to those which exist in London and *(b)* the number of failures which have occurred;

(13) if tunnelling work involving the new Austrian tunnelling method has been halted on the sites in the United Kingdom where this method is being employed; and what conditions have been set with regard to the resumption of such tunnelling work.

(14) what investigations and checks were made by his Department into the safety of the new Austrian tunnelling method following the collapse of the Munich tunnel in September 1994 and prior to the collapse of the central terminal area tunnel at Heathrow.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the impact on the construction times and costs to the Heathrow express link and the Jubilee line extension arising from the Heathrow tunnel collapse.

Mr. Oppenheim: I have consulted my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport following the partial collapse of tunnels under construction at Heathrow airport.

In the early hours of Friday 21 October a ground slip led to a partial collapse into tunnels under construction on a section of the Heathrow express rail link at the central area of Heathrow airport. This section of the work involved the use of the new Austrian tunnelling method—NATM—in a complex of tunnels for a new station.

There were no injuries as a result of the collapse. Site safety procedures included sensors to detect ground movement. These gave early warning of abnormal movement. Emergency procedures were put into effect and workers were safely evacuated. There were two further ground slips over the weekend. They were almost certainly as a consequence of the initial event.

The contractors and their specialist advisers have set up an engineering task force to deal with the situation. Tunnelling has of course been stopped. The key task now is to stabilise the ground to prevent further subsidence and secure the safety of the remaining tunnels. The British Airports Authority and the contractors are working together to secure the continued safe operation of the airport and minimise inconvenience.

At the place where the Piccadilly line crosses the Heathrow express rail link tunnels, there has been no ground movement outside of the tolerances predicted before tunnelling began. The monitoring continues. London Underground has, however, suspended the use of the terminal 4 loop as a precaution. The central station serving terminals 1, 2 and 3 continues in service. A temporary bus link is connecting Hatton Cross station and terminal 4.

NATM has also been adopted for use on the Jubilee line extension project. Contractors on the project suspended the use of the NATM technique as a precautionary measure on the day of the collapse at Heathrow.

The Health and Safety Executive has asked for tunnelling not to restart at Heathrow, nor on the Jubilee line extension project, until it is clear that this can be done safely. The Health and Safety Executive has also asked London Underground to maintain its voluntary suspension of the railway loop until sufficient information is available to justify its safe restoration. The decision will be made in conjunction with HSE's railway inspectorate. HSE's inspectors are on site and keeping in touch with developments in the major remedial works undertaken by the contractors. The HSE is initiating checks of other significant construction projects currently using NATM.

NATM is a tunnelling method that has been used worldwide for over 40 years. The two largest projects under construction in the United Kingdom using NATM are Heathrow and the Jubilee line extension. A trial tunnel was driven at Heathrow in 1992 and the information and experience gained was used in developing the project. Further trials were carried out at London Bridge and Jubilee Gardens at the start of the Jubilee line extension project.

NATM is normally the first stage of a two-stage process involving the construction of a initial lining to provide short-term support followed by the construction of a further lining. There is no evidence that, once the work is finished, there is any significant difference between the safety and integrity of tunnels constructed in this way and those using more conventional techniques.

There was a failure, also during the construction phase, in Munich earlier this year. However, because the ground conditions were considered sufficiently dissimilar, there were no reasons to justify halting work in London. There have been no recorded instances of ground collapse once the construction phase of the tunnelling using NATM is complete.

The Health and Safety Commission has asked the Health and Safety Executive to undertake an investigation. The HSE has asked Mr. Stuart Nattrass, HM chief inspector of construction, to lead it. He will be seeking support from independent consultants of international standing. The investigation will initially concentrate on whether the failure at Heathrow is site specific. Once the initial findings are known, the investigation will go on to consider whether there are broader implications for the use of NATM as a construction technique. The evidence will be reviewed with a view to confirming that the safety of tunnels constructed in this way matches the safety of tunnels constructed using more conventional techniques and will take into account any lessons to be learned from the Munich incident.

Initial lines of inquiry will include whether:

(a) the design was defective;

(b) the execution of any construction work was defective;

(c) adverse ground conditions contributed to the failure.

The investigation has begun. Its findings will be made public. The HSE will consider whether there may have been breaches of health and safety legislation and, if so, what action to take.

It is too early to predict time and cost penalties which may result for the Heathrow express and Jubilee line extension as a result of the collapse on the Heathrow project.

SCOTLAND

Training Schemes

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who collates the information supplied by managers of Government training schemes on the specific skills acquired by trainees; and where this information is published.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local enterprise companies are all involved in the collation of information supplied by managers of Government training schemes. I have asked the chairmen of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he uses to assess the value of Government training schemes; and if that information is publicly available.

Mr. Stewart: The information used by my right hon. Friend to assess the value of Government training schemes is the same as that which I set out in the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 25 February, *Official Report*, columns *435–37*, save that cost figures are now available for 1993–94 as follows:

Cost	*Youth training £ million*	*Adult training training for work £ million*
1993–94	93·451	93·733

Information on Government training schemes is published as follows:

in "Serving Scotland's Needs", the Government's expenditure plans 1994–95 to 1996–97. Data are shown separately for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, for training for work—number of starts, percentage of leavers going into jobs, further education or training, percentage of leavers gaining recognised qualifications—and for youth training, with number of starts, percentage of participants with employed status, percentage of leavers gaining recognised qualifications;

in the monthly "*Employment Gazette*" on training for work, youth training and business start-up—number of people participating number of starts;

in the monthly news release by the Scottish Office on training statistics for training for work, youth training and business start-up—number of programme participants number of starts on programme; and

in the annual reports of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the outturn expenditure given to each local enterprise company in Scotland in 1992–93 at 1993–94 prices; and what is the budget for each training and enterprise council in 1993–94 in total and broken down in the same way as given in the written answer of 18 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *335*.

Mr. Stewart: The budgets of local enterprise companies are a matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked their chairmen to write to the hon. Member. There are no training and enterprise councils in Scotland.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the most recent figures for waiting lists for operations in trust hospitals.

Mr Lang *[pursuant to his reply, 26 October 1994, Official Report, column 876]:* More people are being treated in NHS hospitals than ever before. In the year to June 1994, the number of out-patients treated rose by 2·6 per cent., the number of in-patients treated rose by 1·6 per cent. and the number of day cases treated rose by no less than 18·4 per cent. I am arranging for all the most recent figures for waiting lists to be sent to the hon. Member and published in the *Official Report*.

Table 1—NHSIS—true waiting lists of NHS trusts at 30 June 1994

NHS trust hospital	*Total waiting list*	*Waiting list Inpatient*	*Waiting list Day case*
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS Trust			
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	5,447	3,216	2,231
Roxburghe House	1	1	—
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital	982	667	315
Trust Summary	6,430	3,884	2,546
Angus NHS Trust			
Stracathro Hospital	546	208	338
Trust Summary	546	208	338
Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care NHS Trust			
Arrol Park	2	2	—
Strathlea	3	3	—
Trust Summary	5	5	—
Caithness and Sutherland NHS Trust			
Caithness General Hospital	225	147	108
Lawson Memorial Hospital	75	15	60
Trust Summary	330	162	168
Dumfries and Galloway Acute and Maternity Hospitals NHS Trust			
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	2,139	1,724	415
Garrick Hospital	118	59	59
Trust Summary	2,257	1,783	474
Dundee Healthcare NHS Trust			
Ninewells Hospital	6	6	—
Royal Victoria Hospital	6	6	—
Trust Summary	12	12	—
Dundee Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust			
Dundee Royal Infirmary	2,588	1,021	1,567
Kings Cross Hospital	43	35	8
Ninewells Hospital	2,557	1,983	574
Trust Summary	5,188	3,039	2,149

Table 1—NHSIS—true waiting lists of NHS trusts at 30 June 1994

NHS trust hospital	*Total waiting list*	*Waiting list*	
		Inpatient	*Day case*
East and Midlothian NHS Trust			
Eastern General Hospital	615	354	261
Roodlands General Hospital	302	62	240
Rosslynlee Hospital	2	2	—
Trust Summary	919	418	501
Edinburgh Healthcare NHS Trust			
Gogarburn Hospital, Edinburgh	3	3	—
Royal Edinburgh Hospital	6	6	—
Trust Summary	9	9	—
Edinburgh Sick Children's NHS Trust			
RHSC, Edinburgh	842	508	334
Trust Summary	842	508	334
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary NHS Trust			
Falkirk and district Royal Infirmary	1,792	1,135	657
Trust Summary	1,792	1,135	657
Fife Healthcare NHS Trust			
Adamson Hospital	128	39	89
Glenrothes Hospital	2	2	—
Queen Margaret Hospital	5	5	—
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	33	30	3
St. Andrews Memorial Hospital	79	18	61
Stratheden Hospital	3	3	—
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	6	6	—
Trust Summary	256	103	153
Glasgow Royal Infirmary University NHS Trust			
Canniesburn Hospital	4,287	2,125	2,162
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	4,037	3,377	660
Trust Summary	8,324	5,502	2,822
Grampian Healthcare NHS Trust			
Aberdeen City Hospital	2	2	—
Arduthie Hospital	9	9	—
Campbell Hospital	1	1	—
Chalmers Hospital	20	3	17
Fraserburgh Hospital	1	1	—
Glen O'Dee Hospital	2	2	—
Huntly Jubliee Hospital	21	5	16
Inverurie Hospital	3	3	—
Maidencraig House	4	4	—
Maud Hospital	2	2	—
Turriff Cottage Hospital	1	1	—
Ugie Hospital	1	1	—
Woodend General Hospital	732	585	147
Trust Summary	799	619	180
Greater Glasgow Community and Mental Health Service NHS Trust			
Parkhead Hospital	23	23	—
Woodilee Hospital	3	3	—
Trust Summary	26	26	—
Hairmyres and Stonehouse Hospitals NHS Trust			
Hairmyres Hospital	991	455	536
Stonehouse Hospital	986	774	212
Trust Summary	1,977	1,229	748
Highland Communities NHS Trust			
Belford Hospital	105	44	61
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital	37	17	20
Nairn Town and County Hospital	1	1	—
Portree Hospital	1	1	—
Ross Memorial Hospital	40	40	—
Trust Summary	184	103	81
Inverclyde Royal NHS Trust			
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	1,530	1,095	435
Trust Summary	1,530	1,095	435
Kirkcaldy Acute Hospitals NHS Trust			
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	2,728	1,604	1,124
Trust Summary	2,728	1,604	1,124
Law Hospital NHS Trust			
Law Hospital	2,000	1,228	772
Trust Summary	2,000	1,228	772
Monklands and Bellshill Hospitals NHS Trust			
Monklands District General Hospital	2,458	1,616	842
Trust Summary	2,458	1,616	842
Moray Health Services NHS Trust			
Dr. Gray's Hospital	550	162	388
Seafield Hospital	7	7	—
Turner Memorial Hospital	2	2	—
Trust Summary	559	171	388

Table 1—NHSIS—true waiting lists of NHS trusts at 30 June 1994

NHS trust hospital	*Total waiting list*	*Waiting list* *Inpatient*	*Waiting list* *Day case*
North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust			
Ayrshire Central and Maternity Hospital	5	5	—
Crosshouse Hospital	2,375	1,636	739
Trust Summary	2,380	1,641	739
Perth and Kinross Healthcare NHS Trust			
Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital	1	1	—
Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital	2	2	—
Hillside Hospital	8	8	—
Irvine Memorial Hospital	7	7	—
Meigle Cottage Hospital	7	—	7
Perth Royal Infirmary	1,532	687	845
Trust Summary	1,557	705	852
Queen Margaret Hospital NHS Trust			
Queen Margaret Hospital	2,184	1,341	843
Trust Summary	2,184	1,341	843
Raigmore Hospital NHS Trust			
Raigmore Hospital	2,671	1,812	859
Trust Summary	2,671	1,812	859
Renfrewshire Healthcare NHS Trust			
Bridge of Weir Hospital	6	6	—
Dykebar Hospital	13	13	—
Royal Alexandra Hospital	2	2	—
Trust Summary	21	21	—
Royal Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust			
Royal Alexandra Hospital	3,499	2,161	1,338
Trust Summary	3,499	2,161	1,338
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh NHS Trust			
Edinburgh City Hospital	1,757	1,551	206
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary	3,429	2,262	1,167
Princess Margaret Rose Hospital	1,165	1,072	93
Trust Summary	6,351	4,885	1,466
South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust			
Ballochmyle Hospital	720	242	478
The Ayr Hospital	1,721	1,356	365
Trust Summary	2,441	1,598	843
Southern General Hospital NHS Trust			
Southern General Hospital	2,454	1,764	690
Trust Summary	2,454	1,764	690
Stirling Royal Infirmary NHS Trust			
Stirling Royal Infirmary	2,349	1,336	1,013
Trust Summary	2,349	1,336	1,013
Stobhill NHS Trust			
Stobhill Hospital	2,464	1,635	829
Trust Summary	2,464	1,635	829
The Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust			
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	2,303	2,218	85
Trust Summary	2,303	2,218	85
The Yorkhill NHS Trust			
RHSC, Glasgow	1,176	804	372
Trust Summary	1,176	804	372
West Glasgow Hospitals University NHS Trust			
Beatson Oncology Centre	162	162	—
Homeopathic Hospital, Glasgow	46	46	—
Western Infirmary, Glasgow	3,111	2,738	373
Trust Summary	3,319	2,946	373
West Lothian NHS Trust			
St. John's Hospital at Howden	2,668	1,392	1,276
Trust Summary	2,668	1,392	1,276
Western General Hospitals NHS Trust			
Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh	12	12	—
Western General Hospital, Edinburgh	2,536	1,323	1,213
Trust Summary	2,548	1,335	1,213

Source:
SMR3.

Ref: Unit2/94348.

Date: 11 October 1994.

Table 2—NHSIS–True waiting lists for nationally guaranteed operations at NHS trusts at 30 June 1994

NHS Trust Hospital	*Cataracts*	*Replacements* *Hip*	*Replacements* *Knee*
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS Trust			
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	116	—	—
Trust summary	116	—	—

Table 2—NHSIS–True waiting lists for nationally guaranteed operations at NHS trusts at 30 June 1994

NHS Trust Hospital	*Cataracts*	*Replacements*	
		Hip	*Knee*
Angus NHS Trust			
Stracathro Hospital	—	20	14
Trust Summary	—	20	14
Dumfries and Galloway Acute and Maternity Hospitals NHS Trust			
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	140	90	32
Trust Summary	140	90	32
Dundee Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust			
Dundee Royal Infirmary	—	30	20
Ninewells Hospital	210	—	—
Trust Summary	210	30	20
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary NHS Trust			
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	—	29	15
Trust Summary	—	29	15
Glasgow Royal Infirmary University NHS Trust			
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	64	42	42
Trust Summary	64	42	42
Grampian Healthcare NHS Trust			
Woodend General Hospital	—	108	42
Trust Summary	—	108	42
Hairmyres and Stonehouse Hospital NHS Trust			
Hairmyres Hospital	—	7	1
Stonehouse Hospital	403	14	8
Trust Summary	403	21	9
Inverclyde Royal NHS Trust			
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	150	31	38
Trust Summary	150	31	38
Kirkcaldy Acute Hospitals NHS Trust			
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	—	111	86
Trust Summary	—	111	86
Law Hospital NHS Trust			
Law Hospital	—	52	29
Trust Summary	—	52	29
Monklands and Bellshill Hospital NHS Trust			
Monklands District General Hospital	—	20	15
Trust Summary	—	20	15
North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust			
Crosshouse Hospital	—	21	29
Trust Summary	—	21	29
Perth and Kinross Healthcare NHS Trust			
Perth Royal Infirmary	—	70	37
Trust Summary	—	70	37
Queen Margaret Hospital NHS Trust			
Queen Margaret Hospital	168	—	—
Trust Summary	168	—	—
Raigmore Hospital NHS Trust			
Raigmore Hospital	217	124	52
Trust Summary	217	123	52
Royal Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust			
Royal Alexandra Hospital	221	24	13
Trust Summary	221	24	13
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh NHS Trust			
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary	775	—	—
Princess Margaret Rose Hospital	—	205	144
Trust Summary	775	205	144
South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust			
The Ayr Hospital	334	36	33
Trust Summary	334	36	33
Southern General Hospital NHS Trust			
Southern General Hospital	610	23	21
Trust Summary	610	23	21
Stirling Royal Infirmary NHS Trust			
Stirling Royal Infirmary	230	46	31
Trust Summary	230	46	31
Stobhill NHS Trust			
Stobhill Hospital	363	21	28
Trust Summary	363	21	28
The Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust			
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	—	83	83
Trust Summary	—	83	83
West Glasgow Hospitals University NHS Trust			
Western Infirmary, Glasgow	132	88	50
Trust Summary	132	88	50

Source:

SMR3.

Ref: Unit2/94348.

Date: 11 October 1994.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table. The numbers of items posted for years prior to 1992–93 are not available.

Financial year	*Expenditure £ million*	*Items posted*
1989–90	953,800	N/A
1990–91	986,064	N/A
1991–92	1,266,195	N/A
1992–93	1,140,700	3·5 million (approx.)
1993–94	1,316,231	3·5 million (approx.)

Accurate counts are made of items issuing from main buildings, but estimates have had to be made for other offices throughout Scotland which do not feed into the central mail processing system.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is shown in the table. The fee paid to individual contractors is commercially confidential and therefore cannot be detailed. The total cost of the 27 surveys listed was £1·061 million.

Subject	*Period conducted*	*Contractor commissioned*	*Objectives*
Environment			
Survey of Homeless Applications	June–July 1993	Public Attitude Surveys Ltd.	To examine the operation of the Code of Guidance on homelessness.
Edinburgh Castle Visitors Survey (Historic Scotland)	May–December 1993	System Three Scotland	To provide information on visitors to The Castle, their attitudes to services and facilities and to identify priorities for improving these facilities.
Awareness of Right to Buy and Rents to Mortgages	March–April 1994	System Three Scotland	To identify tenants' awareness of Right to Buy schemes.
Public Knowledge and Perception of Local Government	September 1994	The MVA Consultancy	To ascertain current public knowledge and awareness of local government, public perceptions of remoteness/accessibility and their identification with local government units as a base-line for monitoring change.
Rural Community Development Study	February 1994	System Three Scotland	To provide a baseline picture of life in four representative rural areas in order to monitor change and the impact of rural policy initiatives.
Water and Sewerage	March–August 1994	Market Research Scotland	To test the comprehensibility of the design and contents of the information leaflet; to evaluate recall of the contents and purpose of leaflet.
Sustainable Development	September 1994	The MVA Consultancy	To investigate public awareness and understanding of the concept of sustainable development.
Home and Health Department			
Car Crime	November 1992	Research Resources	To determine amongst car users the steps taken to prevent car crime; their perception of car crime compared with other crimes; awareness of the "Hyena" campaign.
Scottish Crime Survey	December 1992–December 1993	The MVA Consultancy	Provide alternative indicator of the level and extent of household and personal victimisation in Scotland; provide information about public perceptions and experiences of crime and the criminal justice system more generally.
Fire Prevention	February–March 1993–February 1994	Research Resources	To measure awareness and understanding of the television commercial and assess the impact of the commercial in motivating householders to maintain their smoke alarms.
Information Needs of Victims	January–August 1994	The MVA Consultancy	Collect information on current provision of information to victims; provide overview of experience and needs of victims with reference to information provided by criminal justice agencies and identify gaps between needs and actual provision; identify what information could

Subject	*Period conducted*	*Contractor commissioned*	*Objectives*
			specifically be provided by the fiscal service and in what form.
Domestic Violence Media Campaign	July–December 1994	System Three Scotland	Assess the extent of public awareness and comprehension of Scottish Office domestic violence media campaign.
Survey of NHS staff in Scotland	July–August 1993	System Three Scotland	To measure progress in meeting the goals set out in the Patient's Charter and Framework for Action for NHS staff.
Survey of users' experiences of the NHS in Scotland	May–June 1994	MORI Ltd.	To measure progress being made in delivering the commitments made in the Patient's Charter about the standards of service people should expect from the NHS in Scotland.
Maternity Services	October 1992–October 1993	Mrs. Yvonne Bostock (Independent Consultant)	To explore women's view on topics concerned with the provision of maternity care in Scotland; to confirm that CRAG-SCOTMEG Consumer Group's interpretation of the existing research corresponded with women's views and expectations of the services; to provide a sound basis for the Group to form recommendations on women's expectations of services.
Industry Department			
Evaluation of "Cars Kill" TV Campaign	June–November 1993	System Three Scotland	To evaluate the "Cars Kill" TV campaign through testing children's awareness and attitudes to this campaign, and to other related national road safety campaigns and general road safety issues.
Hotel Signposting Evaluation	July–November 1993	The MVA Consultancy	To investigate inter alia whether the provision of new accommodation signs improve ease of access for visitors and guests and to monitor whether these signs are associated with an increase in occupancy rates.
Scottish Drivers' Attitudes to Speeding Survey	December 1993–June 1994	Market Research Scotland Ltd	To detect any changes in the attitudes of Scottish drivers towards speeding since November 1991 and to explore reasons for these changes.
Setting Forth: Economic Development Study	March–April 1994	Oscar Faber TPA	To understand how transport affects transport-sensitive businesses and how changes in transport provision contribute to maintaining or enhancing economic growth in the Lothian and Fife regions; understand how transport is taken into account by inward investment companies in making investment and location decisions.
Setting Forth: Stated Preference Survey	June 1993	Oscar Faber TPA	To provide the data necessary to model the impact of toll increases on driver behaviour across the Firth of Forth.
An Evaluation of Scotland's National Tourist Routes	June–November 1994	Colin Buchanan and Partners	To evaluate the effectiveness of the National Tourist Routes (NTR's) in encouraging a wider spread of tourist traffic, and to measure the availability of STB and ATB promotional material relating to the NTRs.
Urban Partnership Household Surveys (Wester Hailes, Whitfield, Ferguslie Park)	March 1993–May 1994	Social and Community Planning Research	Repeat of household surveys carried out in 1989–90 in order to evaluate the impact of the Urban Partnerships now that initiatives are 5 years old.
Urban Partnership Household Surveys (Castlemilk)	March-May 1994	Public Attitude Surveys	
Education Department			
Further and Higher Education Charter for Scotland	October-November 1992	British Market Research Bureau	To identify issues of importance to current and potential students, their parents, and the general public to help shape the priorities of the Charter.
School Education	April–October 1993	Social Community and Planning Research	To provide information on the public's attitudes towards, and expectations of, school education at senior stages for an international study under the auspices of

Subject	*Period conducted*	*Contractor commissioned*	*Objectives*
			the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
Agriculture and Fisheries Department			
Crofting	January–April 1993	Independent Norther Consultants	To obtain information on the aspirations of crofters for the future, and ways in which the Crofters Commission may help to meet these aspirations.
Central Services			
The Scottish Office Central Enquiry Unit	July-December 1993	Research Resources	To assess the impact of the press advertisement on awareness and on motivating the public to use the Enquiry Unit; determining the public's understanding of the role of The Scottish Office.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* residential homes and *(b)* residents of residential homes there are in each regional council in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* Information on the numbers of local authority and registered private and voluntary residential homes and the number of residents in these homes in each regional or islands council in Scotland are contained in the table. The figures are as at 31 March 1992—the latest complete figures available.

Region	*Number of residential homes*	*Number of residents*
Borders	41	546
Central	40	892
Dumfries and Galloway	42	702
Fife	47	983
Grampian	100	2,078
Highland	68	1,113
Lothian	187	3,152
Strathclyde	312	7,434
Tayside	133	2,706
Orkney	7	102
Shetland	5	85
Western Isles	20	217
Scotland	1,002	20,010

Health Care International

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on ensuring that any plans relating to Health Care International will not involve hospital closures or cuts in beds in Greater Glasgow health board or other neighbouring health boards.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* HCI's business plan is largely based on treating overseas patients and private patients from Britain.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when plans were made for a medical school within Health Care International; and at what stage the plans were abandoned.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Before the hospital was established, the management of HCI discussed proposals for academic links with Scottish universities, including Glasgow university. They also intended to work with the royal colleges.

I am not aware however of there being any plans for an independent medical school within Health Care International.

Bankruptcy

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to amend Scottish housing regulations to make it an offence for an English property seller not to disclose bankruptcy to a Scottish buyer.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* No. A solicitor acting on behalf of a purchaser should undertake all the necessary searches to protect the client's interest, including, where appropriate, a search of the Land Charges Department with which all bankruptcy orders in England and Wales are registered.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Programme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been established to avoid future entanglement of overseas aid grants with military export agreements.

Mr. Baldry: British aid grants are not linked to military export agreements. All bilateral project proposals are subject to economic, financial, technical and environmental appraisal before they are approved, to ensure that they meet the needs and priorities of recipient countries.

UN Conference on Population and Development

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the outcome of the United Nations conference on population and development which took place in Cairo in September.

Mr. Baldry: This conference was a success. I have placed a copy of the Government's report on the conference in the House Library, with a copy of the programme of action agreed in Cairo.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 28 October 1994

SOCIAL SECURITY

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Hague: The total cost of official hospitality in the Department was:

Year	*£*
1990–91	75,778
1991–92	54,036
1992–93	78,833
1993–94	39,625
1994–95 (to September)	12,819

The Expenditure for the agencies was:

Year	*£*
1990–91	—
1991–92	37,898
1992–93	97,068
1993–94	125,940
1994–95 (to September)	36,936

Rents

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much eligible local authority rents and housing association rents rose between May 1988 and may 1992 as a percentage.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information for Wales is set out in the table.

	Local authority	*Private (including housing association)*
May 1988	£19·93	£19·13
May 1992	£29·95	£36·55
Increase (percentage)	50·3	91

Note:

Information is not available for Housing Association rents separately.

Source:

Housing Benefit management Information System, annual 1 per cent. sample.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will now ensure that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish receives immediate replies to Child Support Agency cases discussed with the then chief executive in July.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, dated 26 October 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the cases of your constituents which you discussed with my predecessor on 14 July.

I wrote to you on 26 October concerning some of your constituents and will write to you again within two weeks.

I am sorry that you have had to wait so long for my replies.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those delegations he has met regarding *(a)* standard spending assessments and *(b)* housing policy during the last four months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Between 1 July and 20 October 1994, Ministers met the following delegations on standard spending assessments and housing policy:

Date	*Delegations*
a) Standard Spending Assessments	
6 July	Northamptonshire MPs (R Freeman, T Marlow and W Powell)
11 July	Cllr Paul Drake - Gloucestershire
18 July	Stockport MBC and local MPs (Sir T Arnold, A Bennett, A Coffey and H Day
19 July	Consultative Council on Local Government Finance
21 July	Archbishop and Bishop of Liverpool
21 July	Patrick Cormack MP
15 September	Association of County Councils
21 September	Chief Executive, Wolverhampton MBC
26 September	Cllr John Hale, Wirral MBC
29 September	East Lancs authorities
5 October	Norfolk CC
10 October	Consultative Council on Local Government Finance
b) Housing Policy	
4 July	Housing Choice - Housing Management Conference
7 July	Housing Consultative Council Meeting
13 July	Bishop of London - homelessness/housing policy
26 July	Housing Corporation
6 September	Housing Finance Panel
19 September	HIP Presentation by Wolverhampton and Stafford
27 September	HIP Presentation Derby and Derbyshire Dales
27 September	Kate Hoey MP - Rough Sleepers in the Bull Ring
28 September	HIP Presentation Peterborough and Uttlesford
5 October	Sevenoaks: Large Scale Voluntary Transfer

Date	*Delegations*
6 October	HIP Presentation by Ashford and Eastbourne
6 October	HIP Presentation by Barnsley and Sheffield
10 October	HIP Presentation by Bournemouth and Purbeck
10 October	Peabody Trust
17 October	HIP Presentation by Liverpool
17 October	Wandsworth - General consents for voluntary sales

Badgers

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences have been granted by English Nature for interference with badger setts following the Badgers Act 1991, now the Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and for which purposes listed in section 10 of the 1992 Act such licences were issued.

Sir Paul Beresford: The information requested is as follows:

Reason for licence issue	[1]1991	1992	1993	[2]1994
Scientific/educational and conservation purposes	9	43	31	40
For the purpose of ringing or marking	—	—	3	3
For the purpose of development	10	52	88	70
For preservation/archaeological investigation of ancient monuments	1	2	5	3
For the purpose of investigating offences	67	85	122	102
Total	87	182	249	218

[1] (25 October to 31 December)

[2] (1 January to 30 September

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Gummer: The information available is as follows:

Title	*Objectives*	*Fieldwork start date*	*Organisations (Contractor)*
'Helping the Earth' Campaign Evaluation	To assess knowledge of and attitudes to global warming.	October 1992	Mass Observation
Council Tax Evaluation Research	To assess effectiveness of publicity campaign	October 1992	RSGB
Smoking in Public Places	To monitor policy	October 1992	NOP
[1]Energy Use Questionnaire - Green House Schemes	To monitor Green House Programme	October 1992	Optima Energy
Environmental Protection Commission Audit; Stage 2 - HMIP - Public	To monitor and inform policy	November 1992	MORI
The Children's Initiative	To establish knowledge of, attitudes towards and involvement in Environmental action	January 1993	Millward Brown
[1]Customer Survey: Study of Appellants' Experience of the Written Representations Appeals System	To assess customer satisfaction with the written representation appeals procedures	February 1993	W S Atkins Planning Consultants
Evaluation of Rebuilding Grants	To evaluate and examine the wider applicability of rebuilding grants	February 1993	University of Salford
Owner-Occupiers who are Cavity Wall Insulation Enthusiasts	To encourage uptake of insulation	February 1993	NBA Tectronics
Evaluation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative	To evaluate policy	March 1993	Research & Information Services
Applicant's Perceptions of the Planning Appeals System	Customer's views on the planning appeals system	March 1993	W S Atkins
Evaluation of 'Right to Buy' Publicity Campaign	To evaluate publicity campaign	April 1993	MORI
'Right to Buy' Campaign Evaluation-follow-up stage	Follow-up to above survey	May 1993	MORI
Public Attitudes to the Environment	To inform policy	July 1993	NOP
Landlords Research	To inform policy making	July 1993	SCPR
Helping the Earth Campaign Evaluation Research 93–94 - Waves 4 & 5	To evaluate the 'Helping the Earth' campaign	September 1993	BMRB
[1]Customer Survey: Study of Appellants' and Local Authorities' Experience of the Hearings System	To assess customer satisfaction with the hearings of appeals procedures	September 1993	W S Atkins Planning Consultants
Helping the Earth - Literature Evaluation	To evaluate literature campaign	September 1993	MAI
Helping the Earth Radio Campaign	To assess the effectiveness of campaign	October 1993	RSGB
[1]Ventilation in Homes	To evaluate the effectiveness of Building Regulations	October 1993	PAS
Rent Policies of LAs in England	To monitor and inform policy	November 1993	Inlogov

Title	Objectives	Fieldwork start date	Organisations (Contractor)
The nature of Demand for Housing in Rural Areas	To investigate people's housing experiences in rural areas	December 1993	Birmingham University
Flat Service Charges and Right to Buy	To monitor and inform policy	December 1993	MORI
Monitoring the Actions of Failed Grant Applicants	To monitor and inform policy	January 1994	PAS
Helping the Earth Campaign, Pre and Post Monitor	To assess campaign effectiveness	February 1994	COI[1]
Public Attitudes to Planning (and Development)	To inform policy and promote the planning system	February 1994	Prism Research
Rent to mortgage Leaflet follow-up	To establish tenants opinion and action taken towards buying their home	February 1994	NOP
Study of Lodgers Scheme	Policy making on Lodgers scheme	March 1994	The London Research Centre
Recreational Cycling Market Research	To assess customer satisfaction	April 1994	COI[1]
[1]Ventilation in Homes	To evaluate the effectiveness of Building Regulations	April 1994	Public Attitudes Surveys Ltd.
Vacant Dwellings in the Private Sector	To determine the scope for bringing vacant dwellings back into use	May 1994	University of Wales and MORI
The Environmental Effects of Duct from Surface Mineral Workings - pilot survey	To define reasonable dust levels	May 1994	Ove Arup & Partners
Home Improvement Agency Client Survey	To review the work of Home Improvement Agencies	June 1994	SCPR
Research into the Role and Operation of Homes	To evaluate policy	August 1994	MORI
The Environmental Effects of Production Blasting from Surface Mineral Workings (Pilot Survey)	To define reasonable working levels for production blasting	September 1994	Vibrock Ltd
'Wasting Energy Costs the Earth' Campaign Evaluation	To establish attitudes to and action on energy use in the home	September 1994	NOP
[1]Customer Survey: Study of Customer's experience of the inquiry procedure	To assess customer satisfaction	October 1994	WS Atkins Planning Consultants

[1] indicates those surveys commissioned by Agencies

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proportion of expenditure in the single regeneration budget for 1995–96 is expected to be allocated between each of the *(a)* public, *(b)* private and *(c)* voluntary sectors;

(2) if it remains his policy that the winning bids for the single regeneration budget funds will be announced in December.

Sir Paul Beresford: The timetable for the current single regeneration budget bidding round was set out in the bidding guidance published in April. We expect to announce decisions on the successful bids in January 1995.

Decisions will be made according to the criteria in the bidding guidance. There are no pre-set allocations between types of bidders or projects.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for a bidding round for the single regeneration budget in 1996–97.

Sir Paul Beresford: As I explained in my letter of 26 October to the hon. Member, the position on future bidding rounds will depend on the level of commitments from previous years and the outcome of the annual public expenditure review. This year's review is currently proceeding and decisions will be made following the Budget statement in November.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to change the 1994–95 cash limit and running costs limit for Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Atkins: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate for Ordnance Survey, class VII, vote 10, the cash limit has been increased by £1,357,000 from £14,856,000 to £16,213,000 to take up a capital end-year flexibility entitlement of 1,354,000, announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July, *Official Report* column *729–34*, due to the slippage of payment for capital expenditure from 1993–94.

In addition, the running-cost limit has been increased by £3,000 from £16,162,000 to £16,165,000 due to a transfer of £3,000 from the Treasury in respect of repayment of the average property price list. The increases will be offset by a transfer and a claim on the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

PSA Services

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make to the cash limit and running cost limit on PSA Services class VII, vote II in 1994–95.

Sir Paul Beresford: Subject to parliamentary approval, the cash limit for class VII, vote II, PSA Services, will be reduced by £32,000 from £98,693,000 to £98,661,000.

This reflects a public expenditure survey transfer with the Department for Education to cover the costs of relocating a member of PSA Services staff. The net running cost limit on this vote will also reduce by £32,000 from £98,293,000 to £98,261,000.

Industrial Waste

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to produce guidance on co-disposal of industrial wastes at landfill sites.

Mr. Atkins: Scientific co-disposal will continue to be an important waste management technique in this country for some years to come. We are therefore publishing today a consultation draft of waste management paper No. 26F on landfill co-disposal. The draft paper has been prepared by consultants using the results of recent scientific research on the chemical reactions that take place in landfills. Wastes managers and the statutory waste authorities will benefit particularly from the guidelines. The consultation period will be until 6 January 1995 and, subject to the results of the consultation, waste management paper No. 26F should be published in spring 1995.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 26 October 1994.]*: The only occasion when a spouse accompanied a Minister from this Department in the past year was when my wife travelled with me to Greece for the EC informal Environment Council in May this year, at the invitation of the Greek Government, to join Ministers and their spouses from the other members of the European Union. The total cost to public funds was £736.10.

HEALTH

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* her agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each, the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Sackville: A list of public opinion surveys commissioned since October 1992 will be placed in the Library. The costs of each survey are a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Consultation Papers

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all her Department's consultation papers including circulars and guidance notes issued since 1 January, together with the date by which comments were due on each of them.

Mr. Sackville: The Department regularly consults the national health service and other organisations about proposed new policies and procedures. Major consultation exercises since 1 January 1994 have been undertaken and details will be placed in the Library.

Guidance issued to the NHS, after any consultation, is usually sent as an Executive Letter, EL, or health service guidelines, HSG. A list of ELs and HSGs issued since 1 January will be placed in the Library.

Teenage Smoking

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for health what plans she has to tackle the problem of teenage smoking.

Mr. Sackville: The Health Education Authority is currently evaluating the recent five-year teenage smoking campaign. The lessons learned will be incorporated in the preparatory work now being done on a new £12 million three-year national anti-smoking campaign. Particular emphasis will be placed on addressing parents whose smoking habits and attitudes have a vital influence on the smoking behaviour of their children.

The Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health will consider the whole question of teenage smoking.

Psychiatric Patients

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many acute psychiatric beds there were in the area covered by the Government commissioned mental health task force in London in each of the last five years; and how many psychiatric patients were admitted to private beds in that area in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: Information on the number of acute psychiatric beds and the number of patients admitted to private beds is not available centrally.

Childcare

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health authorities and trusts provide help with childcare for their staff in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Cervical Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women have been screened for cervical cancer; and how many women died from cervical cancer in each *(a)* family health service authority, *(b)* district health authority and *(c)* regional health authority in each year since 1987 and in 1994 to date.

Mr. Sackville: Information on cervical cancer screening is available centrally for financial years 1988–89 to 1992–93. For 1988–89, coverage information is available only as a national figure. From 1989–90 to 1992–93, it is available by region; for 1992–93 it is also available by district health authority. It is not collected centrally by family health services authority.

Percentage coverage of woman screened for cervical cancer in the last 5·5 years

Region	*1988–89 per cent.*	*1989–90 per cent.*	*1990–91 per cent.*	*1991–92 per cent.*	*1992–93 per cent.*
England total	43·0	[1]62·0	74·0	79·9	82·9
Northern	—	64·0	79·0	83·5	85·8
Yorkshire	—	65·0	81·0	84·8	87·0
Trent	—	72·0	83·0	87·5	88·8
East Anglia	—	68·0	83·0	85·8	86·7
North West Thames	—	42·0	58·0	65·0	70·3
North East Thames	—	34·0	50·0	64·4	72·3
South East Thames	—	data unusable	61·0	70·3	79·0
South West Thames	—	46·0	66·0	78·0	80·1
Wessex	—	75·0	86·0	87·6	88·5
Oxford	—	79·0	82·0	85·1	86·1
South Western	—	78·0	84·0	86·5	87·5
West Midlands	—	71·0	81·0	84·1	85·5
Mersey	—	72·0	79·0	82·0	83·5
North Western	—	61·0	79·0	83·5	85·8

[1] excluding South East Thames region.

This information is obtained from the central return KC53 which collects information from the computerised call and recall system for Cervical Cancer Screening in England. Coverage information by district health authority is published in Cervical Cytology 1992–93 Summary Information from Form KC53 England, copies of which are available in the Library.

Cervical cancer mortality data by health authority region are available for the years 1987 to 1992. Mortality data by health authority are available in the Library in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys DH5 series.

Cost Effectiveness

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the cost-effectiveness of the national health services in relation to that of private health care.

Mr. Sackville: None. The cost-effectiveness of the national health service is not in doubt. The recent Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development report, "Assessment of United Kingdom Health Service Reforms", states that the NHS "was, and is, a remarkably cost-effective institution".

Heart Disease

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has on the cost-effectiveness of primary care practice nurses in relation to the effect of counselling on coronary heart disease risk factors.

Mr. Sackville: Research studies are under way that include the evaluation of nurse-administered health checks and advice in general practice. Two studies published interim results in January 1994; the OXCHECK study conducted in general practices in Oxfordshire, and the Family Heart Study Group's trials. These interim reports questioned the effectiveness of nurse-led interventions in relation to coronary heart disease prevention. The studies, however, were carried out before new arrangements for promoting health promotion in general practice were introduced on 1 July 1993. The new arrangements, which practice nurses have played a valuable part in implementing, focus particularly on coronary heart disease and are subject to continuing evaluation. The aim is to make optimum use of the skills of primary health care teams in monitoring and tackling the coronary heart disease risk factors in the population that they serve. A conference has been planned for later this year to consider the most recent research findings and their implications for further work in this area. Copies of the report can be found in the *British Medical Journal* of 29 January, which is available in the Library.

Renal Transplants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names of the units in each region providing renal dialysis for renal transplant; and if she will identify the geographical gaps in the services.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally in the form requested, but a list of all renal dialysis units in England will be placed in the Library.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost to her Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that the then Secretary to the Treasury, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993, *Official Report,* column *387.*

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much legal aid has been paid to George Walker in respect of recent court proceedings; and what is the estimate of the final costs.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Lawyers acting on behalf of George Walker have to date received legal aid payments amounting to £1,152,442. These are discretionary interim payments made in respect of proceedings in the Crown court. It is not possible at this stage to estimate what the final cost of the proceedings will be.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much to date has been paid from the legal aid fund to *(a)* Ian Maxwell and *(b)* Kevin Maxwell in respect of (i) criminal prosecutions against them and (ii) civil proceedings.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Lawyers acting on behalf of Ian and Kevin Maxwell have received legal aid payments of

£170,117 and £224,562 respectively for criminal proceedings in the magistrates courts. Details of payments to date in the Crown court are not readily available in the form requested.

In respect of civil legal aid, lawyers acting on behalf of Kevin Maxwell have so far received payments totalling £22,158. There have not been any payments to date in respect of civil proceedings involving Ian Maxwell.

Legal Publications

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to *(a)* add to or remove from the promulgation list any individuals or organisations and *(b)* require magistrates courts or other court centres to buy statutes and subordinate legislation direct from HMSO.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Existing arrangements for the provision of copies of legislation for the courts and others have been the subject of consultation with representatives of the parties affected and remain under consideration.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether the official promulgation list for the dissemination of statutes and subordinate legislation is still in operation; and if he will publish the names of the individuals and organisations who are entitled to free copies of such material.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Yes. Under arrangements with HMSO, copies of all Acts of Parliament and certain subordinate legislation are sent to magistrates courts, a small number of circuit judges and to local authorities at my Department's expense.

Trespass

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many actions for trespass have been brought in the civil courts in England and Wales since 1979.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information collected from the courts does not allow for this type of analysis.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Proceedings

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what arrangements are being made to provide hon. Members with access to the clean television feed of parliamentary proceedings in accordance with the resolution of the House of 30 June.

Mr. Beith: The clean feed direct relay of proceedings of both Houses will be available on new-style colour television annunciators in the Palace and the outbuildings from the morning of the state opening on 16 November. Detailed arrangements will be notified by the Serjeant at Arms to occupants of offices affected.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of people shown in employment data in the annual abstract of statistics as being employed in *(a)* private and *(b)* public sector education between (i) part-time and (ii) full-time employees under appropriate headings including teachers, lecturers, ancillary staff, administrative staff, local authority officers and other appropriate heading where known, such analysis to be set out by type of educational establishment where appropriated, for 1979 and the most recent two years.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information on public sector employment in the education industry is available only for the two occupational groupings, lecturers/teachers and other staff, and it is not available by type of educational establishment. The available information is given in the following table:

Employees in the education industry Great Britain

Thousands

	Total SIC 93 estimates			*Public sector*			*[1]Private sector*		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
1979									
Lecturers/teachers	—	—	—	605	156	761	—	—	—
Other	—	—	—	238	541	778	—	—	—
Total	N/A	N/A	1,605	843	697	1,539	N/A	N/A	65
1993									
Lecturers/teachers	—	—	—	433	137	570	—	—	—
Other	—	—	—	148	486	633	—	—	—
Total	989	849	1,837	580	623	1,203	409	226	634
1994									
Lecturers/teachers	—	—	—	417	135	552	—	—	—
Other	—	—	—	146	478	624	—	—	—
Total	988	851	1,840	563	613	1,176	425	239	664

Notes:

Male part-time estimates are only available from September 1984.

[1] Private sector estimates have been calculated by subtracting public sector estimates from Total SIC 93 estimates and hence will include all establishments who have 'opted' out of local authority control.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the difficulties being experienced by British humanitarian agencies in Liberia.

Mr. Baldry: Following the resumption of the civil war in early September, non-governmental organisation programmes have ceased in all areas except Monrovia. Latest reports from the Save the Children Fund show that 90 per cent. of the country is now inaccessible to humanitarian aid.

Albania

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in delivering European Union aid to Albania; and what effect the policy of Greece is having on this.

Mr. Baldry: The EU is providing a substantial volume of aid to Albania through the Phare programme: total commitments up to July 1994 were 84·6 mecu, of which 45 mecu had been disbursed by the end of 1993. However, there is a continuing and regrettable delay in agreeing the European Commission's proposal to provide macro-economic assistance of 35 mecu to Albania.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Funeral Services

Mr. Soley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the procedures for regulating practices and costs of funerals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: There are no such procedures.

Mr. Soley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to ensure that relatives of a deceased person are *(a)* consulted before a funeral operator embalms a body and *(b)* told the cost of embalming.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I have no such proposals. Funeral arrangements are a matter for the client and the funeral director to agree upon.

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when green ticket payments on electricity received through the interconnector with France are due to end; when Electricité de France's exclusive monopoly lease of the interconnector expires; whether these issues will be examined during the current nuclear review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The Government are considering the future of the fossil fuel levy and the associated arrangements, including non-leviable status, in respect of nuclear generation as part of the nuclear review, and I cannot pre-judge the outcome.

I understand that the interconnector agreement between Electricité de France and the National Grid Company, which provides for EdF to lease NGC's assets in the interconnector, covers the period until 31 March 2001. However, trade across the interconnector is covered by separate commercial agreements, and the Government have received assurances from the French Government that access across the interconnector to the French electricity market is on a non-discriminatory basis.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to Executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* In total, I am responsible for 935 public appointments, of which 440 are appointments to executive bodies, 279 are appointments to advisory bodies and 216 are other appointments.

Post Office

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will respond to representations regarding a dispute between Bridgegate Engineering and the Post Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wardle *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade responded on Thursday 27 October 1994.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Burundi

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent military activity there has been in Burundi; and what contribution the British Government are making to both humanitarian assistance and diplomatic endeavours to ensure peace and political development.

Mr. Baldry: The situation in Burundi remains stable but tense. We are not aware of any recent major military activity, although there have been reports of isolated incidents within the country, with the military attempting to disarm militant groups at the request of the new Government.

Since the abortive coup in 1993, the British Government have provided £1·79 million bilaterally to NGOs and UN organisations in Burundi. The UN Centre for Human Rights has a technical assistance programme in Burundi, to which the United Kingdom has contributed £100,000. The centre is now looking at ways to strengthen and expand its office there.

The UN is actively considering how best to increase international assistance to Burundi and the United Kingdom supports its proposal to hold an international conference in the region to discuss refugee problems.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether former Government troops are re-entering Rwanda; and what action is being undertaken by the Government of Zaire to prevent this.

Mr. Baldry: There have been unconfirmed reports of minor incursions across the Zaire-Rwanda border in the north-east and south-east sectors by armed bandits, some of whom are thought to be members of the former Government army.

Zaire's Government have asked for UN assistance in providing security in the refugee camps and to help segregate former military and militia from ordinary refugees. A UN report with recommendations is expected shortly.

Antigua and Barbuda

Mr. Mackinlay : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the provisions set out in the preamble of the Statute of Westminster 1931 have been extended to Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The constitutional convention recited in the preamble to the Statute of Westminster 1931 would apply to Antigua and Barbuda.

Act of Settlement

Mr. Mackinl[illegible] : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Commonwealth countries are able to amend, through legislation passed by their own Parliament, the Act of Settlement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Act of Settlement 1700 can be amended only by the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Statute of Westminster 1931

Mr. Mackinley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those independent Commonwealth countries whose head of state is Her Majesty the Queen and whose constitution permits the extension to that country of an Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom under the provisions of section 4 of the Statute of Westminster 1931.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* This information can be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: No record is kept of time spent on the adjustment of clocks.

Hours of Working

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff in his Department alter their hours of work or work overtime when the United Kingdom falls out of line with European time; and what is the total cost to his Department for the year of the non-alignment of United Kingdom time with standard European time.

Mr. Goodlad: No staff alter their hours or work overtime as a result of such time changes. Staff of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office already liaise with colleagues overseas who operate in many different time zones. No additional costs are incurred because of the non-alignment of United Kingdom time with standard European time.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the Nairobi peace talks about Sudan.

Mr. Goodlad: The last round of the peace talks in Nairobi between the Sudanese Government and the southern rebels ended on 7 September in stalemate over the issues of self-determination and secularisation. The four states sponsoring the talks are to continue their attempts to find a solution. We support them in this.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in normalising diplomatic relationships between Sudan and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: Since the expulsion of Mr. Streams in December 1993, we have not appointed a new ambassador to Sudan. We shall consider doing so at an appropriate time.

Government-owned Property

Mr. Denis MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of all properties owned by Her Majesty's Government in *(a)* Switzerland, *(b)* France, *(c)* the United States of America, *(d)* Japan, *(e)* Italy, *(f)* Belgium, *(g)* Canada, *(h)* Hong Kong, *(i)* Germany and *(j)* Russia.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested will not be available until the systematic valuation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's overseas estate is further advanced. This work, at present being planned, is in preparation for the introduction of revised Government accounting methods—resource accounting—later in the 1990s.

GCHQ

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many letters of protest were received in the past 12 months by *(a)* British embassies and *(b)* high commissions concerning the 10th anniversary of the trade union ban at GCHQ.

Mr. Hurd: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Princess of Wales

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who attended the lunch with Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales at the British embassy in Washington on 22 October; and what was its cost.

Mr. Baldry: Those attending the lunch were:

Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales
The British ambassador and Lady Renwick
Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
Mrs. Bruce Babbitt
His Royal Highness Prince Bandar Bin Sultan
The ambassador of Italy

Professor Philip Bobbitt
Mr. and Mrs. Arnaud de Borchgrave
Mr. and Mrs. Leo Daly
The ambassador of Brazil and Mrs. Flecha de Lima
Mr. Oliver Franklin and Dr. Patricia Mikols
Mrs. Albert Gore, Jr
Mrs. Katherine Graham
Professor and Mrs. William Haseltine
Mr. Patrick Jephson
Miss Andrea Mitchell
Mr. Clive Menell
General and Mrs. Colin Powell
The hon. Kurt Schmoke and Dr. Patricia Schmoke
Miss Barbara Walters
Mr. Peter Westmacott
The hon. Douglas Wilder
Mr. and Mrs. Wolfensohn
Mr. and Mrs. Michael York

The cost was part of the normal functioning of the embassy. The full cost cannot be readily identified.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Shotgun Licence Fee

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to raise the shotgun licence fee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 20 July, column 282. I laid before the House on 13 October an order to increase the fee for the issue of a shotgun certificate and other fees under the Firearms Act. On the same day, a separate order was laid to extend the life of both shotgun and firearms licences from three to five years.

Jourdain Society

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the constitution of the Jourdain Society meets all the requirements to warrant its continued charitable status;

(2) if he will make a statement on the charitable status of the Jourdain Society;

(3) what assessment the Charity Commission has made of the current functions and role of the Jourdain Society in relation to its charitable status.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The charitable status of a particular body, and the appropriateness of its constitution, are matters for which responsibility rests with the Charity Commission and, ultimately, the courts.

I am advised that the Jourdain Society is registered with the Charity Commission on the basis of the objects expressed in its constitution, and that those objects are charitable in law. However, there has not been a recent assessment of the function and role of the Jourdain Society and the effect that these could have on its charitable status.

If the hon. Member has any concerns about the society, he should write to the chief charity commissioner.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for 1992–93 and 1993–94 the amount spent in each London borough, with totals for each TEC area, under each of the programmes now incorporated into the single regeneration budget, regardless of whether the sums were paid to the borough council, and the amount allocated to be spent in 1994–95 on the same basis.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford), yesterday.

Private Security Companies

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in the number of private security companies over the past 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not available.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what regulations exist to prevent a person with a criminal record from offering security services, including street patrols.

Mr. Maclean: There are none.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of drug finds in each prison in England and Wales since 1 January.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox dated 28 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about drug finds in each prison in England and Wales.

I attach a table showing the number of drug finds at each establishment from 1 January to 19 October 1994, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Reported drug incidents by establishments

	Number
Acklington	9
Albany	9
Ashwell	2
Askham Grange	7
Aylesbury	14
Bedford	65
Belmarsh	171
Birmingham	73
Blakenhurst	24
Blundeston	11
Brinsford	118
Bristol	24
Brixton	68
Brockhill	4
Bullingdon	25
Bullwood Hall	6
Camp Hill	50
Canterbury	35
Cardiff	83
Castington	35
Chelmsford	27
Cookham Wood	13
Dartmoor	63
Deerbolt	39
Doncaster	13
Dorchester	1
Dover	35

Reported drug incidents by establishments

	Number
Downview	9
Drake Hall	2
Durham	77
East Sutton Park	4
Elmley	34
Erlestoke	48
Everthorpe	7
Exeter	7
Featherstone	13
Feltham	255
Ford	28
Frankland	31
Full Sutton	27
Garth	5
Gartree	29
Glen Parva	97
Gloucester	46
Grendon	13
Guys Marsh	31
Hatfield	10
Haverigg	53
Highdown	27
Highpoint	35
Hindley	56
Hollesley Bay	51
Holloway	29
Holme House	50
Hull	45
Huntercombe	10
Kirkham	39
Kirklevington	5
Lancaster Farms	76
Lancaster	6
Leeds	16
Leicester	61
Lewes	53
Leyhill	3
Lincoln	56
Lindholme	59
Littlehey	14
Liverpool	208
Long Lartin	9
Low Newton	23
Maidstone	4
Manchester	25
Moorland	76
Morton Hall	14
New Hall	2
Northallerton	29
Norwich	40
Nottingham	4
Onley	49
Parkhurst	4
Pentonville	113
Portland	77
Preston	69
Pucklechurch	5
Ranby	10
Risley	51
Rochester	56
Rudgate	5
Send	24
Shepton Mallet	1
Shrewsbury	26
Stafford	45
Standford Hill	10
Stocken	21
Stoke Heath	139
Styal	26
Sudbury/Foston Hall	1
Swaleside	6
Swansea	2
Swinfen Hall	6
The Verne	17
The Mount	47
Thorn Cross	95
Thorp Arch	3
Usk	7
Wakefield	7
Wandsworth	194
Wayland	31
Wellingborough	6
Werrington	4
Wetherby	5
Whatton	2
Whitemoor	15
Winchester	1
Wolds	41
Woodhill	62
Wormwood Scrubs	163
Wymott	8

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he is having, and with whom, as to restricting the number of days that a remand prisoner in England and Wales can be held on remand before his case comes before a court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The period for which a defendant may be held in custody on remand is restricted by the Prosecution of Offences (Custody Time Limits) Regulations 1987 to 56 days pending summary trial or, where a case is dealt with on indictment, to 70 days from first appearance to committal and 112 days from committal to arraignment. The Government keep these limits under constant review.

Probation Work Training

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what estimate he has of the number of places sponsored by his Department on accredited schemes for probation work training in 1995;

(2) what changes he proposes to the entry requirements for those wishing to qualify as probation officers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We have not yet reached conclusions on the report of a recent scrutiny of the recruitment and qualifying training of probation officers, or on 1995 sponsored qualified training places.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places on accredited schemes for probation work training were sponsored by this Department in each of the most recent five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: From 1990 to 1994, the annual intake of students sponsored by the Home Office was as follows:

	Number
1990	336
1991	434
1992	451
1993	470
1994	300

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Mr Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions have been made to ensure that *(a)* Members of Parliament and *(b)* any member of the public can gain access to a copy of the United Kingdom's fourth periodic report under the international covenant on civil and political rights to the United Nations.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Copies of the report are available in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament, the British Library, the other legal deposit libraries and from the Home Office publications unit.

Cycling

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to deal with cycling on pavements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The enforcement of road traffic law, including cycling offences, is a matter for chief officers to police in their respective force areas. It is for them to decide what priority should be given to any particular aspect of their road traffic responsibilities.

British Citizenship

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department from whom and on what dates he has received representations in respect of the applications for British citizenship of Mr. Ali Al Fayed and Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to a question from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) yesterday. Some of those who made representations wrote on behalf of Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed as well.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he first made clear to the then Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), that he wished the application for British citizenship of Mr. Ali Al Fayed to be decided by him.

Mr. Howard: On the first occasion on which I spoke to my hon. Friend concerning this case, I made it clear that I wished the application to be decided by him. The date of that conversation is not recorded.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for citizenship currently awaiting a decision were made less than six months ago, between six and 12 months ago, between 12 and 18 months ago and more than 18 months ago.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The following is the information in relation to the 42,119 applications for British citizenship outstanding on 21 October 1994:

	Number
Less than six months	16,898
Between six and 12 months	14,938
Between 12 and 18 months	6,057
More than 18 months	4,226

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date Mr. Ali Al Fayed first applied for British citizenship; and when a decision is expected to be made on his application.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Mr. Ali Al Fayed submitted his application on 29 January 1993. I hope to reach a decision on his application in the reasonably near future.

Prison Disturbances

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total cost *(a)* to the Prison Service and *(b)* to the contractors of disturbances at Doncaster prison; whether default notices were served; and what financial penalties were applied;

(2) what was the total cost *(a)* to the Prison Service and *(b)* to the contractors of disturbances at Blakenhurst prison; whether default notices were served; and what financial penalties were applied;

(3) what were the total costs *(a)* to the Prison Service and *(b)* to the contractors of disturbances at the Wolds prison; if default notices were served; and what financial penalties were applied.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock dated 28 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the costs to the Prison Service and to the contractor of disturbances at Wolds, Blakenhurst and Doncaster; if default notices were served; and what financial penalties were applied.

Any costs met by the contractor are a matter for them as they do not involve public funds. The cost of prisoner damage at Doncaster are met entirely by the contractor. The cost of damage caused by prisoners at Wolds and Blakenhurst is identifiable, but of those costs the amount attributable to disturbances is not identifiable separately. There have been no default notices issued as a result of disturbances at Wolds, Doncaster and Blakenhurst. No other financial penalties have been imposed, other than those outlined in Mr. Butler's reply to you on 28 April 1994 (*Official Report* column *244*).

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of occasions on which police officers have been called to Doncaster prison since 20 June to the latest available date; and how many officers have been called on each occasion.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock dated 28 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of occasions on which police officers have been called to Doncaster prison, from 20 June to the latest available date, and how many officers have been called on each occasion.

Police attendance to Doncaster prison has been sought on seven occasions since 20 June. On three occasions police were responding to incidents involving visitors; on two occasions they attended a death of a prisoner; one occasion was to help deal with a concerted act of indiscipline by prisoners, and one to recapture an escapee.

The number of police officers involved varied according to the operational need as determined by the local police and is not recorded at the prison.

Police Cells

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost to his Department of keeping prisoners in police cells, broken down by police authority, in 1994 to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock dated 28 October 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost to the Prison Service of keeping prisoners in police cells, broken down by police authority in 1994 to the latest available date.

The information as at 30 September 1994 is as below:

Authority	*Amount Paid £*
Greater Manchester Police	5,240,172·16
Merseyside	1,032,697·06
West Yorkshire	346,807·06
South Yorkshire	270,742·53
Humberside	159,002·43
Northamptonshire	9,190·90
Cumbria	3,394·94
Total	7,062,007·70

The above amounts exclude invoices not yet submitted.

Prison Service Employees

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) on 14 July, *Official Report*, column *695*, if he will list the name, former position and the company joined for each of the Prison Service employees who left to work for private companies operating or tendering to operate prisons.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle dated 28 October 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the 33 former Prison Service employees who subsequently worked for private companies operating or tendering to operate prisons, referred to in the reply given by Peter Lloyd to Joan Ruddock on 14 July 1994.

This information is given in the attached table, and covers those who transferred directly from the Prison Service to private companies and those retired members of the Prison Service who later joined private companies.

It is not our practice to reveal the names of individuals.

Grade	*Companies joined*
Grade 3	Premier Prison Services (PPS)
Deputy Director General	Pinkertons
Regional Director	Pinkertons
Deputy Regional Director	Group 4
2 Inspectors of Prisons	United Kingdom Detention Services (UKDS) (both)
21 Governors	UKDS (6); Group 4 (6); PPS (5); Securicor (2); Mancare (2)
Senior Professional & Technical Officer	Group 4
Psychologist	Group 4
Education Officer	Group 4
Executive Officer	UKDS
Principal Officer	Group 4
Senior Officer	UKDS

Of the above, the Deputy Director General, the Regional Director, the Deputy Regional Director and four of the governors had retired from the Prison Service some time before joining the private company.

WALES

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the outturn expenditure given to each TEC in Wales in 1992–93 at 1993–94 prices; and what is the budget for each TEC in 1993–94 in total and broken down in the same way as given in the written answer of 18 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *335*.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Lady as soon as possible and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Redwood: No record is kept of such estimates.

School Building and Repairs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the building and repairs backlog in schools in each of the local education authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend and I have made no such estimate. Local education authorities are responsible for the repair and maintenance of their school buildings.

Publicity

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of his Department's spending on publicity on television, radio, newspapers, and in other ways for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Welsh Office publicity expenditure for the last five years is as follows:

£,000	*TV*	*Radio*	*Press*	*Other*
1989–90	57	Nil	354	1,758
1990–91	17	Nil	251	1,161
1991–92	8	Nil	341	1,608
1992–93	77	Nil	350	1,547
1993–94	6	Nil	269	1,083

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the housing association grant rates reductions as a cash sum and as a percentage for each of the years since and including 1988.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not readily available in the form requested, but percentage rates for the standard housing association grant in Wales are available since 1988, and are set out as follows:

	Percentage
1987–88	30
1988–89	55
1989–90	72
1990–91	75
1991–92	70
1992–93	67
1993–94	65
1994–95	62

Notes:

1. Mixed funding only became the norm from 1989–90.

2. In some years the rate was changed in-year to reflect interest rate movements, and was paid at different levels for different geographical areas.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage housing represented of total Government spending in 1978–89 and in 1993–94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1978–79, the Welsh housing programme was £168,000,000 and represented 11·3 per cent. of the total public expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility. In 1993–94, it represented 9·5 per cent. This is a real term increase of 24·8 per cent. after allowing for the rise in the cost of living.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the future of the blood transfusion service in Wales, indicating the number employed in the service in Wales.

Mr. Richards: The Welsh Health Common Services Authority and the National Blood Transfusion Service (Wales) are undertaking a review of future management arrangements of the service. A report will be submitted to the Welsh Office in due course. The whole time equivalent number of staff employed in the service is 227.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy concerning speech therapy for *(a)* children and *(b)* stroke victims.

Mr. Richards: The provision of speech therapy is a matter for district health authorities and GP fundholders to determine in the light of local needs, priorities and resources, taking into account national guidance.

Disruptive Pupils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy concerning troubled and disruptive children in schools; and what initiative he will undertake.

Mr. Richards: The response to disruptive behaviour must always be appropriate to the circumstances. Headteachers are responsible for maintaining discipline in schools. The Welsh Office will shortly issue guidance to local education authorities and schools on the education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

SCOTLAND

Health Care International

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contributions Health Care International in Clydebank has made to training in the national health service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Training in medicine and in nursing is dependent on the clinical services being provided. In the short time that HCI has operated in Clydebank, the contribution to training in the Scottish health service has therefore been very small.

Long-stay Learning Disability Hospitals

Ms Jowell : To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people with learning disabilities are resident in long-stay hospitals; and if he will list the long-stay learning disability hospitals still operating.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of residents with a length of stay of at least one year in hospitals for people with learning difficulties is shown in the table.

Hospital	*Number of residents as at 31 December 1993*
Dunlop House	2
Strathlea	49
Arrol Park	61
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board	112
St. Aidans	61
Borders Health Board	61
Elderslie	8
Merchiston	190
St. Marys	33
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	231
Lynebank	264
Fife Health Board	264
Lennox Castle	591
Waverley Park	43
Greater Glasgow Health Board	634
Craig Phadrig	99
Highland Health Board	99
Birkwood	186
Kirklands	173
Lanarkshire Health Board	359
Woodlands/Wellwood Unit	64
Ladysbridge	229
Grampian Health Board	293
St. Josephs	107
Gogarburn	341
Douglas House	1
Tornaveen House	15
Lothian Health Board	464

Hospital	*Number of residents as at 31 December 1993*
Strathmartine	196
Tayside Health Board	196
Royal Scottish National	516
Forth Valley Health Board	516
Criffel View	25
Hestan Flat	6
Netherlea	6
Cromarty	9
Linfern	1
Oakfield	2
Dumfries and Galloway Health Board	49
Scotland	3,278

Source ISD

SMR4 Adhoc Reference MH4125.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* summary procedures and *(b)* solemn procedures were initiated by the procurator fiscal based in Peterhead in each year since 1976.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not possible to provide information on the number of proceedings initiated by the procurator fiscal. The number of summary and solemn case disposals is set out in the table. Summary proceedings are initiated by the procurator fiscal and solemn proceedings on indictment on the instructions of Crown counsel.

P.F. Office - Peterhead Summary and Solemn Disposals

	Total Smy/Dist Disposals	*Total Solemn Disposals*
1976	1,060	—
1977	1,075	22
1978	1,279	26
1979	1,270	21
1980	1,228	43
1981	1,148	22
1982	1,119	27
1983	1,147	24
1984	1,139	26
1985	1,278	33
1986	1,306	34
1987	1,234	19
1988	1,336	20
1989	1,415	20
1990	1,563	22
1991	1,469	9
1992	1,339	18
1993	1,658	12
Total	23,063	398
AVG	1,281	22

These figures relate to the numbers of complaints (Summary) and Indictment (Solemn). There may be more than One accused.

Shipping Subsidies Review

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his decision following the shipping subsidies review.

Mr. Lang: After very careful and detailed consideration of a range of options, I have concluded that the present arrangements for Caledonian MacBrayne represent the most cost-effective and satisfactory way of providing support for lifeline ferry services to the islands off the west coast of Scotland. I am satisfied that CalMac operates economically and efficiently under the present arrangements and provides a service of high quality and reliability.

Of course, there is always room for improvement in financial performance, while maintaining and developing standards of service. Caledonian MacBrayne is making significant efficiency gains under the stimulus of the review and discussions with the company are taking place on the setting of new financial, efficiency and quality of service targets to help sustain the progress.

Following a thorough review of arrangements for financial support for shipping services, I have concluded that the current tariff rebate subsidy scheme for freight and passengers is in need of revision. It is complicated to administer and is not well matched to the present market for passenger and freight services in Orkney and Shetland. First, it does not provide a satisfactory basis on which the long-term viability of the essential passenger service, which also carries accompanied cars and some freight, can be assured. Secondly, it has encouraged the creation of excess subsidised capacity in freight markets, which has led to the under-utilisation of vessels, price instability and uncertainty as to the long-term viability of shipping operators.

Revised subsidy arrangements will be introduced to secure the future of the essential passenger service to and from Orkney and Shetland, in line with the Government's commitment to continued support, where necessary, for shipping services to the islands. I intend, subject to the approval of Parliament and of the European Commission, to change the method of subsidy to a block grant payable over a period of years in accordance with a contract to operate a specified level of service. In the interim, TRS will continue to be applied to passenger and accompanied car fares.

TRS will also be retained for shipments of livestock from the islands, at a revised level of subsidy. I am confident that these arrangements will ensure that farmers on the islands will continue to be able to get their animals to market without unreasonable transportation costs.

In line with evidence of over-capacity in the supply of freight services, I am satisfied that competition for the carriage of freight, other than exported livestock, is such that subsidies are no longer necessary to enable freight services to Orkney and Shetland to be provided at reasonable cost. These subsidies will be withdrawn with effect from 1 May 1995. Freight rates for all types of cargo are expected to remain close to existing levels.

We are continuing to give detailed consideration to the future arrangements for freight services to the west coast and I shall announce my decisions in due course.

The improvements in security of essential services and in value for money from the Government's substantial support for shipping services to and from the islands, which will be achieved through these decisions, demonstrate the benefits of our decision to carry out the review.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is *(a)* the location *(b)* the number of and *(c)* arrangements for using lithotripsy machines in the Scottish health service;

(2) if he will make a statement on the treatment of patients with kidney stones.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* Lithotripsy services in the Scottish health service are provided by Scottish Lithotriptor Centre at the Western General hospital, Edinburgh. The service is comprised of a static lithotriptor on the Western General site and a mobile unit, which is available for use throughout the health service in Scotland. The mobile unit is managed by the Scottish Lithotriptor Centre, but local hospital consultants operate it, treating their own patients in their own areas on an out-patient or day-case basis.

The treatment of patients with kidney stones is a matter for health boards who purchases appropriate services, including lithotripsy, based on an assessment of local need. The type of treatment patients receive is a matter for clinical decision.

Family Law

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans the Government have to bring Scottish child law in line with the principles set out in the UN convention on the rights of children;

(2) what action has been taken to consider whether law, policy and practice in Scotland concerned with juvenile justice and protection of children from violence are in full compliance with all provisions in the UN convention on the rights of the child.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The principles of the UN convention underlie the proposals for child care policy and law set out in the White Paper "Scotland's Children", Cm 2286. We intend the children's hearings system to continue to play a crucial role in the care of children in Scotland and the White Paper contains proposals for strengthening that role. The necessary legislation is in the course of preparation and will be introduced when parliamentary time permits.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Government have to introduce legislation in Scotland allowing for the exclusion of child abusers from the family home.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The White Paper "Scotland's Children", Cm 2286, indicated the Government's intention to introduce an exclusion order for the protection of children. The necessary legislation is in the course of preparation and will be introduced when parliamentary time permits.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland plans the Government have to implement the recommendations of the 1992 Scottish Law Commission report on family law; and when the legislation will be placed before the House.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State plans to implement certain recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission report on family law, particularly those relating to parental responsibilities and rights. The necessary legislation is in the course of preparation and will be introduced when parliamentary time permits.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Government have to implement the recommendations of Lord Clyde in his 1991 report on the Orkney child abuse inquiry; and when the legislation will be placed before the House.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The proposals in the White Paper, "Scotland's Children", Cm 2286, reflect the recommendations of and consultations on Lord Clyde's report and other reports published from 1990 onwards. Many of Lord Clyde's recommendations related to social work practice and procedure, and action to implement these is in hand. Revised guidance on aspects of child protection is now at an advanced state of preparation. Other changes require legislation. This is in the course of preparation and will be introduced when parliamentary time permits.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what areas existing Scottish child law breaches the principles accepted by the British Government following their ratification of the UN convention on the rights of children.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The welfare of the child is at the centre of the child care provisions of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. This is in keeping with the principles of the UN convention. In ratifying the convention, the Government noted a detailed reservation on article 37(d), which takes account of the operation of the children's hearings system in Scotland. The White Paper, "Scotland's Children", Cm 2286, proposed changes in policy and law which are consistent with the principles of the convention.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to bring forward proposals for statutory assistance to Scottish children aged 16 to 18 years who were in local authority care; and what comparison he has drawn with systems in force outside Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* Local authorities already have a statutory duty to provide assistance to young people under 18 if they have been in care immediately before school-leaving age. As was indicated in the White Paper, "Scotland's Children", Cm 2286, the Government propose to extend this duty to include young people aged 18 and to provide local authorities with a power to assist such young people under the age of 21 who meet the criteria of eligibility and need. These arrangements will stand satisfactory comparison with the other countries in the United Kingdom. The necessary legislation is in the course of preparation and will be introduced when parliamentary time permits.

TRANSPORT

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each the subject, objectives, total cost, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Mr. Norris: The information is not available in the form requested.

London Cycle Network

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to ensure that the funds from the London boroughs' joint bid for the London cycle network will be used to implement co-ordinated routes.

Mr. Norris: We are currently considering a bid from London local authorities for Government funding of a five-year programme covering 1300 km of the London cycle network. If the bid is successful, it will be for the local authorities to co-ordinate the implementation of the project.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has drawn from the Transport statistics journey times survey 1993; and how Government strategy to reduce congestion in London and other cities will be influenced.

Mr. Norris: The 1993–94 survey is the first in a cycle of three annual surveys to measure trends in travel times for each of the main modes. The results will inform the development of policies to improve the efficiency of the road, rail and bus networks and to assist the safe movement of cyclists and pedestrians.

Taxi Regulation

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on proposals for the future regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles.

Mr. Norris: Shortly.

Capital Transport Campaign

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the proposals put forward by the Capital Transport Campaign for the regeneration of London's public transport infrastructure.

Mr. Norris: I give appropriate consideration to all proposals put to me on the future of London's public transport infrastructure.

Performance Markings

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether a member of staff with a box 1 performance marking transferred to another Government Department would receive the appropriate box 1 performance pay from their new Department.

Mr. Norris: The arrangements for performance pay for staff transferring between Departments are at the discretion of the importing Department.

Bus Stops

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures exist to prevent the parking of private cars at bus stops.

Mr. Norris: Traffic authorities can make orders under section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984—under section 6 of the Act in London—restricting or prohibiting private cars from stopping, waiting, loading or unloading at bus stops. Enforcement of these orders is a matter for the police, except in London, where, apart from red routes and a few other minor exceptions, it is the responsibility of local authorities.

Cyclists

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department records statistics for accidents involving cyclists riding on the pavement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Figures are shown in the table.

Accidents involving pedal cycles on pavements: Great Britain 1990–93

Accidents

Accident Severity	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Fatal	5	3	4	3
Serious	71	67	81	10
Slight	359	470	508	566
All Severities	435	540	593	670

Land Sales

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he has ensured that any land disposed of by his Department has been put to productive use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. Haynes to Mr. Andrew Welsh dated 28 October 1994.

As you probably know, since the creation of the Highways Agency in April this year, it falls to me, as Chief Executive, to write to MPs who have tabled questions on matters which relate to operational matters of the Highways Agency and to give the information requested.

In answer to your question about how we ensure that any land we dispose of is put to productive use I would explain that, under Treasury rules, Government Departments and their Agencies are required to dispose of surplus land and property within three years of being so identified, subject to the need to realise the full value for the Exchequer. Once land or property has been sold and is no longer in our ownership, it is for the new legal owner to decide how he wishes to utilise his acquisition.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the cost of printing and distribution of leaflets informing members of the public of the procedure to report excessively smoky heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles; how many leaflets have been distributed; and what has been the cost of operating the smoky vehicle hotline between April 1993 and March 1994.

Mr. Norris: The costs of printing and distribution were £13,771. Some 150,000 leaflets have been distributed to date. The cost of operating the hotline between April 1993 and March 1994 was about £5,500.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Steven Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the then Financial Secretary on 30 November 1993 column *387.*

Cones Hotline

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many calls and complaints have been received by the cones hotline in each month since its inception *(a)* relating to the east midlands and *(b)* nationally; and how many of them resulted in cones being removed in each category;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the cones hotline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts *[holding answers 18 July and 26 October 1994]:* As the cones hotline is now an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Paddy Tipping dated 28 October 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Cones Hotline; and if he will make a statement. As this is an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I am replying to your question.

The Cones Hotline was established in June 1992. It gives motorists direct access to the Highway Agency responsible for the motorway and trunk road network in England.

It is covered by the Highways Agency's "Road User's Charter", which sets out standards of service for the road network. In following this, the Highways Agency undertakes to deal with Hotline enquiries as efficiently as possible and, if it is established that there is no good reason for cones to be present, we undertake to have them removed.

You also asked for specific information on the Cones Hotline.

At 20 October 1994 this year, the total number of calls received by the Cones Hotline since its inception was 10,027. Of these, 5,141 have been pursued as formal complaints for requests for information. We cannot provide information by area for the remainder of the calls as they were resolved over the phone.

Monthly figures nationally, and for the East Midlands, are set out over:

	National	*East Midlands*
Up to 31.3.94	1,791	165
April	546	49
May	549	30
June	625	31
July	495	22
August	377	29
September	484	24
October (to 20.10.94)	274	19
	5,141	369

There have been three cases where enquiries established that cones should not have been in place and were therefore removed. In all cases cones have been found to have been present for sound operational or safety reasons.

I hope this information is helpful.

Public Transport (Fares)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the implications of the possible imposition of VAT on public transport fares for *(a)* increased use of private cars and traffic congestion and *(b)* air pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply. Tax changes are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget on 29 November. As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, I am unable to comment at this time on the level of consideration given to any particular matter.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Norris: No record is kept of such estimates.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the privatisation which his Department has promoted since 1979, indicating, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has not promoted any privatisation since it was set up in 1992.

EDUCATION

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the privatisations which her Department has promoted since 1979, showing, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Forth: No organisations within my right hon. Friend's current area of responsibility have been privatised since 1979.

Education Psychologists

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the future of funding for the training of teachers as education psychologists.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is aware of the concerns that have been expressed about the way in which training of education psychologists is currently funded through the grants for education support and training programme. Discussions between officials of the Department and the local authority associations are exploring the possibilities of other methods of funding the training.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much each local education authority was recharged in respect of grant-maintained schools in its area in the latest year for which information is available; what this value was for each pupil in the grant-maintained sector in that local education authority area; and what was the equivalent pupil cost in local authority schools for each local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested will take some time to collate. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Tobacco Farming

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total cost to the European Union of subsidies to tobacco farmers in the EU; how many farmers benefit; in which countries; and how much they are paid.

Mr. Jack: The latest estimate of Community expenditure on the tobacco sector for 1994 is 1,807 mecu or £839 million[1]. It is estimate that 200,000 families are directly involved in tobacco growing within the Community, and up to four times as many indirectly. Tobacco production occurs in seven member states: Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Germany and France. Community expenditure in each of these in 1993, the latest year for which a breakdown of figures between member states is available is as follows:

	Mecu	*£ million*
Belgium	10·00	7·9
Germany	43·91	34·5
Greece	548·02	430·5
Spain	109·64	86·1
France	68·95	54·2
Italy	370·23	290·9
Portugal	14·40	11·3
Total	1165·15	915·3

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much tobacco grown in the EU is consumed in the EU; and how much goes into intervention or is destroyed, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: The latest estimate for the 1993 harvest shows that the Community produced 337,968 tonnes of tobacco, imported 417,493 tonnes, exported 209,738 tonnes and consumed 545,723 tonnes. There is currently about 13,320 tonnes in intervention from the 1993 harvest and before. Intervention is not available for harvests after 1993. There are no Community provisions allowing the destruction of subsidised tobacco.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. French: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when Ministers will make regulations for the residuary milk marketing board for England and Wales

Mr. Waldegrave: Regulations have today been laid before Parliament. They will come into force on 1 November, vesting day for the new milk marketing arrangements.

The regulations set out the functions, powers and constitution of the residuary England and Wales milk marketing board. The residuary MMB will be responsible for winding up the milk marketing board's affairs, having regard to the interests of registered producers. Its functions will include the management of its retained assets pending disposal and the discharge of its retained liabilities. The residuary MMB will be responsible for collecting payments from buyers for milk sold in October, for paying producers for their October milk and for finalising the accounts of the MMB for the period leading up to vesting day. Among its functions will be to determine future ownership arrangements for Dairy Crest and National Milk Records.

Any surplus assets remaining after the residuary MMB has discharged all its liabilities will be distributed to eligible producers. The regulations set out in detail producers' entitlements to a share of any such surplus. These match the provisions of the milk marketing board's approved reorganisation scheme.

The members of the residuary MMB will be appointed by Ministers. The board may consist of up to seven members, including the chairman. Up to three members may be producers. Appointments will be for a period of up to two years and will be renewable. Members' remuneration will initially be set by Ministers. The residuary MMB will ask producers to approve members' remuneration at each annual general meeting from 1996 onwards.

We outlined the arrangements relating to the residuary MMB which the milk marketing board proposed as part of its reorganisation scheme in our consultation document on the scheme issued in March. We also set out the effects of modifications made to these in a document issued when the scheme was approved in June. Copies of these documents were placed in the Library of the House. The regulations were drawn up after consultation with interested parties in August.

TREASURY

Airport Departure Tax (Lourdes Pilgrimages)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to exempt travellers whose fares have been paid for by charities on pilgrimages to Lourdes from the airport departure tax.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. and Learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's intention is for air passenger duty to be a simple, broad-based tax at low rates with the minimum number of reliefs. The Government recognise that charities, including those such as the Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust, carry out extremely useful work, but it would not be appropriate to protect them from the general indirect taxes that apply to all other consumers. The Government's preferred way of helping charities is through covenant, gift aid and payroll-giving schemes.

Economic and Finance Council

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Council of Finance Ministers meeting on 21 October; and under what legislative authority and for what purpose the Council determined to reduce a fine imposed on two member states.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 25 October, which states that the effect of the council decision will be to increase, not reduce, the penalties suffered by the member states in question by some 1·1 becu.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what level of discretion the VAT authorities have in deciding whether to defer or cancel the collection of VAT from a firm.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The care and management of VAT is the statutory responsibility of the commissioners of Customs and Excise, whose discretion must be exercised reasonably in the circumstances of each case.

DEFENCE

Defence Animal Centre

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the chief executive of the Defence Animal Centre, Melton Mowbray, for the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Soames: The chief executive of the Defence Animal Centre has been set the following key targets for 1994–95, the agency's first year of operation:

(1) Establish service level agreements or equivalent with all major customers and suppliers.

(2) Meet at least 95 per cent. of the standard of service targets laid out in the SLAs.

(3) Increase overall business efficiency by at least 2·5 per cent.

(4) Implement the options for change reduction in manpower with minimal reduction in output.

(5) Develop an output-costing system which will measure the resources used to produce various outputs.

(6) Adopt a common syllabus for joint service dog training.

(7) Complete market testing feasibility study.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Report

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will hold consultations with local library authorities with a view to increasing the number of subscriptions to the *Official Report*.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Local authority libraries are well aware of the arrangements under which they can receive 50 per cent. discount on all HMSO publications, including the *Official Report*.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993, column *391*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mrs. Betty Maxwell

Mr. Byers: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to stop the publication and serialisation of works by Mrs. Betty Maxwell; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: As a result of representations made to me, my officials approached Macmillan Publishers Limited to ascertain whether they would be willing to provide an advance copy of the proposed book, "A Mind of My Own", by Elisabeth Maxwell and their co-operation was forthcoming. Having considered the book and taken advice from both junior and leading counsel, I concluded that its contents are not such as would justify an application to the High Court to restrain publication as being likely to create a substantial risk that the course of justice in the forthcoming criminal proceedings arising from the collapse of the Maxwell companies will be seriously impeded or prejudiced.

Macmillan Publishers Limited has been informed of the decision. My officials have made it clear to it that the conclusion reached by me relates only to the material which has been made available to me. If any material generated as part of the process of launching the book gives rise to concern, such material will need to be considered on its own merit. The same considerations apply also to reviews, comment or other reporting which may be triggered by publication of the book.

I have not sought or received material from Times Newspapers Limited, which owns the serialisation rights in relation to the book. It has, however, been informed of the conclusion reached and that it can relate only to the book as a whole. It is aware that separate consideration would need to be given to any serialisation which gave rise to concern as the result of editing or presentation which has been done in such a way as to alter the overall impact and effect of the book.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Attorney-General what changes he proposes to the Crown Prosecution Service's cash and running costs limits for 1994–95.

The Attorney-General: Yes. The cash limit for the Crown Prosecution Service administration vote, class IX, vote 6 will be reduced by £80,000 from £229,472,000 to £229,392,000. Within this total, the Department's running costs limit will be reduced by £80,000 from £224,472,000 to £224,392,000.

The decrease in the case limit and the running costs limit results from a transfer of funds to the Department of Social Security, class XIII, vote 4. The transfer will permit the Department of Social Security to meet the costs of prosecuting those cases which it has been agreed that it should prosecute in accordance with the criteria set out in R.V. Stafford Magistrates Court ex parte Commissioners of Customs and Excise [1991] 2 All ER 201.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 31 October 1994

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Hunting

Mr. Flynn: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what proposals he has to raise the subject of a ban on fox hunting and stag hunting on church land at the appropriate forum.

Mr. Alison: None. The Church Commissioners' long-standing policy on fox hunting is that our tenants should follow their own consciences in deciding whether or not to allow hunts on to land in their care. Our tenancy agreements do not, therefore, reserve the right of hunting to the landlord. This right rests with the tenant. No stag hunting takes place on land owned by the Church Commissioners.

HEALTH

Measles and Rubella Vaccine

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what work her Department is currently undertaking to develop a measles and rubella vaccine which is not dependent on a strain developed from cells from an aborted foetus.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not undertake vaccine development. MRC5, the cell culture in which the rubella vaccine is prepared, is used worldwide and no further foetal material has been involved since its development in 1966. Industry is not, as far as we are aware, seeking other culture media. However, there are many research groups actively investigating the application of new technologies such as the use of recombinant proteins for vaccine development. Such new vaccines may not require viruses to be grown in present cell culture methods.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the foetus, whose cells were used to develop the vaccine against measles and rubella being used in the current campaign to vaccinate all school children, had been aborted.

Mr. Sackville: All rubella vaccines, including the rubella vaccine being used in the measles and rubella schools immunisation campaign, are grown in cell culture whose cells are called MRC5. This cell line was developed from a small number of cells taken from a single foetus in 1966 and the cells have grown and replicated since and been used widely for growing viruses. The termination of pregnancy was carried out on medical grounds in a national health service hospital. No further foetal material has been involved since 1966. The vaccine is highly purified and does not contain any foetal tissue. There is no question of use of this vaccine enabling anyone to profit from a termination of pregnancy.

Measles vaccine is prepared on chick embryo tissue.

Aerosols

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those medical aerosols known to her Department that now contain chlorofluorocarbon gases.

Mr. Sackville: Records held by the Medicines Control Agency show that there are 184 products containing chlorofluorocarbons licensed under the Medicines Act for human use at present. A small number, which are listed, contain chlorofluorocarbons as active ingredients. The remainder contain chlorofluorocarbons used as excipients, usually in the form of a propellant. It is not normal practice to disclose excipients, since to do so could prejudice companies' commercially sensitive information, which they are required to provide to obtain a product licence.

Product Licences with Chlorofluorocarbons
Product Name
Deep Freeze Aerosol Spray
PR Freeze Spray (liquid aerosol)
Pain Relief Spray
Stingo (aerosol spray)
Ultrakool Aerosol Spray
Pharmaethyl (pressurized gas - aerosol presentation)
Burnzap
Fluothane
Ethrane or Enflurane (generic name)
[illegible]e or Isoflurane (generic name)
Isoflurane
Alyrane (nonflammable liquid)

Both the Government and industry are working towards replacement of CFC-containing medicinal products.

Influenza

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many working days on average are lost annually because of influenza.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected by the Department.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the national health service of each influenza vaccination.

Mr. Sackville: The basic cost of a pre-filled syringe of influenza vaccine is approximately £5.10. Reimbursement and remuneration for the general practitioner is about £1.00 per patient; this payment forms part of the general practitioner's total payment for providing general medical services.

Condoms

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of state for health if *(a)* dispensing general practitioners and *(b)* non-dispensing general practitioners are able, under terms and condition of service, to sell condoms to their patients.

Mr. Malone: General practitioners cannot sell condoms to their national health service patients.

General Practitioners

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to decrease bureaucratic requirements on general practitioners.

Mr. Malone: In 1991 we set up a working group on unnecessary bureaucracy, made up of representatives of the general medical services committee, family health services authorities and the Department of Health. It recommended a number of improvements to claim forms and guidance on simplified procedures. These were implemented in June 1991.

All subsequent changes to the general practitioner contract have been made in consultation with representatives of the profession. Among other considerations, these consultations ensure that the profession's views on such changes are fully addressed and that bureaucracy is kept to a minimum.

Unemployment

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the cost to the national health service of unemployment *(a)* in total and *(b)* by such smaller categories as are available.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Dental Problems

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients consulted general practitioners about dental problems in each of the last five years.

Mr. Malone: The information is not available centrally.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the privatisations which her Department has promoted since 1979, indicating, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Sackville: No part of the Department, its agencies or related bodies has been privatised since 1979.

Blood Supplies (North-West)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the average time taken to deliver blood supplies to hospitals throughout the north-west following the proposed closure of two blood transfusion centres.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority is satisfied that its proposal to establish a network of blood banks will enable it to continue to respond to emergency demand for blood without detriment to patient care and will result in an improved service to hospitals.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To [illegible] the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to replace the blood collected from the blood transfusion service at Lancaster for use throughout the north-west.

Mr. Sackville: The majority of blood donation does not take place at transfusion centres. Mobile collection teams go out into the community to conduct pre-arranged donation sessions. Under the NBA's proposals mobile teams would go out to donors in all areas whether the centres are amalgamated or not.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements she has made for the specialist provision of factor 8 to hospitals throughout the north-west of England following the proposed closure of two blood transfusion centres.

Mr. Sackville: The availability to hospitals of factor 8 will not be affected by the National Blood Authority's proposals.

Air Pollution

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the subjects of any reports currently being prepared by the committee on the medical effects of air pollutants, showing the time frames for *(a)* their completion and *(b)* their publication.

Mr. Sackville: Two sub-groups of the committee on the medical effects of air pollutants, on asthma and particles respectively, are expected to report back to the main committee by early 1995. The committee will consider their draft reports, with a view to agreeing publication as soon as possible thereafter.

In addition, a summary of COMEAP's work up to the end of 1994 is being prepared and will be published, jointly with material on the work of the advisory committee on the medical aspects of air pollution episodes. Publication is expected towards the end of this year.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each study undertaken for her Department this year on correlations between atmospheric pollution and the incidence of asthma and respiratory illnesses showing the time frames for *(a)* their completion and *(b)* their publication.

Mr. Malone: The relevant research studies funded in this year through the Department of Health's centrally commissioned programme are:

Middlesbrough Childhood Asthma study—University of Teesside 1 May 1994-30 April 1995.

Health Effects of the Nitrogen Dioxide Episode in London, December 1991–St. George's Hospital Medical School; 1 April 1993-28 February 1994.

Modified National Study of Health and Growth, which includes the prevalence of asthma in children-United Medical and Dental Schools (UMDS) of Guy's and St. Thomas's; 1 January 1993–31 December 1995 (part of a programme of work and not separately costed).

It is planned to commission two further studies this year which will begin in 1995.

Impact of Air Pollution and Temperature on General Practitioner Consultations—University College Medical School; 1 January 1995-31 December 1995.

Personal exposure to Air Pollutants and Severity of Hay Fever Symptoms in London Traffic Wardens-Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine; 1 February 1995–6 November 1995.

Reports arising from all these studies will be published in the normal way.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many employees of the London ambulance service were dismissed in 1993–94.

Mr. Sackville: I am advised by the London ambulance service that it dismissed five people in 1993–94. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. Martin Gorham, chief executive of the London ambulance service, for details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many employees of the London ambulance service were absent for *(a)* under 20 days, *(b)* 20 to 39 days and *(c)* over 40 days in 1993–94.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally in the form requested. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 20 October at column *308–9.*

NHS Estates

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what records are held by NHS Estates of transfers of land and property between health authorities, or health authorities and trusts in the Trent region.

Mr. Sackville: Transfers of property to trusts are agreed by the district health authority, and the legal transfers are effected by the regional authority on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The regional health authority and the trusts hold records of property transfers. NHS Estates may provide advice about policy matters, but is not involved in reaching agreement, and does not hold records of transfers. NHS Estates collects data on the size and value of the estate in the NHS.

Private Hospital Treatment

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many in-patients were treated in private hospitals for psychiatric specialties under contracts placed by *(a)* GP fundholders and *(b)* health authorities in the most recent year for which statistics are available;

(2) how many in-patients were treated in private hospitals for non-psychiatric specialties under contracts placed by *(a)* GP fundholders and *(b)* health authorities in the most recent year for which statistics are available;

(3) how may out-patients were treated in private hospitals for psychiatric specialties under contracts placed by *(a)* GP fundholders and *(b)* health authorities in the most recent year for which statistics are available;

(4) how many out-patients were treated in private hospitals for non-psychiatric specialilities under contracts places by *(a)* GP fundholders and *(b)* health authorities in the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Cannabis

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to reassess the case for permitting the prescribing of cannabis to those suffering from multiple sclerosis or glaucoma.

Mr. Sackville: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), met the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and a delegation from the Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics on 26 October to hear the case for making cannabis available for medical use. We intend to consider carefully the points made to us before coming to a view.

Any consideration of the use of cannabis as a medicinal product would have to take account of the potential risks associated with short and long-term use of cannabis.

Health Board Managers (Greenwich)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list *(a)* the names of the chairman, general manager or chief executive of the Greenwich health authority and its successor bodies and the Greenwich Healthcare Trust in each of the years since 1988–89 and *(b)* the amounts paid to each person by way of fees, salaries, other remuneration and expenses for each year;

(2) if she will list *(a)* the names of members serving on the Greenwich health authority, its successor bodies and the Greenwich Healthcare Trust in each of the financial years since 1988–89 and *(b)* the amounts paid to each member by way of fees, salaries, other remuneration and expenses for each year.

Mr. Malone: A list of chairmen, non-executive members and chief executives of Greenwich health authority, now Bexley and Greenwich health authority, since 1989 and Greenwich Healthcare Trust since 1992 will be placed in the Library.

The annual rates of remuneration are as follows:

	From April 1988	*From April 1989*	*From April 1990*	*From January 1991*	*From December 1991*
Chairmen	£11,868	£12,462	£17,437	£17,610	£19,285

Since 17 September 1990, non-executives have been remunerated at a rate of £5,000 per annum.

Details of expenses paid to chairmen and non-executives and the salary of the chief executives are not available centrally.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of severance pay or other financial remuneration paid or agreed to be paid by the Greenwich Healthcare Trust to its former chief executive.

Mr. Malone: This is a matter for the Greenwich Healthcare Trust and the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman for details.

Tobacco

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest assessment on the influence that tobacco advertising has on the numbers of children and teenagers who become smokers.

Mr. Sackville: With regard specifically to this age group, the report "Why Children Start Smoking", Office of Population Consensus and Surveys 1990, identified a number of risk factors associated with starting to smoke. The report concluded that

> "greater awareness of cigarette advertising is associated with a slightly increased likelihood of starting to smoke in the future. However, the effect appears to be small in comparison with some of the other influences on children such as the example set by parents and siblings."

The new voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry on advertising announced on 13 May contains measures further to restrict tobacco advertising in general and particular measures in relation to children and young people.

Staff Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 October, *Official Report,* column *451*, if she will provide comparable data on staff numbers on the revised basis for each year for which it is available since 1989.

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table.

General and Senior Managers by Region—England as at 30 September 1991 and 1992—Whole Time Equivalents

	1991	*1992*
England Total	14,500	17,700
Northern	770	770
Yorkshire	1,200	1,400
Trent	810	1,070
East Anglian	570	660
NW Thames	720	1,050
NE Thames	2,120	1,950
SE Thames	1,000	1,150
SW Thames	700	580
Wessex	860	990
Oxford	520	770
South Western	800	920
West Midlands	1,460	1,770
Mersey	740	900
North Western	1,000	1,270
SHAs and Others	1,230	2,460

Source:

Non-Medical Workforce Census and KM49 Returns.

Notes:

1. Figures previously published for 1989 and 1990 do not require amendment.
2. All figures are rounded to the nearest ten whole-time equivalents.
3. Totals may not equal the sum of the components due to rounding.
4. Special health authorities and others include London ambulance service, special health authorities, family health services authorities and other statutory authorities.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the privatisations which his Department has promoted since 1979, indicating, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Hague: None.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral Parliamentary question.

Mr. Hague: I refer my hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993 at column *391*.

Benefits (Values)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the combined value of child dependency addition and child benefit for the child of a widow or invalidity pensioner at current and April 1994 prices and as a percentage of average earnings in November 1979 and at each subsequent uprating date.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables.

Table 1

Uprating date	*Rate of child benefit plus child dependency increase for first child*	*Gross adult weekly average earnings*	*As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earnings*	*Equivalent value of benefit at April 1994 prices*
November 1979	£11·10	£100·60	11·0	£26·56
November 1980	£12·25	£120·20	10·2	£25·42
November 1981	£12·95	£132·40	9·8	£24·00
November 1982	£13·80	£142·40	9·7	£24·07
November 1983	£14·10	£156·70	9·0	£23·46
November 1984	£14·50	£167·00	8·7	£22·99
November 1985	£15·05	£178·70	8·4	£22·63
July 1986	£15·15	£189·10	8·0	£22·40
April 1987	£15·30	£198·90	7·7	£21·67
April 1988	£15·65	£218·40	7·2	£21·33
April 1989	£16·20	£239·70	6·8	£20·44
April 1990	£16·90	£263·10	6·4	£19·48
April 1991	£17·95	£284·70	6·3	£19·45
October 1991	£18·95	£294·70	6·4	£20·23
April 1992	£19·40	£304·60	6·4	£20·15
April 1993	£19·80	£316·90	6·2	£20·31
April 1994	£20·00	£328·50	6·1	£20·00

Table 2

Uprating date	*Rate of child benefit plus child dependency increase for subsequent children £*	*Gross adult weekly average earnings £*	*As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earnings*	*Equivalent value of benefit at April 1994 prices £*
October 1991	18·20	294·70	6·2	19·43
April 1992	18·65	304·60	6·1	19·13
April 1993	19·05	316·90	6·0	19·54
April 1994	19·25	328·50	5·9	19·25

Notes:

1 The figures apply to both widows and invalidity pensioners

2 Gross adult weekly earnings have been rounded to the nearest 10 pence.

3 From October 1991 the combined rate of child benefit and child dependency increases for the first child and subsequent children diverged. Table 2 reflects the rate in payment for subsequent children from that point.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the level of unemployment benefit in each year since 1979 expressed as a proportion of average male earnings in the same years.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table.

	Single rate unemployment benefit £	*As a percentage of average male earnings per cent.*
November 1979	18.50	16·2
November 1980	20.65	15·3
November 1981	22.50	15·1
November 1982	25.00	15·6
November 1983	27.05	15·7
November 1984	28.45	15·2
November 1985	30.45	15·3
July 1986	30.80	14·6
April 1987	31.45	14·0
April 1988	32.75	13·3
April 1989	34.70	12·9
April 1990	37.35	12·6
April 1991	41.40	13·0
April 1992	43.10	12·7
April 1993	44.65	12·6
April 1994	45.45	12·4

Notes:

1. Average earnings are taken from males all occupations (New Earnings Survey).

2. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his current calculation of the amount of *(a)* the basic pension, *(b)* the Christmas bonus and *(c)* child benefit allowance had they been increased since 1979 by (i) increase in prices and (ii) increase in earnings.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is in the table.

	Value at November 1979 £	*Current value if increased in line with prices £*	*Current value if increased in line with average earnings £*
Basic retirement pension	23·30	55·70	74·75
Christmas bonus	10·00	23·95	32·15
Child benefit	4·00	9·45	12·80

Notes:

1. Figures have been rounded to two decimal places.

2. In each step of the calculation the benefit has been rounded to the nearest 5 pence.

3. The retail prices index (all items) as published by Central Statistical Office has been used.

4. The average earnings index (whole economy unadjusted) as published by the Employment Department has been used to calculate the earnings upratings.

Advertising Costs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total cost in advertising *(a)* personal pensions and SERPS, *(b)* disability living allowance and disability working allowance and *(c)* family credit in each year in which a campaign has been run.

Mr. Roger Evans: The total costs for advertising by the Department of Social Security were:

Personal pension and SERPS

	£
1993–94	100,000

Disability living allowance and disability working allowance

	£
1991–92	3,043,000
1992–93	240,000
1993–94	803,000

Family Credit	£
1989–90	5,518,000
1990–91	3,894,000
1991–92	1,500,000
1992–93	950,000
1993–94	3,090,000

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reimburse appellants against a negative diagnosis of PP12 D chronic bronchitis and emphysema who obtain at their own cost International Labour Organisation standard soft exposure X-rays which contribute to a positive diagnosis.

Mr. Hague: No. If the medical appeal tribunal considers that an X-ray is needed to decide an appeal it is obtained by the Benefits Agency at no cost to the appellant.

Carers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for removing the age limit on elderly carers after the age of 65 years; what are the reasons for the age limit; and if he will consider allowing carers after the age of 65 to claim invalidity care allowance.

Mr. Hague: Invalid care allowance is intended for people of working age who give up the opportunity of full-time employment because of their caring responsibilities.

We have no plans to allow carers over the age of 65 to claim ICA.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to adapt the benefits system for carers in line with the recommendations of the social services committee and the social security advisory committee.

Mr. Hague: We welcome the contributions made by the committees. However, we have no plans at present further to amend the system of support for carers.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make it his policy to provide more financial assistance to carers;

(2) what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the use of savings on his Budget to provide more financial assistance to carers.

Mr. Hague: The Government recognise the contribution made by carers to society and will continue to keep the financial provision made for them under review.

It is not usual practice to divulge the nature of any discussions which may have taken place with the Chancellor of the Exchequer prior to his Budget statement.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons underlying the policy whereby a disabled person cannot claim the severe disability premium if the carer is receiving invalid care allowance.

Mr. Roger Evans: The severe disability premium is intended to give extra help to severely disabled people living independently, who are most likely to need to purchase care. Invalid care allowance is intended to provide a level of financial assistance to those people who have given up the opportunity of full-time employment because of their caring responsibilities. To pay both in respect of an individual's care needs would be to provide the same help twice.

TREASURY

Counterfeit Coins

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has concerning the circulation of counterfeit pound coins; what steps are being taken to deal with the problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: While there are some counterfeit £1 coins in circulation, the numbers are believed to be extremely small in relation to the total number of £1 coins in circulation.

Under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981, it is a criminal offence to make a counterfeit of a coin or to pass it on to another person. Where sufficient evidence of such activities exists, it is for the police to take action against those responsible.

Share Prices

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the reasons why recently floated companies fail to maintain their flotation share price.

Mr. Nelson: None. Share prices are determined by market forces. The stock exchange investigates any unusual price movements as part of it's responsibility for market supervision.

Life Insurance

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax barriers there are to life insurance companies selling their products throughout Europe; and what measures he proposes to remove them.

Sir George Young: The EC third life insurance directive which came into force on 1 July brings about a single European market for life assurance. Our insurers have a range of good products and a history of achieving good returns from their policyholders and they are therefore well placed to compete for business throughout Europe.

Insurers are taxed in the United Kingdom on the investment income and gains accruing for the benefit of their policyholders. In general, policyholders resident here have no further tax to pay when their policy benefits are paid. This is because the tax the life office pays is treated as satisfying their liability to tax at the basic rate. The tax regimes in other European countries do not all follow this approach. There, the investment income and gains accruing for policyholders are more likely to accrue free of any tax charge. Tax may therefore be payable when policy benefits are paid.

Our tax system already recognises to an extent that this is the approach in many other countries. United Kingdom insurance companies are not taxed on the investment income and gains accruing for the benefits of non-resident policyholders if the business is conducted through an overseas branch.

We shall be introducing legislation in the forthcoming Finance Bill to extend this tax treatment to most life insurance business written directly from the United Kingdom with an individual who is resident in another European state, or which is business written with an employer in another European state for the benefit of employees outside the United Kingdom. Such business will in future be taxed in the same way as branch business with a non-resident. United Kingdom branches of overseas life insurance companies will also be able to benefit from this treatment for business with residents of another European state.

The changes will apply to new contracts written in the first accounting period of an insurer beginning after today.

We are also making some consequential changes to the existing rules dealing with the investment income and gains and tax credits attributable to overseas life assurance business. New compliance and information requirements will also be introduced to ensure that only genuine non-residents will be able to take out policies falling within the special rules for overseas life assurance.

Further details are contained in an Inland Revenue press release which is being issued today.

Taxes Management Act 1970

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions proceedings commenced under section 99 of the Taxes Management Act 1970 in each of the last five financial years resulted in a penalty being assessed.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The numbers of cases in which penalties have been formally charged under section 99 in each of the last five years are as follows:

	Number
1989–90	—
1990–91	—
1991–92	—
1992–93	1
1993–94	—

Welsh Rugby Union

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress of the Inland Revenue's special investigations into Welsh Rugby Union; what tax has been recovered; what future arrangements have been made; and what similar inquiries have been made in England.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 28 October 1994]*: Rugby clubs are entitled to the same degree of confidentiality as any other taxpayers. It would not, therefore, be appropriate for me to comment any further.

PRIME MINISTER

Conduct of Public Life

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what recent meetings he has had with Lord Nolan; and what has been their purpose.

The Prime Minister: I met Lord Nolan on Wednesday 26 October to discuss various matters relating to the committee on standards in public life, including appointments of Members.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the proposed remuneration of the chairman and board members of the proposed committee on standards in public life.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* I shall publish this information shortly.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Prime Minister for what reasons peers are not included in the categories of persons to be considered by the Committee on the conduct of public life in respect of their parliamentary duties.

The Prime Minister: It is open to the committee to examine the standards of conduct to be observed by peers as parliamentarians, as Ministers and, indeed, as holders of other public offices.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Prime Minister if he will include in the terms of reference of the body which will investigate standards of public life the issue of funding of political parties.

The Prime Minister: No. The funding of political parties has already been the subject of an investigation by the Home Affairs Select Committee. Under the terms of reference I announced on 25 October, it is open to Lord Nolan's committee to consider concerns that appointments or other Government decisions may be influenced by political contributions.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his oral statement on standards of conduct in public life of 25 October, *Official Report*, col. 757, if he will indicate *(a)* who was the informant mentioned by the Cabinet Secretary in his report, *(b)* what proposals for a deal were put to him by the intermediary and *(c)* when he was first contacted by the intermediary.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the statement that I made to the House on Public Life (Standards of Conduct) on 25 October 1994, *Official Report*, columns *757-770*, and to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 25 October 1994, *Official Report*, columns *521-22*.

Inhumane Weapons

Mr. Alton: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to ratify the 1980–81 United Nations convention on inhumane weapons.

The Prime Minister: We continue to work actively towards ratification of the United Nations weaponry convention review conference. Meanwhile, we do, of course, adhere strictly to the provisions of the convention.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy that Ministers should give substantive answers to questions from hon. Members about the contents of books or reports in areas for which they have responsibility, which are published by sources other than the Minister's Department or a non-departmental public body operating in the area or public policy for which the Minister has responsibility.

The Prime Minister: It is for individual Ministers to decide how to answer parliamentary questions.

Mr. Al Fayed

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister on what date the note of his meeting with the informant acting on behalf of Mr. Al Fayed was passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Prime Minister: On 20 October 1994.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), of 20 October, *Official Report*, column *420*, what arrangements were proposed to him on behalf of Mr. Al Fayed; and if he will make a further statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the statement that I made to the House on Public Life (Standards of Conduct) on 25 October, *Official Report* 757–70.

Sanctions (Libya)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has had from the Arab league about Libyan sanctions.

The Prime Minister: I have received no such representations.

Al Fayed Brothers (Citizenship Application)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what representations have been made to him *(a)* by right hon. or hon. Members or *(b)* others concerning the applications for British citizenship by Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed and Mr. Ali Al Fayed.

The Prime Minister: So far as I am aware, none.

Public Sector Pay Review Bodies

Sir Giles Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister what is the current membership of the public sector pay review bodies.

The Prime Minister: The membership of the pay review bodies is as follows:

Review Body on Senior Salaries

Lord Nickson KBE DL (Chairman)
Professor George Bain
Sir Cecil Clothier KCB QC
Mr. Gordon Hourston
Sir Anthony Wilson
Sir Michael Perry CBE
Sir Sydney Lipworth QC
Mrs. Rosemary Day
Miss Patricia Mann
Mrs. Yve Newbold
Mr. Mark Sheldon

Review Body on Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine

Mr. Michael Bett CBE (Chairman)
Mr. Jan Hildreth
Miss Anne Mackie OBE
Professor Gillian Raab
Professor George Thomason CBE
Miss Diana Whittingham
Ms Ruth Lea
Mrs. Sheila Gleig

Armed Forces Pay Review Body

Mr Gordon Hourston (Chairman)
Mr Michael Bolton
Mr John Cox CBE
Mr John Crosby
Baroness Dean
Mrs Dorothy Venables
Air Chief Marshal Sir Roger Palin KCB OBE
Mr Guy Neely

Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration

Mr Brandon Gough (Chairman)
Mr Douglas Boyd
Ms Christina Boyden
Mrs Sally Field
Dr Elizabeth Nelson
Professor George Thomason CBE
Mr Dennis Fredjohn MBE
Mr David Penton

School Teachers' Review Body

Mr John Gardiner (Chairman)
Mrs Brigita Amey
Mr Alan Cox CBE
Mrs Gill Rostron
Mrs Anna Vinton
Mr Michael Harding
Mrs Julia Cuthbertson
Mr Philip Halsey CB LVO

Ministerial Conduct

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken to assure himself that the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) has, in all respects, complied with the guidelines laid down in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* Ministers have the responsibility to ensure that they comply with the guidelines in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". I have no reason to think that my right hon. Friend failed to do so.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister what declaration of continuing association with Messrs Hill Samuel was made by the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South and on what date.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* Because of his former association with Messrs Hill Samuel, my right hon. Friend gave instructions to his Department that he should play no part in the selection process, in 1993, of financial advisers to the Department of Transport for the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister on what date the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South intimated *(a)* his desire to leave the Government and *(b)* his intention to rejoin Hill Samuel.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* As was made clear in my right hon. Friend's resignation letter of 20 July, he had advised me earlier in the summer of his intention to leave the Government. I was informed of my right hon. Friend's decision to take up his appointment on 6 October.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister what intimation of potential conflict of interest was made by the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South when direction was given by his Department to the British Railways Board to establish a vendor unit; and on what date.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* British Rail decided to establish a vendor unit in order to co-ordinate sales: no direction was given by the Department of Transport.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements were intimated by the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South under paragraphs 128 to 134 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers"; and if advice was sought by him from the then Prime Minister's Private Secretary in terms of paragraph 132.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* My right hon. Friend's pension arrangements are a matter for him, but I am advised that they corresponded with the requirements of paragraphs 128-134 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", and no consultation with the then Prime Minister's Private Secretary was therefore necessary.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the contracts awarded by Her Majesty's Government to Messrs Hill Samuel between June 1979 and July 1994, with the value in each case.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions since 1 January 1991 the Cabinet Secretary has advised individual Ministers of his opinion on their conduct in relation to "Questions of Procedure for Ministers"; which Ministers were involved; and on what dates the opinion was given.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* Discussions between Ministers and the Cabinet Secretary are private.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will give details of the current inquiry into the system of public appointments and identify *(a)* when it was established, *(b)* its terms of reference, *(c)* its composition and *(d)* when it will report;

(2) if he will give details of the current inquiry into the governance of quangos; when it was established; what are its terms of reference; what is its composition; and when it will report.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* As I told the House on 20 October, I set up a working group in May to review the guidance to Departments on public appointments procedures. The terms of reference for the review are:

> "To examine, in consultation with departments, the principles that should govern the membership of public bodies and the methods used to identify potential candidates, including questions relating to equal opportunities and multiple appointments, and the procedures leading to disqualification from or premature termination of

appointments; and to consider whether amendments and additions need to be made to the 'Guide on Public Appointments procedures'."

The working group is chaired by the director of the public appointments unit and includes representatives from the Department of Employment, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health, the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Scottish Office, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury and the Welsh Office.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and I expect to receive the working group's report in a few weeks' time. I have also asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to look across the board at appointments to all public bodies and to make any further recommendations he thinks necessary. We shall be making any recommendations, together with the working group's report, available to the committee on standards in public life.

In addition, the Office of Public Service and Science and the Treasury are preparing, in consultation with Departments generally, a revision of "Non-Departmental Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments". This is intended to assist sponsor Departments on a range of matters concerning non-departmental public bodies. The guide was last revised in March 1992. Work on a further revision began in May, and the aim is to produce the revised guide when the parallel work on public appointments has been concluded. This, too, will be made available to the committee on standards in public life.

Economic and Finance Council

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will take steps to co-ordinate Government policy between the Treasury and the Home Office on the reduction of fines for law breaking in respect of persons, authorities or nations who refused to pay them, in relation to the decision made at the Council of Finance Ministers of the European Union on 21 October.

The Prime Minister: The decision taken at ECOFIN on 21 October was to increase the so-called "fine" imposed by the Commission on Italy and Spain by 1.1 becu, and not to reduce the penalties.

Although disallowance decisions taken by the Commission under the common agricultural policy are often colloquially described as fines, they are in fact completely different from fines imposed by criminal courts. I believe that co-ordination between the Treasury and the Home Office on these areas of policy is satisfactory.

Cabinet Secretary's Investigation

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 20 October, *Official Report*, columns *420–22*, in regard to the inquiry by the Cabinet Secretary, how many other cases there are of hon. Members who are now Ministers in respect of whom any inquiries are being or have been undertaken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answers of 20 October, *Official Report*, columns *420–22*, (1) which other hon. Members are being questioned by the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet;

(2) if he will *(a)* make a statement on the Cabinet Secretary's report when it is complete and *(b)* publish (i) its contents, including the nature of the complaints and where they originated, (ii) the evidence requested, (iii) details of interviews conducted, (iv) a full summary of points considered and (v) the conclusions drawn.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* I refer the right hon. and hon. Members to the statement that I made to the House on Public Life (Standards of Conduct) on 25 October 1994, *Official Report*, columns *757–770*, and to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 25 October 1994, *Official Report*, columns *521–22*.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) of 25 October, *Official Report*, column *521-22*, if he will identify the informant acting on behalf of Mohamed Al Fayed and all Ministers against whom allegations were made; and what documentary evidence has been requested and examined by the Cabinet Secretary as part of his investigation.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The answer to the first part of the question is no. On the identity of the Ministers against whom allegations were made, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave today to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr Morris). On the third part of the question, I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), on 25 October 1994 *Official Report*, columns *521-22*.

Butler Inquiry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) of 20 October, *Official Report*, columns *420-21*, how many Ministers are being or have been investigated by Sir Robin Butler; when he expects to receive the report; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury have confirmed that they were the subject of allegations investigated at my request by the Cabinet Secretary. No other Ministers were involved.

Mr. Ian Greer

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister on what dates on and after 29 September he has met Mr. Ian Greer of Ian Greer Associates.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* None.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what is the total number of public appointments which he is responsible for making or which require his approval; and if he will include figures for the Crown appointments on which he is responsible for advising Her Majesty the Queen;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, columns *367-68*, if he will give details of the Crown appointments on which he is responsible for advising Her Majesty the Queen.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* Further to the information on appointments already given to the hon. Member, I am listing those appointments on which at the present time I advise Her Majesty the Queen.

The total number of appointments for which I am responsible, including those on which I advise Her Majesty the Queen, cannot be accurately calculated since I have discretion in some cases as to how many appointments I make; and in the case of Church appointments some vacancies fall casually and unpredictably to the Crown by virtue of the Royal Prerogative.

Appointments made by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister

Astronomer royal
Bank of England
  Governor and Deputy Governor
  Executive and Non-Executive Directors
British Broadcasting Corporation
  Governors, including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman
Chancellor of the County Palatine of Durham
Church Commissioners
  Chairman and six others
The Churches Conservation Trust
  Chairman and members
Civil Service
  Head of the Home Civil Service (Cabinet Secretary)
  Board of Customs and Excise, Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Commissioners
  Board of Inland Revenue, Chairman and Commissioners including Deputy Chairman
  Clerk of the Crown in Chancery
  Civil Service Commissioners
  Her Majesty's Printer of Acts of Parliament (Controller of the Stationery Office)
  Procurator General (Solicitor General)
  Registrar General
Comptroller and Auditor General
Constables of
  Caernarvon Castle
  Flint Castle
  Harlech Castle
  Tower of London
Captain of Deal Castle
Crown Estate Commissioners
Data Protection Registrar
Development Commissioners
Ecclesiastical Appointments in England
  Archbishops of Canterbury and York
  Diocesan and Suffragan Bishops
  Deans
  Crown Canonries
  Crown Livings *c. 200*
  Appointments under the Royal Prerogative and Sede Vacante
Ecclesiastical Appointments in Scotland
  Her Majesty's High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland
Forestry Commissioners
Governor of the Isle of Wight
Health Service Commissioners for England, Wales and Scotland
Interception of Communications Tribunal
  Vice-President and members
Ministers of Her Majesty's Government
Senior Judiciary in England
  Lord Chief Justice of England
  Master of the Rolls
  Vice-Chancellor
  President of the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division
  Lords of Appeal in Ordinary
  Lord Justices of Appeal
  Court of Ecclesiastical Causes Reserved
Senior Judiciary in Scotland
  Lord Justice Clerk
  Lord Justice General and Lord President of the Court of Session in Scotland
Judge of the Arches Court of Canterbury and the Chancery Court of
York
King Edward's Hospital Fund for London
  President, or three Governors
Lord Clerk Register of Scotland
Lord Great Chamberlain
Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports
Lord-Lieutenants and Vice Lord-Lieutenants of
  England, Scotland, Wales and
  Northern Ireland
  Parliament
  The Speaker
  Clerk of the Parliaments
  Clerk of the House of Commons
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration
Honorary Physicians to The Queen
Poet Laureate
Police Complaints Authority
Chairman
Public Works Loans Board
  Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Commissioners
Receiver-General and Deputy Receiver-General of Jersey
Receiver-General of Guernsey
Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation
  Members, including President
Standing Royal Commissions, including Millennium Commission
Scholastic Appointments
  Regius Professors of Oxford and Cambridge
  School of Oriental and African Studies
    Governing Body members
  Provost of Eton
  Principal of King's College, Cambridge
  Master of Trinity College, Cambridge
  Master of Church College, Cambridge
Security Service Tribunal
  Members, President and Vice President

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Sri Lanka.

Mr. Baldry: I am planning to visit Sri Lanka from 15 to 16 November.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funding problems there are for the ECOMOG forces in Liberia; and how the United Nations intends to deal with this.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no information on the funding position of those states which have contributed troops to the ECOMOG peacekeeping effort. The UN trust fund for Liberia was set up in 1993, partly to help support troops of participating ECOMOG countries. So far, only three countries, including the United Kingdom, have contributed to the fund.

Middle East

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the result of the study tour organised by Her Majesty's Government of middle east countries related to British expertise in waste water, referred to in his letter of 16 September; and what proposals he has to help Libya, Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As presaged in my letter of 16 September, a group of middle eastern water specialists visited the United Kingdom from 17 to 21 October to take part in a study tour of British waste water facilities. They visited a wide range of facilities in this country.

The tour was arranged as a United Kingdom contribution to the work of the multilateral water working group, one of the five groups on the multilateral track of the peace process.

Libya, Iran and Iraq are not members of the multilateral water working group. None of their Governments have sought our help.

India

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Kashmir, Sind, Karachi and the Punjab.

Mr. Baldry: Clashes continue in Kashmir between militant groups and the Indian security forces. The law and order situation in Sind, and particularly in Karachi, remains unsettled. We are encouraged by the growing return to stability in Punjab.

Pakistan

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding the question of the violation of human rights in Pakistan.

(2) what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to Pakistan concerning the violation of human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We regularly raise our concerns about human rights with the Pakistani Government.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total cost of all assistance provided to the Falkland Islands in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the House on 20 April 1993 by my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd), which listed such expenditure from 1983. The following figures bring that reply up to date:

Gross public expenditure on aid to the Falklands

(£000s)

1992–93	58
1993–94	12 (provisional)

Additional assistance was provided by the diplomatic wing as follows:

Assistant under-secretary's programme budget

(£000s)

1992–93	5
1993–94	7

FCO scholarship awards scheme

(£000s)

1993–94	14

I have nothing to add to the statement made on 20 April 1993 about costs relating to the defence of the islands.

Iraq

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for trade with Iraq have been *(a)* put to the United Nations sanctions committee for consideration by the Government, *(b)* which companies tendered these applications, *(c)* how many applications have been granted and *(d)* which companies succeeded in the applications.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the interests of commercial confidentiality, we do not disclose details about export licences that have been issued. Given constant changes in procedures for submitting applications to the Iraq sanctions committee throughout the lifetime of the regime, the other information requested could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom policy of the statement by the Russian foreign Minister concerning the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Despite the efforts of the Russian Foreign Minister, Iraq has still not recognised the sovereignty of Kuwait or the Iraq-Kuwait border as demarcated by the United Nations.

There can be no question of lifting sanctions until Iraq complies with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Gough Island

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to establish Gough island in the Tristan da Cunha group as a world heritage site.

Mr. Goodlad: We have applied for Gough island's nomination for inclusion in the list of world heritage sites under the world heritage convention. An application was lodged with the world heritage committee of UNESCO in Paris on 12 October 1994.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet Libyan officials in Cairo about Lockerbie.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no such plans.

Nigeria

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there have recently been sales of British tanks to Nigeria.

Mr. Baldry: Yes. Details about the export of tanks can be found in the UK return to the UN register of conventional arms, a copy of which has been placed in the Libraries of the House. However, in December 1993 we and our European Union partners announced a series of measures against the Nigerian military Government, including restrictions on new export licence applications for defence equipment. Since that time, no new export licences have been granted for the supply of lethal equipment to the Nigerian armed forces.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

CERN

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to decide on the United Kingdom's future contribution to CERN; what estimates he has made as to how much it will be; what will be the cost for the other countries involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The United Kingdom's contribution to CERN is fixed by an agreed formula based on member states' GNP. The United Kingdom contribution for the 1994 is about £60·5 million. The contributions of all member states for 1994 are shown in the following table. The budgetary process for 1995 is underway and in the current CERN draft budget the United Kingdom's contribution is estimated to be of the order of £64 million.

Membership of CERN remains a high priority for the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council, which pays the United Kingdom's contribution. The full programme of work at CERN complements domestic particle physics research in the United Kingdom.

Research Councils (Redundancies)

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the current expenditure for each of the research councils on past redundancies.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: In the financial year 1993–94 the research councils then in existence incurred the following costs associated with redundancies (including early retirements and restructuring):

	£ million
Agricultural and Food Research Council	5·76
Economic and Social Research Council	0·02
Medical Research Council	4·00
Natural Environment Research Council	2·60
Science and Engineering Research Council	2·30
Total	£14·68

These figures include both payments in respect of departures in 1993–94 and ongoing payments in respect of earlier departures.

On 1 April 1994 the research council system was reorganised. The Agricultural and Food Research Council and the Science and Engineering Research Council ceased to exist and three new research councils came into being—the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council. The total expenditure by the research councils in 1994–95 on redundancies, as defined herein is currently estimated at around £16 million.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give a breakdown of people currently holding public appointments in terms of *(a)* age, *(b)* sex, *(c)* race and *(d)* the region in which they live.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: This information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: At 1 September, 28 per cent. of appointments to public bodies were held by women. Further details are available in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Statistics about the number of public appointments held by women at 1 September 1994 are still being collected, and will be published at the end of the year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list each public opinion survey commissioned by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies since 1 October 1992, showing for each the subject, objectives, total costs, the period in which it was conducted and the organisation from which it was commissioned.

Sir John Wheeler: The information has been placed in the Library.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Sir John Wheeler: No record is kept of such estimates.

Prosecution Costs

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the arrest, prosecution and appeal for Neil Latimer, Noel Bell, Jim Hegen and Winston Allen since 1983; and how much money it has cost the state to pursue this matter.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Post

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department has spent on postage, and how many items have been posted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The amount spent on postage by the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments in the last five years is:

	£
1989–90	4,231,360
1990–91	4,884,984
1991–92	6,059,985
1992–93	6,387,424
1993–94	6,889,320

The Northern Ireland Office can provide information only for 1993–94. Computerised records are not held for the previous years and many of the manual records have been fire damaged.

No statistics are available on the number of items posted.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Sir John Wheeler: The Cabinet Office publication, "Public Bodies 1993", copies of which are available in the Library, gives a figure of 30 per cent. of public appointments in Northern Ireland being held by women. The 1994 figures are still being collected and will be announced in due course.

Irish Language

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what new proposals he has to promote and support the Irish language.

Sir John Wheeler: A draft order will shortly be laid before Parliament which will include a power to enable district councils to erect street names in a second language other than English. In practice, the second language is most likely to be Irish.

Classical Swine Fever

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of classical swine fever occurred in each year since 1985.

Mr. Ancram: There have been no cases of classical swine fever recorded in Northern Ireland since 1985.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Members' Interests

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will recommend the addition of a new requirement from hon. Members to register the amounts paid to them from all sources for parliamentary work in the Register of Members' Interests.

Mr. Newton: This is a matter for the Select Committee on Members' Interests. The hon. Member can, if he wishes, make a formal proposal to the Committee.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Charging Practice

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the Attorney-General what steps have been taken this year to improve charging practice.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service and the police have together set up a charging standards group to develop joint guidance to assist police officers when instituting criminal proceedings to select the most appropriate charge.

Prosecution of Summary Offences

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he is taking to review the costs of, and time taken for, preparation of prosecution cases for summary offences.

The Attorney-General: The police and Crown Prosecution Service are participating in a pilot study in six police forces on the production of abbreviated files.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has for allowing barristers employed by the Crown Prosecution Service to have rights of audience to act for it.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service is pursuing its application to the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee for rights of audience in the higher courts. The decision is a matter for the Lord Chancellor and the designated judges.

Brendan Smyth

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General on what dates and to what extent representations were made to the Irish Attorney-General about the delay in responding to the RUC's warrant for the extradition of Brendan Smyth; what reasons were offered; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the Minister for Justice answered a question on this case in the Dail on 25 October 1994.

Officials of my Department regularly communicate with the Irish Attorney-General's Office about cases where a request for extradition to the United Kingdom has been made. This case figured in such contacts before it became apparent, in November 1993, that there was a prospect of Brendan Smyth coming voluntarily to Northern Ireland to face trial.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General how long it took to effect the extradition of Brendan Smyth from the Irish Republic following the consideration of the RUC's request in the appropriate Irish court.

The Attorney-General: On 29 April 1993, the RUC delivered to the Garda warrants for the arrest of Brendan Smyth and a request for his extradition. Extradition proceedings were not instituted in the Irish courts before he came to Northern Ireland of his own volition, appearing in court there on 21 January 1994.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General how long the Attorney-General of the Irish Republic took to initiate the appropriate judicial and courts process in response to the RUC's extradition warrant for Brendan Smyth.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Member is referred to my previous answers.

EDUCATION

Cornish Language

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to increase resources that are available to promote the teaching of the Cornish language.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend does not make resources available specifically for this purpose. Schools are, of course, free to provide teaching in the Cornish language from within their general resources, if there is demand.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many copies of the videotape promoting opt-out schools have been made; and at what cost;

(2) what were the production costs of the videotape promoting opt-out schools;

(3) how many copies of the videotape promoting opt-out schools have been distributed; to whom; and at what cost.

Mr. Robin Squire: The videotape, "Our Children, Our Choice", provides factual information on grant-maintained status through the experience of four schools. The production costs were some £48,000, and 10,000 copies have been made at a further cost of £16,000. Between June and September this year about 3,500 copies were distributed, including 500 which were sent to grant-maintained headteachers and governors. The remainder are being made available at the Department's "Going GM" conferences or in response to requests from schools and the public. The videotape frequently forms part of a larger order for publications about grant-maintained status and it is therefore not possible to identify specific distribution costs.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications have so far been considered by her Department from schools seeking grant-maintained status; how many such applications are currently under consideration; and what is the normal length of time taken for the processing of such applications.

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of 1,125 schools have so far applied for grant-maintained status. Of these applications, 28 are currently being considered by the Department.

Applications are processed, on average, within about two months of the end of the statutory period for submission of objections. That average time would be shorter but for the minority of difficult cases requiring prolonged consideration, for example where the local education authority has published conflicting proposals affecting the school.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which Department or office provides the inspectors who visit schools at her behest when considering applications for grant-maintained status; how long on average it takes inspectors to provide a report on their visit; how many such reports in total are currently awaited by her Department; and what steps she is taking to ensure the speedy and efficient delivery of such reports in the future.

Mr. Robin Squire: Schools applying for grant-maintained status are visited by inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education. No record is kept of the average time it takes for inspectors to provide a report of their visit but reports are normally provided speedily. Where the period following the publication of proposals includes school holidays during which the school cannot be visited, the process inevitably takes longer. Eleven reports on applications for grant-maintained status are currently awaited by the Department. Both Ofsted and the Department keep their procedures under continuous review to ensure that they are as efficient as possible.

Chinese Students

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column 416, if she will make it her policy to increase the funding available to Chinese students.

Mr. Boswell: The answer that I gave on 24 October should have said that Chinese students will receive a total of £3·174 million funding in financial year 1994–95 under the overseas research students awards scheme funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for England, as well as £1·136 million funding from FCO, ODA and British Council scholarship schemes for overseas students during the same period. However, it is not possible to identify how much of this funding will benefit students who wish to study English with the aim of becoming translators. The ORSAS awards are available on a competitive basis to students of outstanding merit and no account is taken of nationality. We do not intend to increase the amount of funding to students from any particular nation. Decisions on any increases in other schemes would be taken by FCO, ODA and the British Council.

Teachers

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what recent representations she has received from teaching unions about the difficulties faced by their members when subjected to unsubstantiated allegations of physical or sexual abuse of pupils; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what steps are taken by her Department to protect teachers against the effect of false allegations of physical and sexual abuse upon pupils;

(3) how many complaints were made in the latest year for which figures are available alleging physical or sexual abuse of pupils by teachers; how many of those complaints are expected to lead to criminal charges being laid; and what plans she has to review guidelines in this area;

(4) what compensation is made available to teachers who are unable to continue their careers following unsubstantiated, false and malicious allegations of physical or sexual abuse by pupils; and what plans she has to review policy in this area.

Mr. Forth: My officials and I have held a number of meetings in the last 12 months with representatives of the National Union of Teachers, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the Professional Association of Teachers, the National Association of Head Teachers and the Secondary Heads Association to discuss allegations of abuse against their members. The Department is now considering what new guidance might be issued about child protection and allegations of abuse. No comprehensive figures are available of the number of allegations of physical or sexual abuse made against teachers, or of how many of these lead to criminal charges. A recent survey relating to misconduct more generally suggested that while only 7 per cent. of allegations in 1992–93 had led to conviction for a criminal offence, a further 40 per cent. had been found substantiated and resulted in disciplinary action. Compensation where allegations are shown to be unfounded is in the first place a matter for employers.

Grant for education support and training Programme

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for 1992–93 and 1993–94, the amount spent in each London borough, with a total for each training and enterprise council area, under the part of the grant for education support and training programme now incorporated into the single regeneration budget, and the amount allocated to be spent in 1994–95 on the same basis.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment gave to the hon. Member on Thursday 27 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *813*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Mine Clearance Operations

41. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training the Government provide to personnel involved in mine clearance operations in the removal of anti-personnel mines with self-neutralising or self-destruct mechanisms which have failed to self-neutralise or self-destruct; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We fund a number of UN-sponsored operations, and operations of specialised non-governmental organisations which provide training applicable to the individual mines identified in their areas of operation.

Rwanda

42. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support is being given to help non-government work in Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: Since 6 April, we have specifically provided £15.5 million to non-governmental organisations implementing emergency relief programmes to displaced and refugee Rwandans.

Somaliland

43. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the provision of development aid and assistance to the Republic of Somaliland by British and by international organisations including the European Union.

Mr. Baldry: Since May 1991 we have provided £5·3 million of humanitarian assistance to north-west Somalia. ODA established an NGO liaison and support office in Hargeisa in April.

India

44. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet members or representatives of the Indian Government to discuss overseas aid.

Mr. Baldry: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development plans to visit India from 4 to 8 December to see a number of our aid projects and discuss the aid programme with state and Government Ministers.

Baltic States

46. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new proposals he has to extend the scope of the know-how funds in the Baltic states.

Mr. Baldry: The know-how fund in the Baltic states continues to provide rapid and flexible help for the reform process. It is very much welcomed by the countries concerned.

Malaysia

47. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Malaysia to discuss aid with Ministers of the Malaysian Government.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what current overseas development assistance is given to Sierra Leonne by Britain and the European Union; and if he will list the projects assisted by purpose, value and implementing body.

Mr. Baldry: In the current financial year, British aid is expected to amount to around £1.5 million on technical assistance, plus £0.35 million on humanitarian aid. Further details are set out in the table.

European Community assistance in 1993 was 20.4 mecu. This comprised: national indicative programme 11.9 mecu; structural adjustment support 2.3 mecu; STABEX—agricultural commodity income support programme—3.4 mecu; other 2.8 mecu.

Further details may be found in the 1993 annual report on co-operation between the European Union and the Republic of Sierra Leone, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

United Kingdom Bilateral Aid Projects currently being implemented in Sierra Leone

Project	*Purpose*	*UK contribution £ Sterling*	*Implementing Body*
Moyamba Health: Water & Sanitation	Provision of clean water and sanitation to reduce diarrhoeal diseases	977,800	*CARE (UK)*
Customs and Excise Adviser	Assistance with customs revenue collection to improve economy	281,000	*ODA*
ASYCUDA (Automated System of Customs Data)	To increase customs efficiency and receipts and minimise risk of fraud	140,000	*ODA/UNCTAD*
Income Tax Adviser	Assistance with income tax collection to improve economy	240,000	*ODA*
Police Training Adviser	Provision of advice and training for Police Force to improve police efficiency	440,000	*ODA*
Constitution	Assistance with the drafting of new Government constitution, to help forward democratic process	60,000	*ODA*
Energy Sector Review	A review of woodfuels and household energy to identify options for improvement to satisfy current and future demands	110,000	*ODA/World Bank*
Education Administration Advisers	To advise on administration restructuring and financial management in Sierra Leone's Education Department	32,000	*ODA*
Records Management Feasibility Study	To prepare a project for the improvement of Public Administration records	23,000	*Overseas Records Management Trust*
Economic Planning Workshop	To review aid monitoring and management process in Department of Development and Economic Planning, and identify requirements for a Management Information System	12,800	*The British Council*
Agricultural Certificate Training Centre, Njala	Provision of advice, equipment, and UK training awards for Agricultural Training Centre	297,000	*Berkshire College of Agriculture*
Good Government Fund	Provision of advice and equipment to assist with progress towards democratic government	100,000*	*ODA/The British High Commission*
United Kingdom Training Programme	Provision of UK training awards for selected Sierra Leone citizens	316,000*	*The British Council*
Heads of Mission Gift Scheme	Provision of developmentally useful gifts to local institutions	20,000*	*The British High Commission*
Heads of Mission Small Projects Scheme	Provision of developmentally useful small projects to local communities and institutions	40,000*	*The British High Commission*
Emergency Humanitarian Aid (1994–95)			
Red Cross Emergency Relief Operation	Provision of emergency medical supplies and health education programmes to displaced persons in Kenema, Mogbosi, Bomboli and Tomkolili districts	200,000	British and Sierra Leone Red Cross Societies

United Kingdom Bilateral Aid Projects currently being implemented in Sierra Leone

Project	*Purpose*	*UK contribution £ Sterling*	*Implementing Body*
Relief Supplies for Displaced Persons	Distribution of emergency food, medical supplies and clothing for displaced persons in Moyamba district	60,500	Plan International (United Kingdom)
Emergency Health Facilities and Medical Supplies for Displaced Persons' Camps	Provision of emergency health facilities and medical supplies to camps in Gonduma, Gerihun, Bo and Kenema	91,000	Concern Universal

*Allocations for 1994–95

Palestine

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made with the Palestinian national authority in establishing satisfactory forms of financial accountability that allow the efficient and effective disbursement of aid.

Mr. Baldry: Agreement has been reached with the Palestinian authority on a mechanism for the proper and efficient disbursement of the £3 million which we are providing towards Palestinian police salaries. The United Nations works and relief agency, which has long experience of paying salaries under conditions that are subject to audit, is being used as paying agent.

In addition, United Kingdom consultants working with the Palestinian authorities monitor payments and check that the correct amounts are paid to the police officers.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give a progress report on the use of British aid to help the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza.

Mr. Baldry: We have pledged £75 million in aid for the Palestinians and in support of the peace process, for the three years 1994–95 to 1996–97. Most of this will be channelled through the programmes of the European Community. The EC has fully committed its programme for this year. Some of our aid will go through the United Nations relief and works agency, to which we have provided £6 million this year.

Our bilateral programme has spent £3.5 million so far this financial year. The projects include support for the police, the water sector and health care.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the international donors' meeting in Paris between 6 and 9 September at which the disbursement of aid to the Palestinian national authority was discussed.

Mr. Baldry: The international donors' meeting in Paris between 6 and 9 September was postponed due to bilateral political issues. No new date for such a meeting has been set.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the current humanitarian needs in Sudan.

Mr. Baldry: Harvest prospects are good in most parts of the country, although localised areas of need will remain. United Nations agencies are currently completing an assessment of humanitarian needs for 1995. The conclusions are expected to be made available shortly.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which parts of Sudan are currently inaccessible to international humanitarian relief organisations.

Mr. Baldry: Operation Lifeline Sudan was refused access in September to four of the 77 destinations designated as relief distribution centres: Boma, Kongor, Nimule and Pariang. These are all located in areas of military activity. Access to the Nuba Mountains is as described in my answer of 25 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *546*.

Yemen

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had in relation to the suspension of Britain's overseas aid to the Yemen.

Mr. Baldry: The outbreak of civil war made it impossible to continue with our aid projects. The decision to suspend our bilateral programme was taken at ministerial level. Aid funds were channelled instead to the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide humanitarian relief.

Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent action his Department has taken to protect rain forests.

Mr. Baldry: Our policy is to help and encourage countries with rain forests to manage them sustainably. The Overseas Development Administration has around 200 forestry projects in progress or under consideration, at an expected cost to the aid programme of about £157 million. In July we hosted with the Government of India an international workshop in New Delhi which successfully agreed a standard format for countries to use to report to the United Nations commission on sustainable development on progress in implementing the forest principles agreed at the 1992 earth summit.

Know-How Funds

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the know-how fund projects that have been used for the production or promotion of *(a)* alcoholic drinks and *(b)* tobacco products.

Mr. Baldry: No know-how fund projects have addressed directly the production or promotion of alcoholic drinks. Privatisation programmes in Hungary and Romania have included advice on the privatisation of breweries and one project in Bulgaria will advise the management of a brewery on an employee buy-out. A visit by a Georgian trade team to Britain, to help develop their export potential, included a component on the management and marketing of wine. Nine managers who have undertaken attachments to United Kingdom companies under a scheme to increase management experience have come from or been attached to companies with some interest in alcoholic drinks. This scheme has, since 1990, brought more than 650 managers to the United Kingdom. Two pre-investment feasibility studies have concerned firms involved in the alcoholic beverages sector.

On tobacco products, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend, the Member for Morecombe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd) on 25 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *654*. No managerial attachments involving the tobacco sector have taken place since then, nor has any other support to tobacco sector projects been provided from the know-how fund.

Aid

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria are used to determine whether United Kingdom funding of aid projects will promote the economic development of the recipient country.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answers that I gave to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 26 October 1994 at column *713*.

EMPLOYMENT

Whitland and Longridge Creameries

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has imposed a request for a 90-day consultation period with the relevant trade unions at the Whitland and Longridge creameries following the announcement of 156 and 102 staff redundancies at the two creameries on 21 October.

Mr. Oppenheim: Statutory arrangements concerning redundancy consultation are set out in part IV, chapter II of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. These arrangements provide for application to an industrial tribunal by a recognised trade union where it is alleged that the employer has not complied with the requirements.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the types of special reasons approved by his Department under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 which set aside the requirement for 90 days' consultation with the relevant trade union when more than 100 staff were made redundant.

Mr. Oppenheim: It is for an industrial tribunal to determine whether there are "special circumstances" justifying an employer's failure fully to comply with the duty to consult trade union representatives about proposed redundancies.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what date he was informed by Dairy Crest that it intended to make 156 staff redundant at its Whitland creamery in Dyfed and 102 staff redundant at its Longridge creamery in Lancashire.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information contained in statutory redundancy notifications is supplied in confidence.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces (Cyprus)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were made in each of the past two years against members of the British forces serving in Cyprus.

Mr. Soames: Complaints against members of British forces in Cyprus can be made to a number of agencies. The information requested is not therefore held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving members of the British forces in Cyprus have been sent home to the United Kingdom following disciplinary procedures in each of the past two years.

Mr. Soames: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of disciplinary cases heard against members of the British forces in Cyprus, the number upheld, the nature of those complaints and the consequent sentence, for each of the past two years.

Mr. Soames: Information about the number of disciplinary cases heard against members of the British forces in Cyprus is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, central records are held of courts martial and of cases heard in Cypriot civil courts or the sovereign base area court where, if found guilty, service personnel may receive a penal sentence. A breakdown of these cases over the last two years is as follows:

Number	*Charge*	*Finding/sentence*
1993		
1	Unauthorised phone calls	Guilty - reduced in rank
1	Attempted arson/arson	Guilty - three-year custodial sentence and dismissed from HM Forces
1	Common assault and assault occasioning actual bodily harm (OABH)	Guilty - eight months' detention
4	Assault OABH	All Guilty -six months' detention -nine months' detention -Reduced in rank and stoppages of pay £400 -nine months' detention and stoppages of pay £250

Number	*Charge*	*Finding/sentence*
1	Obtaining property by deception, avoiding liability by deception forgery	Not guilty
1	Theft	Guilty - 56 days' detention and reduced in rank
1994		
1	Fraud	Guilty - 4 months' imprisonment
1	Criminal damage	Guilty - eight months' imprisonment
1	Improperly entering the female accommodation	Guilty - Reduced in rank
1	False accounting	Guilty - Reduced in rank, six months detention and dismissed from HM forces
1	Common assault and assault OABH	Guilty - 112 days' detention and stoppages of pay £300
3	Drink-related driving offences	All Guilty -Fined £150-Fined £600-Fined £500
2	Disobedience to standing orders	Guilty - 28 days' detention
1	Assault OABH	Guilty - seven months'detention and stoppages of pay £250
1	Assault OABH	Not guilty
1	Failing to provide a specimen of breath after an accident	Not guilty
1	Theft	Guilty - Fined £400
2	Absence without leave	Both guilty -112 days' detention-five months' detention
1	Wounding	Guilty - Fined £2000
1	Theft, false instrument and forgery	Guilty - six months' detention and stoppages of pay £1,448 90p
1	Common assault and drunkenness	Guilty - Reduced in rank

Note:

Figures exclude cases heard in Cyprus where the offences were committed elsewhere.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number and nature of complaints made in each of the past two years against members of the British forces in Cyprus; and how many recorded cases there have been of assualt, criminal damage, rape, attempted rape, grievous bodily harm and actual bodily harm.

Mr. Soames: Information about the number and nature of complaints against members of the British forces in Cyprus is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, central records are held of courts martial and of cases heard by a civilian court or the sovereign base area court where, if found guilty, service personnel may receive a penal sentence. Details of cases in the categories requested which have been heard in the last years are as follows:

	1993	*1994*
Criminal damage	—	1
Common assault and drunkeness	—	1
Common assault and assault occasioning actual bodily harm	1	1
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	4	[1]2
Grievous bodily harm	—	—
Rape	—	—
Attempted rape	—	—

Figures exclude cases heard in Cyprus but where the offence was committed elsewhere.

Note:

[1] In one of these cases the verdict was not guilty.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number and rank of those members of the British forces stationed in Cyprus who have been court martialled either while on the island or in the United Kingdom in each of the past two years.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

1993	1994 (to date)
1 Sergeant	1 Lieutenant[1]
1 Corporal	1 Flying officer
2 Senior aircraftmen	1 Master air load master
5 Private soldiers	1 Staff sergeant
	4 Corporals[2]
	1 Lance-corporal
	1 Senior aircraftmen
	7 Private soldiers

Figures exclude cases where the court martial was held in Cyprus but the offence was committed elsewhere.

Note:

[1] Found not guilty.

[2] One of the corporals found not guilty.

Gulf War Syndrome

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 17 October, *Official Report*, column *40*, what action he has taken to examine allegations about Gulf war syndrome sickness.

Mr. Soames: A medical assessment programme has been established for all former Gulf personnel who have come forward with concerns about their health. As part of the assessment they are given a very detailed medical examination consisting of tests and investigations tailored to the patient's medical and occupational history, their reported symptoms and clinical signs. In addition to clinical information gained through these assessments, we are kept informed of relevant developments by former Gulf allies, including the findings of the ongoing American medical assessment programme for United States Gulf veterans.

Information from the medical assessment programme and from other recognised scientific sources is reviewed by medical and scientific experts in my Department covering a range of specialities, including general medicine, occupational medicine, public health medicine, pathology and psychiatry. These investigations have produced no evidence of any medical condition peculiar to service in the Gulf.

Arms Sales (Indonesia)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to sell Scorpion tanks and further Hawk aircraft to Indonesia.

Mr. Freeman: A commercial contract was concluded by industry last year for a further 24 Hawk aircraft to Indonesia. No further Hawk contract has been signed. I also understand that no contract for Scorpion vehicles has yet been signed by Industry. Details of negotiations are commercially confidential between the customer and supplier, but the export of military goods from the United Kingdom has been and will continue to be subject to export control which takes into account defence and foreign policy considerations.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Soames: My Department makes no record of this information.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr Soames: I refer the hon. Member to "Public Bodies 1993", which shows the number of women serving on MOD non-departmental public bodies. The 1994 figures are still being collated and will be announced in due course.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Residence Permits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average processing time of his Department is in respect of applications for *(a)* residence permits for migrant citizens of the European Union and *(b)* residence documents of their third country national family members, as at October 1994; and what it was in October 1993.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information available on processing times for deciding applications for residence documents during October 1993 and September 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, is as follows:

	Residence permits	*Residence documents*
October 1993	67 per cent. within one month	48 per cent. within one month
	85 per cent. within two months	74 per cent. within two months
	98 per cent. within six months	96 per cent. within six months
September 1994	57 per cent. within one month	38 per cent. within one month
	77 per cent. within two months	57 per cent. within two months
	98 per cent. within six months	86 per cent. within six months

In consequence of the European Economic Area agreement the figures for September 1994 include applications relating to nationals of Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden as well as European Union nationals.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the longest period during which an application for *(a)* residence permits for a migrant citizen of the European Union and *(b)* a residence document for the third country national family member of such a person has been outstanding as at October 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As at 1 October 1994, the longest period for which a residence permit application had been outstanding was 10 months and the longest period for a residence document application 46 months.

Cyprus

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made since July in respect of returning to British jurisdiction fugitives from justice resident in Turkish-occupied Cyprus.

Mr. Maclean: The situation which existed in July remains unchanged. We have an extradition arrangement with the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, whose writ does not run in the north of the island. We do not recognise northern Cyprus as a separate state. We have made it clear to the Turkish Cypriot "authorities" that we shall continue to press for the return of fugitives resident there.

Doncaster Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the incidents, giving in each case the date, type of incident with brief details, and the outcome, at Doncaster prison since 20 June to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 31 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for a list of incidents, giving in each case the date, type of incident with brief details, and the outcome, at Doncaster prison from 20 June to the latest available date.

Incidents reported by establishments to Prison Service Headquarters fall into the two categories of "major" or "minor" as defined in Prison Service Circular Instruction 18/1988. Details of incidents reported by Doncaster during the period in question are attached.

Major Incidents From 20 June 1994 to 30 September 1994: HMP Doncaster

ESCAPES

10 August 1994

An unsentenced prisoner charged with criminal damage, escaped posing as a visitor. A visitor who then tried to leave was stopped as the photo image machine revealed a discrepancy. The police were called and the visitor arrested. Police enquiries resulted in the prisoner being recaptured within 30 minutes.

MAJOR ASSAULTS

28 July 1994

One prisoner attacked another, punching him about the head and body with his fists. Minor injuries were treated in the prison Health Care Centre.

22 August 1994

One prisoner was attacked by several unknown assailants. There were no serious injuries. He was treated in the prison Health Care Centre.

22 August 1994

One prisoner was attacked by three unknown assailants. There were minor injuries, which were treated in the prison Health Care Centre.

25 August 1994

A prisoner was arguing with a custody officer and suddenly punched the officer on the shoulder. There were minor injuries but no treatment was required.

26 August 1994

One prisoner was attacked by two other prisoners in an argument over property. There were minor injuries which were treated in the Health Care Centre.

27 August 1994

One prisoner was punched and kicked by two other prisoners. Minor injuries were treated in the Health Care Centre.

DEATH OF A PRISONER/SUICIDE

16 August 1994

A young offender serving two years eight months for wounding, with a release date of 12 June 1995, was found hanging from the cell window bars at 0055 hours. He was cut down and medical assistance was called. He was taken to Doncaster Royal Infirmary but died in hospital at 1230 hours.

16 September 1994

A prisoner was found by his cell mate hanging from his bunk bed by means of a ligature fashioned from boot laces. Attempts to resuscitate him failed.

FIRE

27 July 1994

A prisoner, located in the Segregation Unit, set fire to his bedding and required outside hospital treatment.

4 August 1994

Prisoners on 1A Wing were evacuated when a fire broke out in the shower area. The fire was put out and the prisoners returned to the wing.

CONCERTED INDISCIPLINE

6 July 1994

A number of prisoners refused orders to lock up. They threw rubbish about and confronted staff. After one and three quarter hours they were located in their cells without force being used.

2 August 1994

About 30 prisoners forced open a gate lock allowing them access to the perimeter walkway. Full incident procedures followed. Staff gained Control and all prisoners were locked away 45 minutes later.

13 August 1994

About 15 prisoners refused to return to their cells at lock up. Some armed themselves with blunt instruments and attempted to build a barricade. Control and Restraint teams were deployed but the incident was resolved without the use of force.

16 August 1994

A number of prisoners refused to return to their cells. Minor damage was caused. They went to their cells an hour later. Four prisoners were located in the Segregation Unit.

22 August 1994

A number of prisoners damaged equipment and fittings on C Wing and set several fires in recesses and cells. The wing was evacuated and staff extinguished the fires. No injuries were reported and damage was minimal.

29 August 1994

A series of acts of indiscipline occurred on Houseblock 3 during the evening, including the barricading of a television room. The wing returned to normal following talks with the prisoners.

3 September 1994

Five prisoners refused to leave the exercise yard. They set fire to rubbish in the yard which was extinguished by staff. One prisoner was located in the Segregation Unit.

8 September 1994

Prisoners on A Wing refused to return to their cells at normal lock up time. They attempted to build barricades. Staff negotiated with them and they returned to their cells.

10 September 1994

A number of prisoners refused to return to their cells at lock up because they wanted to watch boxing on television. All prisoners returned to their cells 50 minutes later.

KEY/LOCK COMPROMISE

21 August 1994

A number of prisoners kicked down a wooden door in the gymnasium and removed the lock. The lock was returned to staff the next morning. The Director and Controller were satisfied that the lock had not been tampered with.

MAJOR MISCELLANEOUS INCIDENTS

8 July 1994

A quantity of amitryptaline was taken from the hospital trolley. Neither the tablets nor the container was found.

6 August 1994

A prisoner complained about the canteen prices and then went on to damage windows in the observation room.

17 August 1994

A prisoner was released in error at Barnsley Magistrates' Court. There was an outstanding warrant to Sheffield Crown Court.

Drug Incidents

Date of Incident	*Type of Drug/Equipment*	*How Found*
17 July 1994	Cannabis	Search of visitor
22 July 1994	Cannabis	Search of visitor
8 August 1994	Heroin	Cell search
13 August 1994	Heroin	Cell search
14 August 1994	Cannabis	Information received
21 August 1994	Cannabis	Search of visitor
22 September 1994	Amphetamines	Cell search
22 September 1994	Cocaine	Cell search
24 September 1994	Cocaine	Property search
24 September 1994	Cocaine	Cell search

Minor Incidents[1] from 20 June 1994 to 30 September 1994: HMP Doncaster

	Number
Minor assaults	20
Attempted suicides	10
Minor fires	4
Barricade in cell	1
Tool loss	1
Miscellaneous minor incidents	12

[1] Minor incidents are not reported with the same detail as major incidents.

Blackenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list incidents, giving in each case the date, type of incident with brief details, and the outcome, at Blakenhurst prison since 22 May 1993 to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 31 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for a list of incidents, giving in each case the date, type of incident with brief details, and the outcome, at Blakenhurst prison, from 22 May 1993 to the latest available date.

Incidents reported by establishments to Prison Service Headquarters fall into two categories of "major" or "minor" as defined in Prison Service Circular Instruction 18/1988. Details of incidents reported by Blakenhurst during the period in question are attached.

Major Incidents from 22 May 1993 to 30 September 94: HMP Blakenhurst

ESCAPES

28 October 1993

After a visit, a prisoner charged with possession of drugs with intent to supply, escaped disguised as a visitor. He was recaptured on 10 November 1993.

5 December 1993

After a visit, a prisoner charged with robbery, escaped from the establishment disguised as a visitor. He was recaptured on 31 December 1993.

ESCAPES FROM ESCORTS

13 October 1993

An unsentenced adult prisoner charged with burglary and attempted burglary, escaped from custody at his father's funeral. He had been released from his handcuffs when he escaped. He was recaptured on 18 November 1993.

23 December 1993

A prisoner charged with child abduction, was admitted to Alexander Hospital in Redditch after having swallowed various items. At 0620 hrs, during a change over of escorting staff, the staff left the room to brief the staff coming on duty. The prisoner escaped by jumping from the window, which was about 20 feet above ground. He was recaptured on 27 December 1993.

15 March 1994

An unsentenced adult prisoner charged with threatening behaviour, escaped from escort by running off through the courtyard of Oldbury Magistrates' Court. He was recaptured on 30 March 1994.

MAJOR ASSAULTS

26 June 1993

A- prisoner assaulted a police officer in the reception area, punching him on the head and body. The officer was treated in outside hospital.

21 July 1993

Two prisoners assaulted a custody officer and then punched a second custody officer who had gone to assist. No treatment was required.

8 September 1993

One prisoner was attacked by another prisoner using a pool cue. He was treated in the Health Care Centre.

24 September 1993

A prisoner attacked two custody officers striking one on the head rendering him unconscious. He was treated in outside hospital.

3 October 1993

A prisoner was punched in the face by another prisoner causing bruising to left eye socket. He was treated in the Health Care Centre.

3 October 1993

A prisoner was punched on the head by another prisoner causing bruising. He was treated in the Health Care Centre.

9 October 1993

Three prisoners threw a table and chair at a custody officer causing bruising to his body. He was treated in outside hospital.

9 October 1993

Several prisoners attacked a custody officer punching and kicking him causing bruising to his body. He was treated in outside hospital.

23 December 1993

A custody officer was headbutted and punched by a prisoner. He sustained a minor injury and no treatment required.

23 December 1993

A prisoner was attacked with a sharp implement by an unknown assailant. Treated in the Health Care Centre for lacerations.

16 January 1994

A prisoner was attacked by an unknown assailant causing injury to his face and jaw. He was treated in outside hospital.

28 February 1994

A prisoner was assaulted by several unknown assailants sustaining injury to his head and jaw. He was admitted to outside hospital for treatment.

30 May 1994

A prisoner was assaulted by three other prisoners. No injuries were sustained and no treatment was required.

29 June 1994

A prisoner was attached by other prisoners with a blunt instrument causing facial injuries. He was treated in outside hospital.

12 July 1994

A prisoner punched a custody officer in the face causing bruising. No treatment was required.

4 August 1994

A prisoner headbutted a custody officer who suffered slight concussion. He was treated in outside hospital.

13 August 1994

A prisoner punched a custody officer in the face causing a bleeding nose. No treatment was required.

13 August 1994

A prisoner headbutted a custody officer who sustained a split lip. No treatment was required.

9 September 1994

A prisoner assaulted two custody officers. No injuries were sustained.

DEATH OF PRISONER

19 September 1994

A civil prisoner charged with failing to pay community charge with a release date of 20 September 1994, was found collapsed in his cell. He was pronounced dead by the doctor; it is believed he died from a heart attack.

CONCERTED INDISCIPLINE

9 August 1993

Approximately 50 prisoners refused to return to their cells in protest about the food. The imminent transfer of prisoners to training prisons was also thought to have been an issue.

13 September 1993

At about 21.00 hours, 62 remand prisoners tagged a passive demonstration by refusing to return to their cells. They made a number of complaints but returned to their cells at 23.45 hours having received an undertaking that their grievances would be heard through the normal channels

20 September 1993

A large number of prisoners would not go to their cells at the end of the day. Finally, all were locked in their cells an hour later.

9 October 1993

Fourteen prisoners refused to leave the television room in protest about the re-location of prisoners involved in assaults on staff which had occurred that day. The situation was resolved 1½ hours later when a prisoner was located in the Segregation Unit and the remaining prisoners returned to their cells.

31 December 1993

At lock up time in the evening, 35 prisoners from Houseblock 3 refused to return to their cells and passively waited for midnight. At 00.15 hours, all prisoners were in their cells.

10 February 1994

At about 21.30 hours, 80 unconvicted prisoners refused to lock up. The protest was about the evening meal they had received. Gradually, they returned to their cells without the use of force.

24 February 1994

At 15.00 hours, about 150 prisoners took control of Houseblock 3. Most of the staff withdrew, leaving 3 prison custody officers in the houseblock in possession of their keys. The staff were released by the prisoners 15 minutes later unharmed. A set of keys were taken by the prisoners. Negotiations continued throughout and during the evening prisoners began to return to their cells. All the prisoners were fed and locked up by 21.30 hours. The missing keys were recovered.

23 June 1994

At tea-time, 17 prisoners on C Spur of Brendan House refused to lock up. Following discussions, all had returned to their cells by 22.00 hours.

5 September 1994

About 25 prisoners refused their breakfast in protest about the forcible removal of a prisoner to court. There was a small cell fire and a minor assault on an officer. Staff spoke to prisoners and lunch was taken as normal.

ROOFTOP DEMONSTRATIONS

23 September 1993

At 1755 hrs, during exercise, an unsentenced adult prisoner gained access to the roof where he remained until 2000 hrs.

24 September 1993

At 1655 hrs, during exercise, an unsentenced adult prisoner gained access to the Segregation Unit roof where he remained until 2045 hrs. He was protesting about being segregated.

KEY/LOCK COMPROMISE

17 June 1993

A photograph appeared in a local newspaper in which the keys of a member of staff were prominent. Although it was not thought that there had been a compromise, all Class 1 locks were replaced and all Class 3 locks relevered.

24 February 1994

A set of keys was forcibly removed from a member of staff through the act of concerted indiscipline of 24 February 1994. They were returned to another member of staff. Although it was not thought that they had been removed to be copied, they were sent for forensic testing.

TOOL/IMPLEMENT LOSS

1 October 1993

At 0800 hrs, a knife with a 4" blade was found to be missing from the kitchen. A full search of the prison took place and the knife was found in the toilet area of Houseblock 1.

MAJOR MISCELLANEOUS

16 August 1993

A prisoner was produced at Kidderminster Magistrates' Court. Police inadvertently released him after his appearance.

6 September 1993

A member of staff working in education misplaced a UHF radio set. A thorough search of the area was unsuccessful. Acting on information, the radio was found 45 minutes later. It is believed prisoners took it as a practical joke.

4 May 1994

A prisoner serving 5 years for attempted robbery with a release date of 1 August 1995, was being transferred to HMP Wymott when he cut his wrist with a blade. He had been strip searched prior to his transfer. First aid was administered by staff on the escort and further medical attention given on arrival at Wymott.

13 July 1994

A group of about 15 prisoners shouted abuse at staff and then lit 4 small fires. These were extinguished and the fire brigade attended. The incident lasted 30 minutes.

Drug Incidents

Date of Incident	*Type of Drug/Equipment*	*How Found*
13 July 1993	Pipes	Cell search
14 July 1993	Not specified	Cell search
17 July 1993	Cannabis	Cell search
8 June 1993	Cannabis	Search of inmate
10 June 1993	Cannabis	Cell search
22 June 1993	Cannabis	Search of inmate
1 July 1993	Cannabis	Observation
21 August 1993	Syringe	Not specified
30 August 1993	Heroin	Wing search
4 September 1993	Pipes	Cell search
8 September 1994	Pipes	Wing search
9 September 1993	Cannabis	Search of inmate
17 September 1993	Cannabis	Search of inmate
18 September 1993	Cannabis	Cell search
19 September 1993	Pipes	Not specified
23 September 1993	Cannabis	Cell search
20 January 1994	Cocaine	Cell search
22 March 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
26 May 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
30 May 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
1 June 1994	Cannabis	Search of inmate
2 June 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
2 June 1994	Cannabis	Wing search
2 June 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
11 June 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
11 June 1994	Cannabis	Wing search
14 June 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
19 June 1994	Cannabis	Search of inmate
22 June 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
10 July 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
17 July 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
25 July 1994	Syringe	Cell search
11 August 1994	Cannabis	Search of inmate
19 August 1994	Cannabis	Search of inmate
20 August 1994	Cannabis	Observation
21 September 1994	Cannabis	Search of inmate
21 September 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
23 September 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
23 September 1994	Cannabis	Cell search

Minor Incidents[1] From 22–5–93 to 30–9–94: HMP Blakenhurst

	Number
Attempted escape from escort	4
Abscond	1
Fail to return from temporary release	4
Minor assaults	104
Attempted suicides	9
Minor fires	23
Tool loss	5
Miscellaneous minor incidents	17

[1] Minor incidents are not reported with the same detail as major incidents.

Prisoners (HIV)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have contracted AIDS/HIV in prison in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 31 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about AIDS/HIV in prison. There is only one documented case of a prisoner who clearly became infected with HIV whilst within the prison system in England and Wales. This infection occurred in 1993.

Asylum Applications

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of hours work involved in considering and deciding applications for asylum.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The amount of work involved in considering and deciding any individual asylum application is governed by a wide range of different factors, and no average figure of the kind requested is kept.

Wolds Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list incidents, giving in each case the date, type of incident with brief details, and the outcome, at the Wolds prison since 6 April 1992 to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 31 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for a list of incidents, giving in each case the date, type of incident with brief details, and the outcome, at Manchester prison, from April 1994 to the latest available date.

Incidents reported by establishments to Prison Service Headquarters fall into the two categories of "major" or "minor", as defined in Prison Service Circular Instruction 18/1988. Details of incidents reported by Manchester during the period in question are attached.

Major incidents from April 1994 to 30 September 1994: HMP Manchester

ESCAPE FROM ESCORTS

26 July 1994

An unsentenced prisoner, charged with driving whilst disqualified, slipped his handcuffs and escaped while leaving the escort bus at Rochdale Magistrates's Court. Officers chased him but failed to catch him. He was recaptured on 7 August 1994.

DEATH OF AN PRISONER/SUICIDE

12 May 1994

An unsentenced prisoner, charged with robbery, was found in his cell hanging from a torn sheet. He was cut down and resuscitation was unsuccessfully attempted. He had not been thought to be a suicide risk.

BOMB/EXPLOSION THREAT

4 July 1994

Three packages were x-rayed. The police were called and the packages containing computer components were found to be harmless.

MAJOR MISCELLANEOUS

8 June 1994

There was serious jamming of the prison radio network from an outside source, which had also occurred the previous day. The police investigated.

30 July 1994

An unsentenced prisoner, charged with rape, was released in error from court. He was recaptured by police and returned to the prison the same day.

22 August 1994

Acting on information, A Wing launderette was searched. A 30 foot length of plaited sheet, 3 hacksaw blades (not prison issue) and a set of floor plans for A Wing were found. The same day a large metal hook, suitable for escape, was found in a workshop. Other items such as makeshift screwdrivers, and illicit alcohol were also found. No prisoner could be connected to the escape equipment.

Drug incidents

Date of incident	*Type of drug/equipment*	*How found*
11 April 1994	Cannabis plant	Cell search
9 June 1994	Syringe	Search of prisoner
10 June 1994	Barbiturates	Search of prisoner
13 June 1994	Cannabis	Search of prisoner
23 June 1994	Cannabis	Search of prisoner
25 June 1994	Heroin/Syringe	Cell search
26 June 1994	Syringe	Cell search
10 July 1994	Cannabis	Search of prisoner
13 July 1994	Syringe	Cell search
16 July 1994	Heroin	Search of visitor
23 July 1994	Heroin	Cell search
23 July 1994	Syringe	Cell search
23 July 1994	Heroin	Cell search
6 August 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
8 August 1994	Cannabis	Observation
16 August 1994	Heroin	Search of prisoner
3 September 1994	Cannabis	Cell search
3 September 1994	Cannabis	Wing search
3 September 1994	Cannabis	Wing search
3 September 1994	Barbiturates	Wing search
3 September 1994	Heroin	Wing search
4 September 1994	Syringe	Not specified
15 September 1994	Cannabis	Search of prisoner
18 September 1994	Syringe	Wing search
18 September 1994	Heroin	Wing search
22 September 1994	Syringe	Observation
22 September 1994	Syringe	Search of grounds
23 September 1994	Syringe	Wing search

Minor incidents[1] from April 1994 to 30 September 1994: HMP Manchester

	Number
Minor assaults	12
Attempted suicides	3
Absconds	2
Fail to return from temporary release	4
Miscellaneous minor incidents	6

Note:

[1] Minor incidents are not reported with the same detail as major incidents.

Prison Service (Disputes)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many formally registered disputes or failures to agree there were between the Prison Officers Association and the Prison Service in each month in the last three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 31 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many formally registered disputes or failures to agree there were between the Prison Officers' Association and the Prison Service in each month in the last three years.

The Schedule below shows the number of failures to agree listed by month. Most are not new disputes each month, as they may be in procedure for a number of weeks and will be carried over in the figures from month to month.

The 93 currently in procedure relate to 56 establishments; there are no failures to agree at the remaining 78 establishments.

	Number
October 1991	79
November 1991	66
December 1991	42
January 1992	37
February 1992	38
March 1992	36
April 1992	45
May 1992	46
June 1992	38
July 1992	41
August 1992	45
September 1992	39
October 1992	24
November 1992	26
December 1992	21
January 1993	17
February 1993	17
March 1993	19
April 1993	17
May 1993	19
June 1993	18
July 1993	27
August 1993	46
September 1993	63
October 1993	59
November 1993	52
December 1993	53
January 1994	64
February 1994	56
March 1994	66
April 1994	73
May 1994	71
June 1994	72
July 1994	88
August 1994	91
September 1994	93
October 1994	93

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mr. Ali Al Fayed applied for British citizenship; (1) when he was interviewed by a police officer; when a decision was taken on his application; who took the final decision; what was the final decision; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed applied for British citizenship; when he was interviewed by a police officer; when a decision was taken on his application; who took the final decision; what was the final decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Mr. Ali Al Fayed submitted his application on 29 January 1993 and Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed on 15 February 1994. I do not propose to comment further on the detailed processing of their applications.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what formal or informal representations have been made to him or his ministerial colleagues, or any of his or their predecessors by hon. Members in respect of the applications for citizenship of Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed or Mr. Ali Al Fayed.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We have received representations from two right hon. or hon. Members about these applications. It is not our practice to disclose details about private communications.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the main requirements for a person to satisfy currently before British citizenship is granted; what is the average waiting times between an application being accepted, interview by a detective police officer and a decision being taken to grant or refuse an application; and how many applications are currently awaiting decision.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The requirements for naturalisation as a British citizen are set out in schedule 1 to the British Nationality Act 1981. For those applying on the basis of their residence in the United Kingdom they are that they were in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the period of five years ending with the date of the application; that they have not been absent for more than 450 days in this five year period, and for no more than 90 days in the last 12 months; that they have not been in breach of the immigration laws during the five years and have been free of any restriction under those laws on the period they might remain in the United Kingdom for 12 months; that they are of good character; that they have a sufficient knowledge of the English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic language; and that they intend to make their principal home in the United Kingdom. For those applying on the basis of their marriage to a British citizen the qualifying period is three years with no more than 270 days absences in that period, and no more than 90 days in the final 12 months. Such applicants are required not to have been in breach of the immigration laws during the three-year period and to be free of any restriction under those laws on the period they might remain in the United Kingdom; and to be of good character.

At the end of September 1994, the average waiting time for a certificate of naturalisation was 13.6 months. Not all applicants are interviewed by a police officer so it is not possible to give average interval times in the form requested.

As of 21 October 1994, there were 42,119 applications for British citizenship outstanding of which 33,424 were applications for naturalisation.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances applications for British citizenship are referred to him or Ministers for final decision; and how many such applications have been referred to Ministers in each of the last five years and in the current year to date.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Applications are referred to Ministers where they are especially difficult or sensitive. The number of cases referred to Ministers is not separately recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if a person whose application for British citizenship is refused has a right to receive a full explanation of such refusal; if such a person has a right of appeal against refusal; and if application fees are refunded when applications are refused.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Section 44(2) of the British Nationality Act 1981 provides that the Secretary of State shall not be required to assign any reason for the grant or refusal of any application under the Act the decision on which is at his discretion; and that his decision on any such application shall not be subject to appeal to, or review in, any court.

A small proportion of the fee is refunded when an application is refused.

Iraqi Business Men

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iraqi business men have entered the United Kingdom since October 1992.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available, as business men—persons seeking to establish themselves in the United Kingdom in business or self-employment—are not identified separately in the statistics. Five hundred and fifty Iraqi nationals were given leave to enter as business visitors—persons seeking to transact business during their visit—in the period October 1992 to June 1994.

Sri Lankan Tamils

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankan Tamils are at present being held in *(a)* prison and *(b)* detention centres for alleged immigration offences.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: On 26 October 1994, two Sri Lankan nationals were being held in prison and 13 in detention centres, having been detained on arrival under Immigration Act powers.

Firearms

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the efficiency savings that will result from operating the best practice guidelines issued to police forces in 1991 for administering the firearms licensing system.

Mr. Maclean: The administration of firearms licensing is a matter for individual chief officers of police. The efficiency savings achieved by an individual police force will depend on how closely their existing firearms licensing system follows best practice.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his assessment of the progress made by police forces in adopting the best practice guidelines issued in 1991 for administering the firearms licensing system.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr Griffiths) on 27 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *770*.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: No record is kept of such matters.

Mr. Barron : To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has undertaken of the various costs of administering the firearms licensing system as calculated by *(a)* Ernst and Young and *(b)* the Association of Chief Police Officers multiforce study in setting the levels of fees for firearms certificates.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 20 July at column *282*.

The Association of Chief Officers' study was very helpful, but we could not rely on its figures as a basis for reviewing the fees as they did not take account of overheads and other important factors.

The right course was to base our review on a costing exercise which took full account of the best practise procedures which we have recommended to police forces. That is what we have done.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to provide information on the original residence or ethnic origin of asylum seekers in official statistics.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: There are no plans to compile statistics on the original residence or ethnic origin of asylum seekers.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 1,000 ex-Yugoslav detainees whom the Government said, in November 1992, it would accept into Britain have been accepted; and how many of them are already here.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As at 13 October 1994, 969 particularly vulnerable individuals and 1,293 dependants have been authorised for acceptance under the arrangements announced in November 1992 and June 1993, where the Government offered to receive 1,000 particularly vulnerable individuals from the former Yugoslavia and their immediate dependants, an estimated total of 4,000 people in all.

As at 24 October 1994, 803 particularly vulnerable individuals and 1,104 dependants have arrived under these arrangements. Prior to this, 68 sick and wounded ex-detainees from Bosnia arrived in September 1992.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to provide information on the length of time applicants have been waiting for an initial decision on their asylum applications.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Statistics giving the year of decision by year of application is published in table 5.1 of the Home Office statistical bulletin: "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1993", issue number 17/94 published on 14 July 1994, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Information on the estimated average length of time between receipt of an application and a decision in a given period is available and is provided on request.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications he has received for asylum from Kenyan citizens in each of the past 10 years and in this year to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: In the period 1 January 1994 to 30 September 1994, 930 applications for asylum have been received from Kenyan nationals. Information for the years 1985 to 1993 is given in table 2.1 of the Home Office statistical bulletin: "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1993", issue 14/94 published on 14 July 1994, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Prison Security

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy as to the placing of security cameras in the visiting areas of prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 31 October 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about security cameras in visiting areas of prisons.

The use of closed circuit television cameras in visits areas in prison can be a valuable security aid. The policy is for governors to install such equipment where they judge that the benefits in terms of improved security and control will justify the investment.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep and Cattle

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the Government's long-term policies regarding *(a)* sheep quotas and *(b)* suckler cow premiums.

Mr. Jack: In the long term the Government would like to see agricultural production regulated by price and not by quotas and similar devices, which impose a bureaucratic burden on farmers and prevent or inhibit the rational development of production in response to relative efficiency. In line with this policy the Government have, as a first step, called for the sheep and suckler cow quotas to be replaced by regional reference quantities, with the rate of premium being scaled down proportionately to any excess above the reference levels. Any such change would, of course, require farmers to be given an adequate period of notice before it was introduced.

Fishing

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what actual or previous sums of money have been allocated to the British fishing industry under the PESCA initiative; what proportion of the total EU allocation is allocated to each of the receiving nations, approximately in each European nation; how much will be allocated per person employed in the fishing industry; and what are the funds to be made available in total and per person for Devon.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list in pounds sterling the allocations from PESCA for the United Kingdom and the other eligible member states and the proposed allocations to the regions in the United Kingdom which are highly dependent on fishing;

(2) what is the basis for proposed allocations of PESCA funding for *(a)* member states and *(b)* regions which are highly dependent on fishing.

Mr. Jack *[pursuant to the reply on 26 October column 620]:* The reply should have read:

The commission has allocated PESCA funding between member states as follows

The commission has allocated PESCA funding between member states as follows

	£ million[1]
Belgium	1·52
Denmark	12·30
Germany	17·44
Greece	20·55
Spain	31·46
France	21·15
Ireland	2·80
Italy	25·55
Netherlands	7·73
Portugal	19·41
United Kingdom	25·70

[1] Converted at £1 = 1·319 ecu

This breakdown is based on employment in the fisheries sector as a whole, and on the fleet reductions required by member states' multi-annual guidance programmes.

My right hon. Friends have yet to take a final decision on the allocation of the United Kingdom's share of this and other Community initiatives between England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The allocations which have been notified to interested organisations in England are currently only provisional.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's policy concerning the application of BSE safety regulations to animals born since 1 January 1991.

Mrs. Browning: The measures currently in force in Great Britain apply to all cattle irrespective of their date of birth. No change in this position is envisaged, but the European Commission is considering whether younger cattle should be excluded from the European Union rules for trade in bone-in beef from the United Kingdom and we are pressing for urgent action on this.

Copenhagen Agricultural Economics Institute

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the report produced for the European Commission by the Copenhagen Agricultural Economics Institute.

Mr. Jack: I am not aware of any report produced for the European Commission by the Copenhagen Agricultural Economics Institute. However the hon. Member may be referring to the report of a study by a team of experts on behalf of the European Commission's DG II (Economy and Finance) and entitled "EC Agriculture Policy for the 21st Century". This report has yet to be published; when it is, copies will be placed in the Library.

Classical Swine Fever

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of classical swine fever occurred in each year since 1985 in *(a)* England and *(b)* the European Union.

Mrs. Browning: The following is the information:

	Number of Outbreaks	
Year	*England*	*European/ Union*[1]
1985	—	417
1986	10	106
1987	1	62
1988	—	30
1989	—	75
1990	—	244
1991	—	22
1992	—	39
1993	—	125
1994[2]	—	153

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[1] Including Spain and Portugal during the pre-accession period.

[2] To 25–10–94.

Milk Quota

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the allocation of responsibility for processing milk quota transactions to the Intervention board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* The problems faced by the Intervention board in processing milk quota transfer and leasing transactions have been overcome. In a press statement on 27 October, the board's chief executive explained that excellent progress had been made in recent weeks and that within a few days of vesting day—1 November—the board will have processed all acceptable quota movements received by 31 October. The Government have every confidence in the Intervention board's ability to cope with the task of administering milk quotas and have no plans to review the decision to transfer responsibility for that work to the board from the milk marketing boards.

Less Favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the total direct subsidies paid on cattle and sheep in the less-favoured areas of England since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The information requested for hill livestock compensatory allowances is as follows:

Year	*Cattle £ million*	*Sheep £ million*
1979	5.530	7.969
1980	7.045	11.358
1981	8.638	12.838
1982	8.907	13.205
1983	9.007	13.555
1984	8.910	13.814
1985	9.190	14.760
1986	11.151	16.142
1987	11.505	16.934
1988	11.704	17.374
1989	12.138	17.907
1990	12.770	19.733
1991	14.851	22.386
1992	15.790	22,584
1993	16.168	17.245
1994[1]	12.711	15.051

[1] Incomplete

Payments in the less favoured areas under the Suckler Cow and Sheep Annual Premium Schemes are separately available only in the years detailed as follows:

Suckler Cow Premium Scheme (SCPS)

	£ million
1990	12·040
1991	14·487
1992	15·612

Sheep Annual Premium Scheme (SAPS)

	£ million
1991	57·491
1992	92·724
1993[1]	72·958
1994[1]	91·160

[1] Figures for the 1993 and 1994 Schemes are estimated.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what effect the abolition of the milk marketing board will have on the prices of dairy products.

Mr. Jack: The effect on the price of milk products to the consumer under the new arrangements for the marketing of milk will depend on the circumstances of the market for each product.

WALES

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of Eurostar, Intercity and Regional Railways to discuss the effects of delays in London on travellers from south Wales using the channel tunnel services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The timetabling of services is an operational matter for the railway operators. At present, Eurostar is operating only limited introductory services to Paris and Brussels. From early 1995, Eurostar will begin to operate services every two hours during the day, building to hourly services from Waterloo to both Paris and Brussels. As this service builds, the three trains from south Wales to Waterloo will provide good connections with the Eurostar services, in addition to the hourly service for most of the day from south Wales to Paddington.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his answer of 20 October to the hon. Member for Delyn, (Mr. Hanson), *Official Report*, column *311*, he will provide comparative figures for information refused in answer to parliamentary questions on grounds of commercial confidentiality for each parliamentary Session since 1979–80 which can be provided without incurring a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Redwood: Information provided to the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) was obtained following a manual search of parliamentary answers given in the 1993–94 Session. Information on previous years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

A449

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated cost of the reconstruction of the northbound carriageway of the A449 between Raglan and Usk; and when it is likely to be completed.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The estimated cost of the work is £6,400,000. The work is expected to be completed within the contract period, which ends in early January 1995, weather permitting.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated cost of the proposed reconstruction of the southbound carriageway of the A449 between Raglan and Usk; and when a decision will be made about proceeding with the contract.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The estimated cost of the works is £5,000,000 at 1994 prices. A decision on the contract will be made by March 1995.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated cost of the proposed reconstruction of both carriageways of the A449 between Usk and the Coldra, Newport; and what is the time scale for this work.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The estimated cost of the works is £13,000,000 at 1994 prices. The work is planned to be carried out during 1996 and 1997.

Quangos

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to register the perceived political affiliation of present and prospective members of quangos in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Classical Swine Fever

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of classical swine fever occurred in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No cases have occurred in Wales since 1985.

Press Office (Expenditure)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total spent by his press office in each of the past five years.

Mr. Redwood: Welsh Office press office expenditure is as follows:

Year	£
1990–91	19,498
1991–92	34,499
1992–93	33,757
1993–94	23,538

Figures for 1989–90 were collected centrally and cannot be separated.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total amount paid to all members of quangos in Wales in *(a)* allowances and *(b)* expenses in each of the past 12 years.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Dairy Crest

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what day he was informed that Dairy Crest intended to close their Whitland (Dyfed) creamery.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In the interest of maintaining the essential flow of confidential information from private sector companies to the Welsh Office, it is the practice not to reveal details of this nature.

Lords Lieutenant

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost to public funds spent in each of the past 14 years to pay for the work of each lord lieutenant and each high sheriff in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The total cost to public funds to pay for the work of each high sheriff and lord lieutenant in Wales in 1993-94 was as follows:

	High Sheriff £	*Lord Lieutenant* £
Clwyd	—	440·62
Dyfed	87·00	2,534·13
Gwent	87·50	3,307·46
Gwynedd	—	239·31
Mid Glamorgan	189·50	2,247·41
Powys	—	2,370·70

	High Sheriff £	*Lord Lieutenant* £
South Glamorgan	189·50	4,481·25
West Glamorgan	189·50	2,102·75

The information in the form requested prior to 1993 is not readily available in respect of lords lieutenant,and could only be provided in respect of high sheriffs at disproportionate cost.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of the videotape promoting opt-out schools have been distributed; to whom; and at what cost.

Mr. Richards: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of the videotape promoting opt-out schools have been ordered by his Department; and at what cost.

Mr. Richards: None.

Baglan Hospital

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been spent on the Baglan hospital, to date and in the current financial year.

Mr. Richards: Information provided by West Glamorgan health authority indicates expenditure of £5·1 million on the proposed Baglan hospital to 30 September 1994. This includes £214,000 in the current financial year.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many TB cases were reported in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Richards *[holding answer, 28 October 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

TRANSPORT

A40/Westway Junctions

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will investigate the phasing of traffic lights on the A40/Westway junctions between the London boundary and the Euston road;

(2) if the phasing of traffic lights on the A40/Westway junctions within London are part of a traffic management scheme to prevent traffic from entering or leaving Central London.

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. John Butcher dated 31 October 1994:

You raised two questions in the House of Commons in July (numbers 129 and 135) about the phasing of traffic signals at the A40/Westway junctions. These have been passed to me for reply as they raise operational matters for which the Highways Agency is responsible.

I would first confirm that there is no traffic management scheme in operation on the A40/Westway junctions to prevent traffic entering or leaving Central London. Congestion does occur at these junctions but this is due entirely to the volume of traffic passing through them. Essential roadworks such as those recently undertaken along the A40, M25 to the A312, add to the congestion.

With regard to the actual phasing of the traffic signals, those at Long Lane have been bypassed by the improvement scheme which opened recently. The rest of the traffic signals on the A40 are within the North Circular Road and operate under Urban Traffic Control. This is a computer system which alters the timing of the signals at various times of the day so as to minimise the overall delay to traffic.

The Metropolitan Police can override this computer system and introduce alternative (contingency) plans if the level of traffic is severe and they consider it necessary.

Shipping Policy Division

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it remains his intention to transfer the shipping policy division to No. 11 Millbank.

Mr. Norris: This remains an option if the shipping policy division cannot be relocated into Great Minster, but a final decision must await further evaluation.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the privatisations which his Department has promoted since 1979, indicating, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

Company	*Date of sale*	*Net equity proceeds to Government £ million*
National Freight Consortium	1982	5·0
Associated British Ports	1983	45·4
(secondary sale by HMT)	1984	51·0
British Airways	1987	853·0
British Airports Authority	1987	1,181·6
DVOIT (the former IT arm of DVLA)	1993	3·7

Information on the current value of private companies is not held by this Department.

Departmental Offices (Disabled Access)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all his Department's offices, indicating which have disabled access.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not keep a central record of the access arrangements for individual offices; there are more than 1,400 premises. Guidance has been issued to all property managers on planning for people with disabilities, including access to and within offices.

Vehicle Operator Licences

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of vehicles operating with heavy goods vehicle operator licences in each of the past six years and the number of vehicles operating with public service vehicle operator licences.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

	Vehicles Specified on HGV Operator Licences	*Vehicles Specified on PSV Operator Licences*
1988–89	461,600	75,255
1989–90	441,656	77,067
1990–91	453,139	77,697
1991–92	446,412	78,098
1992–93	406,443	79,563
1993–94	404,211	81,130

Horse Riding (Safety)

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the regulations governing safety clothing and safety markings for horse riders riding at night and in bad weather; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of these regulations.

Mr. Norris: There are no such regulations but we strongly advise riders to follow the detailed guidance contained in the highway code.

Motorways

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to publish his standing advisory committee on transport's report on generated traffic on motorways.

Mr. Watts: We will publish our response in due course.

Rolling Stock

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the indicative rolling stock leasing charges for the InterCity east coast and the Regional Railways north-east train operating units in 1994–95 were notified to the train operating units.

Mr. Watts: On 1 July 1994.

Cycle Safety

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the regulations governing safety clothing and safety markings and lighting for cyclists riding at night and in bad weather; and what assessment he has made as to the adequacy of these regulations.

Mr. Norris: Cycle lighting is governed by the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989. The lamps and reflectors specified in these regulations provide the cyclist with good conspicuity providing they are kept clean and well maintained. There are no regulations concerning safety clothing for cyclists. The highway code contains detailed advice on conspicuity for cyclists.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female staff of each grade within the Driving Standards Agency have signed up to the agency's attendance bonus pay offer.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Driving Standards Agency. The chief executive has written to the hon. Member

Letter from S. J. Ford to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 28 October 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your question about the number of Driving Agency staff who have signed up to the Agency's attendance bonus pay offer.

To date 557 staff (32 per cent. of the total workforce) have responded to the Ballot, of which 317 have accepted the offer. The breakdown of this figure is attached.

Returns are still coming in from staff, and there is at present no formal closing date.

1994–1995 Pay Offer

Grade	*Gender*	*Acceptance*
SEO	Male	2
	Female	—
HEO	Male	6
	Female	1
EO	Male	3
	Female	4
AO	Male	8
	Female	17
AA	Male	15
	Female	28
PS	Male	—
	Female	2
TYP	Male	—
	Female	4
SGB	Male	7
	Female	2
ACDE	Male	1
	Female	—
SE	Male	17
	Female	—
SDE	Male	45
	Female	—
DE	Male	139
	Female	16
Total		317

Train Timetables

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the new train operating units' timetables and ticketing arrangements.

Mr. Watts: We have received 53 representations about timetable arrangements and 62 concerning ticketing since 1 April 1994.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation he has made of the effects of bus deregulation outside London; and what plans he has to introduce deregulation in London.

Mr. Norris: Bus deregulation outside London has resulted in more operators running more bus miles at lower cost than previously. While bus deregulation remains our long-term aim for London, we do not intend to bring forward legislation in the life of this Parliament.

Motorways (Tolling)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his current policy on the tolling of motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: The policy is as set out by the then Secretary of State for Transport on 2 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *646–49*.

Bus Companies

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the previously publicly owned transport undertakings which are now owned or controlled by Stagecoach or its associated companies.

Mr. Norris: The companies are as listed.

Bluebird Buses Ltd. - Aberdeen
Busways Travel services Ltd. - Newcastle upon Tyne
Cheltenham and Gloucester Omnibus Co. Ltd.
Cumberland Motor Services Ltd. - Whitehaven
East Kent Road Car Co. Ltd. - Canterbury
East London Bus & Coach Co. Ltd. - Ilford
East Midland Motor Services Ltd. - Chesterfield
Fife Scottish Omnibuses Ltd. - Kirkcaldy
Grimsby-Cleethorpes Transport Co. Ltd.
Mainline Group Ltd. - Sheffield (20 per cent. shareholding)
Midland Red (South) Ltd. - Rugby
Red and White Services Ltd. - Chepstow
  (formerly National Welsh Omnibus Services Ltd.) including
  The Valleys Bus Co. Ltd. - Pengam
  Eastern Valley Bus Co. Ltd. - Abergavenny
  Western Valleys Bus Co. Ltd. - Brynmawr
  Aberdare Bus Co. Ltd.
Ribble Buses Ltd. - Preston
South Coast Buses Ltd. - Lewes
  (formerly Southdown Motor Services Ltd/Hastings & District Transport Ltd.)
South East London and Kent Bus Co. Ltd. - London SE
Stagecoach (South) Ltd.
  (formerly Hampshire Bus Co. Ltd.)
Sussex Coastline Buses Ltd. - Chichester/Worthing
  (formerly Southdown Motor Services Ltd.)
United Counties Omnibus Ltd. - Northampton
Western Scottish Buses Ltd. - Kirmarnock

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the practice of rear-view mirror scheduling by bus companies.

Mr. Norris: Bus operators are required to register their services 42 days in advance with the appropriate traffic commissioner. The commissioner can act if operators do not run their services in accordance with their registered timetable.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the bus company Stagecoach.

Mr. Norris: I receive correspondence about a variety of bus operators, including Stagecoach.

Correspondence

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East will receive an acknowledgement or reply to the letter he sent on 7 September, with a reminder on 12 October, on behalf of Mr. Little of Cone Contractors Ltd, Mansfield Road, Hasland, Chesterfield.

Mr. Watts: I have now replied to the hon. Gentleman and apologise for not doing so sooner.

Air Training

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received concerning the withdrawal of training approved from South East Kent College of Air Training by the Civil Aviation Authority;

(2) what safeguards exist to ensure the Civil Aviation Authority, in its dealings with training providers, does not use its powers as a regulatory body unfairly.

(3) if he will intervene to ensure the Civil Aviation Authority creates a transitional arrangement for the South-east Kent college of air training to meet new training standards to allow it to continue to provide training for air traffic controllers;

(4) what safeguards exist to prevent the use by the Civil Aviation Authority of its powers as a regulatory body to safeguard its own interests as a training provider.

Mr. Norris: I am writing to the hon. Member and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Road Hauliers

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many drivers have been prosecuted or found guilty of falsifying tachographs each year since 1980; what was the average fine; and how many served custodial sentences.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

Prosecutions are made under section 99(5) of the Transport Act 1968. The available information is given in the table.

Work record - falsification

Year	*Number of proceedings*	*Number of findings of guilt*	*Number of sentences of immediate imprisonment*	*Average fine £*
1980	*	652	0	*
1981	*	485	0	*
1982	*	352	0	*
1983	682	541	0	*
1984	1,554	644	0	*
1985	1,070	858	0	*
1986	1,517	1,140	5	*
1987	1,071	782	3	*
1988	1,530	865	3	*
1989	1,403	921	0	119

Work record - falsification

Year	*Number of proceedings*	*Number of findings of guilt*	*Number of sentences of immediate imprisonment*	*Average fine £*
1990	1,486	1,152	4	110
1991	1,904	1,160	1	138
1992	2,131	1,145	30	143
1993	2,396	1,319	22	161

* Not available

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the average fine for road hauliers convicted for accidents involving fatalities in each year from 1980;

(2) how many road hauliers, who were involved in fatal accidents, were found to have been in breach of the law in each year since 1980;

(3) how many hauliers, or their employees, have served custodial sentences in respect of accidents involving fatalities in each year since 1980.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available centrally.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to Executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The information requested, based on that shown in "Public Bodies 1993" and that given by me on 1 March, *Official Report*, column *656*, is as follows.

(a) Number of public appointments which I am responsible for making:

	Number
(i) Executives bodies[1]	5
(ii) Advisory bodies[1]	73
(iii) other appointments	214
Total	292

[1] as defined in Public Bodies*(b)*

I nominate 1 member of the Covent Garden Market Authority.

SCOTLAND

Health Care International

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contact there has been between him and Greater Glasgow health board over the future of Health Care International in Clydebank; and what action he is expecting from the Greater Glasgow health board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At the instigation of one of the banks involved in the leading consortium, one of my officials spoke to the acting general manager of the Greater Glasgow health board. No further contact is contemplated.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place the terms of the initial agreement between the Scottish Office and Health Care International in the Library.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A copy of the Secretary of State's authorisation of the construction of the Health Care International hospital at Clydebank is available in the Library.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if *(a)* he or *(b)* the Greater Glasgow health board conducted any work to estimate how much it would cost to adapt Health Care International in Clydebank for use in the national health service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In response to a request in mid-September from one of the members of the HCI lending consortium, my officials made a very rough estimate of the cost of adapting the HCI hospital for use as an NHS hospital. Their co-operation was given in order to assist the banks in examining the full range of options available for the future funding of HCI. My officials made clear that the option of bringing the hospital into NHS use was not one which the Government favoured.

Careers Guidance

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from women on income support about adult careers guidance; and what action on careers advice for adults he plans.

Mr. Lang: I am not aware of having received specific representations from women on income support about adult guidance matters. Guidance on vocational and informal education opportunities is available to adults from a variety of sources, including colleges of further education and the community education service of local authorities. Guidance specifically on employment and training opportunities is available through the Employment Service and the enterprise networks respectively, while the skillchoice initiative now being piloted by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise is designed to bring vocational assessment and guidance to people at work. Guidance is also available, particularly to the unemployed and those on low incomes, through a number of projects funded under the urban programme. I have funded the adult education guidance initiative in Scotland, which, in its second year of operation,will be reporting on best practice and possible future developments for adult guidance principally in the informal education setting.

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what guidelines the Government follow in deciding the amount of cardiac surgery to fund; and whether the amount of cardiac surgery being undertaken in Glasgow is above or below those guidelines;

(2) whether Government funding for heart surgery in Greater Glasgow allows operating units to work to full capacity.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Department of Health, in 1986, set a national guideline of a minimum of 300 coronary artery bypass grafts per million population and the guideline in Scotland is 350 per million. The current level of CABGs is substantially above that level at 436 per million. CABGs represent the large majority of cardiac surgery operations.

The contracts with both the Glasgow royal infirmary NHS Trust and the West Glasgow Hospitals University NHS Trust are worth £11 million in 1994–95 and will enable 1,800 cardiac procedures to be carried out.

Insolvency

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* individual insolvencies and *(b)* corporate insolvencies there were in each of the last seven years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of individual insolvencies in Scotland for the last seven years was as follows:

	Sequestrations	*Protected trust deeds*	*Total*
1987–88	951	36	987
1088–89	1,612	10	1,622
1989–90	2,618	12	2,630
1990–91	5,451	3	5,454
1991–92	8,584	1	9,585
1992–93	11,970	2	11,972
1993–94	4022	282	[1]4,304

[1] Follows implementation of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1993.

Corporate insolvency in Scotland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Lang: The time taken by staff to adjust clocks throughout the Scottish Office is not recorded, and in view of the wide range of circumstances no reasonable estimate can be made.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the reduction in junior doctors' hours will not create or exacerbate shortages of junior doctors in *(a)* paediatrics and *(b)* other specialties.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Doctors in training in hard-pressed posts should not be contracted for more than 72 hours per week after 31 December 1994. Additional funding of £1·2 million has been made available in 1994–95, bringing the cumulative total to £9·2 million, to assist NHS employers with the greatest difficulties in meeting the hours targets. It should be possible to make the required reductions in junior doctors' hours by the effective deployment of staff without adversely affecting the level of services to patients.

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the present and expected shortage of junior hospital doctors in each of the health board areas in Scotland; and if he will break down these figures by each hospital-based specialty.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of doctors in higher specialist training in Scotland are based on the numbers estimated to be needed for consultant posts in the future. The assessment of the numbers of doctors, including those in training, needed to provide services for patients is a matter for individual NHS trusts in consultation with health boards.

Property Law

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the Scottish Law Commission to report on its review of property law in Scotland and the future of the feudal system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Law Commission has now completed the consultation process which followed its discussion paper on the abolition of the feudal system. Several substantial issues have emerged as a result of the consultation process and the commission is unable to give a precise indication as to when its report will be available.

Classical Swine Fever

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of classical swine fever occurred in each year since 1985.

Sir Hector Monro: There have been no recorded cases of classical swine fever in Scotland over this period.

Private Finance Initiative

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish and place in the Library a list of all health projects involved in the private finance initiative as at September, setting out in each case the name of the health board or trust, the name of the private firm, and a brief description of the nature of the financial arrangements; and if he will also publish *(a)* the total of elderly care beds in the scheme and *(b)* the steps he is taking to ensure proper medical and social care in the light of the recent fatal accident inquiry into the death of an elderly resident.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A list of major health projects which have been completed involving private sector finance at September 1994 has been placed in the Library.

The number of elderly care beds provided by the private sector following approval of schemes by my officials is 785. There may, however, be other projects involving private finance which have been completed, approval of which falls within the delegated limit of the health board or NHS trust concerned. Information on these projects is not held centrally.

In each of the projects involving elderly care and the private finance initiative, the patients are still under NHS care and health boards therefore are responsible, through contracts set, to ensure the quality of the medical and social care provided.

Information Services

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many calls have been received by the Scottish Office's information line for each month since January; and how much the Scottish Office has spent publicising and administering the information line during this period.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The number of calls received were:

	Number
January	211
February	239
March	199
April	220
May	308
June	315
July	305
August	341
September	334
October (to 21 October)	237

No money has been spent on publicising the inquiry line during this period.

Approximately £21,150 has been spent on administering the line this year.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the addresses of the Scottish Office's information points currently operating, *(b)* the costs of establishing, publicising and administering these facilities since their establishment and *(c)* how many people have visited each facility since their establishment.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The addresses of 25 Scottish Office information points currently operating are:

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office:
Cotgreen Road
Tweedbank
by Galashiels
TD1 3SG

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Tankerness Lane
Kirkwall
Orkney
KW15 1AQ

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Thainstone Court
by Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 5YA

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Government Buildings
2 St. Ninians Road
Stirling
FK8 2HR

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Reception
Pentland House
47 Robbs Loan
Edinburgh
EH14 1TW

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
32 Reidhaven Street
Elgin
IV30 1VE

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Strathbeg House
Clarence Street
Thurso
KW14 7JS

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Government Building
28 Longman Road
Longman East
Inverness
IV1 1SF

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Cameron House
Albany Street
Oban
PA34 4AE

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Charlotte House
Commercial Road
Lerwick
Shetland
ZE1 OHZ
The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Government Buildings
161 Brooms Road
Dumfries
DG1 3ES

The Scottish Office Environment Department
132 Seagate
Dundee
DD1 2HB

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
10 Keith Street
Stornoway
Isle of Lewis
PA87 2QG

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Animal Health Sub Office
Station Street
Stranraer
DG9 7HJ

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Balivanich
Isle of Benbecula
PA88 5LA

The Scottish Office Industry Department
Alhambra House
45 Waterloo Street
Glasgow
G2 6AT

The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Area Office
Russell House
King Street
Ayr
KA8 OBE

The Scottish Office Education Department
Greyfriars House (East Wing)
Gallowgate
Aberdeen
AB9 1UE

The Scottish Office
Reception
New St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3TG

The Scottish Office
Reception
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DE

Citizens Advice Bureau
14 Anderson Street
Airdrie
ML6 0AA

Citizens Advice Bureau
22 College Way
Dumbarton
G82 1LJ

Citizens Advice Bureau
11 Wemyssfield
Kirkcaldy
KY1 1XN

Gilespie, Gifford and Brown
Solicitors and Estate Agents
27 St. Cuthbert Street
Kirkcudbright
DG6 4DJ
Thorntons WS
Solicitors and Estate Agents
27 George Street
Perth
PH1 5JY

The cost of establishing the information points was about £26,900. No publicity costs have been incurred. The administration costs since establishment are about £3,500.

No records are maintained of the numbers of visitors to information points.

Insolvency

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the cost to the Exchequer in each of the past seven years of the processing of insolvencies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The annual total net cost of processing individual insolvencies, including payments to insolvency practitioners and direct administrative expenses, in Scotland, was as follows:

	£ million
1987–88	0·42
1988–89	2·76
1989–90	7·60
1990–91	12·51
1991–92	18·59
1992–93	21·77
1993–94	22·96

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* In the last 12 months, no such travel has been undertaken, either at public expense or at own cost.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much grain was in intervention storage in Scotland in each of the years from 1984 to 1994; and what were the figures for the past five years for *(a)* the number of farmers on the five-year set-aside scheme, *(b)* the amount of land, in hectares, in the five-year set-aside scheme and *(c)* the amount of money paid to farmers in the five-year set-aside scheme in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

(i) Grain in intervention storage in Scotland

Year	*'000 tonnes*
1984	40
1985	319
1986	594
1987	452
1988	452
1989	318
1990	302
1991	327
1992	341
1993	638
1994	523

(ii) Five-year set-aside scheme (Scotland)

Year	*Number of participants*	*Area (hectares)*	*Amount paid (£'000)*
1989	364	12,555	2,207
1990	529	18,752	3,434
1991	658	23,040	4,194
1992	780	23,366	5,037
1993	712	23,766	3,700

Feudal System

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to bring forward legislation to abolish the feudal system in Scotland as outlined in the Scottish Law Commission's discussion paper on the abolition of the feudal system; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The Scottish Law Commission has now completed the consultation process which followed its discussion paper on the abolition of the feudal system. Several substantial issues have emerged as a result of the consultation process and the commission is unable to give a precise indication as to when its report will be available.

The Government are committed to completing the reform of the feudal system and will give careful consideration to the commission's recommendations, when they are received, and to the need for legislation.

Land Ownership and Use

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much *(a)* urban and *(b)* rural land, in hectares, is owned by local authorities in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* No figures are kept centrally.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the arable land cover for Scotland in each of the past five years.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year	
1989	1,065,286
1990	1,046,624
1991	1,023,055
1992	1,022,492
1993	1,019,899

Source:
June agricultural census.

The figures relate to the area of crops and fallow, including set-aside, and grass under five years old.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to ensure access to the countryside for leisure pursuits; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The responsibility for promoting access to the countryside lies with Scottish Natural Heritage and local authorities. My right hon. Friend expects the recently published Scottish Natural Heritage paper, "Enjoying the Outdoors: A Programme for Action", to make a major contribution to the development of wider access to the countryside.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to bring forward legislation to ensure the land register covers all the counties of Scotland; when he envisages its full implementation; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The land register for Scotland was created under the Land Registration (Scotland) Act 1979. At present the land register is operational in seven counties covering more than 40 per cent. of the Scottish housing stock. It is due to be extended to the county of Fife on 1 April 1995, and will be progressively extended to cover the remaining counties by 2003.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much land he expects the Forestry Commission to own in *(a)* 2000, *(b)* 2005 and *(c)* 2010; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* We expect the Forestry Commission to own just over 1 million hectares of land at the end of this century and the early part of the next.

Crofting

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to dispose of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' crofting estates to community ownership following the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993; if he plans to bring forward legislation to increase the number of crofts in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* My Department has no plans at present to dispose of its crofting estates; nor are there any plans to bring forward new legislation to increase the number of crofts in Scotland.

Law and Order (Peterhead)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police personnel were stationed at Peterhead police station in each year since 1976.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The information available is as follows:

Police personnel stationed at Peterhead

	Number
1976	39
1980	44
1986	48
1988	55
1992	64
1994	66

Deployment of officers to particular police stations is the responsibility of the chief constable.

ENVIRONMENT

Water and Sewerage

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those water and sewerage companies that have decided not to embark on a policy of installing meters in domestic properties on a compulsory basis;

(2) if he will list those water companies that have a policy of installing meters in domestic households against the wish of the resident.

Mr. Atkins: Only one water and sewerage company, Anglian Water, has so far announced a widespread programme of metering existing domestic properties. The company announced recently a review of the compulsory element of its metering programme. Several water supply companies have decided to install meters in existing domestic properties in certain parts of their area. Most companies have a policy of installing meters in new and substantially converted domestic properties.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what discussions he has held with the Water Services Association about charging systems for water and sewerage in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has held with water companies or the Water Services Association about the method of charges for water and sewerage in new and refurbished properties.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend and I have discussions with water companies and the water industry associations from time to time about matters of mutual interest. The Water Services Association and the Water Companies Association have recently submitted their views on future methods of charging for water and sewerage services and that is currently being considered. Most water companies require new and substantially converted properties to be metered and charges are recovered on that basis.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the water industry about the connection charge imposed on new properties.

Mr. Atkins: None. This is a matter for the director general of water services.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers rest with the director general of water services to determine a fixed connection charge for new properties.

Mr. Atkins: The Water Industry Act 1991 recognises three separate elements to charging for a new connection to the mains or sewer. A connection charge is payable to cover the direct cost of connecting a new property to the water company's main or sewer. If there is a dispute between the customer and the company about the amount of the charge, the director general of water services has powers to determine the charge. Where it is necessary to requisition the provision of a public water main or sewer, a requisitioning charge is payable. Payment of this charge may be spread over a 12-year period at a rate of interest approved by the director general. When new properties are connected for the first time to a public water main or sewer for domestic purposes, an infrastructure charge is payable. The director general has powers to set limits on each company's infrastructure charges. In his recent periodic review of price limits, the director general set new infrastructure charge limits of £200 each for water and for sewerage. These limits, will apply to all water and sewerage companies from 1 April 1995.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the case of the application by Mr. John Large for documentation held by Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate on past nuclear waste policy and practice with particular reference to the basis for calculation of the cost quoted for the information to be provided; and if he will make a statement on the effectiveness to date of the Environmental Information Regulations 1992.

Mr. Atkins: The response to Mr. Large quoted a rate of charging for the inspector's time of £993 per man-day. This is the standard rate of charging levied on applicants for authorisation, and includes an allowance for overheads. However, there is a different rate of charging for the provision of information to members of the public, based on the direct costs of inspectorate staff time. The rate varies with the location and grade of staff involved. For staff based in London, the rate is, for example, £33 per hour for a pollution inspector and £19 per hour for an executive officer. The higher rate of charging was inadvertently quoted to Mr. Large. HMIP will be writing again to Mr. Large to apologise and to provide him with the correct charging information.

Regarding the effectiveness to date of the Environmental Information Regulations, I refer the hon. Member to my answer given on 26 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *240*.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) which agency would carry any extra costs associated with the burying of low-level nuclear waste on landfill tips;

(2) what are the estimated costs of burying low-level nuclear waste on landfill tips.

Mr. Atkins: Charges for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste at landfill sites are a commercial matter for the operators of the sites and those disposing of the waste. It is for the site operators to set an appropriate rate, and for the disposers to bear the costs.

Housing Investment

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of gross domestic product *(a)* the United Kingdom Government and *(b)* each other EC country invests in housing;

(2) what percentage of housing stock in each other EC country is provided by the equivalent of housing associations.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Comparable information in the form requested is not available. The booklet "Statistics on Housing in the European Community 1993," published by the European Commission, sets out a range of comparative information which may be of interest to the hon. Member. I have placed a copy in the Library.

Housing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of housing stock in England and Wales is provided by housing associations.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The proportion of the overall housing stock that was provided by housing associations at the end of December 1993 is estimated as 3·8 per cent. in England and 2·9 per cent. in Wales.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the availability of specialised housing for the elderly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Research into the housing needs of elderly people has revealed that there is approximately 16 per cent. more subsidised housing provision for elderly people in England than was previously thought to exist, and that there is currently over-provision of ordinary sheltered housing but under-provision of very sheltered housing. Details are in the table following:

Type of housing provider	*Dwellings*
Local authorities	465,920
Housing Associations	148,586
Abbeyfield societies	6,230
Almshouses	20,758
Total	641,494

I hope to publish the results of the research later this year.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of dwellings were owner-occupied in each year since 1979; what percentage of owner-occupation resulted from the right-to-buy scheme; and what percentage of properties sold under the right to buy is represented by newly constructed local authority accommodation over the same period.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The available information is given in the table. Information on newly constructed local authority accommodation sold under right-to-buy is not available centrally.

End of Year	*Percentage of dwellings which were owner occupied*	*Percentage of owner occupied dwellings purchased under right-to-buy scheme*
1979	56·6	—
1980	57·7	—
1981	58·2	0·6
1982	59·5	2·2
1983	60·5	3·3
1984	61·3	3·9
1985	62·2	4·5
1986	63·2	5·1
1987	64·3	5·6
1988	65·6	6·5
1989	66·6	7·5
1990	67·1	8·1
1991	67·2	8·4
1992	67·2	8·7
1993	67·3	8·9

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households were accepted as homeless in rur[illegible]eas for each year since 1979 and for the current year; and how many dwellings were built in such areas in those years by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Department collects information about homelessness and about house building for each local authority area. This information does not distinguish between rural and urban areas.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column 265, how many tenants of *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* private landlords, occupying (i) one, (ii) two and (iii) three or more bedrooms more than required by members of their household are over retirement age.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 29 October 1994]*: The latest available estimates for England are as follows:

Tenants over retirement age and having more bedrooms than the bedroom standard 1993–94
England

Tenure	*Number of bedrooms more than bedroom standard*		
	One thousands	*Two thousands*	*Three or more thousands*
Council tenants	530	280	10
Housing associations tenants	60	20	—
Private tenants	160	120	10
All tenants	750	420	20

Note:

"—" indicates less than 5,000.

These figures are from the 1993–94 Survey of English Housing and are subject to sampling error.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Pike: to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Government have spent on projects for rough sleepers since the introduction of the rough sleepers initiative; and what is the number and capacity of hostels created under the initiative in *(a)* London and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Under the rough sleepers initiative the Government are spending £182 million over the period 1990–96 with the aim of making it unnecessary for people to sleep rough on the streets of central London. The bulk of these resources have been channelled through the Housing Corporation to enable housing associations to develop at least 3,300 places in permanent accommodation in flats and houses. The initiative has also funded 950 places in 25 temporary hostels and night shelters in London. In addition, the initiative has funded 700 places in properties leased for up to three years from private sector landlords, an annual winter shelter programme and outreach, resettlement and other support services. No hostel provision has been funded under this initiative outside London.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend the rough sleepers initiative to cover *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* other towns and cities.

Mr. Curry: None. The rough sleepers initiative focuses available resources on central London because that is where the greatest concentrations of people sleep rough. Part of the success of this initiative has stemmed from encouraging close links between statutory and voluntary sector agencies. Local authorities outside central London are encouraged to follow this model in devising their strategies to help people sleeping rough within their area.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the budget of, and how many voluntary sector proposals were financed through, the urban programme in *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* 1994–95.

Sir Paul Beresford: The figures for expenditure on voluntary sector projects, and for the number of such projects, funded through the urban programme in the years requested are set out in the table:

Year	*Expenditure £ millions (forecast)*	*Number of Projects (forecast)*
1993–94	34·938	1,331
1994–95	[1]22·717	[1]801

[1] These figures exclude the London boroughs of Lewisham and Newham, which are not yet available.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the elderly population lives in sheltered accommodation.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: There is no source of data providing a direct count of the numbers of elderly people in sheltered housing in England. The 1991 census does not separately identify households in this form of accommodation.

It is possible to produce an estimate that approximately 8 per cent. of the population aged 65 or over live in sheltered housing.

This estimate is derived from two sources: First, a study of the housing needs of elderly people commissioned by the Department from Ernst and Young management consultants included a survey of residents of sheltered housing which asked a question about household size. Combining this data with information also collected in the study on the numbers of units of sheltered housing for rent produces an estimate of 579,000 elderly people in this form of accommodation. Secondly, to this must be added 51,000 elderly people in private sector sheltered housing. This is calculated in the same way but uses data from local authority housing investment programme returns for 1 April 1993 on units of private sheltered housing.

Shared Ownership Scheme

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the take-up rate of the shared ownership scheme for the elderly.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The information requested, based on returns to the Housing Corporation, is as follows:

	Units
1992–93	335
1993-94	210
1994–95[1]	117

[1] To 30 September 1994.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding new developments for sheltered accommodation by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* the private sector.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The number of new sheltered housing starts in the first six months of this year is shown in the following table:

Sheltered housing starts: England 1994

	1 January 1994 to 31 March 1994	*1 April 1994 to 30 June 1994*
Local authorities	5	13
Housing associations	204	284
Private sector	142	234

Source:
Housing and Construction Statistics

Air Pollution

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the sites to be included in the enhanced air pollution monitoring programme by 1997, including the time frame for each site.

Mr. Atkins: We are committed to expanding the enhanced urban network from 12 to 24 sites by 1997. The location of new sites is being reviewed in the light of our consultation proposals for the integration of central and local government monitoring networks.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total budget for the air quality research programme for the current year and for 1995–96

Mr. Atkins: The budget for air quality research for the current year, 1994–95, is £9·95 million. The allocation for 1995–96 will be settled in due course.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the review of the air quality research programme.

Mr. Atkins: Information on all projects carried out within the air quality research programme is published annually. This year's report will be produced in November 1994.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total budget for the enhanced urban network air pollution monitoring programme for the current year and for 1995–96.

Mr. Atkins: The total budget for the enhanced urban network air pollution monitoring programme for the current year, 1994–95, is £3·2 million. The provision for 1995–96 will be determined when tenders have been assessed.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what preliminary study his officials have made of the Heilbronn-Neckarsulm experiment banning dirty old cars and lorries to cut air pollution in urban areas, referred to in his letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 19 September.

Mr. Atkins: No data have yet been released by the German authorities on the Heilbronn-Neckarsulm experiment. I understand that first results are likely to be published within the next six months. We shall study them when they become available.

Empty Dwellings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the number of empty dwellings owned by Government Departments, and which Departments, for latest available year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Information about Government Departments' empty residential property is set out in the table:

	Total stock at 1 April 1994	*Empty at 1 April 1994*	*Empty as percentage of total stock Per cent.*
Department of Transport	3,845	887	23
Home Office	[1]4,524	498	11
Ministry of Defence	68,106	11,313	17
Department of Health	[3]15,000	[2]1,800	12
Scottish Office	[4]1,601	158	10
Welsh Office	239	[5]43	18

The management, use and disposal of Government residential property is the responsibility of the Department concerned.

Notes:

[1] Excludes figures for the provincial police authorities.

[2] Most up-to-date figures available are as at 31 December 1992.

[3] Excludes bed-spaces in hostels.

[4] NHS figures included in this stock are as at 1 April 1993.

[5] Excludes properties awaiting demolition or conversion to non-residential use.

Housing Needs Index

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to alter the weight given to homelessness in the housing needs index.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The weights given to homelessness in the 1995–96 housing needs index and the 1995–96 generalised needs index are being held at the same levels as in the 1994–95 indices.

The Government believe, however, that the present mechanisms used to calculate the HNI and the GNI require substantial revision. The Department has recently completed a fundamental review of the indices which looked at all the elements of the current mechanisms and the principles underlying them. We wish to consider further and in detail the changes proposed during the review before making any major changes to the composition of the indices.

Scrap Metal Yards

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many scrap metal yards in the south Yorkshire area are licensed at the present time;

(2) if he will list the scrap metal yards in the south Yorkshire area which have been given licences in each of the past five years.

Mr. Atkins: The recovery of scrap metal is subject to licensing under part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Waste regulation authorities are responsible for issuing licences under section 5 of the 1974 Act and details of them are not held centrally. Section 6(4) of the 1974 Act requires each waste regulation authority to maintain a register containing copies of all current licences which it has issued; and to ensure that its register is open for public inspection at its principal office.

Cockington Valley

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider his decision not to call in the planning application made in respect of the development within the conservation area of Cockington Valley.

Sir Paul Beresford: Torbay borough council issued the planning decision and listed building consent on 28 October. It is now too late for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to reconsider calling in the applications.

Council Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the authorities which have handed their council housing over through the large-scale voluntary transfer scheme and the number and total value of properties concerned.

Mr. Curry: Since 1988, 34 local authorities have transferred a total of 154,081 homes through large-scale voluntary transfer. These authorities are as listed. The tenanted market value of the dwellings transferred is £1,358 million. Tenanted market value reflects the fact that the stock is transferred as a going concern for the long term provision of social rented housing.

Chiltern
Sevenoaks
Newbury
Swale
Broadland
North Bedfordshire
Medina
Rochester
South Wight
Mid Sussex
East Dorset
Tonbridge and Malling
Rydale
South Bucks
Christchurch
Suffolk Coastal
Tunbridge Wells
Bromley
Surrey Heath
Breckland
East Cambridgeshire
Hambleton
West Dorset
Havant
Epsom and Ewell
Hart
South Shropshire
Leominster
South Ribble
Hertsmere
Penwith
North Dorset
Wychavon
Mid Bedfordshire

Private Consultants

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been paid in fees to private consultants employed by each local authority in the county of Durham in each year since 1989.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The information is not available centrally.

Dioxins

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made of the findings of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's report on dioxins released on 13 September; and if he will reconsider the findings of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution on incineration capacity.

Mr. Aitkins: The United States Environmental Protection Agency's report, though both long and in parts technical, is still a preliminary draft, issued for public comment. Its content and findings will be revised during the coming year in the light of the comments received. The Government are studying the draft report, and intend to complete their own preliminary assessment of it by the end of the year. The Government, in responding to the royal commission, have already given a public reassurance that, in deciding its policy on the use of incineration for waste disposal, it will take into account the advice of the chief medical officer about the implications of this and other major dioxins studies.

Chlorine Production

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation calling for an end to chlorine production.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have no plans to ban the production of chlorine, which is already subject to integrated pollution control. In common with the rest of the European Union, the United Kingdom Government support a science-based approach to evaluating the risk and benefits of substances including chlorine. Existing controls on the production of chlorine are considered to be adequate on the basis of current evaluations of the risks.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to introduce legislation to end the importing of another country's toxic waste; and if he will introduce a new classification to cover such categories of toxic material as the scrap metal contaminated with polychlorinated bi-phenyls.

Mr. Atkins: I refer to my answer to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Benton) on 17 October 1994, *Official Report*, columns *17–18*. All imports into the United Kingdom of waste for disposal, and of hazardous waste for recovery, are covered by the provisions of the EC Waste Shipments Regulation, 259/93, and the United Kingdom Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 1994, S.I. No. 1137. Scrap metal contaminated by PCBs is therefore covered by existing legislation.

Blue Circle and Decision Makers Ltd

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any Minister in his Department attended a dinner or other function with representatives of Blue Circle and Decision Makers Ltd. at Hampton Court on 12 and 18 June 1993.

Sir Paul Beresford: No.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) attended a dinner on 25 May 1993 with representatives of Blue Circle, Decision Makers Ltd. and the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame Angela Rumbold) in his official capacity.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) attended the Conservative women's national dinner on 25 May in a private capacity.

Housing Grants

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of replacing mandatory grants for housing maintenance by loans; and what plans he has to do this.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Loans are one of the options being considered in the current review of the future of private housing renewal programmes. An announcement on the outcome of the review will be made in due course.

Unfit Homes

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the report by the National Home Improvement Council on expenditure on improving unfit homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The National Home Improvement Council has made some interesting comments which we will consider in the framework of the current review of the future of private housing renewal programmes.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to set targets to reduce the number of unfit dwellings; and in what time ranges the targets will be set.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is not appropriate to set targets to reduce the number of unfit properties to a particular level. We aim to help improve conditions for those people unable to help themselves and to educate those who can.

Housing Improvements

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to issue guidance to local authorities to ensure that high standards of housing improvements are achieved by the grant system.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The current guidance to local authorities on the house renovation grant system encourages them to ensure that work is of a high standard before grant is paid.

Housing Maintenance

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer *(a)* to re-introduce MIRAS on loans for housing maintenance and *(b)* to allow landlords relief for repair costs to be offset against tax rather than rent.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: None.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the new formula for standard spending assessments has had on Coventry city council; and where the city would have ranked in England for council tax levels under *(a)* the old standard spending assessment formula and *(b)* the new one.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Between 1993–94 and 1994–45 there was a reduction of 3·7 per cent. in Coventry's SSA attributable to the SSA review and the introduction of 1991 census information. Differences in the information available for 1993–94 and 1994–95 make it impossible to disaggregate this figure further.

RSG is distributed so that if all authorities spent at the level of their SSA, then all taxpayers in a given band could pay the same level of council tax whilst receiving a standard level of service. In practice, council tax levels are determined by the local authority's own decisions on spending levels and the use of reserves, not by standard spending assessments.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his target maximum percentage rise in standard spending assessments over the next two years.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced increases in total standard spending for 1995–96 and 1996–7. They were laid before the House in the *"Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994–95"* on 30 November 1993. Paragraph 5·75, page 104, refers to them.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with his colleagues on the effects on standard spending assessments of establishing new police authorities and the implementation of universal nursery education.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: On the standard spending assessments for the police, there has been continuous contact between officials about development of the formula. Ministers in the Home Office and in my Department are jointly considering the options.

The Government are considering the implications of the commitment to nursery education and will announce its conclusions in due course.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding local government expenditure.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. Friend will make a statement on the provisional 1995–96 revenue support grant settlement for local authorities shortly after my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's Budget statement.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 25 October, *Official Report,* column *541,* under what United Kingdom legislation environmental assessments are required before consent is given in respect of the operation of any offshore oil and gas production, exploration or appraisal installation within 25 miles of the coast or in environmentally sensitive areas beyond 25 miles.

Sir Paul Beresford: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Direct Services Organisations

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken against those local authorities whose direct services organisations failed to meet statutory financial objectives in 1992–93.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: One hundred and three statutory notices have been served on 71 local authorities concerning the failure of their DSOs to meet the required financial objective in 1992–93. To date, we have announced final decisions on 81 of the notices.

My right hon. Friend has now considered the responses of the remaining authorities on whom notices were served in June, July and August. He has today given 13 directions to the following local authorities:

(a) Allerdale district council (other cleaning, refuse collection), requiring the authority to seek the Secretary of State's consent if it wishes to award work on the defined activity to their DSO following re-tendering which is currently in hand.

(b) Bedfordshire county council (highways and sewerage), preventing the authority from carrying out the defined activity if it fails to meet the financial objective for the work in 1994–95.

(c) London borough of Camden (other catering, school and welfare catering, sport and leisure management). The other catering and school and welfare catering direction prevent the authority from carrying out all or some of the defined activity through its own DSO. For sport and leisure management the direction requires the authority to re-tender the work and subsequently seek the Secretary of State's consent if it wishes to award it to their DSO.

(d) Canterbury city council (building maintenance), preventing the authority from carrying out the defined activity if it fails to meet a specific financial objective for the work in 1994–95 and the statutory financial objective for 1995–96.

(e) Corby district council (sport and leisure management), requiring the authority to re-tender some of the work if they fail to meet the financial objective in 1994–95.

(f) London borough of Ealing (sport and leisure management), requiring the authority to seek the Secretary of State's consent if it wishes to award work on the defined activity to their DSO following re-tendering which is currently in hand.

(g) Kerrier district council (sport and leisure management), requiring the authority to re-tender all of the work if it fails to meet the financial objective in 1994–95.

(h) Leicester county council (building cleaning), preventing the authority, from carrying out the activity through its own DSO from 1 January 1996.

(i) Rochester-upon-Medway city council (sport and leisure management), requiring the authority to re-tender the work and subsequently seek the Secretary of State's consent if it wishes to award it to their DSO, and,

(j) Slough borough council (sport and leisure management), requiring the authority to seek the Secretary of State's consent if it wishes to award work on the defined activity to their DSO following re-tendering which is currently in hand.

The Secretary of State has also decided to take no further statutory action on this occasion against Camden (other cleaning), Kingswood (sport and leisure management), Northampton (building maintenance), Peterborough (building maintenance), Selby (sport and leisure management), South Bedfordshire (sport and leisure management), Stafford (sport and leisure management), and Wellingborough (highways and sewerage, building maintenance).

A statutory financial objective is set for local authority DSOs to ensure that bids are realistically priced and services delivered at that price.

For the financial year 1992–93, 350 DSOs out of a total of 2,400, failed to meet the prescribed financial objectives. This underlines the need for local authorities to take firm steps to address and correct any financial problems in DSOs, and for the Secretary of State to use the powers given to him by Parliament to ensure that this happens.

In 70 per cent. of the cases notified to the Department, local authorities had already taken action to reduce costs, improve management or, in some cases, withdraw from the activity concerned, and no statutory action was called for.

Over the year, statutory notices were served in respect of 103 accounts, leading to 39 directions. In the remaining cases, the authorities' responses and proposals for action were sufficient for the Secretary of State to be satisfied that no further statutory action was necessary. In addition, 30 out of the 39 directions reflected authorities' projections that their DSOs would meet the prescribed financial objective; the directions required retendering of work or closure of the DSO only if the projected results were not in the event achieved.

The remaining nine directions required authorities to take further action beyond that already proposed—in four cases this involved the closure of the DSOs in question.

I should emphasise that the great majority of DSOs deliver services successfully and meet the prescribed financial objectives. Where problems arise, authorities have the primary responsibility for taking the necessary steps, and the majority of authorities do so without any intervention or prompting by the Department. Their responsible action is to be commended.

Local authorities are required to submit DSO accounts for 1993–94 to the Department not later than today, 31

October. My right hon. Friend will consider shortly what action would be appropriate in respect of any accounts that fail to meet the statutory financial objective in the year.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state, in relation to his decision to open the docklands light railway to an offer of franchise *(a)* to whom the franchise will revert at the conclusion of the stated period, *(b)* whether Railtrack will own the railway infrastructure and *(c)* what is the current ratio between current fare-box takings, including joint ticketing income and annual revenue costs.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Docklands Light Railway Limited (DLR Ltd) will let a vertical franchise to the private sector, transferring specific responsibilities in relation to both DLR infrastructure and operations. Reversion will be to DLR Ltd. The Government have no plans to transfer the infrastructure to Railtrack. The current ratio between the current farebox takings, including joint ticketing income, and annual revenue costs is 1:3·4.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects the first applications for grants for national lottery funding to be made.

Mr. Sproat: I understand that most of the distributing bodies intend to invite applications from 4 January 1995.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assistance his Department has provided the national lottery distributory bodies with regard to setting up their operations.

Mr. Sproat: My Department and the other Departments with lottery responsibilities have provided the distributing bodies with all possible assistance in setting up their systems.

Independent Television Franchises

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has for allowing takeovers of failing television companies holding the franchise.

Mr. Dorrell: The present ITV ownership rules allow the takeover of a Channel 3 company provided that no one company holds more than two licences. The rules are being looked at as part of the review on cross-ownership.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he will next meet the chairman of the Independent Television Association to discuss the independent television franchises.

Mr. Dorrell: I am meeting the chairman of the Independent Television Commission on 2 November. I expect to discuss a number of issues, including Channel 3.

Performing Arts (Teesside)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assistance is given to develop performing arts on Teesside.

Mr. Sproat: Public sector support for the performing arts on Teesside is provided through a partnership between Northern Arts, which is largely centrally funded by the Arts Council, and the local authorities in the area. In 1993–94 this support amounted to over £1·3 million, with approximately £700,000 from Northern Arts and more than £300,000 each from Cleveland county council and the district councils.

Millennium Fund Projects

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to ensure a geographical distribution of millennium fund projects.

Mr. Dorrell: The Millennium Commission has been directed that it must take account of the objective of ensuring that major projects are supported in each country of the United Kingdom when considering applications for lottery funds.

Statues

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to encourage the erection of more statues *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Dorrell: I do not currently have any plans to encourage the erection of more statues.

Media Ownership

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he now expects to publish the results of his consultation on media ownership and cross-ownership.

Mr. Dorrell: An announcement about the outcome will be made once the Government have determined the best way forward.

Sport in Schools

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what importance he attaches to competitive sport in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I consider competitive sport in schools to be of the utmost importance in enabling children to learn to work together as a team within a framework of rules. This is an essential skill for adult life and we are currently working with the Department for Education on proposals for putting competitive sport back at the heart of school life.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he is taking to improve facilities for school sport.

Mr. Sproat: The Sports Council supports the community use of school sports facilities and has provided £12 million for upgrading existing facilities or building new ones over the last 11 years. In addition, schools satisfying certain criteria will be eligible to receive national lottery funds for dual use facilities when they come on stream in 1995.

Popular Music Industry

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultations have taken place with representatives of the popular music industry to discuss the future of the industry.

Mr. Sproat: My Department maintains regular contacts with representatives of the popular music industry at ministerial and official levels.

Sportsmatch Scheme

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the Sportsmatch scheme to promote business sponsorship of sport.

Mr. Sproat: I have received a number of letters from hon. Members and others regarding the Sportsmatch scheme. I have replied to one from my hon. Friend recently.

Arts Sponsorship

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to promote business sponsorship of the arts.

Mr. Dorrell: Over the last 20 years, businesses have increasingly recognised the commercial benefits that flow from their links with excellence in the arts. The Government have welcomed and actively encouraged this trend, and the resulting strengthening of the arts economy. Growth in business sponsorship has been developed and maintained by the efforts of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, and through the Government's own business sponsorship incentive scheme, which since it inception in 1984 has attracted more than £82 million in new money to the arts.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the likely impact of the channel tunnel on the United Kingdom tourism industry.

Mr. Dorrell: I believe that the channel tunnel is an exciting opportunity for the United Kingdom tourism industry. With more than 60 per cent. of visitors to the United Kingdom already coming from western Europe, and France—our second largest market in terms of overseas visitors—there is clearly great potential for the industry to exploit.

Historic Buildings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what study he is making of the availability of stone and other traditional building materials for repairs to historic buildings.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of the Environment's building research establishment undertakes research into the selection and availability of building materials in the British Isles. It has published the following relevant reports:

Title	*Year of publication*
The Building Limestones of the British Isles	1993
The Building Sandstones of the British Isles	1986
The Building Magnesian Limestones of the British Isles	1988
The Building Slates of the British Isles	1991

English Heritage is shortly to commence a study into the problems facing the fissile stone slate industry in the Cotswolds and the Peak district. English Heritage is also funding research into supplies of lime for conservation mortars, plasters and renders and will be publishing a directory of small-scale lime burning and ready mixed materials traditionally used in conservation work.

Library Commission

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding his proposals for a library commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: We received more than 150 responses to our public consultation paper on a new library and information commission, of which most were strongly in favour. The Government have therefore decided to proceed with the establishment of the commission from January 1995, thus providing an influential new forum for the development of policy on library provision.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Insolvency Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the costs of training *(a)* an Insolvency Service examiner, *(b)* an E grade examiner and *(c)* a D grade examiner.

Mr. Heseltine: The direct costs associated with the basic professional and technical training of an E grade examiner are £7,000 and for a D grade are £8,500. These do not include the salary cost of the examiner or of internal presenters and tutors.

In addition, examiners undergo development and management training and have the opportunity to progress to full accountancy qualification.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the Insolvency Service's LOIS computer system in the event of the recommendation of Stoy Hayward in respect of contracting out Insolvency Service work being accepted.

Mr. Heseltine: Consideration will be given to the application of the Insolvency Service LOIS computer system in the event that the case administration work of official receivers is contracted out.

Creditors' Committees

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many creditors' committees were appointed for each of the last three years for *(a)* creditors' voluntary liquidations, *(b)* compulsory liquidations and *(c)* individual bankruptcies.

Mr. Heseltine: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Post Office

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice he has given Post Office Counters Ltd. on whether it is bound by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to ensure that where a main office's work is franchised to a private retail outlet its former employees working for the franchisee should enjoy the same pay and conditions as hitherto.

Mr. Eggar: This is an operational matter for the Post Office.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the privatisations which his Department has promoted since 1979 indicating, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested on proceeds from privatisations promoted by my Department and the former Department of Energy since 1979 is given in the table. The current market value of companies is not held centrally by my Department.

		Proceeds £ millions	
	Date of Sale	*Net Equity to Government*	*Redemption of Debt*
Amersham International	1982	62	—
British Aerospace (secondary sale by HM Treasury)	1981	43	—
	1985	347	—
British Gas	1986	5,143	2,500
	1990	150	—
British Steel	1988	2,425	—
British Telecommunications (secondary sale by HM Treasury)	1984	3,685	3,500
	1991	5,218	—
	1993	5,201	—
Britoil (secondary sale)	1982	536	—
	1985	426	—
Cable and Wireless (secondary sales by HM Treasury)	1981	181	—
	1983	263	—
	1985	577	—
Electricity Generating Companies	1991	[1]2,201	768
Enterprise Oil	1984	382	—
Girobank	1990	[2]—	—
Insurance Services Group	1991	[3]13	—
Jaguar	1984	[4]—	—
Regional Electricity Companies (England and Wales)	1990	[1]5,182	2,815
Rolls-Royce	1987	1,031	—
Rover Group[5]	1988	[6]150	—
British Technology Group	1992	25	—
Wytch Farm	1984	149	—

[1] Gross equity proceeds

[2] Proceeds to the Post Office

[3] Proceeds to Export Credits Guarantee Department

[4] Proceeds to BL plc (Rover Group)

[5] Private sector company

[6] This does not take into account exchequer payments (including cash injection of £547 million) or exchequer cost of deferring payments of consideration

Samsung

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement setting out the role of his Department in helping to attract Samsung's recent investment to Stockton-on-Tees.

Mr. Eggar: My Department took the lead in discussions with Samsung about the company's decision to locate its manufacturing complex in Cleveland. The

Department's Invest in Britain Bureau, whose role it is to promote overseas investment in the United Kingdom, has been in close contact with Samsung for several months. Discussions about the regional financial support offer were conducted by the Department's industrial development unit. The support offered was neutral between alternative United Kingdom locations and left the decision for Samsung to make on commercial and operational grounds. Throughout, my Department also maintained contact with other Departments, the Government office for the north-east and a number of local authorities and other agencies including the Northern Development Company and English Partnerships.

I am delighted to note that these efforts, together with the £58 million financial support offered, influenced Samsung's decision to locate in Cleveland, a decision which I am sure will bring significant and lasting benefits to the company, to Cleveland and the north-east region and to the country as a whole.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Heseltine: The current average cost of preparing an answer, as announced on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *387* by the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr Dorrell) is assessed as being £97 for a written question and £225 for an oral question.

Consumer Councils

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish details of the spending powers devolved by the National Consumer Council to the Welsh Consumer Council; and what authority is devolved to officers of the Welsh Consumer Council.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Welsh Consumer Council's budget is set at a level agreed between the national and the Scottish and Welsh Consumer Councils from the grant in aid that the National Consumer Council receives from the Department of Trade and Industry. The Welsh Consumer Council has established procedures for controlling and monitoring its own expenditure within the agreed limit. Decisions on incurring actual expenditure are taken by council, but authority for payment of goods and services received is delegated to its director. The director of the National Consumer Council, as accounting officer, is responsible, under the grant in aid conditions, for ensuring that expenditure by all three councils is properly authorised and contained within the agreed allocation.

Business Probity

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new proposals he has to improve business probity and ethics.

Mr. Heseltine: As part of its programme of reviewing company law, my Department will publish a consultation document early in 1995 on directors' duties. This will invite views on proposals for a statement of directors' duties and for reforming part X of the Companies Act on the enforcement of fair dealing by directors.

Coal Industry

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the salaries of the chairman and chief executive of the Coal Authority.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Sir David White as part-time chairman of the Coal Authority receives a salary of £18,000 a year for one day per week. Mr Neville Washington, who will be full-time chief executive, receives a salary of £55,000 plus pension and a car allowance. He is also eligible for a non-pensionable performance bonus.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will name the consultants he has employed to give advice on disposal of British Coal's property interests; what are their terms of reference; when their commission was *(a)* started and *(b)* completed; and what was the cost.

Mr. Eggar: No consultants have been commissioned by the Department to advise on the disposal of British Coal's non-operational property interests, which are a matter for the corporation.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Coal Authority's budget in 1994–95; and what budget is planned for 1995–96.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The net provision for the Coal Authority in 1994–95, as published in the revised estimates in June, is £30·9 million. The provision for 1995–96 is currently under consideration and will be published in the 1995–96 supply estimates in March 1995.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the method and timetable of the disposal of British Coal's property interests.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal. The corporation is currently considering the options for transferring its non-operational land and property to the private sector. No decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will name each member of the Coal Authority; and if he will give details of their experience and background.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have today announced the appointment of five part-time members of the Coal Authority. The Coal Authority now comprises:

Sir David White DL (part-time Chairman), Chairman of the Mansfield Brewery plc, of the Nottingham Health Authority, and of the Board of Governors, the Nottingham Trent University.

Mr. Neville Washington (full-time member), who was Director of Human Resources and Operations at the Victoria Infirmary, a NHS Trust Hospital in Glasgow. Previously he was in the armed forces, leaving the army in 1992 as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Mr. John Cunliffe, barrister and, until his recent retirement, a senior legal adviser within The Royal Dutch/Shell Group of Companies and Secretary of The "Shell" Transport and Trading Company, plc.

Mr. Eric Hassall, a qualified chartered engineer currently Chairman of Wardell Armstrong, mining consultants. He is a Member of Council of the Natural Environment Research Council. His previous career included working as the Crown Mineral Agent and employment with the (then) National Coal Board.

Mr. Roy Lynk OBE, National President of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers from 1987 to 1993 and General Secretary from 1985. He was previously a full-time official of the National Union of Mineworkers from 1979, after 19 years as a branch official.

He was a coal face worker for nearly thirty years. Mr. Lynk was a Councillor on Ashfield District Council for eight years.

Mr. Leslie Rendell, the retiring Director of Planning and Transport of Warwickshire County Council and the immediate past President of the County Planning Officers' Society. Until recently he was Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party. He has served as a planning officer in seven counties, including two coal producing regions. His particular interests include environmental sustainability.

Mr. Tom Slee, a Chartered Accountant and Finance Director of Pittencrieff Resources plc, an Edinburgh-based oil and gas company. He is also a non-executive director of Royal London Mutual Insurance Society Ltd. His previous career was with Costain Group, Courtaulds and KPMG Peat Marwick.

Parliamentary Lobbyists

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the parliamentary lobbyists contracted to the regulators of privatised utilities over the past three years and their cost.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the regulators.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much uranium recovered for reprocessing is stored at British Nuclear Fuels plc's facility at Capenhurst; what plans there are to increase the amount; and by how much.

Mr. Eggar: Some 10,000 tonnes of uranium as uranium trioxide, recovered from reprocessing irradiated fuel, is currently stored on the Capenhurst site of British Nuclear Fuels plc. The bulk of this material is owned by BNFL's reprocessing customers and the amount to be stored in the future is a commercial matter for the parties concerned.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the answer of the Secretary of State for the Environment of 25 October, *Official Report*, column *541*, under what United Kingdom legislation he requires environmental assessments before giving consent in respect of the operation at any offshore oil or gas production installation within 25 miles of the coast or in environmentally sensitive areas more than 25 miles offshore.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Environmental assessments are required before consent is given in respect of the operations of any offshore oil and gas production installation within 25 miles of the coast or in environmentally sensitive areas beyond 25 miles by conditions incorporated into licences granted under the Petroleum (Production) Act 1934. Environmental assessments are not required for oil and gas exploration and appraisal.

House of Fraser

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what formal or informal representations he or any of his Ministerial colleagues or their predecessors received as from *(a)* any right hon. Member of hon. Member or *(b)* any other person regarding the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors' report on the takeover of the House of Fraser; what departmental record exists of such representations; and if they were reported to the Cabinet Secretary.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department has received a very large number of representations concerning the takeover of House of Fraser and the DTI inspectors' report. It would not be possible to provide a complete record of these representations without incurring disproportionate cost. The hon. Member may recall that the matter was discussed in the House on 4 April 1989 and on 7 March 1990, and in another place on 3 April 1989, on 7 March 1990 and 28 March 1990. The matter was also referred to in the proceedings of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. A number of hon. Members also asked questions on the subject. Such representations are not, as a general rule, reported to the Cabinet Secretary.

Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *412*, what action he has taken to obtain Lord Archer's consent to releasing the information that Lord Archer provided to those compiling the report.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* I have taken no such action.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many companies from overseas qualified for regional selective assistance between *(a)* March 1979 and June 1983, *(b)* June 1983 and June 1987 and *(c)* June 1987 and May 1992; and what was the total amount of regional selective assistance paid to them in each period.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The number of offers of regional selective assistance made to foreign-owned companies in each of the periods and the amount of grant paid was as follows:

	Number of offers made	*Amount paid in period £ million*
1 March 1979 to 30 June 1983	203	22.5
1 July 1983 to 30 June 1987	274	31.5
1 July 1987 to 31 May 1992	275	81.5

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many jobs were created by those overseas companies receiving regional selective assistance between *(a)* March 1979 and June 1983, *(b)* June 1983 and June 1987 and *(c)* June 1987 and May 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The number of jobs created by foreign-owned companies related to offers of regional selective assistance accepted in the periods was as follows:

Period	*Number of Jobs to date*
1 March 1979 to 30 June 1983	13,815
1 July 1983 to 30 June 1987	23,418
1 July 1987 to 31 May 1992	14,420

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many inward investments which received regional selective assistance between *(a)* March 1979 and

June 1993, *(b)* between June 1983 and June 1989 and *(c)* between June 1989 and May 1992 have since closed the operation for which the grants were received and, in the case of *(a)* and *(b)*, how many such closures have taken place in the past four years.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* Regional selective assistance projects are normally monitored for only a limited number of years after final payment of the grant; complete information on this question is not available.

CORRIGENDUM

Official Report, 31 October 1994: In column *911*, Mr. Llew Smith's written question, the last under the heading "Conduct of Public Life", should read as follows:

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral statement on standards of conduct in public life of 25 October, *Official Report*, column *757*, if he will indicate *(a)* who was the informant mentioned by the Cabinet Secretary in his report, *(b)* what proposals for a deal were put to him by the intermediary and *(c)* when he was first contacted by the intermediary.

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Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 1 November 1994

TREASURY

Back-to-work Bonus

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will explain the tax treatment of a back-to-work bonus of up to £1,000 claimed by a part-time worker who has entered into full-time employment under the scheme announced by the Secretary of State for Social Security on 24 October.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the back-to-work lump sum cash bonus of the new job seeker's allowance will be treated for tax purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The tax treatment of the back-to-work bonus will be announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget.

Tax Exemptions (MEPs)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament are exempt from United Kingdom taxation.

Sir George Young: United Kingdom members of the European Parliament are exempt from United Kingdom taxation in only one respect. A ruling of the European Court of Justice in 1981 said that expense allowances intended to defray costs, paid by the European Parliament to its Members, are not liable to United Kingdom tax.

Royal British Legion

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the proposed imposition of value added tax on membership subscription to the Royal British Legion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no VAT on membership subscriptions to the Royal British Legion where the subscription confers no facility or advantage for the subscriber other than the right to participate in its management or receive reports of its activities.

Customs and Excise officials are discussing with the legion its existing arrangements for accounting for VAT on the elements of subscriptions which provide entitlement to use of the social facilities of its clubs.

Tiger Products

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *754* what happened to the tiger products seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in the period 1989 to 1994.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no disposal records for 1989, but the 1990 seizure was loaned to a zoological establishment to feature in an endangered species exhibition. The remaining items, from 1991 up to the present time, have either been destroyed or retained by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise for display or training purposes and to form the nucleus of a reference collection of tiger derivatives.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, if he will give details of the country of origin of tiger products seized between 1989 and 1994.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs records for 1989 and 1990 seizures do not contain details of the country of either export or origin.

Further to my answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *754*, four musk and tiger–bone plasters were mistakenly described as tiger bones, and according to recently received scientific advice the 13 claws derived from lion only. For convenience, therefore, the following list reproduces the corrected information on seizures from 1991 to date, together with available details of countries of origin where known—COO—or, when not, the countries whence consigned—CWC:

Year	*Seizure*	*COO*	*CWC*
1991	Handbag		Australia
1992	—		
1993	Skin, 1 whole & 1 piece		India
	1 pair of shoes		Saudi Arabia
	Tincture of tigerbone—2 bottles	China	
	Tiger bone plaster:		
	—20 packets		USA
	—12 packets		Hong Kong
	—11 packets	China	
	Tiger bone pills:		
	—50 boxes		Hong Kong
	—1 box	China	
	—420 tablets	China	
	Tiger bone medicine:		
	—1 packet & 3 sachets	China	
	Tiger claws		India
1994	Tiger bone plasters:		
	—20		Tanzania
	—4	China	
	—2	N/k	N/k
	Tincture of tiger bone—20 x 70 cl bottles	China	USA

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, how many prosecutions followed the seizures of tiger products in the period since 1989.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *754*, what information he has of the intended destination of the tiger products seized between 1989 and 1994.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: With one exception, customs' action was confined to seizure of the goods and there is no information on the intended destinations apart from the importers' addresses.

In the one case which was investigated for deliberate evasion, customs was satisfied that a medicinal product had been imported to treat a genuine medical complaint and that there were no grounds to support legal proceedings.

Vehicle Licensing System

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has received about the proposed changes to the vehicle licensing system;

(2) what plans he has for concessions for the classic car sector from the proposed changes to the vehicle licensing system;

(3) what assessment he has made of the extent to which the proposed changes to the vehicle licensing system will encourage registration among those who formerly avoided road tax;

(4) what assessment he has made of the effect of (a) use-based charges and (b) flat-rate registration fees on car use;

(5) what assessment he has made of the effect of the changes to the vehicle licensing system on small businesses concerned with classic car restoration.

Sir George Young: My right hon. learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of representations about the proposed changes to the vehicle licensing system which will introduce a system of continuous licensing based on possession rather than use for all cars and motorcycles. The aim of the change, together with the measure to improve the quality of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's vehicle register, is to counter vehicle excise duty evasion, which costs the taxpayer £145 million or more in lost revenue each year, and assist police efforts against car-related crime. Details of how the new system will operate have yet to be decided. A consultation document, to be issued later this year, will seek views from interested parties.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed to the Treasury's cash and running costs limits in 1994–95.

Mr. Nelson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVII, vote 1 will be increased by a token £1,000 from £77,363,000 to £77,364,000. The net increase is mainly to meet the cost of the grant in aid to the private finance panel executive as announced on 21 July, *Official Report*, column *426* and will be fully offset by savings from within the vote.

The running costs limit will be reduced by £885,000 from £80,969,000 to £80,084,000 mainly reflecting the transfer of the cost of security guards—£830,000—to the Cabinet Office, class XIX, vote 1.

Central Statistical Office

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed to the Central Statistical Office's cash and running costs limits in 1994–95.

Mr. Nelson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVII, vote 13 will be increased by £3,221,000 from £44,781,000 to £48,002,000 and the running costs limit by £3,261,000 to £48,463,000. These increases reflect:

(a) A transfer from the Department of National Heritage (Class XI, Vote 7) (£3,080,000), in respect of funding for the International Passenger Survey.

(b) A transfer from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Class III, vote 5) (£36,000), in respect of the collection of producer prices information.

(c) The take up of entitlement under the end year flexibility scheme for running costs (£105,000).

(d) Additional running costs in respect of increased sales of publications, offset by a corresponding increase in Appropriations in aid (£40,000).

(e) Expenditure required to fund a capital project, offset by a corresponding increase in Appropriations in aid (£100,000).

The increase are offset by inter-departmental transfers and additional receipts or are charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Running Costs

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the current annual cost of maintaining and running the House of Lords.

Mr. Newton: The information requested can be obtained from the House of Lords "Annual Report and Accounts", HL 86, a copy of which is held in the Library.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Disabled People

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if the resultant additional expenses, in particular the services of a carer, can be reimbursed by the appropriate administrative department when the hearing of a case at a Crown, county or magistrates court involving a disabled person has to be re-sited because of difficulties of access for that disabled person.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In criminal cases, additional travelling and associated costs properly incurred by a disabled witness or successful defendant may be allowed from public funds. The costs incurred by a carer who necessarily attends may also be allowed. In civil proceedings, the parties' costs are a matter to be determined by the court.

Northern Ireland Court Service

Mr. Coe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Lord Chancellor's Department, what changes have been made to the class IX vote 3 cash limit and running costs limit for the Northern Ireland court service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class IX, vote 3 has been increased by £758,000 from £26,151,000 to £29,909,000 and the running costs limit by £758,000 from £17,254,000 to £18,012,000. The vote is eligible for a cash limit increase of £94,000 in respect of the end-year flexibility arrangements for running costs. This supplementary estimate gives effect to that increase. The further increase arises out of the transfer from the Crown property unit of the cost of the payment of contributions in lieu of rates.

ENVIRONMENT

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the privatisations which his Department has promoted since 1979 indicating, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Sir Paul Beresford: Since 1979, my Department has promoted the following privatisations:

Sale	*Date of Sale*	*Net Proceeds from Sale £ millions*
Shares in 10 water holding companies	December 1989	[1]5,093·7
Property Services Agency (PSA) Projects	1 December 1992	–49·9
PSA Services Building Management (BM) Scotland	1 September 1993	3·5
PSA Services BM Manchester	1 October 1993	–11·5
PSA Services North East BM	1 October 1993	8·0
PSA Services BM South East and BM South West	1 October 1993	10·4

My Department promoted the sale of the Crown Suppliers in 1990. The sale was not concluded and the organisation closed on 31 March 1991.

In addition, the Hydraulics Research Station became private research association on 1 April 1982.

Details of the current value of each holding are not a matter for my Department.

[1] Includes the sale of Welsh Water by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Water and Sewerage Services

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the powers which rest with the Director General of Water Services to determine the method of charging for water and sewerage services in England and Wales.

Mr. Atkins: The method of charging water and sewerage services in England and Wales is a matter for the water and sewerage companies. The Director General of Water Services has no powers to determine the method of charging, but he does have powers, in section 2 of the Water Industry Act 1991, to ensure—subject to his obligation to secure that the companies can properly finance the carrying out of their functions—that the interests of customers and potential customers are protected as regards the fixing and recovery of charges by the companies.

Commission for New Towns

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who is to be the new chairman of the Commission for New Towns; and who are its board members.

Sir Paul Beresford: An announcement about the new chairman of CNT will be made in due course. The current board members are as follows:

Sir Neil Shields MC (Chairman)
Lord Finsberg MBE (Deputy Chairman)
Lord Bellwin JP
Mr. R. B. Caws OBE
Mr. F. C. Graves OBE, DL
Sir Brian Jenkins GBE
Ms W. Luscombe
Mr. M. H. Mallinson
Lady Marsh
Mr. J. R. Trustam Eve

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Sir Paul Beresford: The latest estimate of the costs of preparing answers to both written and oral questions was given in the reply by the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *387*.

Teesside Development Corporation

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what current developments Teesside development corporation has in hand; and if he will make a statement on progress to date.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Teesside development corporation has the following schemes currently under way: At Hartlepool, the corporation has just opened a major new tourist attraction, the Hartlepool historic quay, which is well on its way to achieving its target of 250,000 visitors per annum. The opening of the centre has already led to the attraction of substantial private sector investment in complementary developments such as a factory shopping complex, superstore, food courts, public house and restaurant and negotiations are also under way for further commercial and residential schemes.

At Teesside the corporation is continuing in its drive to transform 100 hectares of formerly derelict land into a high-quality development incorporating commercial, office, residential, retail, educational and leisure facilities. To that end, the Tees barrage, which was commissioned in September 1994, will be fully operational in 1995. This will dramatically improve the environment and water quality of the Tees providing a prestigious and dramatic setting for water sports and recreation. It will also lead to the attraction of further private investment on high-quality sites with attractive water frontage.

Preston farm, the corporation's main industrial and business site continue to attract new private sector investment. The latest success is the announcement of the creation of 1,000 new jobs within a three-year period by the international cable company COMCAST.

Overall, the Teesside development corporation in its first six years to 31 March 1994 has achieved the following:

- 7,000 new jobs in new floorspace
- 274,000 sq m of new floorspace
- 700 houses completed with a further 350 underway.
- £715 million of private sector investment attracted to the area.
- 330 hectares of land reclaimed.
- Over 6,000 jobs provided in the construction industry.
- Over 300 companies assisted to expand and/or to relocate to Teesside
- £53 million of receipts.
- £10 million of European assistance secured.
- Integrated the community into its developments by promoting schemes such as social and sheltered housing, training initiatives, a new University College, two nursing homes, a Community Farm, an Enterprise and Training Centre and wide-spread environmental improvements.

Belgrave Residents Association, Leicester

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will invite the district auditor to investigate the use of public money by the Belgrave residents association in the city of Leicester and the means by which it came by and disposed of public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: No. If my hon. Friend has concerns about the use of local authority funds he should refer the matter to the district auditor for investigation.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his policy on limiting increases in SSAs over the next two years for local authority expenditure levels;

(2) what discussions he has had with his colleagues regarding levels of SSAs; and what effects these will have on local government expenditure over the next two years.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. Friend regularly discusses the future spending needs of local government with colleagues. Conclusions from these discussions will be announced in due course.

Leicester City Council

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will invite the district auditor to investigate the sale by Leicester city council of land to a temple, a mosque and a gurdwara in Hamilton in Leicester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: No. This is not a matter for the Government. If my hon. Friend has concerns about any financial transactions by the local authority he should refer the matter to the district auditor.

Non-domestic Rates

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will estimate the number of hereditaments where the transition for the 1990 change is likely to be incomplete at 31 March 1995 but is likely to be (i) complete and (ii) more nearly complete at 1 April 1995 by virtue of a reduction in the rateable value from the date;

(2) how many hereditaments in England which currently fall *(a)* below and *(b)* above the threshold of rateable value, for determining whether the lower limit on year-on-year increases in non-domestic rates bills applies, there are estimated to be for which the transition to the rateable value and national non-domestic rate introduced in April 1990 will not have been completed at 31 March 1995; and if he will estimate (i) the average percentage and (ii) the aggregate amount by which the 1994–95 rates bills for those hereditaments falls below the amount which would have been payable without transitional relief.

Mr. Curry: The information about properties in England which are currently in transition is contained in the table. Assuming for illustrative purposes that the rate poundage is unchanged in real terms between 1994–95 and 1995–96, preliminary results from the 1995 revaluation suggest that 35,000 of an estimated 330,000 properties in transition at 31 March 1995 would find themselves with no further increase next year and 50,000 would be closer to reaching their full liability than they are now.

Source: Inland Revenue: estimates rounded to nearest 5,000.

Properties with rate bills affected by transitional arrangements in 1994–95, England

Size of property				*Reduction in bill due to transition*	
	(1) Number (000's)	*(2) Actual rates bill with transition £ million*	*(3) Rates bill without transition £ million*	*(4) Amount £ million*	*(5) Amount per cent.*
Small	275	335	450	115	74
Large	55	1,050	1,435	385	73
All	330	1,385	1,885	500	73

Source:
Inland Revenue
Notes:
1. Figures (except percentages) are rounded to nearest 5 units.
2. Small properties have a 1 April 1990 rateable value less than £10,000 (£15,000 in London).
3. Column 4 is column 3 less column 2.
4. Column 5 is column 2 as a percentage of column 3.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what studies he has commissioned, internally and from external consultants, of the likely impact of the April 1995 revaluation of non-domestic property in England on rateable values and non-domestic rate bills in different regions and different sectors of the economy; if he will publish those studies, or summary thereof; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the regions, sectors and types of hereditament most affected by large increases or decreases in non-domestic rates.

Mr. Curry: The Inland Revenue is analysing the results of the revaluation as they come in. Although numbers are subject to change, our current estimate of the effect of the revaluation on rateable values is given in the table. The effect on rates bills will depend on the multiplier which is determined for 1995–96, and on the final form of our proposed transitional arrangements for the 1995 revaluation, details of which are contained in a consultation paper that we issued on 3 October. Copies of the consultation paper are in the Library and we expect to announce our decisions by the end of November.

Provisional estimates of impact of 1995 revaluation on rateable value.
Average percentage increase (+)/decrease (–) in 1995 list RV compared with 1990 list RV

Region	*Property type*					
	Shops	*Offices*	*Warehouses*	*Factories*	*Other*	*All*
South west	+7	+13	+12	+2	+17	+11
Rest of South east	+2	–12	+7	+2	+12	+2
East Anglia	+12	+14	+9	+3	+15	+11
North west	+31	+51	+46	+31	+21	+32
Northern	+30	+50	+43	+20	+16	+24
East Midlands	+22	+35	+21	+15	+17	+20
West Midlands	+31	+54	+49	+40	+9	+34
Yorkshire and Humberside	+27	+56	+32	+23	+14	+26
Inner London	–16	–59	–14	–14	–3	–40
Outer London	+12	–5	+5	–8	+13	+5
All	+10	–29	+17	+13	+13	+1

Source:
Inland Revenue
Note:
All number are still subject to change, possibly significant, as the revaluation work progresses.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hereditaments in England which fall *(a)* below and *(b)* above the threshold rateable value, for determining whether the lower limit on year-on-year increases in non-domestic rates bills applies, there are estimated to be whose rates bills for 1995–96 in the absence of transitional relief and assuming the rate poundage as adjusted for the revaluation is indexed for inflation would be (i) under 50 per cent., (ii) between 50 and 80 per cent., (iii) between 80 and 120 per cent., (iv) between 120 and 200 per cent., (v) between 200 and 500 per cent. and (vi) over 500 per cent. of their bills for 1994–95; and if he will estimate for each of those categories the aggregate increase or decrease in the rates bills between the two years.

Mr. Curry: Estimates for England based on preliminary results of the 1995 revaluation are given in the table. It has been assumed for illustrative purposes that the rate poundage is unchanged in real terms between 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Estimated increase or decrease in rate bills in England between 1994–95 and 1995–96 as a result of the 1995 revaluation, in the absence of transitional relief

1995–96 bills as a percentage of 1994–95 bills	*Small properties*		*Large properties*		*Total*	
	Number (000s)	*Change in bills £ million*	*Number (000s)*	*Change in bills £ million*	*Number (000s)*	*Change in bills £ million*
<50	10	—320	15	—730	25	—1050
50—80	35	—80	25	—315	60	—400
80—120	335	45	145	105	500	150
120—200	695	670	165	1130	865	1805
200—500	145	220	20	345	165	565
>500	10	40	—	90	10	130
Total	1255	575	370	625	1630	1200

Source:

Inland Revenue

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to nearest 5 units. ('—' means less than 3 units).

2. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

3. Small properties have a 1 April 1990 rateable value less than £10,000 (£15,000 in London).

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the regions, sectors and types of hereditament where there is the greatest incidence of incomplete transition to the rateable value and national non-domestic rate introduced in April 1990.

Mr. Curry: The greatest incidence of property in England currently remaining in transition under the 1990 scheme is the inner London, with 45 per cent. of its properties in transition. The incidence is greater than elsewhere for each main sector of the economy, regardless of whether the 1 April 1990 rateable value of property is more or less than the £15,000 threshold used for determining entitlement to transitional relief. The figures for each class of property are given in the table.

Percentage of properties estimated to be in transition in inner London area as at 31 March 1995

	Properties in transition as a proportion of total number of properties in each class per cent.				
Size	*Shops*	*Offices*	*Warehouses*	*Factories*	*Other*
Small	50	35	40	30	50
Large	60	30	20	20	60

Source:
Inland Revenue
Note:
Small properties have a 1 April 1990 rateable value less than £10,000 (£15,000 in London).

Repair Costs

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has on the number of local authorities which have incurred significant losses as a result of a failure to bill leaseholders for repair costs.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: None. The Department does not collect information in this form.

Westminster City Council

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigation his Department is making into Westminster city council's failure to recover repair costs from leaseholders.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is not the role of the Department to carry out such investigations. This is a matter for the authority's auditors.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons for the qualification of Westminster city council's accounts for 1993–94.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: No. This is a matter for the local authority and its appointed auditor.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the additional cost to tenants in Westminster of the failure of the council to recover repair costs from leaseholders.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Department has no details of the alleged undercharging by Westminster city council, and has made no estimate of the cost to tenants.

Council Tax

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the date by which the last council tax banding appeals are expected to be heard *(a)* by county and *(b)* by district in Berkshire.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We expect four out of five initial appeal period appeals to be settled before the end of this year. The remainder will be settled as soon as possible in 1995. I cannot estimate a date by which all such appeals will have been settled since a few may be affected by special factors—such as an appeal on a point of law to the High Court.

In limited circumstances—for example, on a change of occupier or in the case of a material change affecting the property—appeals can still be made after the end of the initial period.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the percentage of new properties awaiting banding, which has been waiting more than one year *(a)* by county and *(b)* by district in Berkshire;

(2) what is the expected date by which the last of the new properties that have been waiting more than a year for their banding will have been banded *(a)* by county and *(b)* by district in Berkshire.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The local office structure of the Valuation Office Agency is not based on county boundaries and the information for each county is not held centrally. Of the dwellings to be added to valuation lists in the county and district areas of Berkshire, as at 28 October, the following percentage had been outstanding for more than a year:-

	per cent.
Berkshire	12·4
Bracknell Forest	3·4
Newbury	21·1
Reading	6·5
Slough	2·5
Windsor and Maidenhead	4·0
Wokingham	18·9

The Valuation Office Agency at Reading expects to have these dwellings entered in valuation lists before the end of November this year.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of council tax banding appeals made *(a)* by county and *(b)* by district in Berkshire.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The local office structure of the Valuation Office Agency is not based on county boundaries and the information requested at *(a)* is not held centrally.

The number of council tax banding appeals made, as at 28 October, in each district of Berkshire are as follows:

	Appeals
Berkshire	17,821
Bracknell Forest	1,756
Newbury	3,663
Reading	4,669

	Appeals
Slough	1,276
Windsor and Maidenhead	3,359
Wokingham	3,098

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council tax banding appeals were heard by 30 September *(a)* by county and *(b)* by district in Berkshire.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The local office structure of the Valuation Office Agency is not based on counties. The only centrally held statistics that provide figures for counties are those relating to appeals made during the initial period. The number of initial period council tax banding appeals settled by the end of September were as follows:

	Appeals
(a) County	
Avon	12,157
Bedfordshire	5,649
Berkshire	9,616
Buckinghamshire	9,156
Cambridgeshire	5,616
Cheshire	10,991
Cleveland	3,535
Cornwall	8,749
Cumbria	7,721
Derbyshire	10,602
Devon	19,339
Dorset	11,563
Durham	5,432
East Sussex	11,089
Essex	19,867
Gloucestershire	11,086
Hampshire	18,297
Hereford and Worcestershire	10,740
Hertfordshire	9,078
Humberside	7,693
Isle of Wight	2,330
Kent	19,312
Lancashire	15,432
Leicestershire	8,588
Lincolnshire	8,068
Norfolk	8,511
Northamptonshire	6,358
Northumberland	4,432
North Yorkshire	14,140
Nottinghamshire	9,745
Oxford	10,091
Shropshire	6,670
Somerset	8,709
Staffordshire	9,463
Suffolk	7,200
Surrey	14,919
Warwickshire	6,444
West Sussex	10,971
Wiltshire	9,801
Isles of Scilly	165
Inner London	36,284
Outer London	44,834
Greater Manchester	16,016
Merseyside	8,870
South Yorkshire	6,900
Tyne and Wear	6,564
West Midlands	14,966
West Yorkshire	18,663
(b) Billing authority in Berkshire	
Bracknell Forest	845
Newbury	1,791
Reading	2,413
Slough	781
Windsor and Maidenhead	1,935
Wokingham	1,851

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new properties are awaiting banding *(a)* by county and *(b)* by district in Berkshire.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The local office structure of the Valuation Office Agency is not based on county boundaries and the information for each county is not held centrally.

Of the dwellings notified to the VOA office at Reading, as at 28 October, the following number had yet to be entered in valuation lists:

	Number
Berkshire	1,577
Bracknell Forest	116
Newbury	452
Reading	367
Slough	119
Windsor and Maidenhead	222
Wokingham	301

Scrap Yards

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends that the new controls envisaged in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 should be enforced in relation to scrap yards.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply given to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) on 21 October 1994, *Official Report,* column *352.*

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to take action to prevent scrap yards from being a source of pollution.

Mr. Atkins: The recovery of scrap metal is subject to licensing under part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Waste regulation authorities have a duty under section 9 of the 1974 Act to ensure that licensed activities do not cause pollution of water, danger to public health or serious detriment to local amenities; and to ensure that licence conditions are complied with.

Home Improvement Agency

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusion he has reached in his review of the Home Improvement Agency grant programme.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached following his review of the Home Improvement Agency grant programme.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The review has confirmed that home improvement agencies provide an important service helping a large and increasing number of vulnerable people improve their homes. Their work is highly valued by both clients and practitioners, especially local authorities, and makes a significant contribution to the effective delivery of housing and community care policies.

We have therefore concluded that the grant programme should continue for a further five years from 1 April 1995. We are now considering the detailed arrangements under which the programme will operate in the light of suggestions made by consultees.

I am placing in the Library a report of the studies which informed the review, together with a list of the responses received to the consultation letter issued by my Department in June. Copies of individual responses may be obtained through the Library.

Rural Development Commission

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish a management statement on relations between his Department and the Rural Development Commission.

Mr. Atkins: I am issuing the management statement today. Copies are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to change his Department's cash limits and running costs limits for 1994–95.

Mr. Gummer: The Department of the Environment/regeneration initiative non-voted cash limit will be increased by £25,081,000 from £1,267,772,000 to £1,292,853,000. Capital end-year flexibility take-up of £28,288,000 will fund payments on capital projects which slipped from previous years for the Victoria arena, Urban Regeneration Agency, housing action trusts, Plymouth development corporation, Central Manchester development corporation, city challenge and the coalfield areas fund. A transfer of £3,000,000 to class VII, vote 1—housing, England,—is necessary to meet an equivalent increase in city challenge Housing Corporation expenditure and a transfer of £207,000 to the Department of Health is necessary for urban programme payments. There will be associated increases to external financing limits as follows: by £3,000,000 from £5,800,000 to £8,800,000 for Central Manchester development corporation; by £1,000,000 from £30,500,000 to £31,500,000 for Tyne and Wear development corporation; by £1,639,000 from £6,500,000 to £8,139,000 for Plymouth development corporation; by £2,500,000 from £88,215,000 to £90,715,000 for the housing action trusts; and by £21,470,000 from £95,336,000 to £116,806,000 for the Urban Regeneration Agency—English Partnerships.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 5—central environmental services, etc—will be reduced by £1,309,000 from £440,954,000 to £439,645,000 to reflect savings in grant in aid paid to the Rural Development Commission and expenditure forecast under various subheads.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 8—revenue support grant, payments of non-domestic rates, Valuation Office services, etc., England—will be increased by £2,166,000 from £29,632,166,000 to £29,634,332,000. This comprises an increase of £3,452,000 in provision for Valuation Office rating services repayment, an increase of £214,000 in provision for Valuation Office banding and valuation services, and an offsetting reduction of £1,500,000 in provision for valuation tribunals.

The Department of the Environment/local government reorganisation etc. cash limit will be reduced by £3,800,000 from £58,000,000 to £54,200,000. This comprises a reduction of £1,000,000 in provision for supplementary credit approvals to local authorities in respect of commutation of loan charge grants, and a reduction of £2,800,000 in borrowing provision for the local government residuary body.

All increases will be offset by savings or charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Coal Industry

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what amendments he proposes to make to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order following coal privatisation; and what guidance he proposes to issue.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Town and Country Planning General Development Order (Amendment No. 2) Order 1994 which comes into operation on 31 October provides for permitted development rights for licensees of the Coal Authority to continue underground mining at GDO mines subject to conditions requiring the restoration and aftercare of the pithead surface area. These require the operator to submit a scheme for the restoration and aftercare of the site for the Mineral Planning Authority's approval.

There are also a number of minor technical amendments needed to the GDO, broadly to change references to British Coal to the Coal Authority and to update definitions in line with the Coal Industry Act, 1994.

The guidance note that we have published today explains the effect of the changes introduced by the amendment order and gives advice on the preparation and content of restoration schemes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has made equivalent arrangements.

Recycling

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government intend to respond to the second report from the Environment Select Committee on recycling, HC (1993–94) 63.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to announce that our response to the Environment Select Committee's report on recycling is being published today; copies have been laid in the Journal Office.

The Government welcome the Environment Committee's wide-ranging and thoughtful report. The report comes at an opportune moment. A range of United Kingdom and international initiatives on waste management are currently being developed. These have the broad aim of securing a more sustainable approach to waste management and increased beneficial use of unavoidable wastes. The report will provide a focal point for informed debate of the many complex issues that need to be addressed.

The Government are particularly pleased to see the Environment Committee's recognition that recycling should not be pursued for its own sake. It must be seen as part of an integrated approach to waste management. We are also pleased to endorse the Committee's view of the waste management hierarchy as a decision-making tool which balances the environmental and economic considerations in each case. We announced in July that we intend to build upon these principles in the development of a waste strategy for England and Wales.

Recycling will have an important place in that strategy. In part, this is because recycling is the best option for many wastes—but also, as the Environment Committee point out in its report, because the expansion of recycling and increased opportunities for individual participation can be a springboard for wider environmental awareness and action.

Development Corporations

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each development corporation since it inception *(a)* its total budget, *(b)* the number of jobs created and *(c)* the role of private sector investment made in its area, with the jobs and investment broken down into (i) manufacturing, (ii) commercial, (iii) retailing, (iv) office and (v) other.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The urban development corporations' programmes are supported by grant in aid, receipts from their activities and funds from the European Community. The table shows the total grant in aid paid to each corporation since its inception; the gross number of new permanent jobs; and the private sector investment in developments in the designated area. Where information is available, the figures for jobs and private sector investment have been broken down into; (i) manufacturing; (ii) commercial; (iii) retailing; (iv) office; and (v) other.

	Grant-in-Aid	*Permanent Jobs*[1]					
	£ millions	*(i) Manufacturing*	*(ii) Commercial*	*(iii) Retail*	*(iv) Office*	*(v) Other*	*Total*
London Docklands	[2]1610·9	n/a	n/a	n\a	n\a	n\a	56,200
Merseyside	313·4	[3]2,400	[3]2,500	[3]2,350	[3]3,125	[3]230	10,605
Black Country	253·4	8,390	338	1,040	1,190	439	11,397
Teeside	237·3	4,064	243	852	1,672	208	7,039
Trafford Park	153·8	4,359	4,165	1,139	4,312	819	14,794
Tyne and Wear	227·6	1,898	[4]5,713	—	—	8,631	16,242
Bristol	71·0	—	1,166	79	1,000	5	2,250
Central Manchester	67·2	—	—	190	3,341	1,146	4,677
Leeds	51·5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8,218
Sheffield	74·9	1,299	207	7,512	759	305	10,082
Birmingham Heartlands	15·7	137	405	20	136	—	698
Plymouth	7·9	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	3,084·6						142,202

Notes

All figures are up to 31 March 1994.

n/a—Breakdown not available.

[1] Permanent jobs = gross jobs provided by first-time occupiers of newly completed development (new build and conversion) in the Designated Area who took up occupation over the reporting period.

[2] Excludes docklands light railway.

[3] Provisional figures based on a preliminary analysis.

[4] Includes office.

Commentary

In five cases—Birmingham Heartlands, London Docklands, Sheffield, Teesside and Trafford Park—the employment figures vary from those previously published (*Hansard* 14 July 1994, Col. *771*). The substantial downward revisions of the London Docklands and Teesside totals reflect the fact that the earlier numbers had been built up by combining total employment in the area in 1991 with gross jobs subsequently created.

	Grant-in-Aid	*Private sector investment*					*£ millions*
	£ millions	*(i) Manufacturing*	*(ii) Commercial*	*(iii) Retail*	*(iv) Office*	*(v) Other*	*Total*
London Docklands	[1]1610·9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,993·0
Merseyside	313·4	[2]36·2	[2]37·7	[2]23·9	[2]75·4	[2]127·8	301·0
Black Country	253·4	385·7	13·8	24·3	9·9	146·3	580·0
Teeside	237·3	500·4	64·3	50·1	64·3	35·7	714·8
Trafford Park	153·8	474·0	50·0	10·0	165·0	20·1	719·1
Tyne and Wear	227·6	78·5	[3]252·7	1·7	—	270·1	603·0
Bristol	71·0	—	73·1	41·5	44·0	16·4	175·0
Central Manchester	67·2	—	—	4·0	92·0	181·3	277·3

	Grant-in-Aid	Private sector investment					£ millions
	£ millions	(i) Manufacturing	(ii) Commercial	(iii) Retail	(iv) Office	(v) Other	Total
Leeds	51·5	104·0	[3]117·0	35·0	—	61·0	317·0
Sheffield	74·9	35·9	39·8	412.4	27·0	17·5	532·6
Birmingham Heartlands	15·7	7·4	31.8	2·0	5·0	0·1	46·3
Plymouth	7·9	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	3,084·6						10,259·1

Notes:

All figures are up to 31 March 1994.

n/a—Breakdown not available.

[1] Excludes Docklands Light Railway.

[2] Provisional figures based on a preliminary analysis.

[3] Includes office.

Commentary:

In five cases—Birmingham Heartlands, London Docklands, Sheffield, Teeside and Trafford Park—the employment figures vary from those previously published in *Hansard*, 14 July 1994, column *771*. The substantial downward revisions of the London Docklands and Teeside totals reflect the fact that the earlier numbers had been built up by combining total employment in the area in 1991 with gross jobs subsequently created.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what additional safety precautions would be required to permit the burying of low-level nuclear waste on landfill tips;

(2) if he will make a statement on the implications of water pollution at Beighton tip, Sheffield for the suitability of the tip for the burying of low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* A small number of landfill sites, including Beighton tip, already receive some low-level radioactive waste for controlled burial. Authorisations for all such disposals are issued by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the terms of the Radioactive Substances Act 1993. These are designed to ensure the safe disposal of this waste. Conditions in the authorisations are determined on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the sites and the activity and amount of the wastes.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to consult local communities in the vicinities of landfill tips which are being considered for the burying of low-level nuclear waste;

(2) if he will make it his policy that local communities are consulted before any nuclear waste is deposited in landfill tips.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* In addition to the specific requirements of the Radioactive Substances Act 1993, it is already the practice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to consult the relevant waste regulatory authority, local councils, and water undertaker, before issuing authorisations for controlled burial of low-level radioactive waste at landfill sites. The Government are currently consulting on proposals to encourage greater use of controlled burial. However, there are no plans in relation to specific sites.

Ofwat

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost to Ofwat of its contract with Ludgate Laud for parliamentary lobbying in the present year.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer, 31 October 1994]:* This is a matter for the Director General of Water Services.

Economic Development Expenditure

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total spending on economic development measures by *(a)* the five west Yorkshire district councils, *(b)* the four south Yorkshire district councils, *(c)* North Yorkshire county council and *(d)* Humberside county council under the Housing and Local Government Act 1989 in each financial year since 1989–90.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* Section 33 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 allows local authorities to take "such steps as they may from time to time consider appropriate for promoting the economic development of their area". The Department of the Environment does not collect information about expenditure specifically related to section 33, although it does record a number of items of local authority expenditure which can be totalled to produce a figure for economic development generally. For each of the local authorities identified, this gives the following figures for net current and capital expenditure respectively:

	1990–91 £000s	1991–92 £000s	1992–93 £000s	1993–94 £000s
Net current expenditure				
County Councils				
Humberside	1,368	1,899	1,870	1,921
North Yorkshire	577	685	271	736
District Councils				
Barnsley	349	302	247	2,691
Doncaster	202	48	252	647
Rotherham	-428	-352	-138	-460
Sheffield	461	—	2,967	2,749
Bradford	1,425	1,606	1,750	1,486
Calderdale	570	581	280	193
Kirklees	1,468	1,778	2,091	1,950
Leeds	1,879	2,148	2,004	48
Wakefield	—	—	2,258	2,110

	1990–91 £000s	*1991–92 £000s*	*1992–93 £000s*	*1993–94 £000s*
Capital Expenditure				
County Councils				
Humberside	226	293	271	269
North Yorkshire	183	213	—	—
District Councils				
Barnsley	992	1,246	1,754	4,533
Doncaster	3,985	1,287	6,025	2,851
Rotherham	303	199	732	—
Sheffield	9,461	1,415	1,238	n/a
Bradford	5,427	2,637	1,881	6,712
Calderdale	1,242	449	152	1,019
Kirklees	875	2,151	2,231	3,622
Leeds	3,304	5,940	4,455	8,613
Wakefield	5,597	3,239	2,326	1,672

Rents

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average weekly rent paid by people earning less than £10,000 in each year since 1990.

Mr. Curry *[pursuant to his reply, 25 October 1994, c. 531]:* Estimates of the average rent paid by households in England headed by people with annual incomes less than £10,000 are as follows:

Average weekly rents, before and after deduction of Housing Benefit

	£ per week	
	Before deduction of housing benefit	*After deduction of housing benefit*
1990	28·10	15·60
1991	30·10	14·80
1992	35·10	16·00
1993	39·60	16·90

These figures are from the family expenditure survey and are subject to sampling error.

The estimates do not take into account the income of householders other than the head of household.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for 1992–93 and 1993–94 the amount spent in each London borough, with totals for each training and enterprise council area, under each of the programmes now incorporated into the single regeneration budget, and the amount allocated to be spent in 1994–95 on the same basis.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 27 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *813*.

Anti-personnel Mines

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is his policy regarding possible future exports of casings or components for anti-personnel mines with self-destruct or self-neutralising mechanisms;

(2) what is his policy regarding possible future exports of anti-personnel mines with self-destruct or self-neutralising mechanisms.

Mr. Ian Taylor: We have not produced or exported any anti-personnel mines for some years. Nevertheless, any applications to export these forms of mines or their components would be subject to rigorous scrutiny on a case by case basis, with due regard to proposed end users and their adherence to protocol II of the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what failure rate is allowed in the definition of a self-destruct or self-neutralising mechanism on an anti-personnel mine employed by Her Majesty's Government for export purposes.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Applications for licences for the export of anti-personnel mines have not been received for some years and the United Kingdom does not currently produce or export such mines. Failure rate would not, however, be a factor taken into account in considering applications for licences to export such mines. We are working positively towards incorporating achievable criteria into the revised 1981 United Nations weaponry convention which governs the use of such weapons.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the definition of anti-personal mine employed by Her Majesty's Government for export purposes.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Exports of anti-personnel mines are controlled under munitions list 4 of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1994 and our own recently announced export moratorium. Although currently no formal definition on anti-personnel mine is used, companies making applications for licences to export any weapons are required to state the purpose for which those weapons are to be used.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research he has carried out into the impact of production and export of anti-personnel mines with self-destruct or self-neutralising mechanisms by the United Kingdom on the production and export of anti-personnel mines of all types by developing countries; and what were his conclusions.

Mr. Ian Taylor: No such research has been undertaken by my Department.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to which countries the United Kingdom has exported casings or components for anti-personnel mines since 1982.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Details of any export licences approved for this equipment could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement o the value of savings identified by Stoy Hayward as obtainable if the work of the Insolvency Service is contracted out; and when details of the cost and savings will be published.

Mr. Heseltine: Stoy Hayward offer no quantified estimates of potential savings. Detailed information on the costs and the interest of private sector organisations provided to Stoy Hayward Consulting remains confidential.

Steel

Mr. John Morris: To ask the President of the board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect the recent decision of the European Commission in respect of steel will have on British Steel; and if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom steel industry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I expect that the reported demise of the restructuring plan for the European steel industry will have little effect on British Steel, as it is simply an acknowledgement of what has been apparent for some time. The demise only reinforces the view of both the Government and the United Kingdom steel industry that the only way to achieve successful restructuring of the industry is by strict control of subsidies. The Commission should now be free to devote more effort to achieving this.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the European Commission steel industry restructuring plans.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I was not surprised when the Commission recently announced that the restructuring plan for the European steel industry was dead. The demise of the plan reinforces the Government's view that the only way to achieve successful restructuring of the industry is by strict control of subsidies, so that the inefficient producers come under commercial pressure to make closures where necessary. The Commission should now be free to devote more effort to achieving this.

Parliamentary Consultancies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it a requirement for companies to disclose publicly the nature of any parliamentary consultancy they may enter into with an hon. Member and the remuneration.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Such consultancies are already subject to disclosure in the Register of Members' Interests. I have no plans to introduce new Companies Act requirements.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The 1994 figures are not yet available. "Public Bodies 1993" shows that, at 1 September 1993, 19 per cent. of the Department's appointments were held by women. The Department is fully committed to equal opportunities for women in public appointments, and has set itself a goal of increasing the number of women in DTI public appointments to 30 per cent. by 1996.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total number of submissions received in response to his public consultation on the nuclear review; how many of the submissions have now been placed in the Library; and what is the reason for not placing in the Library the submission of the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent.

Mr. Eggar: There have been 505 formal submissions to the nuclear review: 200 of these, from the nuclear industry and other representative bodies and organisations, have been treated as substantive and placed in the Libraries of both Houses in accordance with my announcement of 19 May, *Official Report* columns *545–46*. This includes the submission from the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), and I understand that the Library will be writing to confirm this.

Optical Fibre Networks

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when Her Majesty's Government will respond to the third report from the Trade and Industry Committee of Session 1993–94 on optical fibre networks, HC 285.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Government will publish shortly a Command Paper setting out the opportunities for the United Kingdom arising from the further development of broadband communications networks and services. This Command Paper will incorporate the Government's response to the Trade and Industry Select Committee's report on optical fibre.

Information Super-highway

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what efforts his Department is making to ensure that the largest possible number of individuals and organisations are connected to the information super-highway.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Government will publish shortly a Command Paper setting out the opportunities for the United Kingdom arising from the further development of broad-band communications networks and services.

Entertainment Services (BT and Mercury)

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to vary the ban on BT and Mercury providing entertainment services via their national networks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) on 22 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *227*.

Coal Industry

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what liability will pass to British Coal's successor in regard to the provision of superannuation cover in respect of those employees who accepted the British Coal contract of employment in 1994; and what provision has been made by British Coal to meet this obligation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Successor companies will be liable only for employers' contribution to the new industry-wide schemes that are to be established and—except where a transferring employee also elects to transfer his past service entitlements—only in respect of transferred employees' future service with the successors. There is full provision for transferred employees' entitlements in respect of past service with British Coal within the funds of the existing pension schemes, now subject to guarantee by Government.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes have been made to British Coal's external financing limit for 1994–95.

Mr. Eggar: The external financing limit of the British Coal Corporation has been increased from £700 million to £736 million. This is attributable to a variety of factors including the effect on cash flow of privatising British Coal's mining business.

Indonesia

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial assistance is being provided towards the contracts recently entered into between Trafalgar house, PowerGen and British Gas with companies in Indonesia, the subject matter of the contracts, their total value and the identity of the Indonesian company in those contracts which involve a joint enterprise.

Mr. Needham: The DTI has awarded to Trafalgar house and a subsidiary company two grants under the overseas projects fund. These were to assist with a feasibility study and precontractual activities in Indonesia. Details of these grants are commercially confidential. Where appropriate, in accordance with the scheme rules, grants are repaid.

In addition, in 1988, Her Majesty's Government offered aid funds under the aid and trade provision of £16·856 million in support of a bid by Trafalgar house to build a toll road between Cikampek and Padalarang at an estimated cost of £56 million. The final value of the contract is subject to ongoing negotiations. The Indonesian partner company is PT Jasa Marga (Persero).

No financial assistance has been made available to PowerGen or British Gas.

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which business people representing which companies were involved in the recent trade mission to Indonesia.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* I visited Indonesia from 18 to 24 October 1994 and was accompanied by the following business people:

	Company
Brian McCann Director Corporate Development	AMEC Plc
Adam Strachan-Stevens Regional Manager	Avro International
Ian Thomas Director, International Business Development	Balfour Beatty
David Moleshead Export Finance Director	Banque Paribas, London
Richard Beresford Manager, Indonesia Global Gas Division	British Gas Plc
David Payne Country Representative	British Telecom
Peter Burleigh Managing Director, Asia	Cable and Wireless
Ray Grimwood Managing Director	Focas Limited
Dr. Clive Palmer Director, Exports Division	GEC Alstom
Andrew Walker Director, PT Indurenco International	High Point Rendell Group
Barrie Gannon Chief Executive	International Power Systems
Mr. B Dewe Matthews Senior Director	J. Henry Schroder Wagg
Raymond McCabe Managing Director	John Brown Engineering
Clive Kerner Manager Project and Export Finance	Kleinwort Benson
Dr. Nicholas Crosby Office Manager (Indonesia)	Kvaerner Boving Ltd.
Roger Walker Chairman and Managing Director	Long Products Ltd.
Pat Dougan Chief Executive	Mackie International
Alan McCready Director Asia Pacific	Mivan Group
Carl Nuttall Managing Director (Australia)	MMD Group
Clare Phelan General Manager, Business Development	National Grid Co Plc
David Byers International Business Development Manager	National Grid Co Plc
Peter Windsor Director International Business	National Power Plc
David Smith Executive Project Manager	Philips Telecom
Peter Hughes Managing Director, PowerGen International	PowerGen Plc
James Carmichael Director, Business Development SE Asia	PowerGen Plc
Dr. B Sweeney Marketing Director	Rolls Royce Industrial Power Group
Rod Williams Regional Executive (Indonesia)	Rolls Royce Industrial Power Group
Roger Harman Business Unit Leader	Sir Alexander Gibb
Roger Liew Manager, International Desk	Swindon Chamber of Commerce
Douglas Watkinson Managing Director	Tarmac Construction International
John Swann Manager, Business Development (Asia)	Taylor Woodrow International
John Cotton Managing Director	Westinghouse Brakes Ltd.
Mr C W Lynch Projects Director	Westinghouse Systems

	Company
James Young Director, Project and Export Finance	West Merchant Bank
Dr D Keith Far East Director (Singapore)	Wimpey Construction

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date he expects to announce details of schemes that have been successful under the third non-fossil fuel obligation order.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My Department is currently assessing the cost and quality of the bids received, and carrying out the statutory and other consultations. I hope to be able to announce the order in early December.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes will be made to his Department's cash limits and running costs limit for 1994–95.

Mr. Heseltine: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class IV, vote 1—support for business, consumer and investor protection, energy programmes and administration—will be increased by £12,525,000 from £1,173,077,000 to £1,185,602,000.

The gross running costs limit for the Department of Trade and Industry is being increased by £14,217,000 from £328,000,000 to £342,217,000. This change comprises the take-up of £14,549,000 in running costs end-year flexibility as approved by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *729-34*, and the transfer from Her Majesty's Treasury, class XVII, vote 1, of £3,000, offset by machinery of government transfers to the Department of Transport, class VI, vote 2, of £110,000, Office of the Rail Regulator, class VI, vote 8, of £197,000 and Oftel, class IV, vote 10, of £28,000.

There are some other changes in the allocation of provision. These include a reduction in provision of £1,500,000 on support for business reflecting a forecast underspend and a new provision of £1,795,000 on privatisation and contractorisation of DTI laboratories, the balance being made up by a transfer of £295,000 from other services. They also include the transfer of £740,000 to the Scottish Office and £1,194,000 to the Welsh Office in respect of industrial programmes.

In addition, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class IV, vote 4, privatisation of the coal industry, will be increased by £3,402,000 from £12,495,000 to £15,897,000. The increase covers additional costs of privatisation advisers' fees.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes will be made to the cash limits and running costs limits for the Office of Electricity Regulation, Office of Gas Supply and Office of Telecommunications.

Mr. Heseltine: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit for class IV, vote 10, Office of Telecommunications will be increased by £299,000 from £9,059,000 to £9,358,000 and the gross running costs limit by £299,000 from £8,627,000 to £8,926,000. The increase includes the take-up of running costs end-year flexibility of £171,000 as announced by the Chief Secretary on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *729–34*, and increased provision for personnel services. The increase will be offset by transfers from the Department of Trade and Industry, class IV, vote 1, £28,000, and Office of Electricity Regulation, class IV, vote 12, £100,000.

The cash limit for class IV, vote 11, Office and Gas supply, will be increased by £100,000 from £4,424,000 to £4,524,000. The increase is required for refitting and equipping new offices. The increase will be offset by a transfer from the Office of Electricity Regulation, class IV, vote 12, £100,000.

As a consequence of the above, the cash limit for class IV, vote 12, Office of Electricity Regulation, class IV, vote 12, will be reduced by £200,000 from £10,871,000 to £10,671,000. The gross running costs limit will be reduced by £200,[illegible] from £11,603,000 to £11,403,000.

These changes are offsetting or charged to the reserve and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Iraq

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect in percentage terms in the amount of trade with Iraq following from business visits of Iraqi business men since February 1993.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* None. Exports of foodstuffs, medicines and humanitarian goods to Iraq in 1993 totalled £12 million. For the first nine months of this year they were about £7·5 million. There have been no imports from Iraq in either year.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the guidelines companies receive when applying for export licences for trade with Iraq.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* No written guidelines are issued to companies about exports to Iraq from the United Kingdom, but each proposed export to Iraq is dealt with individually by the Department's sanctions unit.

All exports to Iraq from the United Kingdom require authorisation from the United Nations Sanctions Committee and an export licence from the DTI. Companies must therefore complete a form provided by the United Nations Sanctions Committee giving details for their proposed exports. The form is sent out to any company who intends to export goods and any query that it may have can be discussed with the sanctions unit.

Turkey

Mr. Tipping: To ask the president of the Board of Trade if he will list the dates of each ministerial visit or trade mission to Turkey since April 1992.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Ministerial Visits:

16–20 July 1993 Richard Needham Minister for Trade

Trade Mission	Sponsored by
1992	
1–5 June	London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
21–25 September	Northants Chamber of Commerce and Industry
1993	
1–5 March	Cardiff Chamber of Commerce and Industry
26–30 April	Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce and Industry
14–18 June	London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
20–24 September	Northants Chamber of Commerce and Industry
1994	
17–21 January	Wales (formerly Cardiff) Chamber of Commerce and Industry
7–11 March	Northern Development Company Chamber of Commerce and Industry
9–13 May	Wales Chamber of Commerce and Industry
19–23 September	Northants Chamber of Commerce and Industry
10–14 October	Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans his Department has to import radioactively contaminated nitric acid from the former nuclear reprocessing plant at Hanford, USA; and what representations his Department has received from staff at the British embassy in Washington on the subject.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 31 october 1994]:* None. The import of nitric acid is a commercial matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc, subject to meeting appropriate import licensing and regulatory requirements. The British embassy, as part of its policy to support British companies pursuing commercial opportunities, and with the agreement of my Department, wrote to the United States Department of Energy in August 1994 in support of BNFL's commercial activities, including this proposal.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent action has been taken by Britain and the European Union to address the humanitarian needs of the people in Liberia and refugees therefrom.

Mr. Baldry: Since 1 January, Britain has provided £1·25 million and the European Union approximately £5 million in support of the United Nations and non-governmental organisations emergency relief programmes to those displaced inside Liberia and to refugees in neighbouring states, the United Kingdom share of the EU aid is £0·6 million.

The Gambia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about British and European policy towards The Gambia following the recent coup.

Mr. Baldry: We and our European partners have condemned the overthrow of the democratically elected government of The Gambia. We have made it clear that the four-year election timetable announced by the armed forces provisional ruling council is wholly unsatisfactory. Together with our EU partners, Britain announced on 12 October that it was suspending all military co-operation and balance of payments support and would review new aid projects on a case-by-case basis.

Copies of United Kingdom and European Union statements on The Gambia have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Somaliland

Mr. Worthington: to ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in improving relationships between UNOSOM and Somaliland in adding to the infrastructure of Somaliland.

Mr. Baldry: UNOSOM closed its office in Hargeisa on 21 August. We understand that the United Nations Development Office will visit north-west Somalia in the near future to take forward the process of planning rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance.

Kenya

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the humanitarian needs of Kenya; and what is being done by Britain and the European Union in this connection.

Mr. Baldry: Harvest prospects are good in most areas. The world food programme will continue to deliver food aid until the end of the year to meet localised needs especially in northern and eastern regions.

The United Kingdom has contributed over £6 million in bilateral humanitarian aid since January 1994. European Union emergency aid commitments for 1994 amount to £7·35 million, of which the United Kingdom share is £0·92 million.

Overseas Aid

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the figures, the sources of the figures and the definition of "poorest" which formed the basis of his statement of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *680*, in respect of the focus of bilateral aid.

Mr. Baldry: In 1992–93, £619 million was spent on aid to the poorest countries. This represents 80 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid to developing countries which is allocable by income group.

This information is published in table A2 of "British Aid Statistics 1988–89 to 1992–93", a copy of which is available in the Libraries of the House.

"The poorest countries" are defined as low income group countries with a GNP per capita in 1991 of below $765.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to make a direct comparative assessment of how well British overseas aid expenditure is spent through *(a)* the United Kingdom bilateral programme and *(b)* multilateral agencies.

Mr. Baldry: We attach equal importance to the effectiveness of all projects whether in bilateral or multilateral programmes. A sample of projects financed under the bilateral programme are assessed to determine their effectiveness and the lessons are fed back into the design of future projects. Our approach towards improving the effectiveness of multilateral aid is set out in the speech which my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development gave to the Overseas Development Institute on 14 June 1994, copies of which are available in the Libraries of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: On three such occasions since 1 January 1994, a Minister has been accompanied by his spouse travelling at public expense. The total cost to public funds was £4,197.68. On no occasion has such travel been undertaken at own cost.

University Students

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students from Northern Ireland who gained university entrance, enrolled in universities in Great Britain during the last academic year; and how many went to each university in Great Britain.

Mr. Ancram: Information is not available in the form requested. However, a total of 4,207 students from Northern Ireland entered higher education courses in Great Britain in the 1993–94 academic year.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Asthma

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how much money the Medical Research Council spent in 1993–94 on *(a)* research into asthma and *(b)* research which may be relevant to the condition;

(2) how much money the Medical Research Council plans to spend in the current year and in 1995–96 on *(a)* research into asthma and *(b)* research which may be relevant to the condition.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: In the financial year 1993–94, the Medical Research Council's expenditure on research projects directly related to asthma was £0·9 million. Further spending on research which may be relevant to the condition totalled almost £1·1 million. The decision on funding for asthma research in the current year and in 1995–96 rests with the MRC. It will depend, as with all other research areas, on the quality of the research proposals that the Council receives. The MRC is, of course, willing to consider soundly based proposals in competition with other applications for council support, and funding decisions are dependent upon a peer review process.

On 3 October, MRC and the Departments of Health and of the Environment issued a combined call for research proposals on the links between air pollution and respiratory disease, with a special emphasis on asthma. Up to £5 million has been allocated to support this programme over the next four to five years.

TRANSPORT

Road Repairs

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department is taking to co-ordinate road repairs and the digging up of highways by public utilities, to minimise disruption to local communities.

Mr. Norris: Under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, co-ordination on publicly maintained local roads, the vast majority, is the responsibility of the local highway authority. For trunk roads and motorways the responsibility rests with the Highways Agency which, through its agents, works to the requirements of the Act. A code of practice has been issued under the Act, giving practical guidance on the co-ordination of street works and works for road purposes and related matters.

Seat Belts

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) of 19 July, *Official Report*, columns *81–82*, what progress he has made in establishing a timetable for the compulsory fitting of seat belts on all new minibuses and coaches.

Mr. Norris: We have pressed the Commission on this issue. Work is under way on revised technical proposals on the basis of which we expect the Commission to make a formal proposal for a directive early next year.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the relative merits of lap and three-point seat belts in minibuses and coaches.

Mr. Norris: An assessment of the relative merits of lap and three-point belts is contained in the review of the technical and cost implications of the fitment of seat belts in minibuses and coaches, which was published on 19 July. A copy of that report was placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps he is taking to encourage manufacturers of minibuses and coaches, and owners of currently operational minibuses and coaches to fit seat belts to vehicles.

Mr. Norris: The major minibus manufacturers are already fitting seat belts to all seats in their new vehicles as standard equipment.

We take every available opportunity to encourage coach and minibus manufacturers and operators to fit belts in both new and, where practicable, existing vehicles.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list, for each executive agency in his Department, the number of sick days taken in the past 12 months broken down by grade and gender;

(2) if he will list the number of sick days taken during the last 12 months by staff of the Driving Standards Agency, broken down by grade and gender.

Mr. Norris: I am placing copies of tables containing the figures in the Libraries.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, for each executive agency within his Department, the number of staff who have died while in employment in each of the last three financial years broken down by a grade and gender.

Mr. Norris: The figures requested are given in the following table:

Agency	*Grade*	*Gender*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Vehicle Certification Agency	Higher Professional and Technical Officer	Male	—	—	1
Coastguard Agency	Coastguard Officer (probationer)	Male	1	—	—
	Coastguard Officer (Watch Officer)	Male	—	1	—
	District Officer	Male	1	—	—
	Station Officer (District Management Team)	Male	—	1	1
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	Administrative Assistant	Female	1	1	1
		Male	1	1	1
	Administrative Officer	Female	1	—	—
		Male	1	—	—
	Executive Officer	Female	1	1	—
	Stores Officer Grade C	Male	—	1	—
	Support Grade Band 2	Male	2	1	—
	Typist	Female	2	1	—
Driving Standards Agency	Driving Examiner	Female	—	—	1
		Male	6	4	1
	Senior Driving Examiner	Male	1	—	—
	Senior Driving Examiner Managerial	Male	—	—	1
	Supervising Driving Examiner	Male	1	—	—
Highways Agency	Executive Officer	Female	—	—	1
	Grade 4	Male	1	—	—
	Typist	Female	—	—	1
Transport Research Laboratory	Grade 6	Male	—	—	1
	Professional and Technical Officer	Male	1	—	—
Vehicle Inspectorate	Administrative Officer	Female	—	—	1
		Male	—	1	—
	Casual Administrative Assistant	Male	—	—	1
	Executive Officer	Male	1	—	—
	Higher and Professional and Technical Officer	Male	—	—	1
	Professional and Technical Officer	Male	2	2	2
	Senior Traffic Examiner	Male	—	1	—
	Traffic Examiner	Male	2	1	—
Marine Safety Agency	Executive Officer	Male	1	—	—
DVOIT[1]	Senior Executive Officer	Female	—	—	1
		Male	—	—	1

[1] DVOIT was privatised in December 1993.

London Buses

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the application of the expected receipts from the privatisation of London Buses subsidiary companies.

Mr. Norris: Under arrangements agreed at the time of the unified budget, provision was made for London Transport to retain all proceeds up to £100 million and 25 per cent. of receipts above this level.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many *(a)* vehicle examiners and *(b)* traffic examiners were employed by his Department in each of the last six years;

(2) to what extent Vehicle Inspectorate and traffic and vehicle examiners undertake random roadside checks of vehicles;

(3) how many *(a)* vehicle examiners and *(b)* traffic examiners are employed by the Vehicle Inspectorate; and what are his projections for the numbers in the financial years 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Vehicle Inspectorate. The chief executive has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Mrs Gwyneth Dundwoody, dated 31 October 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about vehicle and traffic examiner staffing, and roadside enforcement checks.

i. Vehicle and Traffic Examiner staffing

Annex 1 updates the tables I sent to you on 18 July. These show the current staff in post figures. The information does not distinguish between operational and non operational staff so cannot be used [illegible] determine average man years spent on testing, and on roadworthiness and traffic enforcement.

Annex 2 is an analysis of average staffing by grade spent on vehicle testing and roadside enforcement activities. This information has been extracted from the Inspectorate's management accounts for the years 1988/89–1993/94.

The Inspectorate is planning efficiency savings of 20 per cent. by April 1996. Total staffing across the Inspectorate will fall by 470 from an average staffing figure of 1,758 in 1994/95. Most of these losses will come from natural wastage and voluntary redundancy. Unfortunately it is too early to determine staffing levels in the operational divisions, but we intend to make up for staff reductions by improved efficiency, greater use of information technology, more automation in vehicle testing work and better targeting of roadside enforcement.

ii. Roadside Enforcement

The Inspectorate targets the majority of its work. Whilst we try to examine at least some vehicles from all operators, we also try to concentrate activities on those most likely to be operating illegally.

In 1993–94, the last full year for which the information is available, vehicle examiners spent a total of 60·89 man years on roadside vehicle checks. VI testing staff carried out an additional 3·93 man years in clearing prohibitions issued by our vehicle examiners.

VI staff spent 64·88 man years on traffic enforcement checks at the roadside plus an additional 5·7 man years at ports.

I hope the above information is adequate, but if you would like to discuss the issues in more detail please contact Mrs. Jean Frary on 0117 9543211 who will arrange a convenient appointment.

Vehicle examiners

Grade	*27 October 1994*
SPTO	36
HPTO	83
PTO	390
AVE	83
Total	592

Traffic Examiners

Grade	*27 October 1994*
Enforcement Co-ordinator	5
Supervising Traffic Examiner	—
Senior Traffic Examiner	25
Traffic Examiner	161
Total	191

Average Vehicle and Traffic Examiner Staffing—1988/89 to 1993/4

	Average Staffing in Man-Years					
	1988–89	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Vehicle Testing						
PTO/AVE[1]	237	240	253	263	252	237
Road Transport Enforcement						
Vehicle Examiners	228	233	244	268	278	244
Traffic Examiners	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	170	172	166

Notes:

[1] Vehicle Testing is conducted by PTOs(VEs), Tester and Assistant Vehicle Examiners. Unfortunately it is not possible to separate VE and AVE staffing.

[2] The Traffic Examiners organisation did not become part of VE until April 1991.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *398*, what plans he has for a press campaign to promote the smoky vehicle hotline.

Mr. Norris: The number of hotline calls received has significantly increased since the leaflet explaining the reporting procedure has been included in vehicle excise licence renewal notices.

I am confident that the recent announcements by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about targeted emissions enforcement checks will help further increase public awareness.

We will review the need for further press announcements in due course.

M25

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the timetable for his review of proposed M25 link roads and for an announcement on whether he plans to abandon or push ahead with the scheme.

Mr. Watts: It was announced earlier this year that the next stage for the scheme for link roads between junctions 12 and 15 of the M25 would be a public inquiry. A date for the inquiry was not fixed. That remains the position. A further announcement will be made in due course.

Airport Facilities

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce a decision on the location of a new runway in south-east England.

Mr. Norris: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 18 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *69*.

Rail Safety

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that the safety and convenience of the travelling public take precedence over the Government's timetable for the successive stages of railway privatisation.

Mr. Watts: Safety is paramount.

Red Routes

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to implement all existing decisions to designate red routes in London; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Implementation of red route measures will begin later this year. The total cost of implementation is estimated to be £100 million at 1991–92 prices.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to change his Department's cash limits and running costs limits; and what proposals there are to change the cash limit and running costs limit of the Office of the Rail Regulator for 1994–95.

Dr. Mawhinney: Subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made:

(i) the cash limit for class VI, vote 1 (highways agency) will be increased by £44,131,000 from £2,098,528,000 to £2,142,659,000. The increase in the cash limit includes the take up of end year flexibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994 (*Offical Report*, columns *729–734*) and subsequently adjusted; and, adjustments in funding relating to the formation of the Highways Agency between this vote and class VI, vote 2 and class VI, vote 5.

(ii) the cash limit for class VI, vote 2 (administration and transport services) will be increased by £15,620,000 from £235,425,000 to £251,045,000. The additional provision includes the take up of end year flexibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994 (*Official Report*, columns *729–734*); the transfer of funds from the Department of Trade and Industry (class IV, vote 1) in respect of the London Regional Passengers Committee; the transfer of funds for research and development from class VI, vote 1 and class VI, vote 5; the transfer to class VI, vote 1 of various items of running costs and administrative capital; and, the transfer of provision to class VI, vote 7 to cover professional advisers' fees.

(iii) the cash limit for class VI, vote 5 (local roads and transport) will be increased by £59,669,000 from £532,904,000 to £592,573,000. The increase includes the take up of end year flexibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994 (*Official Report*, columns *729–734*); various transfers of funds between this vote and class VI, vote 1, class VI, vote 2 and from non-voted expenditure; and, the increase of provision for special grants to passenger transport authorities.

(iv) the cash limit for class VI, vote 7 (passenger rail services) will be increased by £63,000,000 by transfers from class VI, vote 2, class VI, vote 3 and from non-voted expenditure from £1,684,500,000 to £1,747,500,000. The additional provision is required for sums due to British Railways Board in respect of public service obligations and for the costs of professional advisers' fees in connection with the Franchising Director's duties to designate railway passenger services as eligible for provision under franchise agreements.

(v) the cash limit for class VI, vote 8 (office of the rail regulator) will be increased by £1,255,000 from £6,457,000 to £7,712,000. The increased cash limit includes the take up of end year flexibility entitlement of £1,058,000 as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994 (*Official Report*, columns *729–734*) and a transfer of £197,000 from the Department of Trade and Industry (Class IV, vote 1) for accommodation costs of the rail users committees.

(vi) The Department of Transport Local Authority Capital cash limit has been increased by £6,000,000 from £291,358,000 to £297,358,000. This reflects the take up of end year flexibility as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994 (*Official Report*, columns *729–734*).

(vii) The Department of Transport running costs limits has been reduced by £382,000 from £418,375,000 to £417,993,000 and the Office of the Rail Regulator running costs limit has been increased by £197,000 from £5,973,000 to £6,170,000.

The overall increases will be offset by transfers or charged to the reserve and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure. In particular, there are a number of adjustments between the voted and non-voted elements of railway expenditure which do not affect the control total.

Hilton Hotel (Dinner-dance)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any Minister from his Department attended a dinner-dance at the Hilton hotel, Park lane on 14 July 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 31 October 1994]*: My hon. Friend the member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) attended the function in a private capacity.

Security Guards

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to ensure that those convicted of acts of violence are not employed by his Department or their contractors as security guards.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 31 October 1994]*: Contract documents require contractors to obtain tenders for site security services from a list of named, reputable, security firms.

They require the security company to demonstrate its ability to select guards in terms of aptitude and temperament for the job, and that security guards be restrained, self disciplined and trained for dealing with peaceful protestors as well as those intent on causing damage.

As for security guards employed by the Department, any checks for criminal records are made in accordance with our stated vetting policy and decisions on whether to employ are taken with due regard to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

British Rail (Land)

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much land, in hectares, was owned by British Rail in Scotland before the present restructuring.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 28 October 1994]*: British Rail owned some 6,475 hectares of land in Scotland as at 31 March 1994. This figure excludes closed branch lines totalling about 134 miles in length.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Norris: Detailed information on past and present appointees to non-departmental public bodies—NDPBs formerly known as quasi autonomous non-governmental organisations—is not held in the Department and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, from such limited information as is available on present members of NDPBs, there is no evidence that any of them is a former hon. Member, apart from one member of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones, who was a Labour Member of Parliament. He was reappointed as a member of the committee in December 1992 for a three-year period. Committee members are not paid a salary but the Department meets their travel and subsistence costs.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Lady to "Public Bodies 1993".

Pollution

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many calls the telephone line for reporting vehicles which are polluting excessively has received; how the line is promoted; at what annual cost; and if he will publish a list of action taken as a result of calls made.

Mr. Norris: The Vehicle Inspectorate received almost 3,000 calls between April 1993 and March 1994. The cost of dealing with those calls was in the region of £5,500.

The procedure for reporting vehicles was publicised in a leaflet published in August 1993. This was sent to local authorities, motoring organisations, environmental groups, libraries, citizens' advice bureaux and other interested bodies. I have recently placed copies in the Library in response to a question from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). Since February 1994, the reporting procedure has also been explained in one of the small leaflets included with all vehicle excise licence renewal notices.

Operators who have been reported are asked to have their vehicle checked and are warned that continued use of an excessively smoky vehicle could be in contravention of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986.

Ferry Safety

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report from the chief coastguard south-west on the ferry safety exercise that took place on 4 November 1993 on the Quiberon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Mr. David Jamieson, dated 1 November 1994:

The Secretary of the State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question as the Question deals with an operational matter, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

An extensive post exercise discussion was held for all the participants shortly after the exercise and a draft report for the Exercise "EDDYSTONE 93" was circulated in September 1994. A final report will be distributed early in November. Exercise reports deal with operational matters and are not usually submitted to Ministers.

Air Training College

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the decision of the Civil Aviation Authority to withdraw approvals to train air traffic controllers from the South East Kent college of air training.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on Monday 31 October.

Rail Safety

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which organisation has responsibility under the new structure of the railway industry for ensuring that passengers are kept fully informed about the causes of the delays resulting from serious operating incidents; what arrangements exist to ensure that train operating companies have access to the necessary information; and what steps his Department has taken to monitor the policy followed by Railtrack and train operating companies concerning the accuracy and completeness of information supplied to passengers in such circumstances.

Mr. Watts: Railtrack is required to inform the relevant train operating companies of any incidents. Train operating companies are responsible for informing passengers about delays resulting from serious operating incidents. They work to citizens charter guidelines as laid down in British Rail's passengers charter.

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the near collision on the evening of Thursday 20 October involving two passenger trains outside Tunbridge Wells station; what features this incident had in common with the fatal accident at Cowden, Kent on 15 October; how both trains came to be on the same section of track travelling in opposite directions; how close the trains came to colliding and how a collision was averted; what information was given at the time to passengers about the reasons for the resulting delay to services; what telecommunications equipment was available to the relevant signalman and drivers of the two trains; what steps have been taken to ascertain responsibility for the incident; and whether action has been taken against any individual.

Mr. Watts: I understand from the Health and Safety Executive that because of a points failure the signalman had appointed hand signalmen at each end of the short single line through Strawberry Hill tunnel, to hand-wind the points according to instructions from the signalman. An error then occurred which led to the 18.45 Charing Cross to Hastings train running on to the northbound line which was occupied by the 17.40 Hastings to Charing Cross train, and which was standing at a red signal.

The driver of the southbound train was proceeding with caution as instructed, and was thus able to see the points were wrongly set and bring his train to a standstill, 50 yards from the other train.

There were no injuries to passengers or staff, but both drivers were treated for shock.

The circumstances of this incident have nothing in common with the Cowden accident.

I understand that on this line there are telephones on signals which link to signal boxes and these were used as the means of communication between the signalman and the hand-signalmen on site.

I understand that information about services was made available through radio, ceefax and announcements at stations.

Railtrack is carrying out an investigation into the cause of the incident and will then decide what further action is necessary.

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the demands on the time of railway managers imposed by the current reorganisation of the railway industry; and what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that these are consistent with the unimpaired discharge of their responsibility for operating the network and for maintaining safety and that the conditions of employment of employees of British Rail and Railtrack provide facilities for the making public of fears about safety matters.

Mr. Watts: Safety is paramount in all railway operations.

I am satisfied that the arrangements in place will ensure that the appropriate levels of safety are maintained. The new safety regulations are being monitored and enforced by the Health and Safety Executive.

Conditions of employment are matters for British Rail and Railtrack.

Cyclists

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve adherence to the highway code on the part of cyclists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Cyclists are required by law to comply with traffic directions and signals. This requirement is in the interests of cyclists' own safety and that of other road users. The Road Traffic Act 1991 created the offence of dangerous cycling. The maximum fine is now £2,500 for dangerous cycling and £1,000 for careless cycling. Enforcement of the law is a matter for the police.

Blue Circle and Decision Makers Ltd.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what dates representatives of Blue Circle and Decision Makers Ltd. met the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) in his capacity as Secretary of State for Transport to discuss a proposed international passenger station at Ebbsfleet

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* My right hon. Friend had no official meetings organised by the Department with Blue Circle or Decision Makers Ltd.

Austrian Tunnelling Method

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which *(a)* current and *(b)* planned transport schemes, and at which locations, the new Austrian tunnelling method may be used (i) currently and (ii) in the future.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The information is as follows:

(a) Current transport schemes

Two sections of the Jubilee Line Extension, at Jubilee gardens and London Bridge Station, are currently being constructed using the new austrian tunnelling method, although this work is currently suspended pending further information on the Heathrow collapse.

(b) Planned transport schemes

Plans for the crossrail project include the use of NATM techniques for station tunnels at platform levels at Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon and Liverpool Street stations and at part of Paddington station. One additional section of the JLE using NATM is planned between London Bridge and Waterloo.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Livestock Transportation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what meetings he has held with hauliers regarding the movement of small livestock; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: Officials have held one meeting with representatives of the pet industry and organisations with an interest in the transport of small livestock together with a representative of the parcel-carrying firm which recently announced its intention to stop carrying small consignments of poultry or rabbits.

The trade interests agreed to hold further discussions with the carrier with a view to developing suitable containers for the carriage of these types of animal. These would need to make food and water available during journeys of more than 12 hours duration as required by the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992.

Sheep Exports

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when it is expected that the vessels recently applying for licence to export sheep will be licensed by the Ministry; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: The Department's responsibility is to ensure that the arrangements for transporting farm animals are in accordance with the legal requirements laid down to protect their welfare.

We have considered a number of proposals that have been made to transport sheep and calves to the continent by ro-ro ferry from various south and east coast ports. No firm plans have yet been advanced for regular services, but a proposal to ship a single consignment of sheep in a fitted livestock vessel from Grimsby to Calais is likely to proceed, subject to inspection of the vessel and loading of the sheep under official supervision.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to secure a continuation of the EU moratorium on the use of BST beyond the end of 1994.

Mrs. Browning: The Government have made clear their view that any final decision on the licensing of BST should be based firmly on scientific principles, taking into account the need to avoid international trading problems, to encourage Community-based research industries and to maintain the competitiveness of the Community's agriculture and food industries. It should be for the marketplace to determine whether BST has a role to play and it is inappropriate to introduce new criteria to the licensing process. Other member states are fully aware of our views.

We await the report from the Commission on the experience of BST use in the United States where it has been on sale since 4 February 1994. It will also cover the implications for GATT and other trading relationships of a long-term prohibition. Its conclusions will be taken into account, along with the results of the formal consultation on BST carried out earlier this year, together with the representations which we continue to receive on this subject when we come to decide on the approach that the United Kingdom should take on the proposed extension of the EC moratorium later this year.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the privatisation which his Department has promoted since 1979, showing in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Waldegrave: The status of the former agricultural training board was changed on 29 March 1994 from that of a statutory, controlled non-departmental public body to a non-statutory private sector organisation with charitable status. The new organisation is known as ATB-Landbase Ltd. No proceeds accrued to the Government on privatisation. The company is now managed by a board of trustees. No information is available as to the estimated current value of the company.

The commercial artificial insemination service, formerly carried out by the Cattle Breeding Centre was transferred to the private sector in two parts in 1990. Financial details of those sales were not made public; because of subsequent reorganisation and deregulation in those sectors it is not possible to estimate the current value of those businesses.

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been carried out by his Department, and what evidence he has on what paralytic shellfish poisoning is caused by naturally occurring algal blooms.

Mr. Jack: Paralytic shellfish poisoning in humans is caused by the consumption of shellfish contaminated by naturally occurring biotoxins. At present, we know that shellfish can become toxic by ingesting potentially toxic algae species. However, the correlation between algal blooms and PSP contamination of shellfish is not yet clear. A bloom in the water may be symptomatic of PSP toxin; but some blooms are not toxic, and toxin may be present where there are no blooms or other recognisable symptoms. We cannot therefore rely upon the presence of blooms as an indicator and carry out a surveillance programme of sampling and testing of PSP toxin.

The Government are funding an extensive research programme into the nature and causes of PSP and also into improved methods of detection. The results are published in the scientific literature and elsewhere. In addition, the results of the surveillance programme are published.

Infant Formulae

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reasons the European Community directive on the marketing of infant formulae was not implemented by the Government in June; and when the statutory-instrument will be made.

Mrs. Browning: Consideration of the many points made during the consultation has delayed the implementation of European Community directives 91/321 and 92/52. It is hoped to make and lay the regulations shortly.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorell) to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *387*.

Cash Limits

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes are proposed in his Department's cash limits for 1994–95

Mr. Waldegrave: The Intervention Board executive agency is eligible for an increase of £1,012,000 in respect of the end year flexibility arrangements for running costs expenditure, as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *729–34*. At this stage, it is proposed to take up £600,000 of this entitlement to increase the agency's running costs cash limit for class III vote 2 from £32,852,000 to £33,452,000. The increase will be wholly offset by a £600,000 reduction in payments for agents' services, subhead A3, to £16,848,000 and the increase will not therefore result in a change in the cash limit for the vote.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class III, vote 5—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: Departmental Research, Advisory Services and Administration—will be increased by £6,392,000 from £311,890,000 to £318,282,000 and the cash limit for class III, vote 4—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: agricultural, food and fishing services—will be increased by £1,212,000 from £371,418,000 to £372,630,000. The vote 5 supplementary estimate will give effect to the £7,329,000 running costs and £358,000 capital end year entitlement announced by the Chief Secretary to the

Treasury on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *729–34*.

The gross running costs limit of the Department will be increased by £6,305,000 from £238,060,000 to £289,365,000. The £7,329,000 end year flexibility take-up has been offset by running costs reductions of £1,024,000. Those reductions comprise transfers of £842,000 vote 4 and £25,000 to the Welsh Office for commissioning work with the Central Science Laboratory on the bee health programme; a £36,000 transfer to the Central Statistical Office conferring responsibility for the compilation of the food and feed component of the producer price index; a £44,000 transfer to the Welsh Office to meet redundancy costs of agricultural advisory staff at the Welsh Office and a £77,000 transfer to vote 4 for commissioning work with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate in respect of food science.

The cost of the increase on vote 4 is fully matched by receipts in class III, vote 5 and a transfer from class XII, Vote 3. Within the revised limit, expenditure on support for the fishing industry will be increased by £1,500,000, grants for alternative land uses will be increased by £30,000 and expenditure on agricultural and food services will be increased by £1,212,000. The overall increase will be offset by additional receipts from sales of stocks of £1,530,000.

All increases will be offset by increased receipts, transfers on charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Fox Fur Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans he has to require fox fur farms to be licensed;

(2) what proposals he has received from the Farm Animal Welfare Council for the licensing of fox fur farms;

(3) when he last met Respect for Animals; and what proposals it recommends for the licensing of fox fur farms.

Mrs. Browning: Respect for Animals met my predecessor in February this year and provided him with a report prepared by Mr. Robert Golding which reviewed the legislation relating to the keeping of mink and Arctic fox. The Farm Animal Welfare Council last week gave me, as requested, its views on Mr. Golding's report. I am asking officials to distribute the advice to interested organisations so that they can make comments which can be taken into account before we form a view.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on the terms "treason", "secession", "sedition" and "subversion" against the Central People's Government of China contained in article 23 of the Basic Law covering the administration of Hong Kong after 1997;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications of the word "turmoil" as used in article 18 of the Chinese Government's Basic Law on Hong Kong, which permits Beijing to extend Chinese national laws to Hong Kong in certain circumstances;

(3) what assessment he has made of the impact of article 158 of the Basic Law of the People's Republic of China on the administration of Hong Kong after 1997 on the relationship of Hong Kong courts to the National People's Congress.

Mr. Goodlad: Freedom and the rule of law in Hong Kong after 30 June 1997 are enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, an international treaty registered at the United Nations. The United Kingdom and China are obliged to implement the Joint Declaration in good faith. The Basic Law is a law adopted by the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. Generally, under article 158 of the Law after 30 June 1997 it will be for the courts of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to interpret the Basic Law, save in certain limited circumstances where interpretation would be for the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Hong Kong regarding an Access to Information Bill; and what response he has made.

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Christine Loh, an appointed member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, has prepared a draft Access to Information Bill. The Hong Kong Government have decided that an administrative code of practice is the best way to improve public access to information in Hong Kong. A pilot scheme will test the code early in 1995. The Hong Kong Government expect to implement the code in full by the end of 1996.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which provision of the Hong Kong police force ordinance permits the seizure of news footage of demonstrators from television stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Section 50(7) of the police force ordinance provides for the seizure of news footage of demonstrations from television stations where there is reasonable cause to suspect that the footage may provide information about a person liable to arrest. A magistrate may empower any police officer by warrant to seize such news footage if he has satisfied himself that the request for the warrant is reasonable.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will grant Radio Television Hong Kong a formal charter setting out basic editorial safeguards.

Mr. Goodlad: Radio Television Hong Kong—RTHK—has always enjoyed full editorial independence. The Hong Kong Government are considering plans to enact legislation to corporatise RTHK. This would formalise the role of RTHK and set out basic editorial safeguards. The Sino-British Joint Declaration guarantees the freedom of press in Hong Kong after 30 June 1997.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to amend Hong Kong Broadcasting Authority Ordinance before 1997.

Mr. Goodlad: There are no plans at present to amend Hong Kong's Broadcasting Authority Ordinance. But the Hong Kong Government plans to amend the Television Ordinance as part of a rationalisation of Hong Kong's broadcasting legislation.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is making to the Government of China about article 23 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong special administrative region of the People's Republic of China which prohibits after 1997 political organisations in Hong Kong from establishing ties with foreign political organisations or bodies.

Mr. Goodlad: Annex I, section XIII of the Sino-British Joint Declaration states that the Hong Kong special administrative region Government shall maintain the rights and freedoms as provided for by the laws previously in force in Hong Kong, including freedom of assembly, of association, of correspondence, of movement and of belief. The Joint Declaration is a solid foundation for Hong Kong's future freedoms in these areas.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will amend the Hong Kong film Censorship Ordinance to bring it in line with United Kingdom legislation.

Mr. Goodlad: The Hong Kong Government keep the Hong Kong Film Censorship Ordinance under review to ensure that it continues to reflect local needs and values. The ordinance was most recently amended in July 1993. The Hong Kong Government will propose further amendments in January 1995. It is not necessary or desirable to align film censorship legislation in Hong Kong precisely with that of the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs which provisions of the Hong Kong Summary Offences Ordinance permit prosecutions of people using a loudhailer without permission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Section 4(29) of the Summary Offences Ordinance prohibits the use of loudhailers in public places without prior permission from the Commissioner of Police. There have been no prosecutions under this section for several years. Since the provisions under the Noise Control Ordinance are adequate for the prevention of nuisance, the Hong Kong Government plan to repeal section 4(29) of the Summary Offences Ordinance in the present session of the Legislative Council.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on setting up an independent human rights commission in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have received a number of representations, including a recommendation in the Foreign Affairs Committee's first report, "Relations between the United Kingdom and China in the period up to and beyond 1997" published on 23 March 1994. Our policy on this question remains as set out in the observations on the report laid before the House on 1 July.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many individuals in Hong Kong have been granted right of abode in the United Kingdom after 1997.

Mr. Goodlad: As at 22 October, 100,760 people in Hong Kong have obtained British citizenship, which confers the automatic right of abode in the United Kingdom, under the provisions of the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Goodlad: The latest published figures, ie those given in "Public Bodies 1993", show that as at 1 April 1993, 25 per cent. of public appointments made by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including the Overseas Development Administration, were held by women. Figures for 1994 are being collected and will be announced in due course.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Goodlad: There are currently no former Members of Parliament who have been appointed by the FCO to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations.

As there are no centrally kept records, to answer the question in full would incur disproportionate cost.

Embassy Staff

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number and grade of staff at each embassy and high commission whose responsibilities lie primarily in promoting trade with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: The numbers and grades of United Kingdom based and locally engaged staff at Foreign and Commonwealth Office missions overseas whose responsibilities lie primarily in promoting trade with the United Kingdom are listed in the table.

There are, in addition, a large number of staff who contribute a lower proportion of their time to export promotion.

Numbers of staff at FCO missions overseas whose responsibilities lie primarily in promoting trade with the United Kingdom

Location of mission	*Grade*	*Number in Grade*
Abidjan	DS 5	1·00
Abidjan	DS 9	1·00
	LE	2·00
Abu Dhabi	DS 6	1·00
Abu Dhabi	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	6·00
Abuja	DS 7M	1·00
Accra	DS 6	1·00
Accra	DS 9	1·00
	LE	3·00
Addis Ababa	LE	2·00
Aden	LE	1·00
Al Khobar	DS 6	1·00
Al Khobar	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	2·00
Alexandria	LE	2·00
Algiers	LE	3·00
Almaty	DS 7M	1·00

Numbers of staff at FCO missions overseas whose responsibilities lie primarily in promoting trade with the United Kingdom

Location of mission	*Grade*	*Number in Grade*
	LE	2·00
Amman	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	5·00
Ankara	DS 5	1·00
Ankara	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	5·00
Antananarivo	LE	2·00
Antigua	LE	1·00
Asuncion	LE	2·00
Athens	DS 6	1·00
	LE	8·00
Atlanta	DS 6	1·00
	LE	5·00
Auckland	DS 4	1·00
Auckland	DS 6	1·00
	LE	6·00
Bahrain	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	5·00
Baku	DS 4	1·00
Ban Seri Beg	DS 6	1·00
	LE	1·00
Bangalore	LE	2·00
Bangkok	DS 4	1·00
Bangkok	DS 6	1·00
Bangkok	DS 7M	2·00
Bangkok	DS 9	1·00
	LE	14·00
Barcelona	DS 6	1·00
	LE	6·00
Beirut	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	2·00
Belgrade	LE	6·00
Belmopan	LE	1·00
Belo Horizonte	LE	1·00
Berlin	DS 5	1·00
Berlin	DS 9	1·00
	LE	8·00
Berne	LE	2·00
Bilbao	DS 6	1·00
	LE	3·00
Bogota	DS 9	1·00
	LE	6·00
Bombay	DS 4	1·00
Bombay	DS 6	1·00
Bombay	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	9·00
Bordeaux	LE	3·00
Boston	LE	5·00
Bratislava	LE	2·00
Brasilia	DS 5	1·00
	LE	3·00
Bridgetown	LE	3·00
Brisbane	DS 5	1·00
Brisbane	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	3·00
Brussels	DS 4	1·00
Brussels	DS 6	1·00
	LE	11·00
Brussels Ukrep	DS 6	1·00
	LE	1·00
Bucharest	DS 6	1·00
	LE	4·00
Budapest	DS 5	1·00
Budapest	DS 7M	1·00
Budapest	DS 9	1·00
	LE	8·00
Buenos Aires	DS 6	1·00
Buenos Aires	DS 9	1·00
	LE	7·00
Cairo	DS 5	1·00
Cairo	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	8·00
Calcutta	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	7·00
Canberra	LE	2·00
Cape Town	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	3·00
Caracas	DS 5	1·00
Caracas	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	6·00
Casablanca	DS 4	1·00
Casablanca	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	3.00
Castries	LE	1·00
Chicago	DS 3	1·00
Chicago	DS 5	1·00
	LE	10·00
Christchurch	LE	2·00
Cleveland	DS 5	1·00
	LE	4·00
Colombo	DS 6	1·00
	LE	4·00
Copenhagen	DS 6	1·00
	LE	15·00
Dakar	LE	1·00
Dallas	DS 6	1·00
	LE	3·00
Damascus	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	5·00
Dar Es Salaam	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	4·00
Dhaka	LE	4·00
Doha	DS 6	1·00
Doha	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	4·00
Douala	LE	1·00
Dubai	DS 5	1·00
Dubai	DS 7M	1·00
Dubai	DS 9	2·00
Dubai	LE	8·00
Dublin	DS 6	1·00
Dublin	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	5·00
Durban	LE	2·00
Dusseldorf	DS 3	1·00
Dusseldorf	DS 5	1·00
Dusseldorf	DS 6	1·00
Dusseldorf	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	17·00
Florence	LE	2·00
Frankfurt	DS 4	1·00
Frankfurt	DS 6	1·00
	LE	7·00
Freetown	LE	1·00
Gaborone	DS 7M	1·00
Gaborone	LE	1·00
Geneva CG	DS 4	1·00
	LE	2·00
Gothenburg	LE	2·00
Guatemala City	LE	1·00
Georgetown	LE	2·00
Hamburg	DS 6	1·00
	LE	7·00
Hanoi	DS 3	1·00
Hanoi	DS 5	1·00
Hanoi	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	5·00
Harare	DS 6	1·00
	LE	3·00
Havana	LE	2·00
Helsinki	DS 5	1·00
Helsinki	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	9·00
Ho Chi Minh	DS 5	1·00

Numbers of staff at FCO missions overseas whose responsibilities lie primarily in promoting trade with the United Kingdom

Location of mission	*Grade*	*Number in Grade*
Ho Chi Minh	DS 9	1·00
	LE	3·00
Hong Kong BTC	DS 3	1·00
Hong Kong BTC	DS 4	0·90
Hong Kong BTC	DS 5	1·00
Hong Kong BTC	DS 6	1·00
	LE	7·00
Hong Kong CTU	DS 6	1·00
Hong Kong CTU	DS 9	1·00
	LE	2·00
Houston	DS 6	1·00
	LE	3·00
Islamabad	DS 4	1·00
Islamabad	DS 6	1·00
Islamabad	DS 9	1·00
	LE	3·00
Istanbul	DS 6	1·00
Istanbul	DS 9	1·00
	LE	8·00
Jakarta	DS 4	1·00
Jakarta	DS 5	1·00
Jakarta	DS 7M	2·00
Jakarta	DS 9	1·00
	LE	10·00
Jedda	DS 4	1·00
Jedda	DS 6	1·00
Jedda	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	6·00
Jerusalem	LE	2·00
Johannesburg	DS 5	1·00
Johannesburg	DS 7M	1·00
Johannesburg	DS 9	1·00
	LE	11·00
Kabul	LE	1·00
Kaduna	LE	2·00
Kampala	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	1·00
Kano	LE	1·00
Karachi	DS 6	1·00
	LE	5·00
Kathmandu	LE	2·00
Khartoum	LE	4·00
Kiev	LE	2·00
Kingston	LE	3·00
Kinshasa	LE	1·00
Kuala Lumpar	DS 4	2·00
Kuala Lumpar	DS 6	1·00
Kuala Lumpar	DS 7M	2·00
Kuala Lumpar	DS 9	1·00
	LE	11·00
Kuwait	DS 6	1·00
Kuwait	DS 9	1·00
	LE	7·00
Le Paz	LE	2·00
Lagos	DS 9	1·00
	LE	7·00
Las Palmas	LE	1·00
Lille	LE	5·00
Lilongwe	LE	2·00
Lima	LE	2·00
Lisbon	DS 6	1·00
Lisbon	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	10·00
Ljubljana	DS 5	1·00
Ljubljana	LE	2·00
Lome	LE	00
Los Angeles	DS 6	1·00
	LE	6·00
Luanda	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	2·00
Lusaka	DS 6	1·00
	LE	3·00
Luxembourg	DS 9	1·00
	LE	1·00
Lyons	DS 4	1·00
	LE	6·00
Madras	DS 5	1·00
Madras	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	7·00
Madrid	DS 4	1·00
Madrid	DS 6	1·00
Madrid	DS 7M	2·00
	LE	15·00
Managua	LE	1·00
Manila	DS 4	1·00
Manila	DS 6	1·00
	LE	8·00
Maputo	LE	1·00
Marseilles	DS 4	1·00
	LE	3·00
Marseru	LE	1·00
Mbabane	LE	1·00
Melbourne	DS 4	1·00
Melbourne	DS 6	1·00
	LE	8·00
Mexico City	DS 6	1·00
Mexico City	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	9·00
Miaimi	DS 6	1·00
	LE	5·00
Milan	DS 3	1·00
Milan	DS 5	1·00
	LE	19·00
Minsk	LE	1·00
Montevideo	LE	3·00
Montreal	DS 6	1·00
Montreal	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	3·00
Moscow	DS 4	1·00
Moscow	DS 6	1·00
Moscow	DS 7M	2·00
Moscow	DS 10	1·00
	LE	8·00
Munich	DS 6	1·00
	LE	6·00
Muscat	DS 6	1·00
Muscat	DS 7M	1·00
Muscat	DS 9	1·00
	LE	4·00
Nagoya	LE	3·00
Nairobi	DS 5	1·00
Nairobi	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	6·00
Naples	LE	2·00
Nassau	LE	1·00
New Delhi	DS 4	1·00
New Delhi	DS 5	1·00
New Delhi	DS 7M	1·00
New Delhi	DS 9	1·00
	LE	16·00
New York CG	DS 4	1·00
New York CG	DS 6	1·00
	LE	18·00
Nicosia	DS 5	1·00
	LE	5·00
Oporto	DS 6	1·00
	LE	2·00
Osaka	DS 4	1·00
Osaka	DS 6	1·00
	LE	9·00
Oslo	DS 5	1·00
Oslo	DS 7M	1·00
Oslo	DS 9	1·00
	LE	8·00

Numbers of staff at FCO missions overseas whose responsibilities lie primarily in promoting trade with the United Kingdom

Location of mission	*Grade*	*Number in Grade*
Ottawa	LE	3·00
Panama City	LE	2·00
Paris	DS 4	1·00
Paris	DS 5	1·00
Paris	DS 7M	1·00
Paris	DS 9	1·00
	LE	23·00
Peking	DS 4	1·00
Peking	DS 5	2·00
Peking	DS 7D	3·00
Peking	DS 9	1·00
Peking	S2	1·00
	LE	4·00
Perth	DS 5	1·00
Perth	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	4·00
Phnom Penh	LE	1·00
Port Harcourt	LE	2·00
Port Louis	DS 6	1·00
	LE	2.00
Port Moresby	LE	1·00
Port of Spain	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	3·00
Prague	DS 5	1·00
Prague	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	7·00
Pusan	LE	2·00
Quito	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	3·00
Rabat	DS 9	1·00
Rangoon	DS 3	1·00
	LE	3·00
Recife	LE	2·00
Reykjavik	LE	1·00
Riga	LE	2·00
Rio de Janeiro	DS 6	1·00
	LE	8·00
Riyadh	DS 4	1·00
Riyadh	DS 5	1·00
Riyadh	DS 7M	2·00
Riyadh	DS 9	1·00
	LE	6·00
Rome	DS 4	1·00
Rome	DS 6	1·00
	LE	6·00
San Francisco	DS 4	1·00
San Francisco	DS 6	1·00
	LE	3·00
San Jose	DS 5	1·00
	LE	3·00
San Juan	LE	1·00
San Salvador	LE	1·00
Sana'a	LE	3·00
Santiago	DS 5	1·00
Santiago	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	5·00
Santo Domigo	LE	1·00
Sao Paulo	DS 5	1·00
Sao Paulo	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	7·00
Seattle	DS 6	1·00
	LE	3·00
Seoul	DS 4	2·00
Seoul	DS 6	1·00
Seoul	DS 7M	2·00
	LE	21·00
Seville	LE	2·00
Shanghai	DS 4	1·00
Shanghai	DS 6	1·00
	LE	1·00
Singapore	DS 3	1·00
Singapore	DS 4	1·00
Singapore	DS 6	1·00
Singapore	DS 7M	2·00
	LE	11·00
Sofia	DS 6	1·00
	LE	4·00
St. Petersburg	LE	3·00
Stockholm	DS 4	1·00
Stockholm	DS 5	1·00
Stockholm	DS 9	1·00
	LE	12·00
Stuttgart	DS 5	1·00
	LE	4·00
Suva	LE	2·00
Sydney	DS 4	1·00
Sydney	DS 5	1·00
Sydney	DS 6	1·00
Sydney	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	9·00
Tallinn	LE	1·00
Tashkent	LE	1·00
Tegucigalpa	LE	1·00
Tehran	DS 5	1·00
Tehran	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	4·00
Tel Aviv	DS 6	1·00
	LE	6·00
The Hague	DS 4	1·00
The Hague	DS 6	1·00
	LE	10·00
Tokyo	DS 4	1·00
Tokyo	DS 5	3·00
Tokyo	DS 7D	1·00
Tokyo	DS 9	2·00
Tokyo	S2	1·00
	LE	29·00
Toronto	DS 3	1·00
Toronto	DS 5	1·00
Toronto	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	6·00
Tunis	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	3·00
Turin	LE	1·00
Ulaanbaatar	LE	1·00
Valletta	LE	3·00
Vancouver	DS 4	1·00
Vancouver	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	4·00
Victoria	LE	1·00
Vienna	DS 5	1·00
	LE	6·00
Vilnius	LE	2·00
Warsaw	DS 5	1·00
Warsaw	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	10·00
Washington	DS 6	1·00
	LE	4·00
Wellington	LE	3·00
Windhoek	LE	1·00
Yaounde	LE	1·00
Zagreb	DS 7M	1·00
	LE	2·00
Zurich	DS 4	1·00
Zurich	DS 5	1·00
	LE	10·00

Grade key

DS 5/6 = 1st secretary

DS 7 = 2nd secretary

DS 9 = 3rd secretary

LE = locally engaged

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the present numbers, by nationality, of Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group forces in Liberia.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that he received from my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir Mark Lennox-Boyd) on 22 March, *Official Report*, column *142*. Since then, Nigeria has reportedly reduced its presence. We have no further information.

South Africa

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to South Africa on its arms sales to Sudan.

Mr. Baldry: No representations have been made.

Diplomatic Wing (Costs)

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes he proposes to make in his Department's diplomatic wing cash limits and running costs for 1994–95.

Mr. Baldry: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the following changes will be made.

The cash limit for class II, vote 2—other external relations—will be increased by £41,333,000 from £415,509,000 to £456,842,000, mainly to take account of United Nations peacekeeping operations and the repatriation of Vietnamese boat people. The increase is partly offset by appropriations in aid. The balance will be charged to the reserve.

The cash limit for class II, vote 3—external broadcasting and monitoring—will be increased by £2,749,000 from £171,509,000 to £174,258,000, in respect of the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement announced by my right hon. Friend the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the right hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate, (Mr. Portillo) on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *729–34*.

The increases will be offset by increased receipts or charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. There are no changes to running costs.

European Union

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the forthcoming business in the Council of the European Union.

Mr. David Davis:

The following meetings are planned.
7 November: ECOFIN
8 November: Industry
10 November: Cultural Affairs
14 November: Agriculture
15 November: Agriculture
16 November: Budget
17 November: Telecom
21 November: Transport
22 November: Transport
23 November: Fisheries
25 November: Development
28 November: FAC
29 November: FAC, Energy
30 November: Justice, Youth Council
1 December: Justice

The following subjects are likely to be discussed.
A: 7 November, ECOFIN
  White paper on competitiveness and employment
  Vat definitive regime
  CO_2/energy tax (possible)
  Taxation of savings (possible)
  Financial assistance to Slovakia (possible)
  Dinner with CEE Finance Ministers
B: 8 November, Industry
Agenda likely to include:
  (i) Resolution on industrial competitiveness
  (ii) Steel (Ekostahl)
C: 10 November, Cultural Affairs
  Agenda not available
D: 14/15 November, Agriculture
  Wine (possible)
  Duram wheat (possible)
  Set-aside (possible)
  CAP simplification (possible)
  Fruit and vegetables (possible)
  Yellow fats (possible)
  Definition of butter (possible)
  Sugar (possible)
  Animal welfare (possible)
  Plant breeder rights
E: 16 November, Budget
  Council second reading of 1995 budget
  Revision to financial perspectives
F: 17 November, Telecom
Possible agenda:
  Infrastructure liberalisation
  Digital broadcasting standards
  Interchange of Data between Administrations
  Mutual recognition of Telecoms/Satellite licenses
  Access to Space segment
  TENs ISON
G: 21 November, Transport
Maritime
  Port State Control Directive, common position
  Reporting zones Directive, common position
  Ferry safety Directive, possible resolution
  Competition Directive, discussion
Land
  High Speed Train interoperability—orientation debate
  Tachographs—orientation debate
  Dangerous goods advisers—orientation debate
  Trans European Networks—orientation debate
Other
  Switzerland discussion
  Satellite Navigation resolution
H: 23 November, Fisheries
  Spain and Portugal
  Marketing
  Guide prices
I: 25 November, Development
  Agenda not available
J: 28 November, FAC
  Agenda not available

K: 29 November, Energy

Internal market in electricity

Review of Community energy law (Council conclusions)

Energy networks (possible)

Energy policy

Thermie II

Energy Charter (probably over lunch)

L: 30 November, Youth Council

Agenda not available

M: 30 November/ 1 December, Justice

A items

(i) External frontiers convention—Conclusion on Art.8.(3)

(ii) Form of Council agreements on Asylum

B items

(iii) Europol convention

(iv) Nuclear crime

(v) Data protection—interim report

(vi) Extradition—simplified procedure

(vii) CEES. Follow up to the Berlin declaration

(viii) Fraud against the Community Budget

(ix) Asylum: burden-sharing

(x) Racism and xenophobia—interim report from Consultative Commission

(xi) Third Pillar priority objectives for 1995

WALES

Forest Enterprise

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many disposals of land have been completed by Forest Enterprise in the past 18 months.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: One hundred and forty-two.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many access agreements have been completed relating to disposals of forestry land by Forest Enterprise in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Twenty-two.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many parcels of forestry are currently being offered for sale by Forest Enterprise in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Thirty.

Parents Charter

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether copies of the parents charter have been distributed to schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The latest edition of "Education: A Charter for Parents in Wales" has been distributed to every home in Wales. Advance copies were sent to local education authorities, county chief executives, diocesan authorities, teacher organisations and other education organisations, and arrangements are in hand for schools to receive reference copies.

NHS Trust

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the chairs and non-executive directors of each national health service trust board indicating the gender and occupation of each individual.

Mr. Richards: This information is contained in "Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales", which is updated quarterly and placed in the Library of the House.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Redwood: The most recent information about all appointments that I make is set out in "Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales, 1 September 1994", which is available in the Library of the House: 26·8 per cent. of these appointments are held by women.

Those figures include a number of appointments to bodies that are not shown in the Cabinet Office publication, "Public Bodies". The current edition, published in 1993, shows that, of the appointments made by Welsh Office Ministers and included in "Public Bodies", 17 per cent. were held by women in September 1993. Comparable figures for 1994 are being collected and will be published in due course.

Health Authorities (Pay Award)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the reasons for the relative level of pay award concluded by the health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Richards: Health authorities in Wales are not responsible for deciding the level of pay awards.

Cash Limits

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he proposes to make to the cash limits for *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales for the current financial year.

Mr. Redwood: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit on class XV, vote 2 will be reduced by £14,867,000 from £175,198,000 to £160,331,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 4 will be increased by £4,734,000, from £565,419,000 to £570,153,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 5 will be increased by £10,133,000, from £492,775,000 to £502,908,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 8 will be increased by £10,409,000 from £1,501,032,000 to £1,511,441,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 9 will be increased by £819,000 from £65,977,000 to £66,796,000; and the cash limit on class XV, vote 12 will be increased by £203,000 from £7,034,000 to £7,237,000.

Running costs provision for the Welsh Office and the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales, which was not spent in 1993–94 has been carried forward, under the normal end-year flexibility arrangements, into 1994–95, increasing the running costs limits by £915,000 from £77,094,000 to £78,009,000 and £172,000 from £3,273,000 to £3,445,000 respectively. This is required to cover additional costs in administering agricultural grants following the reform of the common agricultural policy. The local authority capital limit—WO/LACAP—will be increased by £10,996,000 from £465,469,000 to £476,465,000.

The decrease in the cash limit for vote 2 is the result mainly of a lower than expected demand—£14,400,000—for regional selective assistance, a transfer of £1 million of the Welsh Development Agency's grant in aid to their public expenditure provision for advances from the national loan fund following the introduction of a simplified loan fund scheme, a transfer of £687,000 to WO/LACAP to reflect the transfer of responsibility for rural development grants from the WDA and DBRW to local authorities, a transfer of £1,194,000 from class IV, vote 1 for the SMART and SPUR programmes and a transfer of £25,000 from class III, vote 4 for payments to the Central Science Laboratory.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 4 provides mainly for an additional £2,000,000 for equipment in respect of the "modern apprenticeship" scheme, £2,000,000 extra for the Further Education Funding Council for equipment and building maintenance, £465,000 to fund the transfer of responsibility to the Higher Education Funding Council from the Department for Education and the Home Office for the diplomas in social work and courses in social work and an additional £300,000 for grant-maintained schools for essential maintenance work.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 5 allows mainly for an additional £2,400,000 grant in aid for Cardiff Bay development corporation, £6,532,000 for central Government roads, including the take-up of £3,532,000 end-year flexibility entitlement and the take-up of £1,200,000 end-year flexibility entitlement for the urban investment grant scheme.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 8 results from an additional £4,000,000 for health authorities to help to reduce waiting list times, the take-up of the £10,735,000 of end-year flexibility entitlement for NHS trusts and capital, the transfer of £904,000 from class XII, vote 1 in respect of the purchasing of special health authorities' patient care services from the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and a reduction of £5,230,000 in NHS trusts' investments.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 9 is mainly in respect of the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement of £948,000 as a result of underspending in 1993–94, a transfer of £77,000 to class XV, vote 12 and increased appropriations in aid. Welsh Office running costs expenditure will be lower in 1995–96 in cash and real terms than in 1993–94 or 1994–95.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 12 results mainly from the take-up of £95,000 end-year flexibility entitlement and a transfer of £77,000 from class XV, vote 9 for the repayment costs for services provided to the office of Her Majesty's inspector of schools in Wales by the Welsh Office.

There is also a increase to a non-voted cash limit, WO/LACAP, resulting from the take-up of £10,309,000 end-year flexibility entitlement and the switch of £687,000 from class XV, vote 2 in respect of the transfer of responsibility to local authorities for the rural development grant scheme.

None of the proposed changes will add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Non-domestic Rates

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hereditaments in Wales which fall *(a)* below and *(b)* above the threshold of £10,000 rateable value, for determining whether the lower limit on year-on-year increases in non-domestic rates bills applies, there are estimated to be, whose rates bills for 1995–96 in the absence of any transitional relief and assuming the rate poundage, as adjusted for the revaluation, is indexed for inflation, would be (i) under 50 per cent., (ii) between 50 and 80 per cent., (iii) between 80 and 120 per cent., (iv) between 120 and 200 per cent., (v) between 200 and 500 per cent., and (vi) over 500 per cent. of their bills for 1994–95; and if he will estimate for each of those categories the aggregate increase or decrease in rates bills between the two years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Estimates for Wales based on preliminary results of the 1995 revaluation and assuming for illustrative purposes that the rate poundage is unchanged in real terms between 1994–95 and 1995–96 are given in the following table. In deciding on the actual poundage for 1995–96 my right hon. Friend will have regard to schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 1988, which requires him to take account of both the rise in inflation and the rateable value of all appropriate hereditaments on the last day of the 1990 list and the first day of the 1995 list so that the rate yield from the two lists will be broadly the same.

Estimated increase or decrease in rate bills in Wales between 1994–95 and 1995–96 as a result of the 1995 revaluation, in the absence of transitional relief

	Small Properties		*Large Properties*		*Total*	
1995–96 bills as a percentage of 1994–95 bills	*No. (1000s)*	*Change in bills (£m)*	*No. (000s)*	*Change in bills (£m)*	*No. (000s)*	*Change in bills (£m)*
Less than 50	—	—	—	—	—	—
50–80	—	—	—	—	—	—
80–120	20	—	5	5	25	—
120–200	55	45	10	60	65	110
200–500	10	15	—	20	10	35
Greater than 500	—	—	—	5	—	5
Total	85	65	15	80	100	145

Source: Inland Revenue.

1. Figures are rounded to nearest 5 units (— means less than 3 units).
2. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
3. Small properties have a 1 April 1990 rateable value less than £10,000.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of hereditaments where the transition for the 1990 changes is likely to be incomplete by 31 March 1995 but is likely to be *(a)* complete and *(b)* more nearly complete at 1 April 1995 by virtue of a reduction in the rateable value from that date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: An estimated 19,000 hereditaments in Wales will be in transition on 31 March 1995 when the existing transitional arrangements expire. On the basis of preliminary results from the 1995 revaluation, and assuming the rate poundage rises in line with inflation, less than 1,000 would find themselves with no further increase next year and 1,000 would be closer to reaching their full liability than they are now.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the regions, sectors and types of hereditament most affected by large increases or decreases in bills for non-domestic rates;

(2) what studies he has commissioned internally and from external consultants, of the likely impact of the April 1995 revaluation of non-domestic property in Wales on rateable values and non-domestic rate bills in different regions and different sectors of the economy; if he will publish those studies or summaries thereof; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Inland Revenue is analysing the results of the revaluation as they come in. Although numbers are subject to change, the current estimate of the effect of the revaluation on rateable values is given in the following table. The effect on rate bills will depend on the rate poundage which is determined for 1995–96 and the final form of the proposed transitional arrangements for the 1995 revaluation, details of which are contained in a Welsh Office consultation paper issued on 4 October. Copies of the consultation paper will be placed in the Library of the House. My right hon. Friend expects to announce his decisions by the end of November.

Provisional estimates of impact of 1995 revaluation on rateable values. Average percentage increase in 1995 list RV compared with 1990 list RV

	Number
Shops	23
Offices	43
Warehouses	42
Factories	29
Other	16
All	25

Source: Inland Revenue.

[1] All numbers are still subject to change, possibly significant, as the revaluation work progresses.

[2] The information is not available on a regional basis for Wales.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Television)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons prisoners can receive television via satellite dishes; and how many prisons are planning to install such dishes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Marshall, dated 1 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about satellite television in Prison Service establishments.

106 establishments in England and Wales have the capacity for prisoners to watch television via satellite dishes, during association periods. Prisoners ability to watch television is restricted and tightly controlled by staff. Satellite television is used as an alternative to the previous practice of watching videos. Satellite television is not financed from public funds. It is funded from the establishment general purposes fund, which is derived from the profits of the prison shop and gifts, or from voluntary contributions by prisoners or well wishers.

Four further prisons are planning to install this facility.

Prisons (Education)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what surveys his Department has carried out as to the effect on education courses in prisons in England and Wales when an inmate is moved to another prison where such courses are not being followed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 1 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the effect on prison education courses when a prisoner is moved to a prison that does not offer the same course of study.

Education courses pursued by a prisoner cannot take precedence when a move between prison establishments is dictated by overriding operational needs. Prison education departments are aware that such moves may occur and courses are planned to be as flexible as possible. This has not been the subject of a national survey.

On transfer, the receiving education department will make every effort to accommodate the prisoner's needs. The receiving department will accept any continuing costs associated with a course of study which a prisoner is pursuing, including distance learning, course costs and examination fees. We are developing a national curriculum framework, the benefits of which will be to help ensure the continuity of study for prisoners between establishments.

Prisoners (Possessions)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the amount of personal possessions a prison inmate is officially allowed to have in a prison.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 1 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prisoners' personal possessions.

Prison standing orders specify a number of personal items which prisoners may have in possession, and set out the basis on which decisions are to be made about other items. The fundamental principle determining the amount of property allowed in possession, as well as the acceptability of individual items, is that effective searching should not be prevented, nor should any items constitute a security, safety or health risk.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison inmates *(a)* men and *(b)* women have been charged and found guilty of being in possession of drugs in prisons in England and Wales since 1 January.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 1 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many inmates in prisons in England and Wales were charged and found guilty of being in possession of drugs since 1 January. The provisional figures for January–September 1994 show 1,722 proved adjudication findings for male inmates and 13 for female inmates charged with being in possession of controlled drugs. The figures include any proved charges of inciting or assisting other prisoners to possess controlled drugs.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors to each of the prisons in England and Wales have been charged with attempting to take drugs into a prison since 1 January.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 1 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of visitors to prisons in England and Wales who have been charged with attempting to take drugs into prison since 1 January .

The Prison Service does not keep a central record of decisions by the police to bring charges.

Prison Officers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to support prison officers in their day-to-day duties, with particular reference to the searching of prison inmates and prisoners' cells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 1 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the action taken to support prison officers with their day-to-day duties, particularly with the searching of prison inmates and prisoners' cells.

Prison Officers duties are varied and include maintenance of security and control; provision of regime activities such as offending behaviour programmes; and other work with prisoners. The Prison Service has made significant progress in all of these areas during the last 18 months, due to the energy and commitment of prison officers and other staff.

Particular measures to support prison officers in their security role include:

- the use of x-ray machines and metal detector portals and metal detectors to help search people, property and vehicles entering or leaving prisons
- specially trained dog handlers and dogs are available to search and detect items such as drugs or explosives in prisons
- CCTV has been installed in some visits areas
- prison officers receive training in searching procedures and techniques as part of their initial training
- the security manual, issued to all establishments giving advice on searching procedures, is being revised and simplified
- Governors have to draw up local searching strategies based on the nature of the prison and the type of prisoners held
- major refurbishment schemes include significant security improvements, in particular to prisoners' cells
- monthly security bulletins are issued to draw attention to lessons from recent incidents and to provide information to Governors on special security topics
- drug testing is due to be introduced under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill
- perimeter security is being improved in many establishments
- court escorts have been made more security by the use of double cuffing for category B prisoners and the increased use of secure vehicles

Control measures include:

the strengthening of Governors' disciplinary powers

- about half of establishments have introduced differential regimes and local incentive schemes to improve behaviour
- more cellular accommodation is being provided for category C prisoners
- new allocation procedures have been introduced for category C prisoners, designed to ensure that the mix of prisoners in establishments is monitored and controlled to minimise the risk of disturbances
- a project is researching violence in prisons with a view to developing guidance on best practice

Improvements concerned with regimes include:

- prisoners are expected to engage actively in work, training, education and other purposeful activities. The target for increasing levels of purposeful activity is being exceeded
- offending behaviour programmes are being expanded, with more training for officers involved in these programmes
- more than 700 NVQ schemes for prisoners are being implemented through prison workshops and other facilities

Prison officers will have more time to concentrate on these activities as the disruptive court escort work is contracted out and work not requiring a prison officer's expertise is transferred to other grades.

Domestic Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has had as to the feasibility of allowing overseas domestic workers in the United Kingdom to change their employer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We have received a number of representations in support of allowing overseas domestic workers to change employers but we consider that this would be contrary to our immigration controls and against the interest of the resident labour force. Each case involving a domestic worker who wishes to remain in the United Kingdom after having left his or her employer is carefully considered and account is taken of any compassionate circumstances.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the privatisations which his Department has promoted since 1979, indicating, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Howard: The available information is as follows:

Name of Body	*Purchaser*	*Date sold*	*Proceeds of sale £ million*
National Transcommunications Limited (NTL)	Mercury Asset management	24 October 1991	70·00
DTELS	NTL	1 March 1994	6·60
United Racecourses (Holdings) Limited	Racecourse Holdings Trust Limited	29 April 1994	30·25

No information is held on the current value of the companies concerned.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum have been determined since the passage of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993; in how many cases the applicant has been allowed to stay in the United Kingdom; how many principal applicants were successful; and how many dependants they had.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on decisions made since the implementation of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993—1 August 1993 to 30 September 1994—and the estimated number of dependants accompanying these decided cases is given in the table.

Decisions[1] on applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom, and dependants, August 1993 to September 1994

	Decisions made in August 1993 - September 1994
Total decisions made on principal applications for asylum[2]	24,665
- dependants accompanying cases decided[3]	7,565
Cases recognised as a refugee and granted asylum[2]	845
- dependants accompanying cases granted asylum[3]	600
Cases not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave to remain[2]	3,330
- dependants accompanying cases granted exceptional leave to remain[3]	1,620
Cases refused asylum and exceptional leave after full consideration[2]	19,890
- dependants accompanying cases refused asylum and exceptional leave[3]	5,345

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[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest 5.

[2] Exclude dependants.

[3] Information on dependants is of those applying with the principal applicant or arriving subsequently, before the principal application was decided. Information excludes dependants who arrive after the principal decision.

[4] Including refusals on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country and refusals under para 180F of the Immigration Rules for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum are still outstanding after *(a)* four years, *(b)* five years and *(c)* six years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: At 30 September 1994—the latest date for which the information is available—by the estimated number of asylum applications outstanding was 52,760. Information on the number of these cases waiting longer than four, five, or six years is not available.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the processing period of asylum applications at the present time.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The estimated average length of time between the receipt of an asylum application and the decision, for cases decided on application for asylum received since the introduction of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993—26 July 1993 to 30 September 1994—was 4·7 months.

Cannabis

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the therapeutic uses of cannabis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Representations have been received from Members of Parliament, doctors and patients claiming that cannabis relieves the symptoms of a number of medical conditions and asking if it can be made available to treat them.

The Department of Health is considering these claims in conjunction with the Medicines Control Agency and the Home Office.

Sri Lankan Tamils

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankan Tamils *(a)* have applied for and *(b)* have been granted political asylum in the United Kingdom since 1 January.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on Sri Lankan Tamils are not separately identifiable in the statistics. The table gives information for the period 1 January 1994 to 30 September 1994 on the number of applications for asylum from nationals of Sri Lanka and decisions made.

Decisions[1] on applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, from Sri Lankan nationals, 1 January 1994–30 September 1994

	Number of principal applicants
Asylum applications[2]	1,835
Decisions[2,3]	815
Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum	10

Decisions[1] on applications[2] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, from Sri Lankan nationals, 1 January 1994–30 September 1994

	Number of principal applicants
Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave to remain[4]	65
Refused asylum and ELR—after full consideration	615
Refused under para 180F[5]	65
Refused on safe third country grounds[6]	60

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5.

[2] Figures exclude information on applications made overseas.

[3] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in 1994.

[4] Usually granted for a year in the first instance, subject then to further review.

[5] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to invitation to interview to establish identity.

[6] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankan Tamils have been deported from the United Kingdom since 1 January.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Two Sri Lankan citizens were removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process in the period January to September 1994. No distinction is made in statistical records between Tamils and other Sri Lankans.

West Midlands Police

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the conclusions of the inquiry being carried out by Leicestershire police into alleged bribery in the West Midlands police service will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The investigation, which is being conducted under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority, is still in progress.

Any announcement of criminal or disciplinary proceedings is a matter for the chief constable of West Midlands police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Police Complaints Authority.

British Dependent Territories

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to extend the right of abode in the United Kingdom to all British dependent territory passport holders;

(2) what plans he has to regularise the position of British dependent territories passport holders after June 1997, in respect of the position of Gibraltarians and Falkland Islanders.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None. There is no reason to change the status of British dependent territories citizens either now or after June 1997.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: As at 1 September 1993, 40 per cent. of public appointments made by the Home Office were held by women. The 1994 figures will be announced in due course.

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responsibilities his Department has for liaison with the French Government regarding civil defence emergencies resulting from transport of nuclear material near the channel islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply. All movements of radioactive materials in the French and English territorial waters of the English channel are subject to the maritime nuclear emergency plan for the English channel. The plan is administered by the prefet maritime, Cherbourg, controlled through the cross-channel maritime communications centre, and involves all the relevant United Kingdom and French authorities.

General Oleg Kalugin

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what decision has been taken on the application by General Oleg Kalugin for a visa to visit the United Kingdom; and what were the reasons for the decision.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Mr. Kalugin's application for a visa is at present under consideration. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as a decision has been taken.

Airports (Immigration Officers)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many United Kingdom airports receiving scheduled flights form abroad do not have permanent, full-time immigration service staff stationed at the airport.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Immigration Service staff are stationed permanently at all airports where their full-time attendance is justified. There are seven small regional airports operating scheduled passenger flights where Immigration Service staff are not stationed on a permanent basis.

Misuse

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend the number of local drugs prevention teams in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Northern Ireland and *(d)* England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Funding for the drugs prevention initiative in England is being renewed for a further four years from April 1995. From that date there will be 12 teams, covering some 16 million people rather than the 6 million covered by the current teams.

Arrangements for building from the work of the two teams in Scotland is being considered in the light of the report of the drugs task force. In Wales, a new strategy for the prevention of drug and alcohol misuse is being developed. There are no current plans to establish a drugs prevention team in Northern Ireland.

Police Authorities (Allowances)

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the differences in financial allowances between the independent appointees to the new police authorities and the allowances permitted for the local authority and magistrates' representatives.

Mr. Maclean: Councillor and independent members of new police authorities will be able to claim £15 per hour for time spent on police authority business, up to a limit of £120 per day and £3,000 per year—£6,000 per year if they are the chairman of the authority.

Magistrate members of new police authorities will, as at present, be able to claim financial loss allowance at the rates payable to them as magistrates.

Al Fayed Brothers (Citizenship Application)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what *(a)* formal or *(b)* informal representations he has received from (i) hon. Members and (ii) others asking for reconsideration of the refusal to grant British citizenship to Mr. Mohammed Al Fayed and Mr. Ali Al Fayed.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As their applications have not yet been determined, the question of representations asking for reconsideration of refusal does not arise.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name the referees who have supported the applications for British citizenship of Mr. Ali al Fayed and Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: No. It is not our practice to disclose such details.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what formal or informal representations he has received from persons other than hon. Members on the applications by Mr. Mohammed Al Fayed or Mr. Ali Al Fayed for British citizenship.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We have received representations from three people other than hon. Members concerning these applications. It is not our practice to disclose the details of private communications.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the consultations held with ministerial colleagues concerning the applications for British citizenship by Mr. Mohammed Al Fayed and Mr. Ali Al Fayed; and what special principles apply when considering such applications.

Mr. Howard: I made a public statement on this matter on 24 October 1994, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Private Security Industries

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with his European counterparts regarding regulating standards in the private security industries across the European Union.

Mr. Maclean: No such discussions have taken place.

Criminal Justice Act 1991

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has plans to extend to other categories of offenders the powers contained in section 44 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to require sex offenders to be supervised for the whole of the remainder of their sentence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans at present to extend the powers contained in section 44 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to cover other offences.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of whether judges are sufficiently aware of the powers contained in section 44 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to require offenders to be supervised for the whole of the remainder of their sentence following automatic conditional release.

Mr. Maclean: A circular was sent to all judges on 5 March 1992 describing the provisions contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 which were to be implemented in 1992, including section 44. The statistics suggest an increased use of the power in the years since its introduction.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions section 44 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 has been used by judges to require contrived supervision of an offender for the remainder of his or her sentence.

Mr. Maclean: The number of cases in which a court has ordered that an offender should be supervised for the whole of his sentence under section 44 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 are as follows:

1992 — 1
1993 — 11
1994 (January-June) — 34

It is likely that the recorded figures for 1992 and 1993 are understated because of initial difficulties in probation areas in the recording of such cases.

Local Government Review

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about future police and fire service arrangements in Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire, and Avon and Somerset.

Mr. Howard: In the light of the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 25 October, *Official Report,* columns *534-37* about the future arrangements for local government in Humberside. I announced my intention to consider and consult upon whether a separate Humberside police force, based on the four unitary authorities, should be retained. I propose to make a statement on future policing arrangements in Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire when the Humberside police review has been completed and I have reached a decision on that matter.

In the case of the Avon and Somerset constabulary, its present boundaries are unaffected by the decision to replace the county of Avon by four unitary authorities. The new unitary authorities will, from the appointed day of reorganisation, replace Avon county council as relevant councils for the appointment of councillor members of the police authority.

For fire services, in the light of advice which I have received from the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council and from Her Majesty's chief inspector of fire services, I propose to establish combined fire authorities when local government in Avon, Humberside and North Yorkshire is reorganised. These combined authorities will take over the functions under the Fire Services Act 1947 which are currently exercised by separate county councils. The provision of fire services in Lincolnshire and Somerset will remain unchanged.

Cash Limits

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proposals he has for changes to the 1994–95 cash limits within his responsibilities.

Mr. Howard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class VIII, vote 3—Home Office administration, immigration, probation and police support services, England and Wales—will be increased by £39,000 from £1,212,682,000 to £1,212,721,000. This is to enable a special capital grant at the rate of 100 per cent. to be made in order to fund the preliminary stages of the national probation service information systems strategy, for which the inner London probation service will act as the interim contractual authority. The total grant of £755,000 has been financed by a transfer of £604,000 from other probation capital grants, together with a reduction of £151,000 in the local authority capital non-voted HO/LACAP cash limit from £122,291,000 to £122,140,000. The new grant will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. The cash limit for class VIII, vote 3 is increased by only £39,000 because at the same time a transfer of £112,000 is being made to the Welsh Office, class XV, vote 4, to meet the costs of providing additional places for Home Office-sponsored students at universities.

Drug Deaths

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his calculation of numbers who have died as a result of the use of *(a)* solvents, *(b)* LSD, *(c)* amyl nitrate, *(d)* butyl nitrate, *(e)* khat, *(f)* temazepam, *(g)* ecstasy, *(h)* amphetamine and *(i)* GBH in each of the past five years.

Mr Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* The information requested is contained in Tables 17, 19 and 20 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of drug addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom" and is summarised in the table:

Deaths from solvents and certain controlled drugs, United Kingdom, 1988–92[1]

	Number of persons				
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Volatile substances	89	84	112	87	68
LSD	—	—	—	1	2
Benzodiazepines [2]	—	308	311	316	370
"Ecstasy"[3]	1	2	—	5	—
Amphetamines	4	3	4	15	10

[1] No information is available on deaths from the use of alkylnitrites (which includes amyl and butyl nitrite), khat, and GHB (gamma-hydroxy- butyrate), none of which are controlled drugs.

[2] No data are available before 1989. This group of drugs includes Temazepam, for which separate figures are not available.

[3] MDMA and other drugs related to MDA (methylenedioxy-amphetamine).

IRA Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if IRA prisoners in Whitemoor prison have been permitted to make telephone calls of up to one hour's duration per month on telephones not limited to inland calls;

(2) what steps were *(a)* required by his Department and *(b)* taken by the Prison Service, at Whitemoor prison prior to 9 September, in response to (i) Prison Governors Association comments concerning Whitemoor prison (ii) representations from Whitemoor's board of visitors, (iii) HM chief inspector of prisons' report on Whitemoor and (iv) representations from the Prison Officers Association regarding Whitemoor;

(3) what *(a)* discussions there with the present governor of Whitemoor prison and *(b)* instructions were given to him regarding any change in regime from that pertaining immediately prior to his appointment;

(4) what arrangements existed for monitoring phone calls made on official telephones by IRA prisoners at Whitemoor prison prior to 9 September;

(5) how the prison regime at Whitemoor differs from any other comparable prison;

(6) if high-risk prisoners in special secure units *(a)* are and *(b)* have been permitted to make telephone calls of up to one hour's duration per month on telephones not limited to inland calls.

(7) what special instructions he gave to the director-general of the Prison Service regarding the security arrangements for IRA prisoners, following the announcement that IRA prisoners, following the announcement that IRA prisoners would be moved from the mainland back to Northern Ireland;

(8) what arrangements exist for monitoring phone calls made on official telephones by high-risk and exceptional risk category A prisoners.

(9) in what ways the Whitemoor regime for IRA prisoners is different in terms of control and privileges from that of other category A prisoners;

(10) what measures have been taken to review and improve the security of prisons, following the recent security breaches at Whitemoor and Durham prisons.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* These issues are a matter for the Director General of the Prison Service. He wrote to the hon. Member on 25 October and a copy of that reply has been placed in the Library of the House.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he required the Director General of the Prison Service to review the circumstances and the security arrangements of IRA prisoners under Prison Service control following the recent movement of IRA prisoners from the mainland to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* There was no requirement to review the security of IRA prisoners remaining in prisons in England and Wales following the transfer of IRA prisoners to Northern Ireland. Security arrangements are to be examined in the light of the results of the inquiry by Sir John Woodcock.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Back-to-work Bonus

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the maximum amount of the proposed back-to-work bonus for each partner where a couple are both claiming benefit on a means-tested basis; and whether the total accumulated credit from part-time earnings of both partners would be payable when one of them moves into full-time work.

Mr. Roger Evans: The maximum amount of the proposed back-to-work bonus is £1,000 per benefit unit. The earnings of both partners may contribute towards building up this amount, which would be payable in full when the couple left benefit as a result either of the claimant moving into work of 16 hours or more per week, or the claimant's partner moving into work of 24 hours or more per week.

State Retirement Pension

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women aged 100 years and over are in receipt of a state retirement pension.

Mr. Arbuthnot: At 31 March 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, a total of 830 men and 6,640 women, aged 100 and over (figures include persons residing overseas) were in receipt of state retirement pension ("State Retirement Pension" means a contributory retirement pension, a non-contributory retirement pension or a graduated retirement benefit).

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates will be the cost in a full year of raising the level of pension that may be received without affecting benefit from £35 to £50 a week combined with the removal of the age threshold; and how many people will benefit from this.

Mr. Roger Evans: Raising the level of occupational or personal pension that can be received without affecting a contribution-based job seeker's allowance from £35 to £50 per week, combined with removing the age threshold, would save around an estimated £10 million in a full year at current prices. It is estimated that around 15,000 claimants would gain through the raising of the abatement limit to £50.

Notes:

1. Estimates rounded to nearest £10 million and 5,000 cases.
2. Estimates assume:
    a. 2·55 million unemployed claimants (GB);
    b. 600,000 Unemployment Benefit claimants.
    3. Losers are estimated using the Policy Simulation Model with 1990/91/92. Family Expenditure Survey data and 1994 Unemployment Benefit Statistics.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give the latest cost of fully restoring the value of retirement pensions paid to United Kingdom citizens living abroad on the basis that the normal uprating had been paid as if the recipient had continued to live in this country;

(2) what would have been the cost of uprating the retirement pensions of United Kingdom citizens living abroad on the same basis as those pensions paid to those living in the United Kingdom in this financial year.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The estimated cost of paying fully indexed benefits to all people receiving state retirement and widows pensions living abroad whose benefits are not uprated is £230 million a year. The cost in the 1994–95 financial year of paying just the April 1994 uprating to these pensioners is estimated to be £16 million. Separate figures are not available on the cost of uprating benefits only for retirement pensioners or those who are citizens of the United Kingdom.

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have received a reduced rate of income support in the form of a hardship payment in the latest year for which figures are available and in each of the preceding three years.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table:

Awards of income support to prevent hardship

Period	*Number of hardship payments*
April 1990–March 1991	2,415
April 1991–March 1992	2,992
April 1992–March 1993	3,477
April 1993–March 1994[1]	3,701
April 1994–August 1994 (4 months)[1]	1,677

Note:

[1] Figures are provisional and subject to amendment.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people who gave up employment to protect the benefit entitlement of a spouse or partner in the latest period for which an estimate can be made; and what change he estimates there would have been in that figure if the 16-hour limit had been raised to 24 hours.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available in the form requested. We estimate that approximately 20,000 households will benefit from the change in the hours rule for working partners, when the changes from 16 to 24 hours as proposed with the introduction of job seeker's allowance are introduced.

Family Credit

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many employees of his Department and of each of its agencies are in receipt of family credit payments.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not available.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how long it took to process a family credit application in each region for England during 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available in the form requested as family credit claims are administered centrally. The clearance times for Great Britain as a whole were as follows:

1991–92

64·4 per cent. in 18 working days

89·2 per cent. in 35 working days

1992–93

60·7 per cent. in 13 working days

96·8 per cent. in 45 working days

Source: Social Security Departmental Report.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what category of claimant would continue to draw income support if the job seeker's allowance were in operation.

Mr. Roger Evans: Claimants in specified groups who are not required to be available for work could continue to claim income support. The main groups will be lone parents, men aged 60–64, those with significant caring responsibilities and people with disabilities.

However, claimants in these groups who want to claim job seeker's allowance could do so provided that they meet the entitlement conditions, including being available for and actively seeking work.

Job Seeker's Allowance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether someone refused a hardship payment in circumstances described in paragraph 4.39 of "Jobseeker's Allowance" is eligible for a crisis loan from the social fund.

Mr. Roger Evans: Claimants who would not have access to hardship payments in the circumstances described in paragraph 4.39 of the job seekers's allowance White Paper would not have access to the social fund for a crisis loan to cover living expenses. Provision of such a loan would negate the effect of the sanction. Crisis loans would, however, be available in those circumstances to help make good damage caused by unforeseen disaster, such as fire or flood.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes are proposed in the cash limits or running costs limits of his Department.

Mr. Hague: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIII vote 4 will be increased by £45,825,000 from £2,724,356,000 to £2,770,181,000. The revision takes account of increased requirements resulting from policy changes—£43,526,000, of which £29,948,000 is running costs—an increase of £77,454,000—of which £66,474,000 is running costs—in respect of the end-year flexibility arrangements, an increase of £350,000—running costs—offset by a corresponding reduction on Crown Prosecution Services; Crown Prosecutions and legal services, class IX vote 7, an increase of £3,000—running costs—offset by a corresponding reduction on Her Majesty's Treasury, class XVII vote 1, an increase of £56,000—running costs—offset by a corresponding reduction on Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England, class XII vote 3, a reduction of £5,152,000 in running cost cover for services provided by Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland) on repayment and an increase of £75,564,000 in appropriations in aid.

Further running cost changes arise from a reduction of £3,018,000 as a result of a reallocation to capital and other current expenditure, a reduction of £2,169,000 resulting from a transfer to a net running cost section of the vote and an increase of £5,029,000 in value added tax refunds.

As a result of these changes, the running cost limit of the Department of Social Security will be increased by £81,463,000 from £2,928,784,000 to £3,010,247,000.

The additional requirements will be changed to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Disability

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consideration she has given to the report on the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation's investigation of complaints from disabled people about delays in assessment for and the provision of services under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; what action she is taking; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what consideration the Minister for Disabled People has given to the report of the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation's investigation of complaints from disabled people about delays in assessment for and the provision of services under section two of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have seen a copy of the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation's end of project report, "Disabled People Have Rights".

Local authorities' duties under the 1970 Act remain unchanged, however, and they were reminded of their legal obligations in December 1992. We have also set out procedures for the investigation of complaints, and the Department follows up cases where it is alleged that a local authority is in breach of its statutory duties.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage of (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful claims for disability living allowance and attendance allowance for (1) disability living allowance (care), (2) disability living allowance (mobility) and (3) attendance allowance in each year since 1992-93 and the first quarter of 1994–95.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the table.

	Total decisions	*Number of awards*	*Success rate (per cent.)*
Disability Living Allowance			
1992–93	685,154	432,382	63
1993–94	441,470	223,347	51
April–June 1994	112,315	55,253	49
Attendance Allowance			
1992–93	516,357	379,298	73
1993–94	480,578	347,793	72
April–June 1994	118,171	86,398	73

Notes

[1] The information is not available in the form requested.

[2] Figures for DLA relate only to decisions given on new claims; the figures for AA include first awards on review and appeal.

[3] DLA figures for 1992–93 include single component claims made under transitional arrangements.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage of (i) disability living allowance claims and (ii) attendance allowance claims where an examining medical practitioner's report was commissioned by his Department in respect of (1) disability living allowance (care), (2) disability living allowance, mobility and (3) attendance allowance in each year since 1992–93 and the first quarter of 1994–95.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the table:

	Total decisions	*EMP report obtained*	*Percentage with EMP report*
Adjudication Officer's decisions on DLA			
1992–93	633,684	120,506	19
1993–94	429,415	88,552	21
April 1994–June 1994	109,544	19,670	18
Adjudication Officer's decisions on AA			
1992–93	415,503	92,465	22
1993–94	428,974	74,741	17
April 1994–June 1994	109,435	15,903	15

Notes:

1. The information is not available in the precise form requested. EMP reports may also be obtained at the request of the claimant.
2. Figures for DLA relate to new claims; the figures for AA include first awards on review and appeal.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disability living allowance decisions in which *(a)* review requests and *(b)* appeals were made in respect of (i) disability living allowance (care), (ii) disability living allowance, mobility and (iii) attendance allowance were made in each year since 1992–93 and the first quarter of 1994–95; and what percentage of all decisions each formed.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the tables.

	Total decisions	*Number of reviews requested*	*Percentage of decisions*	*Number of appeals requested*	*Percentage of decisions*
DLA decisions					
1992–93	685,154	96,799	14	6,918	1
1993–94	441,470	271,165	61	29,617	7
April 1994–June 1994	112,315	77,573	69	5,276	5
AA decisions					
1992–1993	516,357	132,169	26	2,130	—
1993–94	480,578	139,251	29	5,025	1
April 1994–June 1994	118,171	32,670	28	743	1

Notes:

1. The information is not available in the precise form requested.
2. Requests for review and appeal do not necessarily relate to decisions made in the year shown but reflect activity undertaken during the period.

Children in Hospital

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce a visiting costs scheme for families with a sick child in hospital.

Mr. Roger Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him today by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health.

War Pensions

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many certificates he issued in 1992 and 1993 under section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 for the purposes of awarding war pension to former service personnel.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Such statistics are not routinely kept; however, it is estimated that, in total, about a dozen section 10 certificates were issued in 1992 and 1993.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total amount spent on official hospitality by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* her agencies for each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure on hospitality, including basic refreshments for meetings of expert advisory groups and working groups and for meetings with representatives of other Government departments, voluntary organisations and public bodies is shown in the table. Separate figures are only available for the agencies from 1991–92. All ministers hospitality budgets are underspent.

	1990–91 £ millions	*1991–92 £ millions*	*1992—93 £ millions*	*1993–94 £ millions*
Department	158,000	168,151	246,374	218,995
Agencies	—	10,318	15,612	28,864

Note:

Figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

General Practitioner Fundholding

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has done into the cost-effectiveness of consultant clinics in fundholding practices.

Mr. Malone: The proposed programme of work for the National Centre for Primary Care Research includes a study of the cost-effectiveness of specialist clinics in general practice.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect of general practitioner fundholding on the doctor/patient relationship.

Mr. Malone: General practitioner fundholders are free to use resources directly to improve services and secure the care they judge best for their patients. This can only strengthen the doctor/patient relationship.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the status of fees that consultants receive from general practitioner fundholders.

Mr. Malone: National health service consultants are free to make personal arrangements with any health care purchaser, subject to their contractual arrangements with their NHS employer.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on *(a)* the production and *(b)* the availability of the hormone replacement drug premarin in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: Premarin is produced by the pharmaceutical industry using pregnant mares' urine, which is collected on farms in Canada and the United States of America, not in the United Kingdom. During that part of the pregnancy when oestrogen levels are high, the mares are fitted with a lightweight harness. The collection device is attached to this and the urine drains into it. Both the Canadian and United States authorities have said that no mares are catheterised to collect urine, and have confirmed that all the farms satisfy their animal welfare concerns.

In the United Kingdom, medicinal products need to be licensed under the Medicines Act 1971. Before a product licence is granted, a company needs to satisfy the Licensing Authority of the product's safety, quality and efficacy. Premarin is licensed for use in the United Kingdom, and there are no grounds under the Medicines Act for withdrawing it from use.

Asthma

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure on general practitioner-prescribed anti-asthma medication and preparations in each family health services authority area in 1993–94 expressed in terms of *(a)* net ingredient cost and *(b)* net ingredient cost per capita.

Mr. Malone: The information will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure on general practitioner-prescribed anti-asthma medication and preparations in 1993–94, broken down by drugs prescribed.

Mr. Malone: Information on individual drugs prescribed is commercially confidential. Information broken down by British National Formulary classification to sub section level is shown in the table.

Asthma Prescribing Figures - England 1993

BNF Section	*Prescriptions (000s)*	*Net Ingredient Cost (£000s)*
3.1.1.1 Selective bete-andrenoceptor stimulants	17,125·6	119,208·8
3.1.1.2 Other andrenoceptor stimulants	638·9	1,358·6
3.1.2 Anti muscarinic bronchodilators	1,341·8	19,491·5
3.1.3 Theophyline	2,194·2	11,008·9
3.1.4 Compound bronchodilator preparations	482·4	4,573·7
3.2.0 Corticosteroids	8,526·1	172,887·3
3.3.0 Cromoglycate and related therapy	936·1	17,979·9
21.12 Peak flow meters and inhaler devices	329·0	2,079·5
Total	31,576·1	348,588·2

Notes:

1. The data are based on items and cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.

2. Drugs used in the treatment of asthma are contained in the British National Formulary sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. The therapeutic classifications are based on the September 1992 issue. The drugs for Broncholidators may be used for other conditions.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the total number of prescriptions for treatment of asthma and *(b)* the number of prescriptions of inhalations, broken down by drugs prescribed, to (i) the whole population and (ii) those aged under 16 years for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Malone: Information on individual prescribed drugs is commercially confidential. The number of prescribed items for asthma preparations down to British National Formulary sub-section level for the whole population is shown in table 1. The number of prescription items for asthma preparations for patients exempt on grounds of youth down to BNF section level is shown in table 2.

Asthma Prescribing Figures - England 1984 to 1993

Prescriptions ('000) BNF Section	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
3.1.1.1 Selective beta-adrenoceptor stimulants	9,075·3	10,125·3	10,736·1	11,264·3	12,231·4	12,526·8	13,450·0	15,460·9	16160·9	17125·6
3.1.1.2 Other adrenoceptor stimulants	374·5	504·0	633·8	573·3	640·5	591·2	607·0	673·2	615·7	638·9

Asthma Prescribing Figures - England 1984 to 1993

Prescriptions ('000) *BNF Section*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
3.1.2 Antimuscarinic bronchodilators	373·6	431·8	496·3	552·1	658·1	706·0	856·6	1,005·1	1,193·5	1,341·8
3.1.3 Theophylline	2,845·0	3,125·6	3,187·4	3,216·2	3,196·8	2,955·8	2,802·0	2,634·9	2,409·5	2,194·2
3.1.4 Compound bronchodilator preparations	883·2	698·2	645·9	662·7	672·1	701·2	706·2	619·0	545·3	482·4
3.2.0 Corticosteroids	2,129·4	2,486·1	2,919·2	3.426·4	4,031·3	4,391·5	5,040·0	6,265·6	7,414·0	8,526·1
3.3.0 Cromoglycate and related therapy	1,528·2	1,480·9	1,427·1	1,299·8	1,206·9	1,083·1	998·0	983·8	924·9	938·1
21.12 Peak flow meters and inhaler devices	—	—	—	—	—	—	61·8	258·1	297·0	329·0
Total Asthma Preparations	17,209·2	18,851·9	20,045·8	20,994·8	22,637·1	22,955·6	24,521·6	27,900·6	29,560·8	31,576·1
Net Ingredient Cost (£'000) *BNF Section*										
3.1.1.1 Selective beta-adrenoceptor stimulants	35,244·7	39,389·0	43,591·2	47,785·6	59,442·5	66,488·7	76,783·0	98,538·7	109,908·4	119,208·8
3.1.1.2 Other adrenoceptor stimulants	1,019·4	1,232·3	1,426·2	1,304·6	1,424·8	1,345·4	1,280·3	1,354·0	1,301·1	1,358·6
3.1.2 Antimuscarinic bronchodilators	1,971·8	2,398·4	2,857·0	3,410·3	5,949·5	7,658·2	9,784·0	12,664·0	16,354·1	19,491·5
3.1.3 Theophylline	12,274·5	13,350·5	14,173·7	14,435·8	14,993·7	14,081·5	13,458·1	12,708·3	11,860·2	11,008·9
3.1.4 Compound bronchodilator preparations	3,674·7	3,448·3	3,787·1	4,453·5	5,137·4	5,498·5	5,773·0	5,221·4	4,914·2	4,573·7
3.2.0 Cortcosteroids	18,343·8	23,726·4	31,709·7	41,876·6	61,021·2	71,368·7	86,988·4	112,412·9	142,521·8	172,887·3
3.3.0 Cromoglycate and related therapy	16,591·2	17,005·2	17,779·5	17,578·0	17,737·8	16,954·5	16,364·5	15,956·9	16,448·7	17,979·9
21.12 Peak flow meters and inhaler devices	—	—	—	—	—	—	378·2	1,604·4	1,858·3	2,079·5
Total Asthma Preparations	89,120·1	100,550·1	115,324·4	130,844·4	165,706·9	183,395·5	210,809·5	260,460·6	305,166·8	348,588·2

Notes:

[1] Data up to 1990 are based on fees and cover prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors only.

[3] Data from 1991 are based on items and cover prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.

Table 2—England

1992	*Prescription items (1000s)*
3.1. Bronchodilators	3,438·8
3.2. Corticosteroids	1,188·1
3.3. Cromoglycate and related therapy	445·5
Total	5,072·4
1993	
3.1. Bronchodilators	3,731·7
3.2. Corticosteroids	1,461·3
3.3. Cromoglycate and related therapy	481·4
Total	5,674·4

Notes:

1. The data includes items dispensed for people under the age of 16 and aged between 16 and 19 and in full-time education.

2. The date are based on items and cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors only. Items dispensed by dispensing doctors and personal administration are excluded. Dispensing doctor prescriptions are not analysed into exempt, non-exempt or other categories and are therefore excluded; personally administered items are free of charge.

3. Drugs used in the treatment of asthma are contained in the British National Formulary sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3. The therapeutic classifications are based on the September 1992 issue. The drugs for Bronchodilators may be used for other conditions.

Dentistry

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS dental check-ups took place in each year since 1988 by *(a)* regional health authority, *(b)* district health authority, on 1 April 1992 boundaries, *(c)* family health service authority and *(d)* nationally.

Mr. Malone: The available information will be placed in the Library.

Blood Transfusion Centres

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the blood transfusion centres which have been issued *(a)* a wholesale dealers' licence and *(b)* a manufacturer's special licence under the Medicines Act 1968, and those which have not been issued with those licences.

Mr. Sackville: Since April 1994, the National Blood Authority has held a wholesale dealers licence and a manufacturers licence for the national blood service as a whole.

The wholesale dealers licence currently includes the following centres: Northern, West Yorkshire, East Anglia, Trent, Oxford and Mersey. Wessex, West Midlands and Blood Services South-West (Bristol) have been approved and are yet to be shown on the licence. The remaining transfusion centres do not currently undertake wholesale dealing activities and do not therefore require to be licenced.

In relation to the manufacturers licence; the Medicines Control Agency has identified specific work to be undertaken at the Wessex and West Midlands centres. The NBA has given assurances to the MCA on this and the MCA is content for the processing and testing functions, for which all centres are required to be licenced, to continue at these centres.

Health Authority Funding

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to implement changes in the weighted capitation formula for London to take account of deprivation.

Mr. Sackville: The modified weighted capitation formula takes account of deprivation by including a wide range of health and socio-economic factors.

In 1995–96, it will be used to inform allocations to regional health authorities. It will be for Thames regions to decide which formula to use for London district health authorities.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes for each authority's revenue budget were brought about as a result of the replacement of the resource allocation working party system of determining funding allocation.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 3 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *808*.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the figures for revenue funding for each purchasing health authority or equivalent in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in 1992–93, 1993–94, 1994–95 and the estimated figures for 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Mr. Sackville: Information for England will be placed in the Library for 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95. No information is available for future years.

Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Performance-related Pay

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received in response to her proposal to introduce local performance-related pay into the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Since announcing our plans for reforming national health services in "Working for Patients" in 1989 and proposals for strengthening the links between reward and performance in the national health service in the citizens charter in 1991, we have received representations from a wide range of organisations and individuals including hon. Members, the Trust Federation, the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts, chairmen, chief executives and human resource directors of trusts and authorities, professional bodies and trade unions.

Cows' Milk Allergy

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that new-born babies should be tested for allergy to cows' milk; and what investigation she has conducted into such a proposal.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to develop a policy to test new babies for allergy to cows' milk. Their risk of allergy may be assessed from their family history of allergic disorder. Breast feeding is recommended for all babies and this is of particular importance for babies at risk of allergic disorder.

Psychiatric Beds

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that the capital and revenue costs of funding 45 extra NHS medium-secure psychiatric beds for south-east Thames will be made available in the next financial year.

Mr. Bowis: South Thames regional health authority, in conjunction with the Department of Health, the national health service executive and North Thames regional health authority, is currently reviewing the supply of medium-secure psychiatric beds in the Thames regions.

Eye Tests

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people had eye tests in each year since 1988; what proportion of these was NHS provided; what proportion was assisted by the voucher scheme, listed by *(a)* regional health authority, *(b)* district health authority, on 1 April 1992 boundaries, *(c)* family health service authority and *(d)* nationally.

Mr. Malone: The total number of sight tests performed has not been collected centrally since April 1989 when universal entitlement to national health service sight tests was ended.

The number of sight tests paid for by family health services authorities in England since 1988–89 will be placed in the Library. Such information is not available by district health authority.

From a survey carried out in 1993 on behalf of a technical sub-committee representing the Department and the optometric profession, it was estimated that the total number of sight tests performed in Great Britain in 1993–94 would be 13·184 million, 50 per cent. of which would be NHS.

The number of vouchers paid for will be placed in the Library. Such information is not available by district health authority.

Acute Units (Closure)

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether guidance has been issued to health authorities on how funds released by the closure or reductions of acute units are to be transferred to the primary health care sector.

Mr. Malone: It is for local health authorities, taking account of clinical priority, the views of local people and the available resources, to assess the level of services needed to meet the requirements in their area and to negotiate appropriate provision. We will be examining the changing pattern of service provision to ensure that patients continue to receive effective and high quality care.

London Implementation Group

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the budget of the London implementation group for each year since it was established.

Mr. Malone: The London implementation group was established in February 1993. The LIG's budget for 1993–94 and 1994–95 has been £2 million. For both years, those figures include the clearing house for displaced staff and for 1994–95 the budget figure includes the primary care support force.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what actions her Department is taking to ensure that reductions in junior doctors' hours do not create or increase shortages of junior doctors in *(a)* paediatrics and *(b)* other specialties.

Mr. Malone: Since the new deal was launched in 1991 we have funded an extra 750 career grade posts specifically to reduce juniors' hours.

The number of paediatric consultants increased by 9·1 per cent. in 1992–93.

In accident and emergency the increase was 11 per cent. and in both anaesthetics and obstetrics and gynaecology, the increase was nearly 4 per cent.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of public appointments made by her Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The latest published figures show that 35 per cent. of the public appointments made by the Department were held by women. Figures for 1994 will be announced in due course.

Visiting Costs Scheme

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has, following the publication of Department of Health advice in "Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital", to implement a visiting costs scheme to ensure that the parents of hospitalised children are not prevented from visiting their children regularly because of a lack of money.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce a visiting costs scheme for families with a sick child in hospital.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will establish a fund for hospital visiting costs; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will list the concessions available to families visiting sick children, in respect of travelling, parking and other necessities.

Mr. Sackville: The Hospital travel costs scheme provides financial assistance to parents on low income to enable them to accompany their children to and from hospital where this is medically necessary. The majority of national health service hospitals provide accommodation for parents to enable them to stay overnight at the hospital while their children receive treatment. Financial help is available from the social fund to enable parents in receipt of income support to visit their children in hospital. There are no plans to extend these arrangements.

Community Health Sheffield NHS Trust

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the transfers of land and property that have taken place over the past six months to Community Health Sheffield NHS trust and their value at the time of transfer.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Community Health Sheffield national health service trust. The hon. Member may want to contact the chairman, Sir Michael Carlisle, for details.

Kidney Treatment

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements for availability for kidney dialysis treatments exist in Great Britain for patients requiring regular dialysis treatments whilst on holiday or visiting relatives.

Mr. Sackville: Renal units in the United Kingdom will provide dialysis for patients on holiday or visiting relatives provided there is spare dialysis facility available. Usually the patient's regular unit will make the arrangements for them.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Department's estimate of the cost of providing indoor and outdoor powered wheelchairs remains as set out in the letter date-stamped 23 March, ref. POH(4) 4295/111 from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), to the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait); when and by whom the estimate was made; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Calculation of the likely cost of supplying powered indoor/outdoor chairs to all those who qualify and require one is complex. The defining factors are assumed need, purchase cost through bulk purchasing, the cost of maintenance and repair and the effect on costs of refurbishment and re-issue of chairs.

The estimate referred to was based on a simple extrapolation derived from a broad estimate of need contained in the 1986 McColl report.

On 1 July I announced a review of wheelchair services in the context of the feasibility and affordability of a voucher scheme. As part of this review we have commissioned firm and practically based costings including for supply of indoor/outdoor powered chairs. We will be announcing our conclusions on this exercise in due course.

General Practitioner Lists

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in each family health services/authority area have been removed from their GP's list and how many have been *(a)* under 18 years, *(b)* women over 60 years, *(c)* men over 65 years of age, *(d)* registered disabled people, *(e)* are in receipt of repeat prescriptions and *(f)* recorded as having been previously removed from a GP's list in each of the past four years.

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State gave the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) on 25 October, *Official Report*, column *743–44*.

Nicotine

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will bring forward proposals to require manufacturers to reduce nicotine levels by 10 per cent. each year.

Mr. Sackville: No. The Cigarettes (Maximum Tar Yield) (Safety) Regulations 1992 set the current maximum tar yield in cigarettes at 15 mg and require a further reduction to 12 mg from 1 January 1998. There is a relationship between tar and nicotine yields and we have no plans for specific legislation on nicotine yields.

Cash Limits

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes will be made to the cash limits of her Department in 1994–95.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The cash limit for class XII, vote 1—Hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England—will be reduced by £44,104,000, from £21,778,220,000 to £21,734,116,000. That reduction allows for transfers of £44,500,000 to class XII, vote 4—Family health services (part), England—for pharmaceutical services, following a reappraisal of general practitioner fundholders' drugs budget requirements; £120,000 to class XII, vole 3—Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England—for Special Hospitals Services Authority audit services; £241,000 to class XIV, vote 14—Hospital, community health, family health (part) and other services, Scotland—and £165,000 to the Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland for de-designated supra regional services; £904,000 to class XV, vote 8—Hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, Wales—£289,000 to class XIV, vote 14—Hospital, community health, family health (part) and other health services, Scotland—and £24,000 to the Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland for London post-graduate teaching hospitals special health authorities services and £48,000 to class XIV, vote 17—Education, arts and libraries, Scotland—for clinical placements in England of Glasgow Caledonian university students. The overall reduction is partially offset by £1,647,000 from class XII, vote 3—Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England—for work of the NHS Estates Management and Health Building Agency—£1,447,000—and for the regional health authorities print budget for NHS forms—£200,000; £333,000 from class XII, vote 6—Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—for the NHS central register superannuation costs and £207,000 from class VII, vote 3—Regeneration initiatives, England—for the urban programme.

The cash limit for class XII, vote 3—Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England—will be reduced by £2,946,000—from £1,594,202,000 to £1,591,256,000. This reduction allows for transfers of £1,647,000—£200,000 running costs—to class XII, vote 1—Hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England—as mentioned above; £1,158,000 to class XIV, vote 14—Hospital, community health, family health (part) and other services, Scotland—for work of the NHS Estate Management and the Health Building Agency—£318,000—and the Prescription Pricing Authority—£840,000; £195,000—£183,000 running costs—to class XIX, vote 3—Privy Council Office—for the drugs co-ordination unit; £56,000—running costs—to class X111 vote 4—Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services—for the departmental records office; and £10,000—running costs—to class III, vote 4—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: agriculture, food and fishing services—for the Committee on Novel Foods and Processes. The overall decrease is partially offset by a transfer of £120,000 from class XII, vote 1 as mentioned above.

The non-voted cash limit for supplementary credit approvals for personal social services—DoH/LACAP—in England is to be increased by £1,185,000—from £26,100,000 to £27,285,000—in respect of the take-up of entitlement to carry forward of underspends from the 1993–94 financial year under the end year flexibility arrangements as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994, at *Official Report*, columns *729–34*.

The Department's gross running cost limit will be reduced by £449,000 from £258,302,000 to £257,853,000. This reflects the transfers mentioned above.

All increases will either be offset by savings, increased receipts or transfers to or from other votes or charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Burnley Heath Care Trust

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has received regarding Burnley Health Care Trust; and if she will make a statement.

(2) If she now proposes to call for an independent inquiry into the problems at Burnley Health Care Trust; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received a number of representations about Burnley health care national health service trust, some of which call for an independent inquiry. The trust has commissioned an independent expert investigation into the management of the women's unit at the trust and the circumstances of the dismissal of consultant gynaecologist Mr. Ian Mahady, and will make public the findings.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether national health service trusts are required to produce the names and addresses of trust board members; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: National health service trusts publish the names of board members in their annual reports. There is no requirement on NHS trusts to make public the private addresses of board members.

Sister Pat Cooksley

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the statement of the Minister of State of 25 October, *Official Report*, column *854*, what is, or has been, the nature and type of retraining undertaken by Sister Pat Cooksley.

Mr. Malone: That is a confidential matter between Sister Cooksley and the Plymouth Hospitals national health service trust.

Private Children's Homes

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral answer of 25 October, *Official Report*, column 749, how many *(a)* qualified field social workers, *(b)* unqualified field social workers, *(c)* qualified residential social workers and *(d)* unqualified residential social workers there were in 1974; and what are the latest available figures.

Mr. Bowis: There have been changes of definition and coverage in the information on qualifications of social work staff since 1974, and although the Department collected data on qualifications of social work staff in 1974, it no longer does so. It is for that reason that I quoted percentage figures rather than numbers.

In the 1974 Department of Health staffing return on local authority social services staff, 5,150 field social work staff out of a total of 13,154 or 38 per cent. were reported as having the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. In 1992, the latest date for which the information is available, the local government management board social services work force analysis showed that, out of a total of 32,826 staff, 26,906, or 82 per cent., had CQSW and a further 3,415, or 10 per cent., had another relevant qualification such as certificate in social service or diploma in social work.

Corresponding comparative figures for staff in residential establishments are not available.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchcliffe), of 25 October, *Official Report*, column 749, what information is being requested from local authorities about the placement of children in small unregistered children's homes; and from which date this information is to be requested.

Mr. Bowis: In the current year, figures are being collected about those small unregistered children's homes in which children looked after by a local authority were accommodated in the period 1 April to 30 September 1994. The information collected includes the home's facilities and the age, gender and maximum number of children who can be accommodated. As my reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield said, from now on—that is, from the next annual collection—the number of children placed will also be separately identifiable.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) of 25 October, *Official Report*, column 749, whether statutory inspections in future will apply to small unregistered children's homes.

Mr. Bowis: Section 80 of the Children Act 1989 allows the social services inspectorate to inspect facilities for children in a wide variety of settings, including small children's homes, if circumstances show that it is necessary.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral answer of 25 October, *Official Report*, column 748, what are the welfare responsibilities of those authorities in whose areas small unregistered children's homes are located with regard to those homes; and under which section of the Children Act 1989 those welfare regulations are laid down.

Mr. Bowis: The local authority which places the child carries full responsibility to satisfy itself that the proposed placement promotes and safeguards the child's welfare—Arrangements for Placements of Children (General) Regulations 1991.

If a particular placing authority finds a small children's home unsatisfactory, its recourse would be to terminate that placement and not use the home again.

Authorities placing children in homes in a different area must inform the area authority about the placement—Arrangements for Placements of Children (General) Regulations 1992. Where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives in its area is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, it shall make inquiries to determine whether to take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare—section 47, Children Act 1989.

Where an arrangement has been made with the placing authority, the area authority can carry out the functions in relation to a placement on behalf of the placing authority—Arrangements for Placements of Children (General) Regulations 1991.

NHS Hospitals (Car Parking)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish a maximum charge for car parking in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: No.

Health Service Workers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing on the subject of the local determination of pay and conditions of service; what has been the nature of such representations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Discussions have taken place with both the nursing and medical professions and are continuing.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the Government guidelines for the setting up and staffing of private nursing homes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Statutory control of nursing homes is provided by the Registered Homes Act 1984. Registration and inspection is wholly delegated to health authorities, and the Department of Health endorsed guidance published by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts in 1985. Homes have a statutory duty to provide adequate nursing and other staff bearing in mind the number, age, and condition of the people being cared for.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she proposes to the cash limits and running costs limits for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for 1994–95.

Mr. Sackville: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XII, vote 6—Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—will be increased by £1,833,000 from £33,592,000 to £35,425,000 and the running costs limit by £1,515,000 from £48,991,000 to £50,506,000. This reflects the take up of £1,512,000 for running costs and £318,000 for capital under the end-year flexibility entitlements announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *729-34*. It also reflects a transfer of running costs provision of £3,000 from the Valuation Office for additional housing costs allowance and increased capital costs provision of £931,000 in the national health service central register for work on the Department of Health's existing number replacement project. The increase in capital costs will be met from within the existing resources of the Department of Health—class XII, vote 3—and will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Social Work

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what decision she has reached on the selection of consultants to undertake work on the definition of standards of conduct and practice in social work.

Mr. Bowis: I am pleased to announce that two short separate projects have been commissioned. One is from Price Waterhouse Management Consultants, the other is a joint project by the National Institute for Social Work, North Down and Ards community trust and Eastern health and social services board, Northern Ireland. These two projects will examine the issues from different perspectives.

The result of both projects will be reported to the Department of Health in the early months of next year.

Passive Smoking

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have contracted an illness caused by passive smoking in the workplace in each of the last five years.

Mr. Oppenheim: I have been asked to reply.

There is no information available on the number of people who have contracted an illness caused by passive smoking in the workplace.

EMPLOYMENT

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for 1922–93 and 1993–94, the amount spent in each London borough, with totals for each training and enterprise council area, under each of the programmes now incorporated into the single regeneration budget, regardless of whether the sums were paid to the borough council, and the amount allocated to be spent in 1994–95 on the same basis.

Mr. Paice: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 27 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *813*.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Miss Widdecombe: The answer to this question is not readily obtainable and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the privatisations which his Department has promoted since 1979, indicating, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Miss Widdecombe: There have been two privatisations in the Department of Employment since 1979: the Professional and Executive Register in 1988 and the Skills Training Agency in 1990. Information relating to the proceeds from both sales is set out in the Department's appropriation accounts for 1989–90—PER—and 1990–91 to 1992–93—STA. The Department does not hold information relating to the current value of the companies involved.

Performance Agreements

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the target figure in the Employment Service performance agreements for the numbers of claimants to be referred for adjudication for the current year, in each of the last three years and the coming year; and how many in each case he estimates lost, or will lose, entitlement to benefit as a consequence.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 1 November 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about target figures in the Employment Service Annual Performance Agreement (APA) for the number of claimants referred to adjudication, and the number of claimants who lost, or will lose benefit as a result of referral.

We do not currently have, and never have had, a target in our APA for the overall number of submissions to adjudication. Our APA for 1994–95 contains a target of "135,000 submissions to adjudication where there is an arguable case with supporting information to show that the claimant is not available for, actively seeking or willing to accept work." This is the first APA to contain a target relating to the number of submissions to adjudication.

I am currently negotiating our APA for 1995–96 with officials in the Employment Department acting on behalf of the Secretary of State. It is too early in these negotiations to confirm whether it will include a target relating to the level of adjudication referrals, or what that level might be.

The information you have requested on the number of decisions and disallowances is not fully available. However, the attached tables give details of the number of decisions and disallowances for the four questions covered by our APA target; availability for employment, restricted availability, actively seeking employment and refusal of employment. The data relates to the past three years and for the quarter ending 30 June. More recent information is not currently available.

Table 1: Number of decisions made

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*Q/E 30 June 1994*
Availability	86,336	87,328	80,248	19,190
Restricted Availability	44,672	39,642	33,869	8,166
Actively Seeking Employment	8,539	6,070	8,912	3,666
Refusal of Employment	2,789	1,824	3,257	1,858
Total	142,336	134,864	126,286	32,880

Table 2: Number of disallowances

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*Q/E 30 June 1994*
Availability	49,736	49,463	51,729	14,911
Restricted Availability	14,467	13,332	16,562	5,323
Actively Seeking Employment	2,598	2,555	6,274	3,045
Refusal of Employment	979	685	1,643	1,118
Total	67,780	66,035	76,208	24,397

Employment and Training Programmes

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will break down into convenient categories the 1·5 million opportunities on employmnet and training programmes whcih will be available tto unemployed people in the current financial year, giving the number of places available in each category.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delgated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 1 November 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the opportunities on employment and training programmes which will be available to unemployed people in the current financial year. These are as follows:

	Number
Access to Work	10,000
Career Development Loans	35,000
Community Action	50,000
Employment Rehabilitation	10,400
Jobclub	265,000
Jobfinders' Grants	4,400
Job Interview Guarantee	300,000
Jobplan	250,000
Job Review Workshop	40,000
Job search seminar	75,000
One to One	10,000
Restart Course	120,000
Training for Work	272,000
Travel to Interview	34,000
Workstart	1,200
Work Trials	20,000
Workwise/link	10,000
	1,507,000

Job Finder's Grant

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to publish a report on the trial testing of the job finder's grant.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the area or areas in which the job finder's grant scheme is, or has been, tested, the numbers who have been given a grant and his best estimate of the take-up expressed as a percentage of those eligible to apply.

Miss Widdecombe: The job finder's grant pilots are operating in the east midlands and west midlands. Some 3,626 grants have been issued. Information regarding the take-up as a percentage of those eligible to apply is not available.

Job Seeker's Allowance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if there is any power proposed in the White Paper, "Jobseeker's Allowance," to compel a benefit claimant to undertake community or public work in return for the standard benefit to which he or she would be otherwise entitled; and in what circumstances it could be used.

Miss Widdecombe: As the White Paper explains, people receiving job seeker's allowance may be required to undertake activities designed to increase their employability and their chances of finding a job. Where it is appropriate, this may include a period of work experience on a community project. Participants in community action currently receive an allowance equivalent to their benefit entitlement plus £10.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the difference between, and define, the official recommendation and the job seeker's direction as referred to in the White Paper, "Jobseeker's Allowance".

Miss Widdecombe: Current legislation provides that a claimant can be disqualified from receiving benefit if he fails to carry out an official recommendation given to him by an Employment Service adviser with a view to assisting him to find a particular type of employment. That power would be carried forward into job seeker's allowance but widened to enable advisers additionally to direct job seekers to improve their employability through, for example, attending a course to improve job-seeking skills or motivation, or taking steps to present themselves acceptably to employers.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the sanctions that will be available to his Department when the proposals in the White Paper, "Jobseeker's Allowance", are implemented which are presently not available; and if he will define the circumstances in which these can be used.

Miss Widdecombe: The White Paper explains that the main system of sanctions in the jobseeker's allowance would generally take forward provisions from unemployment benefit and income support. The benefit sanctions for leaving a job voluntarily without just cause, losing a job through misconduct, neglecting to avail oneself of a reasonable opportunity of a job and refusing a job without good cause would continue to last for up to 26 weeks. The sanction for refusing to attend or complete mandatory courses such as jobplan workshops and prescribed training courses, and for failing to act upon a job seeker's direction, would be for a fixed period of two weeks, rising to four weeks if refusal or failure to act is repeated.

North Norfolk Action Scheme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to publish a report on the north Norfolk action scheme, including an assessment of the effectiveness of the approach and the costs of the scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *391*.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Miss Widdecombe: No further appointments have been made since the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on 12 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *216*.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is given in "Public Bodies 1993" which is available in the Library. 1994 figures are still being collected and will be announced in due course.

Benzene

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to study the health risk of benzene in garages and workplaces.

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 require benzene exposure to be reduced so far as is reasonably practicable and in any case below the maximum exposure limit. The Health and Safety Executive plans to reassess the control of exposure to benzene in the workplace and aims to report by the end of 1995.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why the services provided by the regional laboratories of the Health and Safety Executive are being contracted out; and what consideration he gave to allowing those laboratories, individually or collectively, to be market tested.

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* The Health and Safety Executive decided to include the regional laboratories in its "Competing for Quality" programme for 1994–95 to seek improvements in value for money from these services. Careful consideration was given to how the laboratories should be treated under the programme. HSE concluded that a bid from the staff in the laboratories, acting on their own account, would not be viable.

Jobcentres

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on the advertising of jobs at jobcentres where firms wish to place age restrictions upon applicants.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* Where this occurs, the Employment Service tries to persuade employers to consider job seekers on their merits. The ES has produced a leaflet, "What's Age got to do with it?", designed to persuade employers not to impose upper age limits. If an employer insists on setting a limit, the vacancy will still be advertised. However, this would not prevent ES staff from approaching an employer on behalf of an otherwise suitable job seeker who falls outside the limit stated.

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what levels of part-time earnings make job seekers ineligible for consideration under the job interview guarantee scheme; and what plans he has to change the current arrangements.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* The basic eligibility condition for the job interview guarantee scheme is that a job seeker must be unemployed for at least 26 weeks, and be in receipt of benefit. The level of part-time earnings in respect of unemployment benefit, and the number of hours worked in respect of income support, can affect a job seeker's entitlement to benefit. This would also affect his eligibility for JIG in the following circumstances:

> a client loses entitlement to UB for a day he works and earns more than £2·00, or for a week where he earns more than £57 in that week.
>
> a client loses entitlement to IS for a week in which he works for more than 16 hours.

There are no plans to change the programme eligibility for JIG or, in the short term, benefit entitlement conditions. There are, however, proposals to change benefit rules from April 1996. Information about the jobseeker's allowance was announced to Parliament on 24 October.

Self-Employed Workers

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria he uses for categorising self-employed workers as being part-time; when this criteria was last changed; and when he plans to alter it in the future.

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* Information on the number of self-employed workers is collected from the quarterly labour force survey. As with all LFS questions, the categorisation of full or part-time is based on the self-classification of the respondent.

Although the methodology used to estimate the numbers of self-employed was refined in April 1994, this did not effect the criteria for categorising part-time workers which has, since its inception in 1979, been based on self-classification from the LFS. There are no plans to alter this method in the future.

Coal Industry

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment at how many deep coal mines in the United Kingdom the refuge holes required under section 40 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and regulation 59 of the Shafts Outlets and Roads Regulations have not been excavated; and if he will list the mines.

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The legal requirement relating to the provision of refuge holes is absolute and no mine has been granted an exemption from providing refuge holes.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) on what grounds managers of certain deep coal mines have been given a derogation from their liabilities to cause refuge holes to be excavated; and who gave authority for the derogation;

(2) what is the total number of refuge holes that must now be excavated following the derogation given to managers at certain deep coal mines; and if this work will be completed prior to privatisation.

Mr. Oppeneheim *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* No manager of a deep coal mine has been given derogation from the provision of refuge holes in roadways.

PRIME MINISTER

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister how many people there were in employment *(a)* in the United Kingdom, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* in the Clydebank and Milngavie constituency in September in each year since 1979; how many of these jobs were (i) full-time or (ii) part-time; and how many were filled by (1) men and (2) women.

The Prime Minister: The information requested at *(a)* and *(b)* is available for all years since 1979 and can be obtained from the Library of the House. Constituency information is available only for September of 1984, 1987, 1989 and 1991.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest information available to him about health and malnutrition conditions at the present time in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The Prime Minister: In addition to information from non-governmental organisations we receive reports from United Nations agencies. Copies of the most recent report from the office of the United Nations co-ordinator in Baghdad have been placed in both Libraries of the House.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what response he is making to the petition he received from Lord Attenborough and others on 19 October urging the provision of powered indoor/outdoor wheelchairs for severely disabled people who cannot be independently mobile without them; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A reply has been sent to the Muscular Dystrophy Group to acknowledge the petition and explain our policy on the provision of wheelchairs for disabled people. I have passed the petition itself to the Department of Health. Health Ministers are, of course, aware of the "batteries not included" campaign.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), is currently studying the feasibility and affordability of a wheelchair voucher scheme and will announce his conclusions in due course.

Documents for Signature

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *619*, if he will list the official documents, letters or accords that he has allowed photographic reproduction of his signature to appear on; and if he will list the official documents, letters or accords that he has signed which are written in a language that he does not understand.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 26 October, *Official Report*, column *619*.

Mohamed Al Fayed

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister when Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed requested a meeting with him; for what reasons he declined the request; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the statement I made to the House on standards of conduct in public life, on 25 October, *Official Report*, columns 775–70.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions since 1 January 1985 Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed has visited 10 Downing street; and on what dates.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* Mr. Al Fayed visited No. 10 Downing street on the following occasions:

25 January 1985

(for the then Prime Minister's meeting with the Sulton of Brunei)

14 March 1985

(for the then Prime Minister's lunch for President Mubarak)

3 April 1985

(for a meeting with officials)

7 January 1986

(for a meeting with officials)

Correspondence

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *370*, if his Office will now seek to obtain the full text of the letter from the Ritz hotel referred to in the correspondence between the Prime Minister and Mr. Peter Preston, editor of The Guardian.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to my previous answers on this subject.

Council of Europe

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Prime Minister, if he will place in the Library a copy of the information bulletin on the activities of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: I have done so today.

Open Government and Accountability

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Prime Minister what initiatives the Government has taken since November 1990 on open government and accountability.

The Prime Minister: The Government launched the citizens charter in July 1991. Information and openness are among its central principles.

The membership and terms of reference of ministerial Cabinet committees were published in May 1992, along with "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

In May 1992, I avowed for the first time the continuing existence of the secret intelligence service and named its chief. The Intelligence Services Act, which received royal assent in May 1994, puts both Government communications headquarters and the secret intelligence service on a statutory footing. A statutory oversight committee of parliamentarians for the security and intelligence services was also provided for.

The White paper on open government, published in July 1993, proposed the following measures:

> A code of practice on access to government information.
>
> Statutory access rights to personal records and health and safety information.
>
> Greater openness in access to public records.

The code of practice came into force in April 1994, providing for:

> Information to be volunteered by Government, such as facts and analysis with the policy decisions, and internal guidelines on dealing with the public.
>
> Government information to be released in response to specific requests.
>
> Reasons to be provided for administrative decisions.
>
> Enforcement by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, at no cost to the applicant.

A similar code of practice, covering the national health service, is currently the subject of consultation.

Over 24,000 records have been released since the open government initiatives began. These include almost 4,000 pieces of the intelligence material shown to Winston Churchill during the war—the so-called "Dir C Archive"; 840 pieces from the Special Operations Executive archive relating to SOE activities in the far east, Scandinavia, the middle east and Africa; previously withheld wartime Cabinet minutes; Admiralty intelligence papers; and War Office papers relating to the interrogation of prisoners-of-war.

A code of conduct has been issued to national health service boards, emphasising that high standards of corporate conduct and probity are at the heart of the NHS. Public registers of interests have been established.

A similar Treasury code of best practice for board members of other public bodies has also been promulgated. It recommends that all boards should establish a register of board members' interests.

As I announced to the House on 20 October, *Official Report*, column *421*, a review of the system of appointments to public bodies is currently being carried out. The conclusions of the review will be made public, and will also be made available to the Nolan committee.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals there are to change the 1994–95 cash limit or running costs limit in respect of security and intelligence services.

The Prime Minister: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary token supplementary estimate, the cash limit for security and intelligence services, class XIX, vote 2 will be increased by £1,000 from

£881,486,000 to £881487,000 and the gross running cost limit will be reduced by £2,361,000 from £449,850,000 to £447,489,000. This takes account of increased capital spending arising from the slippage of a building project and unforeseen capital and other purchases. These increases are being offset by increased receipts and reductions in both running costs and other current expenditure.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals there are to change the 1994–95 cash limit or running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: other services vote.

The Prime Minister: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the Cabinet Office: other services, class XIX, vote 1, will be increased by £1,452,000 from £43,381,000 to £44,833,000. At the same time, the running costs limit will be increased by £1,452,000 from £41,762,000 to £43,214,000.

The increase reflects the transfer of certain administrative functions and the move to repayment for some common service support as follows:

(a) transfer of running costs provision for certain Ministry of Defence property charges (Class I Vote 1) (£494,000);

(b) transfer of running costs provision for support to former Prime Ministers (Class VIII, Vote 3) (£163,000);

(c) transfer of running costs provision for central services (Class XVII, Vote 1) (£80,000); and

(d) transfer of provision for the calculation of the average property price list (£3,000).

In addition, as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *729–734*, this vote is eligible for a cash limit increase of £721,000 in respect of end year flexibility arrangements for running costs expenditure. This supplementary estimate gives effect to the increase. All the increases are either offset by inter-departmental transfers or have been charged to the reverse and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

EDUCATION

National Targets Initiative

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the key objectives being sought under the national education and training targets initiative.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The national targets for education and training aim to help improve Britain's competitiveness by raising expectations of what young people and adults can achieve at school, college and at work.

Schools (Cornwall)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the level of capital expenditure approved for schools in Cornwall.

Mr. Robin Squire: Cornwalls' allocation for capital for 1994–95 is £1·744 million. With regard to bids for 1995–96, I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Sir D. Madel).

Student Grants

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the effect on the welfare of student of the reduction in the worth in real terms of student grant.

Mr. Boswell: Since 1990, the total resources available to students through grant and student loan have been uprated annually by the rate of inflation estimated at the time, thus maintaining their value in real terms. Additionally, access funds are available for students who are in particular financial difficulties.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions she has had with teachers' unions concerning pay levels in the profession.

Mr. Robin Squire: Teachers' pay is a matter for the school teachers pay review body which is in the process of taking evidence from interested parties including the teacher unions and the Government.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, columns *416–17*, if she will provide a table showing *(a)* the cost of teacher salaries by local education authority and *(b)* the cost of implementing the school teachers pay and conditions document 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: Teachers' pay costs by LEA in 1992–93 are shown in the table. Figures for 1993–94, which will include the effect of the 1993 teachers' pay award, are not yet available.

Teachers' Pay Costs 1992–93

LEA	*£000*
Corporation of London	428
Camden	36,778
Greenwich	57,441
Hackney	42,157
Hammersmith and Fulham	25,144
Islington	40,339
Kensington and Chelsea	15,969
Lambeth	45,081
Lewisham	43,850
Southwark	43,037
Tower Hamlets	57,235
Wandsworth	41,485
City of Westminster	29,064
Barking	34,134
Barnet	61,723
Bexley	43,229
Brent	48,628
Bromley	37,052
Croydon	56,379
Ealing	48,569
Enfield	57,216
Haringey	46,196
Harrow	38,397
Havering	49,716
Hillingdon	32,850
Hounslow	48,723
Kingston-upon-Thames	26,672
Merton	34,380
Newham	55,156
Redbridge	48,178
Richmond-upon-Thames	25,951
Sutton	26,067
Waltham Forest	49,215
Birmingham	226,986
Coventry	68,241
Dudley	61,409
Sandwell	67,116
Solihull	44,663
Walsall	57,957
Wolverhamton	52,823
Knowsley	34,957
Liverpool	106,122
St. Helens	40,656
Sefton	58,695
Wirral	71,520
Bolton	58,731
Bury	33,786
Manchester	98,210
Oldham	57,609
Rochdale	44,279
Salford	51,731
Stockport	58,114
Tameside	46,054
Trafford	39,523
Wigan	72,263
Barnsley	40,094
Doncaster	61,082
Rotherham	59,486
Sheffield	95,070
Bradford	113,897
Calderdale	40,476
Kirklees	83,022
Leeds	144,719
Wakefield	65,138
Gateshead	41,420
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	54,297
North Tyneside	43,475
South Tyneside	31,785
Sunderland	64,315
Isles of Scilly	599
Avon	179,711
Bedfordshire	116,753
Berkshire	133,913
Buckinghamshire	116,645
Cambridgeshire	121,295
Cheshire	193,359
Cleveland	136,127
Cornwall	86,734
Cumbria	94,791
Derbyshire	187,005

Teachers' Pay Costs 1992–93

LEA	*£000*
Devon	179,197
Dorset	99,774
Durham	122,305
East Sussex	115,326
Essex	279,683
Gloucestershire	87,598
Hampshire	281,689
Hereford and Worcester	133,454
Hertfordshire	195,847
Humberside	184,702
Isle of Wight	24,255
Kent	257m412
Lancashire	290,367
Leicestershire	192,009
Lincolnshire	94,889
Norfolk	129,927
North Yorkshire	137,936
Northamptonshire	117,669
Northumberland	62,703
Nottinghamshire	204,216
Oxfordshire	102,211
Shropshire	87,570
Somerset	83,851
Staffordshire	201,758
Suffolk	126,106
Surrey	151,970
Warwickshire	90,879
West Sussex	128,140
Wiltshire	105,215
Total	9,371,750

Note:

Figures are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department of Environment.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 24 October, *Official Report,* columns *416-17,* what additional funds her Department has made available to meet the cost of teacher salary re-assessment.

Mr. Robin Squire: Education's share of the 1993–94 local authority grant settlement was £16·8 billion, 2·6 per cent. higher than the comparable figure for the previous year. It was for local authorities to decide how to meet the cost of the 1993 teachers' pay award from within this total.

School Inspectors

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to recruit lay inspectors of schools.

Mr. Forth: This is a matter for Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, who heads the independent Office for Standards in Education. I have asked Mr. Woodhead to write to my right hon. Friend.

Higher Education Institutions (Accountability)

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures she is taking to ensure proper accountability of the use of public money by higher education institutions.

Mr. Boswell: The Higher Education Funding Council for England is responsible for allocating public funds to individual higher education institutions in England. Institutions are required to ensure that the funds they receive are used in accordance with the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, a financial memorandum with the council and any other conditions that the council prescribe. They provide audited financial statements to the council annually and their books and records are open to inspection by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

University Degrees

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to ensure uniformity in the standards of degrees between universities.

Mr. Boswell: The central responsibility for the quality of education and the standard of degrees rests with the universities themselves, acting individually and also collectively through the higher education quality council. My right hon. Friend has made clear the importance that she places on this responsibility, and has welcomed evidence that it is being taken ever more seriously.

Specialisms (Schools)

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what support she proposes to give to those schools that wish to develop a specialism in music, art, languages or other areas of the curriculum.

Mr. Forth: As part of our commitment to increasing choice and diversity in education, we want to encourage schools to specialise in particular subjects. We have already introduced the successful technology colleges programme to support schools which wish to specialise in technology, science and mathematics. We hope to extend this principle in due course to other areas of the curriculum.

Nursery Education

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to improve the funding available for nursery education.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is now consulting widely a range of interests in pre-school education with a view to drawing up detailed proposals on how to achieve the target for expansion of pre-school provision set by the Prime Minister. The need for additional funding will be determined as part of the development of these proposals.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the percentage of three and four-year-old children receiving full-time nursery provision.

Mr. Forth: At January 1994, 3 per cent. of three and four-year-olds attended nursery classes full-time and 24 per cent. attended such classes part-time. A further 25 per cent. of this age group were in attendance at other infant classes, 23 per cent. full-time and 2 per cent. part-time.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she expects to announce details for further provision of nursery education; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Prime Minister recently reaffirmed the Government's firm commitment to pre-school education. He set a target to provide, over time, a pre-school place for all four-year-olds whose parents wish them to take it up. My right hon. Friend is now consulting widely with a view to drawing up detailed proposals on the expansion. She will make an announcement as soon as practicable.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest estimate she has of the amount of money being tied up in maintaining surplus school places; and what steps she is taking to reduce the number of surplus places.

Mr. Robin Squire: We estimate the direct costs of maintaining current surplus places—not all of which is in practice removable—as being some £240 million. We announced in June our intention to set targets for those authorities with particularly high levels of removable capacity.

Student Loans Company

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received regarding the Student Loans Company Ltd.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend receives a variety of representations about the Student Loans Company from time to time.

Sport

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she intends to take to ensure that all children aged between five and 16 years play competitive sports in schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Competitive sports are an important part of a balanced physical education curriculum. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has announced that she will be accepting in full Sir Ron Dearing's recommendations on the new national curriculum. The new curriculum for physical education, which will be published shortly, will require all children aged five to 16 to pursue competitive games—starting with learning the skills of competitive games, right through to playing the full recognised version of a competitive game.

Parental Choice

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the most accurate assessment she can make of *(a)* the number of parents who secure for their children their first choice of nursery, primary and secondary schools and *(b)* the satisfaction of parents about the current systems for choosing nursery, primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally. The most recent evidence—from surveys commissioned by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in 1992 and *The Times* newspaper in 1993—shows that some 90 per cent. of parents gain a place for their child at their first choice of school. Circular 6/93 stressed that schools' admission arrangements should be clear and objective, and gave parents a clear indication of their chances of gaining a place for their child at a particular school.

Student Finance

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the number of potential students in further or higher education who have been or are deterred from undertaking or completing a course for financial reasons.

Mr. Boswell: There are record numbers of students in further and higher education. This does not suggest that potential students are being deterred. Some students will inevitably fail to complete their courses for a variety of reasons but wastage rates in higher education have remained broadly steady for a number of years.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received on the financial hardship experienced by students in receipt of student loans; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about the adequacy of the student support system. It is not possible to say how many of them were about the position of students who have taken out student loans.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will retain the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Robin Squire: Yes.

School Buildings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is her latest assessment of the fabric of school buildings.

Mr. Robin Squire: The fabric of school buildings in England is the responsibility of governors and local education authorities. The £600 million of Government support for school capital and repairs that has been made available in 1994–95, together with the additional input which local education authorities are able to make from their own resources, should enable them to make significant progress in improving the state of the school stock.

English in Schools

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what additional proposals she has for the study of English language in schools.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to improve the standard of spoken and written English in schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has announced that she intends to accept in full Sir Ron Dearing's recommendations for the revised national curriculum. In English, there will be clear and more rigorous requirements for pupils to be taught written and spoken standard English, with a greater emphasis on grammar, spelling, and punctuation. For the first time, there will also be a requirement to pay proper attention to correct English across the curriculum. A full announcement will be made shortly and the revised curriculum will be implemented in September 1995 for five to 14-year-olds and from September 1996 for 14 to 16-year-olds.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many grant-maintained schools have applied to the Treasury for a loan;

(2) how many loans to grant-maintained schools have been approved by the Treasury;

(3) if she will list each grant-maintained school that has been granted Treasury loans and show how much each has been loaned;

(4) if she will list the grant-maintained schools which have repaid Treasury loans; and how much each school has repaid.

Mr. Robin Squire: These matters are now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the agency to write to the hon. Member.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average cost to her Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *387*.

Beechwood Day Nursery, Coventry

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what dates her Department asked Coventry social services to conduct an inspection of day care facilities at Beechwood day nursery in Coventry.

Mr. Robin Squire: My officials invited Coventry social services department on 15 July this year to visit Beechwood pre-prep independent school and report further on the provision made for children aged under five.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what date Coventry social services first raised concerns with her regarding Beechwood day nursery in Coventry.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department first became aware on 10 July 1992 of Coventry social services department's concerns about aspects of the nursery provision at this establishment. These were taken into account when the establishment was subsequently notified of the improvements required in order for final registration as an independent school to be granted.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what dates she received complaints from parents of children attending Beechwood day nursery.

Mr. Robin Squire: Only one such complaint has been received, on 12 May this year.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what date she registered Beechwood day nursery in Coventry.

Mr. Robin Squire: The establishment in question was provisionally registered on 6 August 1992 as an independent school as required by teh Education Act 1944, under the name of the Abacus pre-prep school. It changed its name to Beechwood pre-prep independent school on 26 September 1992. The Department has notified the school of the improvements required in order for final registration to be granted. We still await confirmation that these have been carried out.

School Buildings (Basildon)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action she is taking to restore the quality of school buildings in Basildon constructed in the 1960s.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is for Essex LEAs to put forward for the schools they maintain the bids they judge necessary for consideration within the annual capital guidelines, or to use their own resources. It is for grant-maintained schools as they judge necessary, to put forward bids independently for consideration by the Funding Agency for Schools.

SCOTLAND

Non-domestic Rates

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hereditaments in Scotland whose rateable values will fall *(a)* below and *(b)* above the proposed £10,000 threshold for determining whether the lower limit on year-on-year increases in non-domestic rates bills applies, there are estimated to be whose rates bills for 1995–96 in the absence of any transitional relief would be (i) under 50 per cent., (ii) between 50 and 80 per cent., iii between 80 and 120 per cent., (iv) between 120 and 200 per cent., (v) between 200 and 500 per cent. and (vi) over 500 per cent. of their bills for 1994–95; and if he will estimate for each of those categories the aggregate increase or decrease in rates bills between the two years.

Mr. Stewart: The requested estimates depend on an assumption as to rate poundages and cannot therefore be provided until rate poundages have been set for Scotland for 1995–96. It is planned to announce 1995–96 rate poundages in December.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the regions, sectors and types of hereditament most affected by large increases or decreases in bills for non-domestic rates.

Mr. Stewart: The requested information depends on assumptions as to the progress made in introducing a unified business rate. It cannot therefore be provided until rate poundages have been set for Scotland for 1995–96. It is planned to announce 1995–96 rate poundages in December.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he has commissioned, internally and from external consultants, of the likely impact of the April 1995 revaluation of non-domestic property on rateable values and non-domestic rate bills in different regions and different sectors of the economy; if he will publish those studies, or summary thereof; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Between February and July of this year, the Scottish Office employed the research organisation SIAS Ltd. to gather information from Scottish assessors giving the estimated effect of the 1995 revaluation on the rateable value and net annual value of a sample of about one in 10 non-domestic properties in Scotland. The sample was chosen to be representative of all regions of Scotland and of the main sectors, and was weighted to give greater coverage for larger subjects. Overall, subjects in the sample comprise some 42 per cent. of the 1994–95 rateable value of all subjects in the classes surveyed. In the last few weeks, assessors have supplied updated estimates for a number of these properties. The data obtained are still being analysed.

The information from the surveys will be used to inform decisions on rate poundages for Scotland for 1995–96, and transitional arrangements. No decision has been taken regarding eventual publication of the results of this survey.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the results of his consultations about the numbers of councillors in the proposed single-tier local authorities.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend will be announcing his decisions on the electoral wards to be used for the elections to the new single-tier councils shortly.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he intends to make to the cash limits and running costs provision for 1994–95 within his responsibility.

Mr. Lang: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, I intend to make changes to eight voted cash limits, two non-voted cash blacks and five running costs limits:

a. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 3, training programmes, roads and transport services and industrial support, Scotland, will be increased by £4,248,000 from £872,404,000 to £876,652,000. The increase includes a transfer of £740,000 from the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of certain innovation and technology support schemes in Scotland and the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement for Motorways and Trunk Roads, announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July (official Report Columns 729-734).

b. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 7, housing and environmental services, Scotland will be increased by £1,747,000 from £432,051,000 to £433,798,000. The increase takes account of a £1,979,000 increase in gross running cost provision for Historic Scotland from £12,725,000 to £14,704,000, reflecting the uptake of end-year flexibility entitlements and various inter-vote transfers representing transference of responsibility. It also takes account of an increase in provision for the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland.

c. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 12, law, order, miscellaneous health and social work services, Scotland, will be increased by a net total of £5,822,000 from £296,863,000 to £302,685,000. Provision for running costs on this vote has been increased by £2,676,000. The changes include the take-up of the end-year flexibility entitlement for the Scottish Prison Service, increasing Departmental running costs and capital provision by £2,656,000 and £359,000 respectively. Other changes include an increase in the capital provision of The Scottish Office Pensions Agency, for information technology investment; and an increase in provision for health education in Scotland, for publicity on measles and rubella vaccination. These changes will be offset by transfers from other votes.

d. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 14, hospitals, community health, family health (part) and other health services, Scotland, will be increased by a net total of £23,893,000 from £2,988,180,000 to £3,012,073,000. This increase takes account of this vote's end-year flexibility entitlements and various inter-vote and inter-departmental transfers including the Scottish contribution to the Prescription Pricing Authority's administration costs in connection with the assessment of claims under the Scottish Low Income Scheme and for NHS estate management consultancy; a transfer to cover the cost of services previously funded directly by the Department of Health; and a transfer to reflect a change in responsibility for the unlinked anonymous HIV testing programme. It also includes transfers to fund the Scottish Hospital Advisory Service and publicity in connection with the measles and rubella immunisation campaign; and for the capitalisation costs of pension arrangements entered into by the Scottish Ambulance Service. In addition there is a revision of NHS trusts' external financing limit and some adjustments between subheads to reflect revised requirements and changes to anticipated appropriations in aid.

e. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 17, education, arts and libraries, Scotland will be increased by £434,000 from £918,012,000 to £918,446,000. The increase reflects the full take-up of end-year flexibility for further education capital; an increase in provision for the Scottish mining Museum: and a transfer for the Student Awards Agency for Scotland, in respect of additional costs. This increase is partially offset by a transfers to OST as part of a national contribution towards a "Supercomputing: Class Three Time" project; and one in respect of prosthetic student fees.

f. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 21, Scottish Office Administration, will be increased by £470,000 from £168,264,000 to £168,734,000. Within this total, running cost provision increases by £459,000 arising from take-up of end-year flexibility predominantly to fund staff early departure costs, less inter-vote transfers. The capital provision reduction arises from a take-up of end-year flexibility less inter-vote transfers. Current provision increases to reflect a transfer from the Department of National Heritage, class XI, vote 6.

g. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 22, Scottish Record Office, will be increased by £1,513,000 from £7,514,000 to £9,027,000. Within this total, running cost provision increases by £438,000, £231,000 of which results from a take-up of end-year flexibility which will reduce the backlog of building maintenance and an intra-vote transfer of £207,000. The capital increase results from a take-up of end-year flexibility and a transfer from Scottish Office Administration which will offset new repository building costs arising in 1994–95 from earlier slippage.

h. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 23, will be increased by £544,000 from £5,450,000 to £5,994,000. The running cost provision increases by £307,000 due to take-up of end-year flexibility, necessary to continue to meet operational requirements. Capital end-year flexibility will enhance the continued development of the management information systems.

i. The non-voted cash limit SO/LA1, which covers non-housing capital expenditure by local authorities, is to be increased by £12,004,000 from £610,212,000 to £622,216,000. This reflects full take-up of end-year flexibility together with a transfer from residential accommodation to secure accommodation within class XVI, vote 12.

j. The non-voted cash limit SO/LA2 which covers housing capital expenditure by local authorities and capital expenditure by New Towns will be increased by £13,215,000 from £262,992,000 to £276,207,000. The increase reflects the full take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement.

k. The overall running cost limit for the Scottish Office together with its Agencies will be increased by £5,212,000 from £330,676,000 to £335,890,000. This results from take-up of end-year flexibility, increased cost provision arising from increased income by Historic Scotland less a reduction for Common Police Services within vote 12. In addition this running cost limit of the Student Awards Agency for Scotland in its first year is £2,699,000.

The increases will be offset by savings on other votes within my responsibility, transfers from other departments or charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Abstraction Controls

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce his response to the comments received on the consultation paper, "Abstraction Controls: A System for Scotland".

Mr. Lang: There were 53 responses to the consultation paper, from a wide variety of bodies. Over half supported the introduction of enhanced controls, but a significant minority preferred the status quo. As with other consultation exercises, the comments are available to the public at the Scottish Office.

In the light of these comments, I have concluded that selective abstraction controls should be introduced in Scotland as envisaged in the consultation paper. Our proposals need however to be seen in the context of current EC developments on groundwater protection. Discussions with the Commission on groundwater protection measures are under way and the Council resolution agreed on 4 October urged the Commission to bring forward by mid-1995 proposals for the implementation of the action programme on groundwater agreed at The Hague in 1991. In the course of these discussions, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I will of course seek to ensure that the principles of subsidiarity are fully respected.

In these circumstances I have decided not to seek new powers over abstraction at this time. My intention none the less remains to introduce selective abstraction controls in Scotland. I will bring forward the necessary legislation in the light of progress on the action programme. In the meantime my officials will take forward with the interested parties various points arising from the responses to the consultation paper.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* Information on non-departmental public bodies and national health service bodies is published in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993", copies of which are available in the Library. Information about any other appointments made by me, or which I approve, is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Law and Order (Peterhead)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the crime figures for cases processed through Peterhead sheriff court, by type, for each year since 1976.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The available information is set out in the table:

Persons Called to Peterhead Sheriff Court by Main Crime and Offence Category, 1976–1992

	Main Crime and Offence Category[1]							
Year[2]	*Group 1*	*Group 2*	*Group 3*	*Group 4*	*Group 5*	*Group 6*	*Group 7*	*Total*
1976	14	5	116	15	18	275	534	977
1977	22	7	152	23	17	338	531	1,090
1978	20	13	149	20	29	384	590	1,205
1979	17	5	193	24	16	281	674	1,210
1980	31	7	174	27	29	302	555	1,125
1981	43	2	161	15	17	185	574	997
1982	39	6	144	17	26	130	483	845
1983	32	6	124	21	30	102	491	806
1984	26	4	138	7	46	105	382	708
1985	35	6	212	11	41	139	443	887
1986	20	10	124	18	22	171	330	695
1987	21	14	159	12	37	120	336	699
1988	28	15	230	19	29	146	318	785
1989	18	13	151	29	42	183	413	849
1990	15	7	183	27	42	190	460	924
1991	20	8	164	27	44	187	408	858
1992	15	5	146	10	39	132	386	733

Notes:

[1] The classification of crimes and offences used by The Scottish Office Home and Health Department for criminal statistics contains about 320 codes. These are grouped in the table as follows:

Group 1—Non-sexual crimes of violence
Group 2—Crimes of indecency
Group 3—Crimes of dishonesty
Group 4—Fire-raising, vandalism etc
Group 5—Other crimes
Group 6—Miscellaneous offences
Group 7—Motor vehicle offences

[2] The year recorded is the year in which the person's case is disposed of.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the average waiting times for hospital treatment for patients who suffer from kidney stones, listed by year for the last five years by health board area.

Lord Douglas James Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The mean waiting times—days—for in-patient and day case admissions from the waiting list where the principal diagnosis was calculus of kidney and ureter are shown in the table for each health board of treatment for calendar years 1989–1993.

Mean waiting time—days—for in-patient and day case admissions from the waiting list where the principal diagnosis was calculus of kidney and ureter, by health board of treatment, calendar years 1989–1993

HB Treatment	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Argyll and Clyde	13·9	39·4	15·2	22·3	54·9
Ayrshire and Arran	32·4	31·1	37·1	32·5	35·0
Borders	24·7	32·2	13·3	36·7	25·7
Dumfries and Galloway	68·0	146·2	79·4	69·5	61·8
Fife	29·4	33·9	43·9	17·7	24·2
Forth Valley	32·6	33·1	21·3	29·6	26·2
Grampian	72·4	41·8	42·0	30·8	26·4
Greater Glasgow	40·4	46·2	50·7	49·5	38·2
Highland	46·8	18·8	17·8	30·2	15·9
Lanarkshire	51·9	49·1	59·8	55·3	56·4
Lothian	27·7	24·9	49·3	31·7	22·5
Orkney	15·7	3·0	—	—	2·0
Shetland	1·0	35·5	—	—	55·0
Tayside	35·9	30·2	42·6	50·6	39·6
Western Isles	—	10·5	—	24·3	23·1
Scotland	38·5	36·8	46·3	36·6	29·6

Notes:

1. Diagnostic codes are based on the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases 9th revision (ICD9). The code used in the analysis is ICD9 592, calculus of kidney and ureter.
2. The table is for elective admissions from the waiting list (SMR1 TADM=1 and WAIT>0).
3. The table excludes out-patient attendances for teratment of renal calculi for which information is not centrally available.

Land Ownership and Use

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much land, in hectares, was owned by *(a)* the North of Scotland hydro-electricity board and *(b)* the South of Scotland electricity board just prior to privatisation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* Information about the area of land owned by the former NSHEB and SSEB, just prior to privatisation, is not held by my Department.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures the Scottish Office takes to ensure land is used productively in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The use to which land is put in Scotland is generally for the landowner to determine, within any constraints that may be imposed by wide-ranging legislation. The United Kingdom strategy on sustainable development sets out the Government's agenda for using such land in productive but environmentally responsible ways, and the Scottish Office is committed to its implementation. The rolling review of national planning policy guidelines and development plans is a prime example of that commitment.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he ensures that land disposed of by the Scottish Office in Scotland has been put to productive use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* Revised guidance on the disposal of surplus land and buildings was circulated within the Scottish Office and associated Departments last year. This guidance establishes the principles and procedures to be followed when disposing of such assets. Before a property is offered for sale, officials must seek explicit advice on its development potential, and, where appropriate, secure outline planning permission for a suitable use. The sale may entail associated conditions. Within any such constraints, it is then for the new owner to consider subsequent use or development, and to obtain any necessary permissions from the appropriate planning authority. For its part, the authority is required to consider any proposals for development against the land use framework set by the approved development plan for its area, and any other material considerations.

Gaelic Language

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new proposals he has to support and promote the Gaelic language.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* None, but I am currently considering a report on Gaelic education carried out by HM inspectorate.

Sight Tests

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many NHS sight tests have been performed in each health board area in Scotland in each year since 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The number of national health service sight tests paid for by health boards in each of the financial years since 1987 is shown in the table.

Number of NHS sight tests[1] in Scotland by Health Board area

Health Board	*1987–88*	*1988–89*	*[2]1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Argyll and Clyde	95,153	98,926	36,636	39,703	46,243	50,139	55,284
Ayrshire and Arran	80,202	85,746	34,754	34,606	38,236	41,530	45,739
Borders	16,123	17,981	7,176	5,240	6,316	7,673	7,945
Dumfries and Galloway	29,324	31,000	11,761	11,336	13,637	15,192	16,003
Fife	72,534	76,854	24,821	28,556	34,049	36,482	38,082
Forth Valley	54,525	58,847	26,276	18,426	21,637	23,141	25,317
Grampian	96,777	108,592	30,582	33,367	36,977	39,738	41,492
Greater Glasgow	237,924	252,843	131,605	110,697	122,878	135,240	144,399
Highland	36,185	36,599	15,841	13,091	15,476	17,234	18,748
Lanarkshire	119,371	119,307	47,680	47,983	56,269	59,510	64,234
Lothian	162,353	176,902	74,531	56,682	66,297	71,554	77,065
Orkney	2,674	2,972	862	873	1,034	1,091	1,103
Shetland	7,000	7,069	2,808	2,420	2,834	2,460	2,560
Tayside	83,680	90,498	28,103	28,132	32,642	35,414	39,391

Number of NHS sight tests[1] in Scotland by Health Board area

Health Board	*1987–88*	*1988–89*	[2]*1989—90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Western Isles	4,320	4,467	2,043	1,773	2,073	2,287	2,309
Scotland Total	1,098,145	1,168,610	475,479	432,885	496,598	538,683	579,671

[1] One person may have more than one sight test in the period.

[2] Since 1 April 1989 free NHS sight tests have only been available to children, full time students under 19, those in receipt of Income Support or Family Credit, the registered blind or partially sighted, complex lens users, those who hold an AG2 exemption certificate from the Health Benefits Division, diagnosed diabetic or glaucoma sufferers, and close relatives aged 40 or over of glaucoma sufferers.

DEFENCE

Indonesia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Field Marshall Peter Inge last visited Indonesia; with which Indonesian ministers and officials he discussed the procurement of military equipment; which military equipment was specified; and when he expects contracts for such equipment to be signed.

Mr. Freeman: During his visit to Indonesia, from eight to 12 October this year, Field Marshal Inge met with President Suharto, the Commander in Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces General Feisal Tanjung, and other senior military figures. Discussions covered a range of equipments and topics of mutual defence interest. Details of negotiations are commercially confidential between the customer and supplier, but export of military goods from the United Kingdom has been, and will continue to be, subject to export control, which takes into account defence and foreign policy.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the privatisations which his Department has promoted since 1979 showing, in each case, the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale, and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has completed only one full privatisation since 1979. The proceeds of the sale in 1987 of Royal Ordnance Factory, Leeds were £15·4 million and the gross receipts from the sale of the rest of royal ordnance were £190 million. Detailed figures are given in the NAO's report into the "Sale of Royal Ordnance plc (House of Commons Paper 162 1987–8 Session)". Current values of those companies are a matter for their present owners.

Territorial Army

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how recruits are to be accounted for in Territorial Army figures following the abolition of the recruits pool.

Mr. Soames: Territorial Army recruits will be held against the establishment of their parent unit.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Territorial Army recruits pool of 4,500 personnel is included in the 63,500 establishment figure.

Mr. Soames: The previous planned size of the Territorial Army of 63,500 included a margin of 4,500 to allow TA recruits to be held above the formed units' establishment of 59,000.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a recruits pool, as referred to in "Front Line First", was attached to the Territorial Army prior to 1992.

Mr. Soames: No.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Freeman: The current average cost of preparing an answer is assessed as £97 for a written question and £225 for an oral question.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United Kingdom organisations which have been engaged to assist with the cleansing of the Maralinga site, with reference to the exchange of notes between Her Majesty's Government and the Federal Government of Australia concerning the former United Kingdom nuclear test and experimental programme sites at Maralinga, the Monte Bello islands and Emu field, Cm. 2533; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The clean-up operation at the Maralinga site, and the appointment of organisations involved in it, are matters for the Australian Government. However, the Atomic Energy Authority Harwell has been retained by the Australian Government to act as health and safety advisors for the duration of the rehabilitation project.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent information Her Majesty's Government have received from the Federal Government of Australia regarding the implementation of the cleansing programme at the Maralinga site, with reference to the exchange of notes between Her Majesty's Government and the Federal Government of Australia concerning the former United Kingdom nuclear test and experimental programme sites at Maralinga, the Monte Bello islands and Emu field, Cm. 2533; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: We understand that preliminary discussions have taken place regarding the appointment of British contractors.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been paid so far to the Government of Australia in relation to the cleaning up of the Maralinga test site under the exchange of notes between Her Majesty's Government and the Federal Government of Australia concerning the former United Kingdom nuclear test and experimental programme sites at Maralinga, the Monte Bello islands and Emu field, Cm. 2533; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: An initial payment of £5,000,000 was made to the Australian Government in December 1993;

£4,000,000 was paid in October 1994, leaving a balance of £11,000,000 to be paid in accordance with the exchange of notes.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the cleansing operation at the Maralinga site to be completed under the exchange of notes between Her Majesty's Government and the Federal Government of Australia concerning the former United Kingdom nuclear test and experimental programme sites at Maralinga, the Monte Bello islands and Emu field, Cm. 2533; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: That is a matter for the Australian Government.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what visits officials have recently paid to inspect the cleansing operation at the Maralinga site; if such officials and their federal Government counterparts have held discussions with representatives of the Aboriginal people living in the area in relation to the exchange of notes between Her Majesty's Government and the Federal Government of Australia concerning the former United Kingdom nuclear test and experimental programme sites at Maralinga, the Monte Bello islands and Emu field, Cm. 2533; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There have been no such visits or discussions by my officials. Both the operation itself and any discussions with representatives of the Aboriginal people are matters for the Australian Government.

European Armed Forces

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to whom allegiance will be given by British forces in the proposed *(a)* European Army and *(b)* Anglo-French or European air force.

Mr. Soames: We have no plans for a European army, or for a bi-national or European air force.

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans he has to discuss the pooling or merging of *(a)* some and *(b)* all of the RAF and the French air force for operations (i) outside and (ii) within continental Europe (1) at the next Franco-British summit and (2) on other occasions;

(2) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the proposal to merge *(a)* some and *(b)* all of the RAF and the French air force on an operational basis.

Mr. Soames: Discussions are taking place with French officials to identify ways in which British and French air forces may operate together more effectively outside the NATO area. That does not involve any merger of the air forces. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence intends to carry forward those exchanges at the forthcoming summit.

Defence Forces

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on current levels of the defence forces.

Mr. Soames: The current strength of the Armed Forces—as at 1 September 1994—is 246,926—Royal Navy 53,961; Army 120,058; Royal Air force 72,907. Our armed forces are manned, equipped and supported to enable them to meet their commitments as laid out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994".

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 2 November 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The percentage figure for such public appointments made by the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Northern Ireland court service was 27 per cent. as at 1 September 1993. This answer does not include judicial appointments.

The figures for 1994 are still being collated and will be announced in due course.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *387*.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No central records are kept of previous employment of persons appointed by the Lord Chancellor to non-departmental public bodies. It would therefore not be possible to give the detailed and comprehensive information sought by the question without incurring disproportionate cost.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available. The Lord Chancellor's Department has 497 buildings on its estate and therefore the information could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

London Rail Connections

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for restoring the rail route facilities that permitted through services of trains from the former Great Western main line, at its junction with the Heathrow branch, with *(a)* King's Cross, *(b)* Liverpool Street and *(c)* Stratford, as part of his studies consequent on the report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution.

Mr. Watts: Any restoration of these rail routes is a commercial matter for Railtrack. The recommendations in the report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution will be considered carefully.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimates he has made of *(a)* the passenger demand for an international station at Stratford and *(b)* the number of jobs likely to be created by such a development;

(2) what estimates he has made of the likely level of demand for travel between Ebbsfleet and Paris/Brussels, and of the approximate number of passengers expected to join each train calling at Ebbsfleet;

(3) what assessment he has made of the impact of the construction of Ebbsfleet on nearby stations owned by Railtrack, and the effect of reduction in passengers using them on future levels of train services on the North Kent and Chatham lines;

(4) what analysis was carried out of the costs and benefits to passengers of constructing stations on the proposed high-speed rail link at *(a)* Stratford, *(b)* Rainham and *(c)* Ebbsfleet.

Mr. Watts: The assessment of each of the intermediate station options was based on studies undertaken by Union Railways and its consultants. Union Railways worked closely with the principal local authorities concerned and each of the promoter groups. The approach was to evaluate and compare outline designs, passenger demands, road traffic and highway impacts, associated developments, socio-economic impacts, environmental appraisals, cost/benefit analysis, contributions by third parties and safety considerations. Account was also taken of estimates of the impact of intermediate stations on nearby domestic stations and estimates of future levels of domestic services.

Some of the information in the assessment is commercially confidential. However, much is provided in Union Railways' October 1993 report to the Government, which was placed in the Library on 24 January 1994, together with a supporting report by the consultants Pieda plc, entitled "*Intermediate Station Options: Socio-Economic and Development Impacts*".

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations were received from the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) concerning the location of an intermediate station on the proposed high-speed rail link between London and the channel tunnel.

Dr. Mawhinney: No meetings were arranged by the Department of Transport between Ministers and the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold).

Scotch Whisky (Transportation)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has received in connection with the proposed EC directive on the approximation of the laws of the member states with regard to the transport of dangerous goods by road, and by the Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail (Classification, Packaging and Labelling) Regulations 1994, as they may affect the transportation of Scotch whisky; what discussions he has held with his European counterparts on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My Department has had representations from the Scotch Whisky Association about the effect of the draft directive and the regulations on the carriage of whisky in casks over 250 litres capacity within Great Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) has also made representations on behalf of the association. The Transport Council agreed a common position on the draft directive in June, and will discuss it again only if the European Parliament proposes further amendments. My officials have explained to the association how they propose, within the derogations permitted by the directive, to exempt the carriage of whisky within Britain in traditional-sized casks from the unintended requirements for design-type testing of the casks, so that existing practice can continue.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what strategic planning considerations he took into account when determining that there should be an international station at Ebbsfleet, together with associated urban development.

Mr. Watts: Strategic planning objectives for the south-east Region are set out in the Government's regional planning guidance published in March 1994—draft March 1993. The location of intermediate stations on the new channel tunnel rail link at Stratford, Rainham or Ebbsfleet would be consistent with the policy of encouraging future development in the east Thames corridor or Thames gateway. The scope for development, in terms of land availability close to the projected an additional station site, is greatest at Ebbsfleet. Ebbsfleet has been selected, but the opportunity for an additional station at Stratford remains open. The potential contribution which stations and associated developments at these locations could make to the future development of Thames gateway is set out in the more detailed guidance contained in the consultation draft of the Thames gateway planning framework published by the Department of the Environment on 7 September.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the company to be granted the concession to operate passenger trains on the channel tunnel rail link will also be given a concession to operate international passenger trains on the existing lines through the channel prior to the channel tunnel rail link coming into use.

Mr. J. Watts: The channel tunnel rail link promoter will be granted the ownership of European Passenger Services Ltd. which will be the operator of international passenger trains through the channel tunnel on the existing lines, as well as on the channel tunnel rail link when it comes into use.

Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current annual capital spending on *(a)* overground and underground railways and *(b)* national roads; what is (i) the number of passenger and vehicle occupant journeys and (ii) the distance travelled on (a) overground and underground railways and (b) national roads; and how much was spent on (a) overground and underground railways and (b) national roads (A) per passenger and vehicle occupant and (B) per mile travelled.

Mr. Watts: Information on journeys and passenger mileage is not available separately for national roads. The other information requested is given in the table.

Capital expenditure on and use of national roads and railways 1993–94

	National roads	*Overground railways*[1]	*Underground railways*[2]
Capital expenditure, £ million	2,316	824	627
Passenger journeys, millions	na	713	735
Passenger miles, billions	na	18·9	3·6
Expenditure (£) per journey	na	1·2	0·9
Expenditure (£) per 1,000 passenger miles	na	44	174

[1] British Rail

[2] London Underground

na not available

For comparability, only infrastructure expenditure (including renewals) is included—expenditure on rolling stock is excluded.

European Passenger Services Ltd.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current capitalisation of European Passenger Services Ltd.

Mr. Watts: At 31 March 1994, the date of the latest audited accounts, the company had a capital value in terms of fixed assets of £928 million.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the valuation of assets transferred from the British Railways Board to European Passenger Services Ltd.; and what is the value of the liabilities attributable to British Rail's former European passenger services operating divisions that remain on the British Railways Board's balance sheet.

Mr. Watts: The net value of assets transferred from the BR Board to European Passenger Services were valued at approximately £818 million. The board retains certain contingent liabilities in respect of guarantees and indemnities which it had entered into when EPS was its subsidiary.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what communications he has had with the safety commission of the Channel Tunnel Intergovernmental Commission concerning use of the new

Austrian tunnelling method in the channel tunnel's cross-over chambers.

Mr. Watts: The Channel Tunnel Intergovernmental Commission supervises all matters concerning the construction and operation of the tunnel on behalf of the United Kingdom and French Governments. It is advised by the independent channel tunnel safety authority. The safety authority carried out very careful checks of the tunnelling and support systems used in the channel tunnel, including the new Austrian tunnelling method, before advising the intergovernmental commission that it had no objection to their use.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what detailed arrangements have been made covering the Secretary of State's freehold interest in the channel tunnel, in the event of the formal liquidation, or insolvency of the concessionaires; and what equivalent arrangements have been made in respect of assets within the public domain in the Republic of France.

Mr. John Watts: In Britain the Government hold the freehold of the land on which the fixed link has been built. This land is leased to the concessionaires under the terms of the concession agreement. In the event of formal liquidation of the concessionaires the concession agreement states that the terms of those leases shall end. Similar arrangements in France are also covered by the concession agreement.

M25

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the proposed widening of the M25.

Mr. John Watts: This an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms. Tessa Jowell, dated 2 November 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking what representations he has received about the proposed widening of the M25.

A total of some 14,000 representations have been received in respect of the proposed widening of the M25 between junctions 5–7, 12–15, 15–16, 16–19 and 23–26 for which draft proposals have been published.

Marine Safety Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many ship inspectors are employed by the Marine Safety Agency; and what are his projections for the number employed in the financial years 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Mr. Norris: The Marine Safety Agency currently employs 125 staff based in the marine offices, which deal mainly with the survey and certification of United Kingdom ships and the inspection of United Kingdom and foreign ships. Under current plans to meet the Department's efficiency gains proposals it is expected that by April 1996 there will be 117 such staff based in the marine offices.

Stockport Bypass

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the side orders on the A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Sir Thomas Arnold, dated 2 November 1994:

Mr Watts, the Minister for Roads and Railways, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State regarding the A6(M) Stockport North-South bypass, as this is an operational matter for the Highways Agency.

We expect to publish fresh Orders early in 1995 with a view to holding a public inquiry in the Autumn.

Railways

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the areas of rail transport policy about which Ministers in his Department answered parliamentary questions prior to the passage of the Railways Act 1993 but which are now regarded as either *(a)* matters of commercial confidentiality or *(b)* other matters about which answers will no longer be given.

Mr. Watts: There has been no change, since the passing of the Railways Act 1993, in the way in which matters of commercial confidentiality are defined. Ministers will not answer questions on issues now properly, the statutory responsibility of the regulator.

London Underground Ltd.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much capital spending London Underground Ltd. made in each of the past six years, excluding the fire-risk reduction cost following the King's Cross fire.

Mr. Norris: London Underground Ltd.'s capital investment expenditure on the core network, excluding fire safety works, over the last six years, was as follows:

	£ million outturn prices
1993–94	445
1992–93	590
1991–92	265
1990–91	310
1989–90	245
1988–89	200

Highways Agency

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the final date for consultation on the proposed restructuring of the Highways Agency; and when he expects to announce the results.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Faber, dated 2 November 1994:

The Minister for Roads and Railways has asked me to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the proposed restructuring of the Highways Agency.

Consultations with staff and trade unions on the restructuring are continuing and I expect to announce the Agency's future organisation later this month.

Plutonium Transport Review

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 20 October, *Official Report*, column *325*, when he received the executive summary of the plutonium transport review; how the review report has been distributed; and if he will place copies of both the review and its executive summary in the Library.

Mr. Norris: The plutonium nitrate transport assessment done in 1984 was reviewed by the Atomic Energy Authority in 1993 in the light of updated criteria. The exercise was an internal one within the AEA for a specific purpose and a copy of the summary of the review was received by my Department, on request, on 19 October 1994. I am awaiting a copy of the full review. Copies of the summary and the review will be placed in the Library.

PowerGen Building, Shirley

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what conclusion is reached by the Property Holdings report on the PowerGen building in Shirley, west midlands, on whether the agency should take up the lease; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library;

(2) when the Highways Agency leased the PowerGen building in Shirley, west midlands; and if he will make a statement on the cost.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 2 November 1994:

The Minister for Roads and Railways has asked me to respond to your two Parliamentary Questions about the Powergen building in Shirley.

I am exploring a number of property options in relation to the Agency's restructuring proposals. No new leases have yet been signed. Reports on properties received from Property Holdings have to be treated as commercially confidential.

Birmingham Northern Relief Road

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the costs *(a)* incurred by the Exchequer to date in respect of the proposed Birmingham northern relief road, *(b)* of his Department's involvement in the public inquiry into the road, *(c)* for the use of Mans Hal management centre for the public inquiry into the proposed road; and if he will recover this sum from the concessionaire, Midland Expressway Ltd.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms Joan Walley, dated 2 November 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for details of expenditure on the proposed Birmingham Northern Relief Road. As this is an operational matter for the Highways Agency I have been asked to reply.

In response to those detailed points I would answer, using your paragraph letter, as follows:

(a) The Exchequer has so far spent around £6·7 million on the proposed BNRR.

(b) The setting up of the public inquiry currently in progress has cost the Department about £250,000 and there are running costs (including fees, hire charges etc.) of around £20,000 per week.

(c) It is no longer intended to take the inquiry to Hams Hall. Alternative arrangements have been made.

You also asked about the recovery of costs from Midland Expressway Limited. The detail of the cost sharing between MEL and the Department is commercially confidential.

Transatlantic Air Services

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his response to the third report of the Transport Committee on the future of air services between the United Kingdom and the United States of America, HC 47; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I will write to my right hon. Friend.

Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will estimate the cost of an *(a)* single-line and *(b)* double-line tunnel to extend the route of the docklands light railway under the Thames from Beckton to the north Kent railway at Thamesmead as part of his studies consequent on the report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution;

(2) if he will obtain an estimate of the approximate additional percentage of paid passenger miles which would need to be travelled in order to reduce the general level of fares by *(a)* 10 per cent. *(b)* 20 per cent. and *(c)* 30 per cent., as part of his studies consequent on the report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 17 October, *Official Report*, column 97, if he will request Railtrack and the potential operators of the route from north Woolwich to Woolwich Arsenal to estimate the marginal cost of movement alone of three-car multiple-unit trains, subsequent to its re-electrification from Willesden junction to North Pole junction, as part of his studies consequent on the report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution;

(4) if he will estimate the marginal cost of movement by rail within the approximate area of Greater London per passenger mile, or other convenient unit, at weekends and public holidays, assuming no charge for standing charges, infrastructure costs, or any cost other than that of the direct movement costs of trains currently time-tabled on *(a)* the rail services of London Underground Ltd. and *(b)* the inner-London services operated over routes for which Railtrack is responsible, as part of his studies consequent on the report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport, for Health and for the Environment welcomed the Royal Commission's comprehensive report and will be studying carefully the recommendations, including their potential benefits and costs. I have no plans at present to ask for the specific information referred to by the hon. Gentleman.

EMPLOYMENT

Objective 3 Funding

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total amount received in European Union objective 3 funding for 1993 and 1994 for *(a)* each county in Wales, *(b)* each training area in Wales, *(c)* Wales, *(d)* England, *(e)* Scotland and *(f)* the United Kingdom, indicating the percentage change in each case; if he will conduct a review of the methods used by his Department in allocating such moneys; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The amounts in the following tables have been claimed for 1993:

Objective 3 and 4 in 1993

Country	*ESF £ millions*
Wales	41.08
Scotland	89.13
England	257.99
Total	388.20

Objective 3 and 4 Spend in 1993 by Welsh Counties

County	*ESF £ millions*
Clwyd	3·63
Dyfed	5·45
Gwent	5·84
Gwynned	5·06
Mid Glamorgan	8·50
Powys	0·78
South Glamorgan	6·31
West Glamorgan	5·51
Total	41·08

European social fund grants for objective 3 are managed at Great Britain level through sector managers, with Northern Ireland managing ESF separately. Information is not collected below county level.

An amount of £344 million for objective 3 is available in 1994. The process of approving applications has not yet been completed and it is not yet possible to give figures for the overall levels of assistance which will go to projects in Wales or Scotland as a whole in 1994.

The monitoring committee for objective 3 will be considering proposals for allocating money to the non-Government sectors for 1995 and beyond later this month.

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the credibility and effectiveness of the job interview guarantee scheme; and what plans he has to review it.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G Fogden to Mr. Peter Hardy, dated 2 November 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the credibility and effectiveness of the Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) Scheme.

The Scheme was first piloted in 20 inner city offices from September 1989. The pilots were reviewed during 1990 and found to be effective in helping long term unemployed and other disadvantaged clients into jobs. As a result JIG became a national programme from April 1991.

Since the original pilots, a survey was carried out in 1991–1992 by an independent organisation on behalf of the Employment Services (ES) of both JIG participants and employers who had used JIG. The findings showed that 92 per cent. of employers were positive about the service they had received from the jobcentre, 89 per cent. were satisfied with the people they had recruited and that some 40 per cent. had taken on a long term unemployed person for the first time.

For clients who had been found a job through the scheme, evidence showed that JIG had considerably increased their chance of being successful at interview and 60 per cent. were still in work.

So far this year, 46 per cent. of the people helped through JIG were placed into jobs.

A major evaluation of ES programmes and services which lead to jobs, including JIG, is currently in progress.

December marks the fifth anniversary of JIG. I am taking the opportunity to remind the people who deliver JIG in my local offices about the key features of what is one of our most effective programmes. The anniversary has been supported by re-designed publicity material and updated guidance for people in Jobcentres to help long term unemployed people and others at a disadvantage in the labour market to get back into work. Copies entitled "Job Interview Guarantee, Extra Help in filling your vacancies" and "Job Interview Guarantee, Extra Help to get you a job", have been placed in the Library. I hope this is helpful.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Insolvency Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to *(a)* pilot test contracting out of the work of the Insolvency Service and *(b)* evaluate the pilot scheme prior to deciding whether to accept the recommendations of the Stoy Hayward report.

Mr. Heseltine: I have asked my officials to begin work on devising a specification which could be the subject of an invitation to tender to private sector contractors. They will be advised in this work by consultants. Only when that work is nearer completion would it be possible to decide whether there should be a pilot scheme and on the detail of evaluation criteria.

Any decision to contract out work of official receivers or to invite private sector contractors to bid for such work would be subject to the passage of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill currently before Parliament and the procedures applicable to contracting out which are set out in it including the requirement to consult with official receivers as statutory office holders.

Bus Services

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the companies currently running bus services in Worthing; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness and fairness of competition in this area with particular reference to Stagecoach and Cedar Buses.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Adur Valley Swift Line, Sussex Bus, Sussex Coastline Buses Ltd., and S H Martin trading as Access Cars have services registered to operate in Worthing. Under the competition legislation it is for the Director General of Fair Trading to keep under review the effectiveness of competition and take action if appropriate.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the companies currently running bus services in Hastings; what assessment he has made of the effectiveness and fairness of competition in this area; and if he will make a statement on the findings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Bexhill Buses, Eastbourne Buses, Maidstone and District Motor Services Ltd., Rambler Coaches, and South Coast Buses Ltd. have services registered to operate in Hastings. Under the competition legislation it is for the Director General of Fair Trading to keep under review the effectiveness of competition and take action if appropriate. The acquisition by Stagecoach (Holdings) Ltd.—owners of South Coast Buses—of Formia Ltd. was referred in 1990 to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which found that acquisition could be expected to lead to removal of competition, reductions in choice, service quality and frequency and higher fares. Stagecoach has since given undertakings on lines recommended by the MMC to remedy these adverse effects.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many times Stagecoach South has been investigated by the Office of Fair Trading and by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; if he will give details of the results of the investigations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* The Director General of Fair Trading has conducted one Competition Act investigation involving what is now known as Stagecoach South—"An investigation under Section 3 of the Competition Act 1980 by the DGFT: Southdown Motor Service Ltd.—the registration and operation of services 242 and 262 in Bognor Regis". The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has also reported on this matter—"Southdown Motor Services Ltd.—a report on the conduct of Southdown Motor Services Ltd. in respect of its operations of local bus services on route 262 and 242 in Bognor Regis". The MMC has also reported on two mergers: Stagecoach/Portsmouth Citybus and Stagecoach/Formia Ltd.

Full details of the findings are given in the reports. Copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will conduct an investigation into alleged predatory pricing practices of Stagecoach, with particular reference to similar routes at different prices.

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* It is for the Director General of Fair Trading to consider allegations of anti-competitive practices including predatory pricing.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the efficacy of the Office of Fair Trading in halting anti-competitive practices by bus companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* There is scope for increasing the effectiveness of UK competition law in general and the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will do so. But my assessment is that action taken by the competition authorities to limit anti-competitive behaviour under existing law has been broadly effective.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the companies currently running bus services in Bognor; what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of competition in this area; if he is satisfied that competition is working effectively; and if he will make a statement on the findings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* B. Hand and Sussex Coastline Buses Ltd. have services registered to operate in Bognor Regis. Under the competition legislation it is for the Director General of Fair Trading to keep under review the effectiveness of competition and take action if appropriate. The conduct of Southdown Motor Services Ltd.—now Sussex Coastline Buses Ltd.—in operating certain routes in Bognor Regis was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1992. The MMC found that the anti-competitive conduct of Southdown on one route was the main cause of the withdrawal of a competitor. Sussex Coastline Buses has since given undertakings relating to the operation of this and adjoining routes.

Cuba

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column 647, regarding the visit to Cuba of the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology, if he will place in the Library a copy of the bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: On 14 September 1994 I initialled the English text of a bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement with Cuba. The agreement is not yet signed. We are only awaiting a precisely matched Spanish text from the Cubans before proceeding to full signature and publication.

After signature of the text, the agreement will be presented to Parliament by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in the normal way.

Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the former Minister for Corporate Affairs was party to the ministerial decision in respect of action on the report by DTI inspectors on alleged insider dealing by Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare.

Mr. Heseltine: As Minister for Corporate Affairs, my hon. Friend was fully aware of all the issues involved. Reponsibility for the decision in this case was mine.

Hydrocarbons

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects British standard 4434 and the relevant European standards to be finalised for hydrocarbon refrigerants; and if he will make a statement on progress so far.

Mr. Ian Taylor: A meeting of a BSI committee to discuss an amendment to BS4434 to permit the use of hydrocarbons in refrigeration systems was held on 13 October. A proposed amendment to EN60335-2-24, which is the safety standard for domestic electrical refrigerators, to permit the use of hydrocarbon refrigerants will be debated in CENELEC, the European electrical standards body, in December.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he considers refrigeration systems that avoid the use of hydrocarbons to be best practice and therefore eligible for inclusion in his Department's best practice programme or demos programme.

Mr. Ian Taylor: DEMOS—DTI's environmental management options scheme—is no longer open to applications for grant assistance.

The joint DTI/DOE environmental technology best practice programme, ETBPP, aims to promote better environmental performance and to increase the competitiveness of United Kingdom industry and commerce. Emphasis will be on waste minimisation and reducing pollution at source in the manufacturing process. In the selection of projects for inclusion in the programme, preference is given to those lying within the areas to which the programme is currently giving special attention. These areas are currently foundries, metal finishing/surface engineering and releases of volatile organic compounds. However, any project encompassing the use of cleaner technology can be considered for inclusion in the programme if it has sufficient merit and satisfies the announced selection criteria, including those relating to potential for stimulating national cost savings.

Those wishing to propose technologies and techniques to the programme should in the first instance contact the environmental helpline on 0800 585794.

Regional Challenge

Mr. Thomason: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress is being made on regional challenge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Further to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's announcement of 21 July, *Official Report*, column *538*, I shall be launching a round of consultation with a range of bodies in each of the eligible areas. A copy of the draft guidelines for regional challenge has been placed in the Library of the House. It is my intention that this special competition should encourage greater partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors and take full advantage of the talents and expertise of the local community in addressing the problems of the eligible areas. I look forward to receiving a wide range of views as a part of this consultation process.

As a result of currency movements and adjustments to the financial tables of the single programming documents during their negotiatin with the European Commission, the £160 million announce by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 21 July now represents 12 per cent. of the money available from the European regional development fund in each eligible area, plus 10 per cent. of that sum from the European social fund.

Oil and Gas Industry

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many representations his Department has received from individual members of the public concerning the 16th round of offshore oil and gas licensing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have received more than 2,300 postcards and more than 500 letters from members of the public making representations about future offshore licensing rounds. The 16th round was mentioned specifically in only a few of these cases.

Hong Kong

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next expects to visit China; and if he will make a statement about the effect of the issue of Hong Kong on Sino-British commercial relations and prospects.

Mr. Needham: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is hoping to visit China next year to promote our trade and commercial relations. We have no firm evidence that political differences with China over Hong Kong are having an effect on British commercial interests. Our exports to China rose by 72 per cent. in 1993, and by a further 21 per cent. in the first nine months of 1994; and the level of intended direct investment by British firms in China rose from £1 billion to £3 billion in 1993, which will make Britain one of the largest overseas investors there.

Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many companies with deficiencies of £500,000 or more were not investigated after receipt of an initial report highlighting misconduct under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 due to lack of resources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many initial unfit conduct reports, pursuant to the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 have been received from *(a)* insolvency practitioners and *(b)* official receivers during each of the last three years; what was the source of each report; how many initial reports were rejected; and if he will give the reasons for rejection.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The number of unfit conduct returns/reports pursuant to the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 received and rejected during each of the three calendar years and the current year (to 31 October 1994) are as follows:

	1991	*1992*	*1993*	[1]1994
Insolvency practitioners				
Received	3,479	4,144	4,093	2,726
Rejected	[2]—	2,888	3,322	1,864
Official receivers				
Unfitted returns received	2,057	2,317	3,318	2,308
Unfitted reports	208	169	78	150
Rejected reports	26	29	19	12

[1] To date.

[2] Not known.

The main reasons for rejection were where the unfitted conduct alleged was not considered to be sufficiently serious or evidentially strong enough to justify disqualification proceedings in the public interest. Other reasons include cases where there was clear mitigation or where the case was linked to other proceedings which could result in disqualification or where the whereabouts of the directors were not known.

Contracting Out

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce primary legislation to facilitate the contracting out of parts of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The coming into force of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, when enacted, will enable parliamentary approval to be sought for an order which will permit official receivers to contract out their functions.

I have no plans to introduce any further primary legislation in this regard.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effects of the proposals of Stoy Hayward on contracting out part of the functions and duties of the official receiver on the official receiver's statutory duty to investigate the affairs of bankrupts and companies in compulsory liquidation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Stoy Hayward Consulting reported that the contracting out of official receivers' case administration work would enable official receivers to concentrate more on their investigative role. I am satisfied that this would be so.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* In the past year, spouses of Ministers have travelled abroad at public expense six times. The total cost to public funds was £22,998.67. On three occasions in the past year spouses have travelled abroad at their own expense.

Spouses accompanied Ministers on the six occasions in order to take an active part in the official programme. Spouses' activities included attending official functions, as well as, for example, visits to education and welfare establishments.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Allowance

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of the numbers of children who would receive the (a) higher rate and *(b)* the lower rate of the mobility component of the disability living allowance if the age limit of five years was (i) removed altogether, (ii) reduced to age two and (iii) reduced to age three; and what is the estimate of the costs in each category;

(2) how many awards of the care component of the disability living allowance are currently payable in respect of children aged under five years at *(a)* the higher rate, *(b)* the middle rate and *(c)* the lower rate, by main disabling condition;

(3) how many claims for disability living allowance care component have been made in respect of children aged under five years since 1992; and how many were refused, giving figures for each reason for refusal.

Mr. Hague: The tables set out the best available estimates of the caseload and expenditure implications of changes to the lower age limit for claiming the mobility component of disability living allowance; and information on current awards of the care component of disability living allowance to children aged under five years. No information is available on the number of claims made in respect of the care component of disability living allowance, the number refused or the reasons for refusal.

Changes to age limit for DLA mobility component: estimated numbers of gainers 1994–95

Mobility component	*Total abolition of age limit*	*Age limit reduced to age 2*	*Age limit reduced to age 3*
Higher rate	9,000	8,000	6,000
Lower rate	10,000	8,000	6,000
Total	19,000	16,000	12,000

Note: These estimates are highly uncertain and subject to significant margins of error, therefore should be treated with extreme caution.

Changes to age limit for DLA mobility component: estimated additional costs 1994–95 (1994 prices)

Mobility component	*Total abolition of age limit £ million*	*Age limit reduced to age 2 £ million*	*Age limit reduced to age 3 £ million*
Higher rate	16	13	9
Lower rate	6	5	4
Total	22	18	13

Notes: These estimates are highly uncertain and subject to significant margins of error, therefore should be treated with extreme caution.

DLA care component: number of awards to children under five by main disabling condition (thousands)

Rate of care component	*Higher*	*Middle*	*Lower*	*Total*
Muscle/bone/joint disease	1	2	—	3
Blindness	—	—	—	1
Stroke related	1	—	—	1
Learning difficulties	2	4	1	7
Epilepsy	1	1	—	1
Deafness	—	1	—	1
Chest disease	1	—	—	2
Heart disease	1	—	—	1
Asthma	2	2	2	6
Neurological Diseases	2	1	—	3
Skin Diseases	—	1	—	2
Other causes	3	3	—	6
All causes	14	16	4	34

Notes:

As at 31 August 1994.

Source:

DSS analytical Services Division—based on a 5 per cent. sample.

The figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand, so component parts may not sum to totals.

Job Seeker's Allowance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give his best estimate of the number of claimants who will be worse off at any one time as a result of the introduction of the job seeker's allowance and the reduction in the contributory benefit from 12 months to six months

Mr. Roger Evans: It is estimated that at any one time 250,000 unemployed claimants would no longer be entitled to an adult dependency increase, or would receive the lower personal allowance for claimants under 25, or would receive no or less benefit after six months. However, claimants in those groups may benefit from other measures outlined in the White Paper. A further group of claimants could either gain or lose a small amount depending on whether the personal rate of unemployment benefit would have been higher or lower than the personal allowance of income support in 1996–97 for claimants aged 25 or over. Since the uprating factors will depend on the increase in the Rossi and RPI indices in the year to September 1995, it is not possible to provide firm estimates of the effects at this stage.

Notes:

1. Estimates rounded to nearest 10,000 cases.

2. Estimates assume:

a) 2·55 million unemployed claimants;

b) 600,000 Unemployment benefit claimants.

3. Losers are estimated using the Policy simulation Model with 1990/91/92 Family Expenditure Survey data and 1994 Unemployment Benefit Statistics.

Income Support

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the definition of the term, "habitually resident", as stated in the new income support regulations.

Mr. Roger Evans: The term "habitually resident" is not defined in the regulations. When deciding whether a claimant is habitually resident, among the factors that the adjudication authorities may take into account are the length and continuity of his residence in another country; his employment record; his reasons and intentions for coming to the United Kingdom and factors which show where his centre of interest is situated. The concept of habitual residence is well established in United Kingdom and European Union law.

Children in Hospital

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what conditions must be met by families who face serious financial difficulties as a result of visiting their sick child in hospital to qualify for any financial assistance towards these costs from the social fund.

Mr. Roger Evans: Community care grants from the Social Fund can assist people in receipt of income support to meet the cost of visiting a hospital patient. Social fund officers have to take account of all the circumstances of each application to the fund, but the Secretary of State's guidance provides that help with costs to visit a child in hospital should normally be given high priority. Those payments are designed to ensure that help is focused on those with the lowest income who are least able to meet the cost.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many benefit penalties for non-co-operation with the Child Support Agency have now been imposed by Benefits Agency branch office.

Mr. Burt: From April 1993 to the end of August 1994, 4,850 cases have been considered for the implementation of a reduced benefit direction. Details of the number of cases in which benefit was reduced is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what powers are possessed by Child Support Agency officials to elicit financial information from those being pursued for payment; whether the agency is empowered to obtain copies of bank statements and other confidential financial information without permission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Information, Evidence and Disclosure Regulations place parties to an assessment, and other specified persons, under a duty to furnish information or evidence required by the Secretary of State for one or more of the purposes listed in the regulations. That duty does not extend to banks or other financial institutions and a child support officer cannot therefore request information from them.

The Secretary of State may, however, appoint inspectors for the purpose of acquiring information under the Child Support Act 1991. Those inspectors are not bound by the Information, Evidence and Disclosure Regulations and may ask banks or other financial institutions for information.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: This information is contained in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Hague: None to those bodies listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

National Insurance

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the effect on Treasury revenue in 1995–96, and in a full year, of *(a)* raising the national insurance ceiling to the same level as the higher-rate tax band and *(b)* abolishing the ceiling for national insurance contributions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is in the table:

1995–96 Additional Yield (£ million)

	Employees	*Self-employed*	*Total*
(a) In Year	1,000	50	1,050
Full Year	1,150	100	1,250
(b) In Year	3,000	200	3,200
Full Year	3,350	500	3,850

Note:

(1) The reply assumes that the upper earnings limit would remain in place at current levels for the purpose of calculating contracted-out rebates.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate for 1994–95 or give the most recently available estimate of the number of *(a)* employees who pay national insurance contributions, *(b)* employees with earned income above the national contributions ceiling, *(c)* employees with earnings less than the income tax threshold who pay national insurance insurance contributions, *(d)* self-employed who pay class 4 national insurance contributions, *(e)* self-employed who pay class 2 national insurance contributions, *(f)* self-employed who pay class 3 national insurance contributions, *(g)* all self-employed paying national insurance contributions and *(h)* self-employed with profits above the upper profits limit for national insurance contributions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is in the table:

(a) 18·1 million
(b) 3·2 million
(c) 0·5 million
(d) 1·6 million
(e) 2·4 million
(f) Reliable estimates are not available.
(g) In addition to those at (e) a number of self-employed earners pay Class 3 National Insurance Contributions (NICs) to make-up their contribution record or Class 1 NICs from concurrent employment as an employment earner. Reliable estimates of the numbers involved are not available.
(h) 0·35 million

Note:

Figures in the table *(a-e)* have been rounded to nearest 0·1 million.

Benefits

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants were deprived of benefit as a sanction for breaking benefit rules *(a)* in the latest year for which figures are available and *(b)* in each of the preceding three years; and what in each case this total represented as a percentage of the total number receiving benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 2 November 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of claimants deprived of benefit and the percentage this represents of the total number receiving benefit. I have assumed that the claimants to which you refer are those in receipt of benefits being paid to unemployed people.

Unfortunately the statistics you asked for are not available in the form you have requested. Information on the number of adjudication officers' decisions and disallowance rates (in respect of unemployment benefit (UB) and opinions (in respect of Income Support (IS) is contained in a published document entitled "Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions". This provides information on all the main entitlement questions arising on claims, including those which might be regarded as sanctions. Copies of this document are held in the Library of the House. The latest available information relates to the quarter ending June.

I am also unable to provide information on the total number of claimants receiving UB or IS during any particular period. The number of people receiving benefit during a period is constantly changing, and a simple count would include those who received benefit for only one day as well as those who received it for the whole period. It is possible therefore that a person would be included in such a count more than once. For these reasons statistics relating to the number of people who are claiming benefit at a given time are more meaningful. These are, as you know, regularly compiled and placed in the Library on a monthly basis.

WALES

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the management and administrative costs of running each of the training and enterprise councils in Wales in 1993.

Mr. Richards: The figures requested are given in the following table.

TEC administration costs for Wales 1993–94

TEC	*£'000*
Gwent	1,796
Mid Glamorgan	2,665
North East Wales	1,340
North West Wales	911
Powys	539
South Glamorgan	1,467
West Wales	2,552
Total	11,270

Source:

Published accounts.

Drug Misuse

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many drug addicts were notified in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is given in table A3 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of Drug Addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom 1993"—area tables.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total amounts of money spent over the last five years by his Department on the prevention of drug abuse.

Mr. Richards: The following table gives the information requested as far as it is available. The figures shown are totals for the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse: it is not possible to disaggregate the amount spent on prevention of drug abuse.

Year	*A* *£*	*B* *£*
1989–90	[1]—	—
1990–91	[1]—	—

Year	A £	B £
1991–92	246,712	—
1992–93	298,129	43,275
1993–94	354,193	19,500

[1] Not available.

In addition to the sums in column A, the Department has made available the additional moneys shown in column B for specific prevention projects such as European drug prevention week and the Wales sixth form conference.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many drug addicts were newly notified in Wales in each of the past five years.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is given in table A1 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of Drug Addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom 1993"—area tables.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action his Department has taken to promote and mark European drug prevention week this year.

Mr. Richards: The Department undertook a range of actions to promote and mark European drug prevention week this year.

A comprehensive programme of events in Wales for European drug prevention week has been placed in the Library of the House.

Planning Inquiry, Oystermouth

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now publish his decision on the planning inquiry into the proposals at Oystermouth, Swansea.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Secretary of State has not yet issued his decision on the planning application of the development of the Oystermouth bus station site, Mumbles, Swansea. The decision is expected to issue very shortly.

National Curriculum

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to announce his decisions on recommendations for the revised national curriculum submitted to him by the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend and I are grateful for the extensive work that the authority has undertaken on the shape of its proposals. The result is a slimmer curriculum which meets Welsh needs, offers teachers more time to use at their discretion and gives schools an excellent platform from which to continue the work of raising educational standards. Accordingly, my right hon. Friend has accepted the authority's recommendations for the new subject orders. Proof copies will be issued in November and will be placed in the Library of the House.

Health Authorities

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has concluded his consideration of the future configuration of health authorities in Wales; and when a decision is likely to be released to the service.

Mr. Redwood: The extensive consultation exercise conducted by my Department revealed a broad consensus on the advantages of amalgamating district health authorities and family health services authorities. Opinion was much more divided on the geographical areas which merged authorities should cover.

In the light of the consultation responses, I believe that the health service in Wales will best be served by a reduction of DHAs and FHSAs from 17 to five. Subject to legislation, this will involve the merger of DHAs and FHSAs and the geographical amalgamation of certain areas also. My preferred option—based on option C in the consultation document—will involve the creation by 1 April 1996 of:

a North Wales Health Authority (Gwynedd and Clwyd);

a Mid and West Wales Health Authority (Powys and Dyfed);

an enlarged Gwent Health Authority (including Caerphilly Unitary Authority area);

an enlarged West Glamorgan Health Authority (including Bridgend Unitary Authority area); and

a Mid and South Glamorgan Health Authority (comprising all of South Glamorgan and the remaining parts of the present Mid Glamorgan)

Recognising the strides already made by Pembrokeshire and East Dyfed health authorities to establish a West Wales Commission, those DHAs could be amalgamated formally in advance of the main reorganisation. I therefore propose to issue very shortly draft regulations for their amalgamation to form a single Dyfed health authority as from 1 April 1995.

My aim is:

to reduce expenditure on management and administrative costs in favour of spending on direct patient care;

to ensure that Health Authorities are in a position to perform all their roles and functions effectively ; and

to ensure that Health Authority boundaries are compatible with those of the new Unitary Authority boundaries.

The reorganisation should result in significant savings, which I believe should exceed £3 million per year in the longer term, allowing more patients to be treated sooner. As it is envisaged that fewer staff will be required than at present, I expect health authorities to use natural wastage to run down their numbers. There will be full consideration and consultation.

I believe that the new health authorities should aim to pursue greater patient choice. Their task is to improve standards of care and treatment and provide effective stewardship of public resources.

I am writing today to the chairmen of the existing health authorities and family health service authorities informing them of the outcome of my deliberations. Having decided upon the future health authority structure in Wales, I hope to shortly announce my decision on the structure of community health councils in Wales.

Welsh Language

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to extend the official status of the Welsh language in European Union proceedings.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 20 October 1994]:* Under article 217 of the treaty, the Council has to agree unanimously to approve a new official language. It has recently agreed that Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian will be added as official languages subject to their entry. The Council has no plans to add any other languages.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The details of the public appointments I make are given in "Appointments by the Secretary of State of Wales, 1 September 1994", copies are in the Library of the House. The figures are as follows:

	Number
Appointments to Executive Bodies	235
Advisory Bodies	170
Other Appointments	[1]403

[1] Of which 320 are to NHS bodies

I am also consulted on a number of appointments made by Ministers in charge of other Government Departments, but this information is not held centrally by the Welsh Office.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Foreign Legislatures

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Lord President of the Council what are the salaries, expenses and associated benefits paid to the elected members of the legislatures of *(a)* each EU member state, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Canada and *(d)* Japan.

Mr. Newton: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Parliamentary Salaries (Europe)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord President of the Council, what are the basic salaries paid to elected Members of Parliament in each of the European Union countries.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not held centrally.

Privy Council Office

Ms. Maddock: To ask the Lord President of the Council what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures were available.

Mr. Newton: The percentage in 1993 was 36 per cent.

Norman Shaw Buildings

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee (1) what compensation has been received by the House from the company responsible for the non-availability of lifts in the Norman Shaw North building;

(2) if he will list the companies, the cost and the length of the contracts to undertake structural alterations at the riverside entrance to the Norman Shaw buildings;

(3) what has been the total cost to date of the work in Norman Shaw North and South on *(a)* the structure and *(b)* the lifts.

Mr. Ray Powell: These are matters for the Director of Works and I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Director of Works.

Administration Committee

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee when it is proposed to introduce improved large envelopes for hon. Members' mail.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Approval for the inclusion of large pre-paid plastic envelopes for bulk mail in the range of stationery available to Members has been given by the Administration Committee. These envelopes are now available from the Serjeant at Arms Stores.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what proportion of the floor area of the Palace of Westminster is occupied by *(a)* the House of Commons and *(b)* the House of Lords.

Mr. Ray Powell: Of the usable floor space in the Palace of Westminster 58·3 per cent. is the responsibility of the House of Commons and 38·7 per cent. the responsibility of the House of Lords. Three per cent. of the Palace is under the joint control of the Speaker, the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Great Chamberlain.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: The percentage of women appointments made by the Minister to those bodies listed in "Public Bodies" is 18 per cent. Figures for 1994 are still being collated and will be announced in due course.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Jack: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Gentleman of 6 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *110.*

Animal Transportation

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms animals have been shipped by ferry from *(a)* France, *(b)* Holland and *(c)* Belgium into the United Kingdom, in each of the past three months; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: The information requested is not available. However, when consignments of animals are despatched from other member states notifications are sent via the Animo computer messaging system from the veterinary authorities of the countries of despatch. These notifications indicate that the following numbers of farm animals have been sent by all routes to Great Britain from the member states in question in the period July to September 1994:

		July			*August*			*September*	
1994	*France*	*Holland*	*Belgium*	*France*	*Holland*	*Belgium*	*France*	*Holland*	*Belgium*
Cattle	493	1,190	—	401	1,019	—	132	265	7
Pigs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheep	1	7	115	25	—	20	3	3	—
Poultry	56,330	6,720	25	70,250	24,999	—	63,064	8,552	31

Note:

Figures are provisional and subject to change.

Pigs

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to assist pig producers in the United Kingdom between now and 1 January 1999 when new unilateral rule changes on sow stall and tether regulations take effect.

Mrs. Browning: This Department has contributed to the work of the pig welfare advisory group and financed the publication of a series of nine booklets on alternative systems of pig husbandry. These have been used at associated workshops run by ADAS. The Government also fund a programme of research into alternative systems.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the additional financial cost to United Kingdom pig producers of the unilateral rule changes on sow stall and tether regulations to be introduced on 1 January 1999; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: The total cost to producers in Great Britain of complying with the phasing out of tethers and close confinement systems for sows has been estimated at £9 million. Further details are given in the compliance cost assessment, prepared for the Welfare of Livestock Regulations 1994, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House. The total cost to producers in Northern Ireland is estimated at £0·5 million.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to make the proposed United Kingdom changes in rules on sow stall and tether regulations applicable throughout the European Union.

Mrs. Browning: EC Directive 91/630 requires the European Commission to report, by 1 October 1997, on the welfare of pigs in different types of intensive system and to submit appropriate proposals to the Council. The United Kingdom will be pressing for this review to be undertaken at the earliest opportunity and for our own high standards to be adopted throughout the European Union.

Oyster Farms

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many of the oyster farming sites in England and Wales monitored for faecal coliforms achieved *(a)* classification A, *(b)* classification B or *(c)* classification C; how many were prohibited; what percentage of the total number of sites each represents; how many oyster farming sites in Holland and France are also monitored for faecal coliforms; what classification each site achieved; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many oyster farming sites in England and Wales are monitored for faecal coliforms under the shellfish hygiene regulations.

Mr. Jack: In England and Wales a total of 41 oyster production areas are monitored for faecal coliforms—E.Coli—under the Food Safety—Live Bivalve Molluscs and Other Shellfish—Regulations 1992. In these areas there are 63 groupings of beds, of which 12—19 per cent.—fall into class A, 39—62 per cent.—into class B, nine—14 per cent.—into class C, and three—5 per cent.—are prohibited.

All production areas in Holland and France are required by directive 91/492/EEC to be monitored. Information on the number of oyster farms classified in other EU member states is not generally available to us.

Whitland and Longridge Creameries

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he was informed that Dairy Crest intended to close its Whitland and Longridge creameries.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* The closures were a matter for the commercial judgement of Dairy Crest.

It is not my practice to reveal details concerning the receipt of commercially sensitive information.

Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether the members of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee are required to declare their commercial and non-commercial interests;

(2) if he will publish the commercial and non-commercial interests of the members of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee.

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *446*, for what reason members of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee are not required to provide details of consultancies held; and how this practice differs from that applied to other advisory committees for which he is responsible.

Mrs. Browning: Further to my written answer on 18 October about the commercial and non-commercial interests of members of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee, the following information is now available from member, Dr. W. A. Watson:

Commercial interests

Name of company	*Nature of interest*
	Sheep farmer
Food and Agriculture organisation of the United Nations	Occasional consultancy work
Biotechnology and biological sciences research council	Occasional consultancy work

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of toxic waste was imported into Britain from abroad for disposal or reprocessing in 1991, 1992 and 1993; and what is the projected level for 1994.

Mr. Atkins: Imports of hazardous waste into Great Britain, notified under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988, were as set out in the table. In order that comparison may be made with previous years, the totals are expressed by financial year—1 April to 31 March.

Year	*Tonnes*
1990–91	44,542
1991–92	46,714
1992–93	45,942

Figures for imports notified in 1993–94 have not yet been published.

For further information, I refer the hon. Member to table 7.6 and paragraphs 7.9 to 7.12 of the "*Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics No. 16, 1994 (HMSO)*", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the draft list of hazardous wastes set out in the European Commission's proposal for a Council decision establishing a list of hazardous waste, pursuant to article 1(4) of Council directive 91/689/EEC on hazardous waste, Com (94)156 final, dated 21 September 1994.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my Department's explanatory memorandum on this document, which was deposited in the House Libraries on 27 October.

Green Belt

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce additional planning controls to protect the green belt in the centre of England in the areas affected by the expansion of the national exhibition centre, the expansion of the airport runway, the widening of the M42 and the development of housing under the unitary development plan; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: Stringent controls already exist to protect green belts from inappropriate development. Such development is only allowed in very special circumstances, while green belt boundaries can be altered only in exceptional circumstances. The revised version of planning policy guidance note 2 will maintain our commitment to green belts when it is published.

In the recently published draft regional planning guidance for the west midlands we confirm that there is no case for fundamental review of the green belts, which have served their purpose well and which will continue to do so.

Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he was first given a copy of the draft text of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's 18th report, "Transport and the Environment", Cm 2674.

Sir Paul Beresford: My right hon. Friend was sent a copy of the report the day before publication. My Department's officials received early drafts of parts of the report for factual comment earlier in the year.

Stockton Shopping Centre

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the proposed redevelopment of Stockton's shopping centre by the city challenge team is expected to commence.

Sir Paul Beresford: This is a matter for the Stockton city challenge partnership.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Sir Paul Beresford: Such information is not available centrally.

Development Corporations

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the total amount of urban block expenditure by his Department, *(b)* the total amount and percentage allocated to all urban development corporations and *(c)* the total amount and percentage allocated to the London Docklands development corporation for each year from 1987–88 to 1993–94.

Sir Paul Beresford: The information requested is detailed in the table:

£ million

	1987–88	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Urban expenditure	514·4	597·6	815·0	964·5	979·4	984·4	936·3
UDCs and Docklands light Railway	160·2	254·7	476·8	607·5	601·4	515·0	371·2
UDCs as a percentage of Urban expenditure	31	43	59	63	61	52	40
LDDC	82·8	116·4	255·8	333·0	248·7	156·5	105·4
LDDC as a percentage of Urban experience	16	19	31	35	25	16	11

Figures exclude UDC borrowing and receipts.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many successful prosecutions have been undertaken by local waste authorities over the past three years.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

Statistics relating to prosecutions undertaken by waste regulation authorities cannot be identified centrally.

The table shows the number of non-police prosecutions and convictions under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 and the Control of Pollution Act 1974 for certain waste-related offences in England and Wales in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

It should, however, be noted that the statistics of court proceedings are based on returns made by the police to the Home Office and although these include offences where there has been no police involvement, such as those prosecutions instigated by Government Departments, local authorities—in this case probably waste regulation authorities—and private organisations and individuals, the reporting of these types of offence is known to be incomplete.

Number of non-police prosecutions for certain sections under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 and the Control of Pollution Act 1974, 1991–1993
England and Wales

	1991		*1992*		*1993*	
Act/Section	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section:						
33(8)	—	—	13	8	45	36
33(9)	3	3	1	—	11	10
34	—	—	14	9	57	43
38(10)	—	—	—	—	1	1
38(11)	—	—	—	—	—	—
44	—	—	6	4	—	—
57	1	—	1	1	—	—
59	—	—	1	1	2	2
69(a) (b)	—	—	—	—	1	1
69(c)	—	—	—	—	2	1
70	—	—	—	—	1	1
71	1	1	5	2	2	1
Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 Section:						
1	4	3	—	—	23	18
5(4) (a)	—	—	2	1	36	35
5(4) (b)	1	1	—	—	13	11
6(9)	—	—	—	—	1	1
7(3) (a)	—	—	1	1	4	4
7(3) (b)	—	—	2	2	—	—
Control of Pollution Act 1974 Section:						
3	7	4	4	2	50	30
16	—	—	1	1	2	1
93	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source:
Home Office—Court Proceedings data.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Sir Paul Beresford: Information on public appointments to non-departmental public bodies and nationalised industries for which the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible is contained in "*Public Bodies 1993*", published by HMSO, a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. This gives the percentage of all such appointments, for which this Department is responsible, held by women, as 22 per cent., at 1 September 1993. Similar information for 1994, to be published in "*Public Bodies 1994*", is currently being collected.

The information in "*Public Bodies*" includes the Commons Commissioners and valuation tribunals, for which the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible but to which appointments are made by the Lord Chancellor and local authorities, respectively.

CFCs and Hydrofluorocarbons

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will support proposals circulated by the Dutch Government at the September meeting of the international negotiating committee—INC 10—to restrict the use of HFCs to applications where there are no viable alternatives to those HFCs with low global warming potential and to where leaks can be avoided.

Mr. Atkins: The document circulated at INC 10 was a report on the likely global warming effects of various HFC emissions control scenarios and, as such, was not a proposal by the Dutch Government. United Kingdom policy on HFCs is set out in sections 6.37 to 6.39 of the United Kingdom climate change programme, a copy of which is in the House Library.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress green Ministers have made in eliminating CFCs, HCFCs and HFCs from the Government estate.

Mr. Atkins: Green Ministers have encouraged the elimination of ozone-depleting substances and Departments have prepared action plans showing how they will reduce use and emissions of these substances,

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has given to waste regulation authorities to ensure that they uphold the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 relating to the deliberate release of CFCs, HCFCs and HFCs; and what action he will take if this guidance is not acted upon.

Mr. Atkins: Guidance on the application of waste law to ozone-depleting substances is contained in paragraphs 4.95 to 4.103 of DOE circular November 94. I fully expect waste regulation authorities to act upon this guidance.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department has produced to help refrigeration engineers and technicians to assist in his policy of phasing out CFCs and HCFCs and limiting the use of HFCs.

Mr. Atkins: Guidance for the refrigeration industry is contained in the DTI publication, "*Refrigeration and Air Conditioning. CFC Phaseout: Advice on Alternatives and Guidelines for Users.*" A second edition should be published by the end of November.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has held on the strategies for phasing out CFCs and HCFCs in refrigeration and limiting the use of HFCs with *(a)* ICI, *(b)* Calor Gas, *(c)* Sainsburys, *(d)* Tesco and *(e)* Iceland.

Mr. Atkins: My officials hold regular meetings with the refrigeration industry at which retailers and producers are represented. Discussions have also taken place with Calor Gas concerning hydrocarbon refrigerants. In addition, representatives of the refrigeration industry met my predecessor last year, and I shall be meeting them later this month.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to deposit in the Library all the submissions received on his Department's nuclear waste policy review.

Mr. Atkins: A list of submissions will be placed in the Library in due course.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring is undertaken of sites where low-level nuclear waste is deposited.

Mr. Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regularly samples leachate or other local waters at sites authorised to receive low-level radioactive waste for controlled burial.

Details and results of the programme are given in HMIP's annual monitoring reports, copies of which are lodged in the Library.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the suitability, in terms of lining, soil conditions and proximity of water sources of Beddingham landfill site near Lewes for possible disposal of low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Atkins: The suitability of the Beddingham landfill site to receive low-level radioactive waste, small quantities of which are sent only from Sussex university, was carefully assessed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution before an authorisation for disposal was granted.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what precautions are taken to ensure that low-level nuclear waste is not dispersed or misused.

Mr. Atkins: The accumulation and disposal of radioactive waste are regulated under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 and, as appropriate, under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will agree to the request by Lewes district council for a representative of his Department to attend a public meeting in Lewes to explain the proposals to allow the disposal of low-level nuclear waste on council landfill sites.

Mr. Atkins: Yes.

Water Disconnections

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of disconnections in water supply in the Rotherham metropolitan borough council area for each year since 1990 and so far in 1994.

Mr. Atkins: Data on disconnections by local authority district are not available centrally. The Director General of Water Services publishes data on disconnections twice a year, by water company area.

Climate Change

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he supports the comprehensive approach interpretation of the framework convention on climate change article 4 commitments.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom's response to the commitments in the framework convention on climate change is set out in our national programme under the convention, published in January. The programme sets out measures aimed at returning emissions of each of the main commitments contained in article 4.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in securing the voluntary controls on the release of HFCs described in section 6.38 of the Government's report "Climate Change: the United Kingdom Programme".

Mr. Atkins: My Department has held preliminary discussions with HFC producers and representatives of the aerosol, refrigeration, fire protection, solvents and foam manufacturing industries, to explore the scope for voluntary agreements to minimise emissions of HFCs.

Government Offices

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *38-40*, what is the total cost of the refurbishment to properties at *(a)* Montrose house, Glasgow, *(b)* Station road, Kettering, *(c)* Lambert house, Talbot street, Nottingham, *(d)* Crown Building, 55 Norfolk street, Boston, *(e)* Crown Buildings, 1 Queen street, Wellingborough and *(f)* Ladywood house, 45-46 Stephenson street, Birmingham.

Sir Paul Beresford: *(a)* Montrose house, Glasgow—planning on this project has not yet started and, consequently, no figures are available;

(b) Station road, Kettering—this refurbishment and fit out for government occupation, including the provision of full disabled access, cost Government just under £40,000 plus VAT;

(c) Lambert house, Talbot street, Nottingham —refurbishment did not take place;

(d) Crown building, 55 Norfolk street, Boston—this scheme, which did not proceed, was designed to accommodate a Government Department expansion which, in the event, did not materialise;

(e) Crown building, 1 Queen street, Wellingborough—Employment Service, the occupant of this building, is dealing with the refurbishment and improvements, however, planning is at a very early stage and no costs are yet available;

(f) Ladywood house, Birmingham—the Department's landlords, at their own cost, paid about £2·75 million to refurbish Ladywood house.

Local Government

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment he has made of the extent to which the Local Government Commission's proposals for Cleveland would require joint arrangements between authorities and contracting of functions to maintain services;

(2) if he will make it his policy that any new authorities created as a result of local government reorganisation should be capable of directly providing the full range of public and support services within their own resources;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect of the non-directly elected joint bodies requiring under the proposed local government reorganisation for Cleveland on local democracy.

Mr. Curry: Every local authority, existing or new, should be capable of securing the provision of the full range of services for which it is responsible. Except for the fire service, we do not consider that statutory joint authorities will be necessary for any local government functions in Cleveland following reorganisation. It is for the local authorities themselves to consider the most suitable means of service delivery, including whether voluntary joint arrangements or contracting out are desirable for particular functions. In any event, the elected local authorities will remain democratically accountable.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that all the proposed orders for new local government structures should be laid before the House *(a)* at the same time and *(b)* the conclusion of the entire review process.

Mr. Curry: No.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated number of jobs which the Local Government Commission has calculated would be lost if its proposals for the Cleveland area were implemented.

Mr. Curry: The Commission's financial estimates of costs and savings associated with reorganisation in Cleveland, which were made publicly available in November 1993, incorporated the assumption that 336 staff would become surplus if the present local government structure were replaced with four unitary authorities. The staffing levels of the authorities are, however, ultimately a matter for them.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that there should be fresh all-out elections to shadow authorities to supervise the changes in local government structures; and what consideration he has given to the creation of shadow authorities for the Cleveland area.

Mr. Curry: Our policy is that wherever possible there will be all-out elections to shadow unitary in the May preceding the April start-up date. In Cleveland all-out elections to the four district councils will take place in May 1995. The councillors who are elected then will plan for the transfer of functions from the county council to the districts and will continue at reorganisation in April 1996 as councillors of the unitary authorities.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will ensure that, in the current local government reorganisation exercise, a package of staff protection and compensation measure will be available which will be at least as comprehensive and beneficial to staff as the arrangements made available during the last two previous reorganisations;

(2) if he will make it his policy to create a mandatory national framework to maintain continuity of employment for those affected by changes in local government as a result of the local government review, together with full protection of pay and conditions of service; and if he will provide sufficient resources in addition to those required for the maintenance of services, to ensure that such protection is available for all of the affected employees

Mr. Curry: Protection of rights of employees upon transfer is already afforded by employment law and will not be affected by reorganisation. The Government will ensure a suitable package of staff protection and compensation measures for employees in local government affected by the current reorganisation. We have consulted on proposals for redundancy compensation and hope to make an announcement on other elements of the package in due course. Since local authorities will benefit from the savings arising from reorganisation, it is right that they should manage the transitional costs without additional resources from central Government.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy not to implement changes in local government structures which are likely to put jobs at risk.

Mr. Curry: No. Local government reorganisation is intended, among other things, to achieve greater efficiency and long-term savings in the cost of providing services. There will inevitably be some effect on staffing structures. The changing role of local government is bound to have implication for the skills and numbers in the local authority work force whether there is structural change or not.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Local Government Commission's proposals for Cleveland have been demonstrated to have the clear support of an absolute majority of the residents of that area.

Mr. Curry: The commission's final report on Cleveland, published in November 1993, included the results of opinion research which showed that a clear majority of local residents want change, and that the structure proposed by the commission is the most popular option for change.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what importance he attaches to public opinion as expressed in responses to the Local Government Commission's consultation period.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Local Government Act 1992 requires the Local Government Commission to have regard to the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities, and to secure effective and convenient local government. Public opinion is one important test of this.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes were provided through the Housing Corporation in 1993–94; and how many he expects will be provided in 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: In 1993–94 the Housing Corporation provided 56,500 new lettings through its approved development programme. In estimates published in December 1993, the Housing Corporation indicates that on current plans it will be able to provide over 58,000 new lettings in 1994–95 and some 52,000 in 1995–96 through its ADP. Plans for 1995–96 and beyond are, of course, under consideration as part of the current public expenditure round.

In addition, 8,334 new lettings were provided in 1993–94 through the Housing Corporation funded by local authority housing association grant. The level of output from this programme in future years will depend on decisions taken by individual local authorities.

Cites

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has consulted fully with Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food over resolutions to be considered at the forthcoming conference of parties to the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species which may affect the convention's listing of marine mammals and fishes.

Sir Paul Beresford: Yes. We have consulted all other Departments with an interest in proposals and resolutions to be considered at the CITES conference, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Overseas Development Administration, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Forestry Commission.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects decisions to be announced on bids made to the single regeneration budget, with particular reference to those applications relating to education projects; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: We expect to announce decisions on bids for funding from the single regeneration budget, including bids involving education projects, in January 1995.

International Station, Ebbsfleet

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a map of the area covered by the approved urban development around the planned international station at Ebbsfleet showing ownership of principal areas of leasehold and freehold interests.

Sir Paul Beresford: Information on planning permissions and land ownership are not held centrally. Details of planning permissions which exist for development in the area around the site of the proposed international station at Ebbsfleet will be available from the planning registers of Dartford and Gravesham district councils. Records of land ownership are held by the Land Registry.

Planning Application, Whitechapel Moor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will decide whether to call in the planning application in respect of the leisure development at Whitechapel moor, South Molton, Devon.

Sir Paul Beresford: It is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's policy to deal expeditiously with requests that he call in planning applications for his own determination. He expects to issue a decision shortly after North Devon district council has reached its conclusions on it.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes in circumstances occurred between 16 September and 21 October to cause the Secretary of State to require the local planning authority to resolve the planning application in respect of the leisure development at Whitechapel moor, South Molton, Devon.

Sir Paul Beresford: On 16 September my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State exercised his powers under article 14 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 and directed North Devon district council not to grant planning permission for a golf and leisure development at Whitechapel moor, South Molton, Devon. The direction was issued because the application would not otherwise be referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as a departure from the development plan. In effect, the direction provides an opportunity to consider whether the application raises the type of issues which would justify call-in.

On 20 September the North Devon district council planning committee deferred making a decision on the application pending the outcome of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's decision on call-in. On 21 October the Government office for the south-west requested the council to resolve the planning application which remains before it and explained that it was important to know what the council's decision would be. If the application were refused, the substantial additional expense associated with a public inquiry would be avoided.

Move-to-buy Grant

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations are made to ensure that a housing association tenant who proposes to apply for the move-to-buy grant is able to meet his mortgage commitments; how much is the move-to-buy grant; whether a recipient of the move-to-buy grant whose property is subsequently repossessed is regarded as intentionally homeless; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The tenants incentive scheme is available to housing association tenants seeking to buy a home on the open market. Grants of between £8,000 and £16,000 are available, depending upon the geographical location of the property.

In applying for a TIS grant, tenants are required to declare details of their income and savings as part of their application, and housing associations are entitled to take this information into consideration as part of their assessment of the application.

In responding to an application under the homelessness legislation from a former HA tenant who is subsequently repossessed, a local authority will take account of all factors relevant to a particular case.

Nuclear Waste

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites which are currently used for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Atkins: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what account will be taken of public opinion when the decision is made about the level of nuclear waste at the Milton tip;

(2) what plans he has to introduce further sites for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste in East Anglia;

(3) on what date he expects to publish the findings of his review of waste management disposal;

(4) when he will take a decision about the level of nuclear waste disposed of at the Milton landfill pit near Cambridge;

(5) what representations he has received on his plans to allow the dumping of low-level nuclear waste on council landfill sites;

(6) what further consultation he intends to carry out with the councils and the residents in the Lewes area before deciding whether Beddingham landfill site is to be approved as a site for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: One of the proposals in the Department's consultation paper, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions", published in August, was that waste producers should be encouraged to make greater use of the controlled burial of low-level radioactive waste in landfill sites. The Department has received a large number of responses to the review, which are being given full consideration. A statement of future policy will be made in due course.

There are no proposals in relation to specific sites. However, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution consults the relevant waste regulatory authority, local councils and water undertakers, before issuing authorisations for controlled burial.

Waste Water

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what discussions he has had with the European Commission under its urban waste water treatment directive for the classification of all waters south of the Humber bridge as coastline;

(2) what part the National Rivers Authority plays in classifying rivers and coastline for the purposes of the urban waste water treatment directive;

(3) what discussion he has had with Yorkshire Water Services Ltd. concerning the designation of the city of Hull as a coastal city for the purposes of the EC directive on urban waste water treatment;

(4) with whom he had discussions before the classification of all waters south of the Humber bridge as coastline;

(5) what estimates has his Department made of the savings in capital costs arising from the classification of Hull as a seaside resort for the purposes of the directive on urban waste water treatment.

Mr. Atkins: The EC's urban waste water treatment directive provides for waters to be identified according to their sensitivity to *inter alia* eutrophication—sensitive areas—or according to their natural dispersion characteristics—high dispersion areas. It also requires that the seaward limits of estuaries should be identified for the directive's purposes.

After public consultation on the criteria for the identification of sensitive areas and HNDAs, the NRA proposed that, for the purposes of this directive, the seaward limit of the Humber estuary be drawn at the Humber bridge and that the coastal area to the east of that be identified as an HNDA. The NRA advised the Department that no further environmental benefit will accrue from the provision of levels of sewage treatment in addition to the minimum requirements for HNDAs in the directive at the locations so identified.

Following discussions with English Nature and the water companies I announced on 18 May 1994 the identification of 33 sensitive areas and 58 HNDAs. These decisions were communicated to the European Commission.

The Director General of Water Services published on 28 July 1994 his estimate of £6 billion for the cost of implementation of the UWWTD in England and Wales. This estimate took account of the decisions taken on sensitive areas and HNDAs.

Water Prices

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage change in the price of water in each year since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: The most complete available historical data on water charges from 1979 are contained in "*Waterfacts*" published annually by the Water Services Association, copies of which are available in the Library.

Bolton Council

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive a reply from Bolton council to his letter of 9 September, reference PNW/5080/147168.

Sir Paul Beresford: Bolton borough council has advised that if hopes to reply to that letter within a week.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of whether there is a connection between respiratory diseases and vehicle emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department takes advice from the Department of Health on the effects of pollutants on human health. The Government take very seriously evidence that high levels of some traffic-related pollutants can have adverse effects on those suffering from respiratory disorders. On 3 October 1994 my Department, the Department of Health and the Medical Research Council announced a £5 million research programme into links between air pollution and respiratory disease. I and my colleagues will further consider issues of air quality and public health when we discuss the terms of our response to the consultation paper on improving air quality. We intend to publish our proposals later this year.

Building Regulations

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from public and private representative bodies to amend the building regulations to reduce the danger of accidents from the collapse of freestanding masonry walls; and what proposals he has in response to amend or to institute some form of regulatory control.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Apart from a request from the hon. Member's own local authority at Swansea and from HM coroner for north Buckinghamshire, following an inquest into a tragic accident involving a young boy, the Government have received few representations calling for freestanding masonry walls to be brought under building regulation control.

Following its review earlier this year, the Government accepted the Building Regulations Advisory Committee recommendation that such walls should not be brought under statutory control. It was the committee's view that despite the tragic fatality cases reported, the health and safety risks associated with such walls are far less than for other hazards, such as those present in the home. The burden of control on enforcement authorities, industry and the public could not therefore be reconciled against such low risk of injury.

The Government are, however, committed to improving the safety of freestanding walls through their continued sponsorship of the development and dissemination of technical guidance on wall construction and maintenance. NHBC registered builders already have an obligation to observe such guidance.

In addition, the Government are encouraging local authorities to be vigilant in exercising their powers under sections 77 and 78 of the Building Act 1984 to remedy any dangerous walls.

Council Tax

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against banding remain outstanding in the London borough of Lambeth; and when he expects the appeals to be disposed of.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: As at 30 September, 1,788 initial period banding appeals were outstanding in respect of dwellings in the London borough of Lambeth.

We expect four out of five initial appeal period appeals to be settled nationally before the end of this year. The remainder will be settled as soon as possible in 1995. I cannot estimate a date by which all such appeals will have been settled since a few may be affected by special factors, such as an appeal on a point of law to the High Court.

Zoos

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many exemptions have been granted in each county to establishments keeping animals from provisions of the Zoo Licensing Act in each year since 1982; and if he will make a statement about the reasons for these exemptions in respect of the last year for which figures are available.

Sir Paul Beresford *[pursuant to his reply, 20 October 1994, c. 292]:* Between 1984 and 1991 the following exemptions from the provisions of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 have been granted.

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Avon	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Cheshire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cornwall	5	5	1	—	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Devon	3	3	—	1	1	—	1	—
Dorset	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Essex	3	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	1	1	3	—	—	—	—	—

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Herefordshire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
London	5	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Middlesex	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—
Northamptonshire	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oxfordshire	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Somerset	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Sussex	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Tyne and Wear	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—
Warwickshire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	2	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Worcestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Yorkshire	—	3	1	3	1	1	—	—

No exemptions have been granted in 1992 to 1994. Exemptions from the Act are granted to collections which consist entirely of animals which are normally domesticated in Great Britain. Establishments which have been granted exemptions are not considered to meet the definition of zoo within the meaning of the Act by virtue of the fact that wild animals are not being exhibited to the public.

EDUCATION

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in her Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[pursuant to her reply, Official Report, 27 October 1994, c. 626]:* There have been no occasions in the last year when the spouse of a Minister in the Department for Education has travelled abroad to accompany a Minister on public duties at public cost. On four occasions, a Minister was accompanied, but in no case was this at public cost.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action she is taking to maintain in schools the teaching of English to ethnic minority children currently funded under section 11; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: In addition to existing mainstream provision for them, initiatives to benefit minority ethnic pupils for whom English is not their first language are eligible for support from the single regeneration budget. Bids for that support in 1995–96 are currently under consideration. Support will also be available from the rersidual element of section 11 grant, for which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has invited bids for next year.

Cash Limits

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes she has to announce to cash limits and running cost limits on votes within her responsibility for 1994–95.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limits for class X, vote 1, schools, research and miscellaneous services and vote 4, administration will be amended. The cash limit changes are as follows:

	Class and vote current cash limit £	*Change* £	*Revised cash limit* £
X.1	800,269,000	+ 3,527,000	803,796,000
X.4	93,032,000	+ 5,911,000	98,943,000

The increase on class X, vote 1 is in respect of the take up of the capital end-year flexibility entitlement of £3,538,000 announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *729–34*, offset by a contribution of £11,000 from the Welsh Office Education Department towards the funding of the special educational needs tribunal.

The increase on class X, vote 4 is in respect of the take-up of the end-year flexibility entitlements of £1,886,000 for capital and £4,021,000 for running costs as announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *729-34*, and a transfer of £32,000 from the Public Services Agency, offset by a contribution of £28,000 from the Welsh Office.

Education Department towards the running costs of the special educational needs tribunal.

The running costs limit for the Department for Education will be increased by £4,053,000 from £90,347,000 to £94,400,000. This reflects take-up of the end-year flexibility entitlement and the transfer from the Public Services Agency.

The increases will be offset by transfers or charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Nursery Education

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what educational effect she expects increased levels of nursery education to have over the next two years.

Mr. Robin Squire: Progress will be made in the lifetime of this Parliament towards implementation of the Government's firm commitment to make a pre-school place available for all four-year-olds whose parents wish to take it up. Good quality nursery education should lead to improved performance at key stage 1, and the beneficial effects should last well beyond that.

Travellers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the educational effect on gipsy and travellers' children of evictions under the provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Robin Squire: The increased powers of eviction provided under the Bill are intended primarily to tackle the serious nuisance of mass trespass, raves and illegal camping. The draft circular of guidance recently issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has drawn attention to the need for local authorities to take particularly careful account of the effects of any evictions on the education of children. The guidance also draws attention to the need for alternative educational arrangements to be made in such circumstances, appropriate to the children's ages, abilities and aptitudes.

Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 25 October, what was the funding to the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute by the Further Education Funding Council in 1993–94 and 1994–95.

Mr. Boswell: Funding of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute by the Further Education Funding Council was £20,974 in respect of the period April 1993 to July 1994, and £140,767 in respect of the period August 1994 to July 1995. This reflects the re-classification of some courses for English as a foreign language.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of public appointments made by her Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: In 1993, 27 per cent. of public appointments made by this Department were held by women. The 1994 figures are still being finalised and will be made available in due course.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by her Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if she will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is given as follows:

Name of member	*NDPB and post held*	*Salary £ per annum*	*Duration of appointment*	*Political part*
Mr. N. Bennett	Further Education Funding Council (England) Member of the Council	4,000 honorarium	3 years	Conservative
Mr. M. Fallon	Higher Education Funding Council (England) Member of the Council	4,000 honorarium	2·5 years	Conservativ

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Attorney-General how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

The Attorney-General: Adjusting clocks forms part of the normal day-to-day maintenance of my Department's buildings. No separate records are kept of the time spent on this.

Children (Legal Guardianship)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement regarding legal guardianship and adoption of children when one or both parents are deceased or no able to look after the child and when friends of the paren or parents act to adopt he child against the wishes of othe blood relatives of the child who may be surviving.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

Each case will be decided within the legal framewor and according to its individual circumstances.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what plans h has to review the law regarding legal guardianship o children by persons who are not related to the child whe grandparents willing to act as legal guardian and bring u the child are still alive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

There are no plans to review the law.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if he will review the law regarding access rights of grandparents with particular reference to cases where the child is the legal ward of people who are not related by blood or birth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

The Children Act 1989 contains provisions under which grandparents can apply to the court for contact with their grandchild. These apply whether or not the child is living with its natural parents or with others. There are no plans to review these provisions.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many of those people currently holding public appointments hold more than one appointment; and if he will list those people and the appointments they hold;

(2) how many members of public bodies have been dismissed from office since 1979.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: This information is not held centrally.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many names on the public appointments unit list currently hold public appointments.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the Government accepted the recommendations of the 1989 review of public appointments procedures that all Departments should set a target for the percentage of women in public appointments by the end of 1994; and if he will give details of targets for each Department and of current performance against it.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Departmental plans and goals for the increased representation of women on public bodies were published on 16 November 1992. A summary of these is in the Library of the House. Details of progress toward these goals can be found in *"Public Bodies 1993"*, a copy of which is also available in the Library of the House.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the public appointments which are made by Ministers are *(a)* full-time, *(b)* part-time, *(c)* paid, *(d)* unpaid, *(e)* full-time and paid, *(f)* part-time and paid, *(g)* full-time and unpaid and *(h)* part-time and unpaid.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: This information is given in the Cabinet Office publication *"Public Bodies 1993"* a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the public appointments made in 1993–94 were public appointments unit nominees; and if he will list these appointments.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: During 1993–94, the public appointments unit learned of 134 appointments which were made following nomination by the unit. A list of these appointments is as follows:

Nationalised industries and public corporations:
Bank of England—1 appointment
British Railways Board—2 appointments
London Transport Board—1 appointment

Executive bodies:
Brent Housing Action Trust—1 appointment
Broadcasting Standards Council—1 appointment
Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work—1 appointment
Horticultural Development Council—1 appointment
Monopolies and Mergers Commission—1 appointment
Museum of London—1 appointment
Occupational Pensions Board—1 appointment
Regional Flood Defence Committees—2 appointments
Remploy Ltd.—2 appointments
Royal Armouries—1 appointment
Urban Development Corporations—3 appointments
Water Customer Service Committees—2 appointments

Advisory Bodies:
Advisory Committee on Business Appointments—1 appointment
Advisory Committee on Telecommunications—3 appointments
Citizens' Charter Complaints Task Force—1 appointment
Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body—1 appointment
Electricity Consumer Committees—5 appointments
Farm Animal Welfare Council—1 appointment
London Regional Passengers Committee—2 appointments
MAFF Regional Panels—4 appointments
National Consumer Council—2 appointments
Post Office Users' Council for Scotland—1 appointment
Royal Commission for Environmental Pollution—1 appointment
Schoolteachers' Review Body—1 appointment
Scottish Consumer Council—1 appointment
Social Security Advisory Committee—2 appointments
Transport Users' Consultative Committees—8 appointments

Tribunals:
Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal—2 appointments
Copyright Tribunal—3 appointments
Meat Hygiene Appeals Tribunal—1 appointment
VAT Tribunal—1 appointment

National Health Service Bodies:
Regional and Special Health Authorities—2 appointments
District Health Authorities—3 appointments
Family Health Service Authorities—4 appointments
National Health Service Trusts–27 appointments

Executive Agency and other Management Boards:
Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research—1 appointment
Employment Services External Advisory Board—4 appointments
Insolvency Service Steering Board—1 appointment
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre Advisory Board—1 appointment
Royal Mint—1 appointment

Other Appointments:
British Waterways Board—1 appointment
CAPAM—1 appointment
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority Committee of Enquiry—1 appointment
Final Selection Board—1 appointment
General Medical Council—1 appointment
General Optical Council—2 appointments
Home Office Inspectors of Constabulary Selection Panel—1 appointment
Independent Living Fund—3 appointments
Institute of Cancer Research Audit Committee—1 appointment
International Development Research Centre (South African Workshop)—1 appointment
National Board for Crime Prevention—2 appointments
National Support Force for Children's Residential Care—1 appointment
Registry of Friendly Societies—1 appointment
Restrictive Practices Court—3 appointments
Review of Government Administration in Lithuania—1 appointment
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons—1 appointment
Royal Commonwealth Society of the Blind—1 appointment

Soil Association Organic Marketing Company Ltd—1 appointment
South African Advanced Education Project—1 appointment
US/UK Education Commission—1 appointment
Women's Issues Working Group—2 appointments

Freedom of Information

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will bring forward proposals for a Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: No. Current open government initiatives plus the further commitments set out in the White Paper on Open Government, Cm 2290, will provide a more practical alternative to freedom of information legislation.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Badgers

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to amend the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 to allow police officers powers of entry on to private land.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We have no plans to do so.

Asylum Seekers

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of those who applied for asylum *(a)* since 26 July 1993 and *(b)* since 1 January 1994, and are liable to detention under paragraph 16(1) and 16(2) of schedule 2 and paragraph 2 of schedule 3 to the Immigration Act 1971 have been detained under these provisions.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: On 28 October 1994 a total of 702 people who had sought asylum were detained. This figure includes people awaiting the setting of directions for removal following refusal of the application, as well as those whose application was under consideration or subject to appeal. Of this figure, 332 were detained under paragraph 16(1) of schedule 2, 306 under paragraph 16(2) of schedule 2 and 64 under paragraph 2 of schedule 3 of the Immigration Act 1971. Information on the percentage of those applying for asylum since 26 July 1993 and 1 January 1994, who were detailed, is available only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have been detained under the provisions of section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 *(a)* since 26 July 1993 and *(b)* since 1 January 1994; and how many asylum seekers are currently detained under those provisions.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 refers to appeals from the immigration appeals tribunal. It has no provisions for the detection of asylum seekers, but at 31 October 1994 there was one case in detention awaiting the outcome of such an appeal.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are currently detained under the Immigration Act 1971; and how long, on average, those detainees have been held.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: On 28 October 1994 a total of 702 people who had sought asylum were detained. This figure includes people awaiting the setting of directions for removal following refusal of the application, as well as those whose application was under consideration or subject to appeal. Of this figure, 216 had been in detention less than one month, 118 between one and two months, 262 between two and six months and 106 had spent longer than six months in detention.

Police

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Home Department what the actual establishment for the police was for each year since 1978 in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Northern Ireland, *(d)* the west midlands and *(e)* H division, Walsall.

Mr. Maclean: The information for England and Wales and the West Midlands police is set out in the table. The position in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The setting of divisional establishments within the West Midlands police is for the chief constable to decide.

Establishment of police service in England and Wales[1] *as at 31 December*

Year	*England and Wales*	*West Midlands Police*	*H Division (Walsall)*
1978	118,967	6,509	423
1979	119,765	6,509	423
1980	120,261	6,509	423
1981	121,353	6,684	421
1982	121,480	6,684	419
1983	121,802	6,684	419
1984	122,233	6,684	419
1985	122,457	6,684	417
1986	123,514	6,684	424
1987	124,370	6,684	427
1988	125,390	6,754	451
1989	126,592	6,830	450
1990	127,588	6,893	459
1991	128,265	6,958	461
1992	128,972	6,977	460
1993	128,859	6,977	470
1994[2]	128,954	6,991	470

[1] Includes central service, regional crime squads and inter-force units.

[2] Establishment as at 31 August 1994.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional police officers have been released to operational duties as a result of civilianisation in the past five years in each of the following areas: *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Northern Ireland, *(d)* the west midlands and *(e)* H division Walsall.

Mr. Maclean: Over the last five years—1989 to 1993—the following number of police officer posts have been civilianised thereby releasing those police officers for redeployment to other tasks. It is a matter for individual chief officers to decide how these additional resources should be used.

England and Wales - 3,327 posts
West Midlands police - 61 posts

Progress on civilianisation within Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Information on H division Walsall is not readily available.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the organisations consulted on the issues covered by the Home Office review of core police functions.

Mr. Maclean: Consultation is currently under way with the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Superintendents Association, the Police Federation, the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. My right hon. and learned Friend will decide on the appropriate level and type of wider consultation in the light of recommendations made by the review in its final report at the turn of the year.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the nature, length of time and extent of the consultation exercise he intends to carry out in response to the recommendation of the Home Office review of core police functions.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 21 July, columns *493-94*.

Drinking Ban, Yarm

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made towards imposing a ban on drinking in public places in Yarm, Cleveland.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Home Office gave provisional approval on 31 October to the making of byelaws by Stockton-on-Tees borough council prohibiting the consumption of intoxicating liquor in designated parts of Yarm and Thornaby; and to the making of similar byelaws by Yarm town council in respect of two areas under its control.

Prisons

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be announcing the findings of his review into prison day release and home leave procedure.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have reviewed the arrangements for home leave and temporary release and expect to be able to announce our detailed conclusions shortly.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average cost per prisoner place, at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 2 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on the average cost per prisoner place.

The average cost per prisoner place in 1993-94 was £22,712. This figure excludes exceptional items consisting of the costs of holding prisoners in police cells and compensation for abandonment of plans to relocate the Prison Service headquarters to Derby.

Dorset Police Authority

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department from which police authorities police officers were seconded to Dorset police authority to police the annual Conservative party conference in Bournemouth; and how many officers were seconded from each of those authorities.

Mr. Maclean: It is not the practice to provide details of security arrangements.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Howard: The following former Members have been appointed to Home Office non-departmental public bodies since 1988.

David Bellotti
Trustee of the Community Development Foundation
Expenses only
Appointed January 1992 for 3 years
Liberal Democrat

Right Hon. Lord Carlisle of Bucklow, QC
Chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
Salary £31,350
Appointed 1 March 1989 until 31 March 1995
Conservative

John Cartwright
Deputy Chairman of the Police Complaints Authority
Salary £44,750
Appointed for 3 years from 1 August 1993
SDP

Sheila Faith
Former Member of the Parole Board
Fee Paid; £139 per attendance
Appointed 1 June 1991 for 3 years
Conservative

Ben Ford
Member of the Firearms Consultative Committee
Expenses only
Appointed 1989 for 2 years
Labour

Cecil Franks
Member of the Parole Board
Fee Paid; £149 per attendance
Appointed 1 August 1994 for 2 years
Conservative

Lord Kimball
Chairman of the Firearms Consultative Committee
Expenses only
Appointed for 5 years from 1989
Conservative

Anna McCurley
Member of the Horserace Betting Levy Board
Salary £11,640
Appointed 1988 for 3 years extended until 1994
Conservative

Michael Meadowcroft
Trustee of the Community Development Foundation
Expenses only
Appointed 1986, extended until 1994
Liberal

Norman Miscampbell, QC
Member of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
Fee £246 per day
Appointed 22 March 1993 until 31 March 1995
Conservative

Lord Wyatt of Weeford
Chairman of the Horserace Totalisator Board
Salary £90,918
Appointed 1976; reappointed 1993 for 2 years
Labour

Information in respect of the parole local review committee is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The committees ceased to exist from October 1994.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Howard: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), to my hon. Friend the member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993, column *391*.

Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from Cleveland on the measures against crime in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend has himself informed us of a number of representations which he has received about the Bill, and we have also received a small number—in similar terms—direct from members of the public in Cleveland.

I am confident that the people of Cleveland generally will appreciate that fears expressed about the Bill are misplaced and that it has a valuable part to play in fighting crime and protecting the public.

Film Censorship

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to require that if the British Board of Film Classification finds it necessary to edit a section of a film under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill the board should state in full the reasons for the editing of the film.

Mr. Maclean: The British Board of Film Classification already provides the owner to the rights of a video in which it requires cuts with an explanation of those cuts. Owners who consider the decision by the board to be overly strict have a right of appeal to the video appeals committee, which has the power to vary the decision made by the board.

If in future the board reviews a work already classified before the introduction of the new statutory criteria, the owner of the work will similarly have the right of appeal against any fresh decision by the Board.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to review or change the membership of the British Board of Film Classification following the increase in the board's powers as a result of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill:

(2) if he will ensure that any proposals for changing the membership of the British Board of Film Classification will ensure that the membership reflects an accurate cross-section of society.

Mr. Maclean: The British Board of Film Classification is an independent body and my right hon. and learned Friend has no authority to determine its membership.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary for the Home Department what guidelines will be issued to the British Board of Film Classification concerning the editing and classification of films; and if they will include advice that before a scene is cut it will be viewed in the context of the entire film.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to issue any guidelines on the editing and classification of a video work. The British Board of Film Classification is an independent body and it alone is responsible for determining the classification given to any individual video work. If owners of the rights of works consider decisions by the board to be overly strict, they may appeal to the video appeals committee, itself a separate and independent body.

Bail Hostels

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many bail hostel places exist in London for *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: In the Greater London area, comprising the inner London, south-east London, south-west London, north-east London and Middlesex probation areas, there are currently a total of 349 approved hostel places. Of these, 273 are designated for men, 28 for women, and a further 48 are available for men or women as required.

Wheel Clamping

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish his findings arising from the consultations he received on wheel clamping following the issue of the consultation paper on this subject in February 1993, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 26 October, *Official Report*, column *642*.

Bail

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the most recent available statistics on the number of offences and the number of persons involved who have over the last number of years committed crimes while on bail; and what steps he is taking to deal with this problem.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the numbers offending while on bail is not collected centrally. A Home Office research report, *"RPU Report 65, Offending While on Bail; A Survey of Recent Studies"*, gives information on recent studies relating to offences while on bail. A copy of this report is available in the Library. The survey concludes that, on average, between 10 and 12 per cent. of defendants are subsequently convicted of an offence committed while on bail and nowhere was the figure more than 17 per cent. The inference from this and other studies is that more than 50,000 offences per year are committed by persons who are on bail.

The Government are committed to preventing offending on bail, through legislation, and by improving the information available to bail decision makers.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill contains seven measures to do with bail. In particular, defendants charged with offences which appear to the court to have been committed while on bail will lose the "right" to bail, and the police have been given powers, to detain to prevent offending, and to arrest without warrant where police bail is breached. The Bail (Amendment) Act 1993, which came into force in the summer, gives the prosecution a right, in certain circumstances, to appeal against the grant of bail. Additionally, the Criminal Justice Act 1993 requires the courts to consider that an offence committed on bail should be treated more seriously when sentencing.

Serious Offences

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportions of successive male cohorts have been convicted of serious offences by the age of 15, 21 and 30 years of age.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is drawn from the offenders index and is shown in the following table.

Males born in 1953, 1958, 1963, 1968 or 1973: the cumulative percentage convicted[1] at the given age[2].

Age	Born in 1953	1958	1963	1968	1973
15	12·2	13·5	12·8	10·7	5·2
21	24·2	26·4	26·9	[3]n/a	[3]n/a
30	32·5	34·0	[3]n/a	[3]n/a	[3]n/a

[1] For a "standard list" offence by the end of 1989.

[2] Percentage convicted at that age or younger.

[3] Not yet available.

Humberside Police Authority

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation processes he proposes to undertake with representatives of the Police Federation, and other trade unions representing employees of the Humberside police authority, during his deliberations on the future of police structures in the Humberside area.

Mr. Maclean: Organisations representing the police service and trades unions which represent staff working in support of the police have been invited to comment on the future arrangements for policing in Humberside.

Fire Service, Humberside

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he proposes to have with the Fire Brigades Union on the future arrangements of the fire service in the Humberside area following the abolition of Humberside county council.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As he has indicated in his reply to a question yesterday from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) my right hon. and learned Friend proposes to establish a combined fire authority for Humberside. Before reaching this decision, he received advice from a sub-committee of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council on which the Fire Brigades Union is represented. He will also be considering advice from the sub-committee about the detailed arrangements for the establishment of the combined fire authority.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of a week in *(a)* Her Majesty's prison Holloway and *(b)* a bail hostel.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The net operating cost per place per week at Her Majesty's prison Holloway in the financial year 1993–94 was £554. The average cost of a place in a bail hostel in that year was £221 per week.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* convicted and *(b)* remand prisoners there were in Her Majesty's prison Holloway in each of the past 24 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter From Derek Lewis to Mr. Peter Bottomley, dated 2 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* convicted and *(b)* remand prisoners there were in HMP Holloway in each of the past 24 months.

The information requested is given in the attached table.

Population on last day of each month at Her Majesty's Prison Holloway, August 1992–August 1994[1]

Last Day of Each Month	Untried	Convicted[2]	Total
1992			
August	160	333	493
September	156	322	478
October	145	288	433
November	134	327	461
December	111	302	413
1993			
January	120	271	391
February	124	287	411
March	126	291	417
April	127	287	414
May	134	301	435
June	150	296	446
July	160	297	457
August	161	292	453
September	167	283	450
October	186	270	456
November	183	265	448
December	155	260	415
1994			
January	167	279	446
February	192	262	454
March	188	304	492
April	163	272	435
May	153	310	463
June	183	280	463
July	197	286	483
August	193	297	490

[1] Excludes non-criminal prisoners.

[2] Includes remand convicted unsentenced and sentenced prisoners.

Jamaican Visitors

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the visitors who came into the United Kingdom on charter flights KT310 and ULE966 have returned to Jamaica after the period for which they were admitted expired; what steps are being taken to ensure that those who have overstayed in the United Kingdom beyond the date permitted for this visit are being traced with a view to deportation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Since departures from the United Kingdom are not comprehensively recorded, the information requested in the first part of the question is not available. The Immigration Service works with the police and other agencies to detect and deal with overstayers, using deportation powers where necessary. Efforts are being made to apprehend a number of passengers who arrived on the flights mentioned by my hon. Friend and are believed to have overstayed.

CND Demonstration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has had with the Metropolitan police concerning the arrangements for the CND demonstration on 29 October.

Mr. Maclean: My Department received a brief report on the demonstration after the event.

Prison Service

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Wallasey will receive a substantive reply to her letter to him dated 26 May, which was forwarded to the Prison Service, reference PO 13447/94, for reply.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have asked the Director General to ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply today.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Angela Eagle, dated 2 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking when you will receive a substantive reply to your letter of 26 May.

I sent you a substantive reply on 2 November.

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement of the performance of the Prison Service and its Director General in dealing with matters raised by hon. Members on behalf of their constituents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have asked the Director General to ensure that all Members of Parliament raising constituency cases after 17 October receive a reply within 21 days of receipt and have asked officials to introduce a new computerised monitoring system.

Special Branch

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to revise the existing guidelines on the work of a special branch.

Mr. Howard: Revised "Guidelines on Special Branch Work in Great Britain" have been sent to all chief officers of police in Great Britain. I am placing a copy of the guidelines in the Library of the House.

Code of Practice on Financial Management

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he intends to issue the code of practice on financial management under section 28(c) of the Police Act 1964, as inserted by section *15* of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994.

Mr. Howard: I have today laid before Parliament a copy of the code of practice on financial management which I have issued under section 28C of the 1964 Act. A copy of the code has been place in the Library of the House.

Amusement Arcades

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to change the law governing amusement arcades to give more power to local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* I have received some representations on this matter which I am considering.

The law is set out in section 34 and schedule 9 to the Gaming Act 1968. The grant of a permit for an amusement arcade is at the discretion of the local authority, but a permit cannot be refused without giving the applicant the opportunity of a hearing. There is no power to attach conditions to the grant of a permit. There is a right to appeal to the Crown court against refusal to grant a permit.

Renewal of permits may be refused only on certain limited grounds, such as that the authority has been denied access to inspect the premises.

Strangeways Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of incidents, giving in each case the date, type of incident with brief details, and the outcome, at Strangeways prison, Manchester since April 1994 to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 2 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for a list of incidents, giving in each case the date, type of incident with brief details, and the outcome, at Wold prison, from 6 April 1992 to the latest available date.

Incidents reported by establishments to Prison Service Headquarters fall into the two categories of "major" or "minor", as defined in Prison Service Circular Instruction 18/1988. I attach details of incidents reported by The Wold during the period in question, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Cannabis

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of those convicted of *(a)* possessing cannabis and *(b)* trafficking in cannabis were fined the maximum sum in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer on 31 October 1994]:* The information is not available in the form requested.

Prisoners, East Midlands

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* remand and *(b)* convicted prisoner were held in police cells in (i) Nottinghamshire and (ii) the east midlands in each month of 1994 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Paddy Tipping, dated 2 November 1994:

> The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of remand and convicted prisoners held in police cells in Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands in each month of 1994 to date.
>
> To date there have been no prisoners held in police cells in Nottinghamshire or the East Midlands in any month in 1994.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to bring anabolic steroids within the provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Mr. Michael Howard *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* The misuse of anabolic steroids is a matter for concern and in view of the harmful effects surrounding their misuse, including a number of serious health problems, the Government have decided to impose further controls on them, in line with a recommendation of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

We propose to change the law to make it an offence, without authority, to produce, supply, or possess or import or export with intent to supply, anabolic steroids and other similar drugs. In accordance with the recommendation of ACMD it would not, however, be an offence simply to possess these drugs in the United Kingdom. The necessary draft order under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and amending regulations to effect these changes will be brought before Parliament in due course.

The proposals deliberately target illicit suppliers and traffickers. The maximum penalties will be three months imprisonment and a £2,500 fine, or both, on summary conviction and five years or an unlimited fine, or both, on indictment.

We intend to keep under review the effectiveness of the new controls in tackling the supply and trafficking of anabolic steroids and, if it proves necessary, we shall consider even tougher measures.

SCOTLAND

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the chairs and non-executive directors of each national health service trust board indicating the gender and occupation of each individual.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am arranging for a copy of the lists to be sent to the hon. Member and placed in the Libraries of the House.

National Parks

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the advantages and disadvantages of establishing national parks in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The question of establishing national parks in Scotland has been examined many times. In 1988, Ministers invited the Countryside Commission for Scotland to investigate the management of Scotland's mountain areas. In reporting, the Commission recommended the creation of four national parks and the setting up of land management forums for the management of other, upland, areas. However, public consultation found no consensus in favour of national parks and the Government concluded that they were not satisfied that a need for national parks had been demonstrated.

In 1991, the Government established two working parties to examine the management of the Cairngorms area and of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs. These reported in 1992 and 1993 respectively and neither recommended that the national park model be followed. They each recommended management structures tailored to the areas, in particular addressing the different pressures and needs found in each. Both were put to public consultation and the Government expect shortly to indicate how they intend to proceed in relation to the reports.

Fishing Industry

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many decommissioning applications have been received from Scottish registered fishing vessels during 1994; how many were successful; if he will give a breakdown according to ports of registration; and if he will list the individual moneys made available per vessel.

Sir Hector Monro: One hundred and forty-nine applications for decommissioning grant were lodged with the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department before the closing date of 15 August; 49 of these have been successful in the tendering process and the owners of the vessels have been informed.

The following table shows the distribution of these successful bids between licence ports:

	Number
Arbroath	1
Ayr	9
Buckie	9
Campbeltown	7
Eyemouth	1
Fraserburgh	2
Lossiemouth	4
Macduff	2
Mallaig	4
Oban	1
Orkney	1
Pittenweem	1
Portree	1
Stornoway	2
Ullapool	1
Wick	3

These offers of decommissioning grant have not yet been accepted by vessel owners. Until the vessels have been scrapped and the licence entitlements surrendered, individual grant offers must remain confidential between the Department and the applicant.

Asthma

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his estimate of the number of individuals suffering from asthma in each of the past five years for each Scottish health board area;

(2) what is the estimate for the number of individuals under the age of 18 years suffering from asthama in each of the past five years in each Scottish health board area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information required to answer these questions is not centrally available.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of deaths from asthma for each year since 1990 in each Scottish health board area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

Deaths from asthma, Scotland, 1990-93

Health Board Area	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Scotland	148	161	115	129
Argyll & Clyde	9	11	4	9
Ayrshire & Arran	19	24	15	12
Borders	8	3	5	6
Dumfries & Galloway	4	3	3	3
Fife	9	11	5	9
Forth Valley	8	9	10	5
Grampian	19	19	16	7
Greater Glasgow	24	20	16	24
Highland	3	10	4	8
Lanarkshire	10	9	9	8
Lothian	18	24	17	26
Orkney	2	2	1	1
Shetland	1	—	—	1
Tayside	13	15	10	10
Western Isles	1	1	—	—

Common Services Agency (Computers)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those companies which have indicated an interest in the supply of £35 million worth of personal computers to the Common Services Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not the practice to name companies which have indicated interest since this is usually on the basis of commercial confidentiality.

Tenders have been invited by the supplies division of the Common Services Agency of the NHS in Scotland for central contracts for the supply of personal computers over the next two years. The value of business is expected to be over £5 million per year. Tendering procedures followed EC regulations and 20 companies were invited to tender. Sixteen companies have submitted tenders and these are being evaluated. The successful tenderer will be announced in due course.

Local Government

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his most recent assessment of the number of jobs which will be lost following the implementation of his proposals for local government reform; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Our estimate of the reduction in posts resulting from reform of local government in Scotland ranges from 220 to 1,800, well under 1 per cent. of the total of local government employees. The eventual outcome is of course dependent on the organisational and staffing decisions taken by the new authorities, during the shadow year and beyond.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that any new authorities created as a result of local government reorganisation should be capable of directly providing the full range of public and support services within their own resources.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's policy, as set out in the White Paper *"Shaping the Future—The New Councils"* Cm 2267, is that the proposed new councils should have available a range of service delivery options, including direct provision, joint arrangements of various kinds with other councils and contracting with external suppliers. It will be for each new council to decide how best it can fulfil its statutory obligations with the maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy not to implement changes to local government structures which are likely to place jobs at risk.

Mr. Stewart: It has never been a policy of this Government to place jobs at risk. The reform of local government in Scotland is intended to make councils more responsive to the wishes of their citizens, and more effective in the delivery of services. With the removal of unnecessary duplication, it seems likely that fewer staff will be required in the new structure. But we estimate that the reduction in posts will be significantly less than 1 per cent. and with sensible planning by authorities most of this could be found by natural wastage and early retirement measures. Large job losses would imply that local government is currently overmanned.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent assessment he has made of the extent to which his proposals for local government reform would require joint arrangements between local authorities and the contracting of functions in order to maintain both services and facilities at their current levels.

Mr. Stewart: Under the proposed new local government structure, councils will, as now, have a range of options available to them in terms of how they carry out their functions. These will include entering into joint arrangements of various kinds with other councils and contracting with external suppliers. It will be for each new council to decide how best it can fulfil its statutory obligations with the maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is his intention to ensure that, following the implementation of his proposals for local government reform, a package of staff protection and compensation measures will be available which will be at least as beneficial to staff as those arrangements which were put into practice after the last reorganisation of local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill provides that staff who transfer by order will do so on existing terms and conditions of service. In addition, there exists an extensive framework of employment protection legislation, much of which was not available at the time of the last reorganisation of local government in Scotland. The Secretary of State is currently considering what compensation arrangements should apply in the light of the advice he has received from the Staff Advisory Committee, now the shadow Staff Commission, the views expressed by local authorities in response to consultation and the proposals for England and Wales. Draft regulations are expected to be published by the end of the year.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to establish a mandatory national framework to maintain continuity of employment for those affected by changes in local government as a result of his proposals, together with full protection of terms and conditions of employment and service; if he will provide sufficient resources, in addition to those required for the maintenance of services at their present levels, to ensure that such protection is available to all of the affected employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: In addition to the protection afforded by existing employment law, the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill provides specifically that staff who transfer by order will do so with their existing terms and conditions intact. The Bill also includes safeguards with regard to continuity of service of local government employees. The protection which will be afforded by the Act, following Royal Assent, and by existing employment legislation will place legal requirements and obligations on new authorities which will be taken into account in the local government finance settlements for 1995–96 and subsequent years.

Super-quarry, Lingarabay

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the likely costs to the Government of the public inquiry into the proposed super-quarry at Lingarabay in the Hebrides; and if he will consider contributing to the costs which will be incurred by the Western Isles island council in making representations to that inquiry.

Mr. Stewart: The latest estimate of the likely costs to the Government of the public local inquiry into the proposed super-quarry at Lingarabay is £120,000.

The matter of contributing to the costs which will be incurred by the Western Isles island council in participating in the inquiry has been the subject of correspondence between, among others, my right hon. Friend and the convener. He has considered the request carefully but has made it clear that he is unable to make an exception to the statutory requirement for such costs to be met by the council.

Historic Scotland Agency

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has completed the review of the Historic Scotland executive egency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have reviewed Historic Scotland at the end of its first three years as an executive agency and have concluded that agency status should continue. Historic Scotland's performance has been evaluated, and it has taken significant steps forward, in particular:

it has consistently achieved almost all of its targets

it has made significant improvements in the delivery of services to all its customers.

Historic Scotland's framework document has been revised and I have placed copies in the Libraries of both Houses.

Tourist Boards

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the *(a)* chairs and *(b)* non-executive directors of each tourist board, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Area tourist boards in Scotland are established by local authorities under discretionary powers. They are generally either associations or companies. Members of their committees are mainly either appointed as representatives of local authorities or are elected from within the tourism industry membership. I am arranging for a copy of the current lists to be sent to the hon. Member and placed in the Libraries of the House.

Land Ownership and Use

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much land, in hectares, is owned by the Crown Commission in Scotland; and if he will publish a breakdown in terms of *(a)* forestry, *(b)* agricultural land in productive use, *(c)* agricultural land in set-aside, *(d)* sporting land, *(e)* inland waters, *(f)* coastal waters, *(g)* urban land and property and *(h)* crofting land.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* Each year the Crown Estate Commissioners publish an annual report which contains a schedule of all Crown Estate properties including a breakdown by Scottish regions and individual estates.

At 31 March 1994 the total acreage of agriculture and forestry lands held by the Crown Estate in Scotland amounted to 34,947 hectares. This comprised predominantly, land let through agricultural tenancies and included areas also used for sporting purposes. Principal forestry areas amounted to around 4,290 hectares.

The Crown Estate owns approximately half of the foreshore and almost all of the seabed around the coast of Scotland although ownership does not extend to fresh water lochs.

The urban holdings in the ownership of the Crown Estate amounts to some 10 hectares with a further 97,500 sq ft of office space. No land is held under crofting tenure.

Rent-to-mortgage Scheme

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the total cost for *(a)* publicity and *(b)* administration of the rent-to-mortgage scheme since the date when this policy was first implemented; and how many tenants in each sector of public housing have (i) applied to take part in the scheme and (ii) signed an agreement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* Advertising of the pilot rent-to-mortgage scheme in spring 1991 and spring 1992 cost £381,000 and some 21,000 responses requesting further information were received. The right to buy and the statutory rent-to-mortgage—introduced in September 1993—were promoted together in campaigns in autumn 1993 and spring 1994, at a cost of £512,000, and over 12,400 responses were received.

The administration of the rent-to-mortgage scheme is a matter for local authorities, Scottish Homes and the new town development corporations; information on administration costs is not held centrally.

The number of applications to purchase and complete sales under the rent-to-mortgage scheme up to July 1994 by each sector is shown in the table:

Rent-to-mortgage in Scotland

	Applications	*Sales*
Local authorities	1,467	457
Scottish Homes	737	346
New towns	38	61
	2,242	864

The Scottish Homes application total includes some in respect of New Town houses.

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what conditions in relation to private finance have been attached to the granting of capital consent for building the new royal infirmary of Edinburgh;

(2) what are the general implications of the involvement of private finance in the building of the new royal infirmary of Edinburgh for *(a)* the public sector borrowing requirement and *(b)* future current expenditure;

(3) what are the implications for private beds of the involvement of private finance in the building of the new royal infirmary of Edinburgh;

(4) what are the implications for ownership of the involvement of private finance in the building of the new royal infirmary of Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* Ministers are currently considering Lothian health board's proposals for acute services including the building of a new royal infirmary and an announcement will be made shortly. The Edinburgh Royal Infirmary NHS trust is currently exploring the scope for the private financing of a new hospital, should approval to this development be given. Meanwhile, no decisions on private finance has been taken.

Children (Legislation)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the difficulties he has identified with introducing a children's Bill for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* Work is in hand to prepare the necessary legislation and my right hon. Friend has in mind to introduce it when parliamentary time is available.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has come to a decision on the scope of legislation for children.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The legislation on children, which is in preparation, will be based on the proposals set out in the White Paper "Scotland's Children", Cm 2286, and will also draw on those proposals in the Scottish Law Commission's report on "Family Law", Scot Law Com No 135, 1992, relating to children.

Health Care International

Mr. Worthington: to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that Health Care International in Clydebank is using national health service pay and conditions for its staff.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* Since the authorisation of the building of the Health Care International hospital at Clydebank was granted in 1987, NHS trusts have been introduced with the freedom to determine the terms and conditions of service for the majority of their staff. HCI is aware of the principles which underlie the authorisation.

Dentists

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the effect of the current national health service terms on whether dentists in Scotland are withdrawing from national health service work or seeking to increase their private practice.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* Since the current dental contract was introduced on 1 October 1990, the number of dentists on health board lists have increased from 1,626 to 1,757. General dental practitioners are independent contractors who are free to choose whether they wish to join a health board dental list to provide NHS services, and to decide whether to give NHS treatment to each individual patient. No information is available on dentists' private practices.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what projects Britain's contribution to the Liberian trust fund has been spent.

Mr. Baldry: We have contributed $1 million to the UN voluntary trust fund for Liberia, including

> $251,000 on a public information campaign to encourage national reconciliation and to facilitate disarmament; and
>
> $65,000 on generators for the University of Liberia and JFK hospital.

The balance has been earmarked for emergency assistance to persons affected by the fighting, a demobilisation programme, trauma counselling and further support to the public information campaign.

Conference on Women

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the leader of the British delegation to the UN conference on women in Beijing in 1995, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), will support and promote in Beijing the declaration of the UN conference on population and development in Cairo.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom delegation to the fourth UN world conference on women in Peking will follow Government policy in relation to the programme of action adopted at Cairo. Its composition has yet to be determined.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Overseas Development Administration's policy document *"Children by Choice not Chance"*, will be supported and promoted by the British delegation at the UN conference on women in Beijing in 1995.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom delegation to the fourth UN world conference on women in Peking in 1995 will support Government policy, including those in the booklet *"Children by Choice, not Chance—Meeting the Challenge"*.

Scholarships

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the number of nationalities of students on Chevening scholarships in each year since 1985; and if he will list the number and nationalities of students funded by the Commonwealth scholarship and fellowship plan in each year since 1985;

(2) what was the number and nationality of students on Overseas Development Administration shared scholarships in each year since 1985.

Mr. Baldry: The information currently available has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

International (Atomic Energy Agency)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what uses Overseas Development Administration funding of the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1992–93 was put.

Mr. Baldry: In 1992–93 the Overseas Development Administration contributed towards 23 separate research projects aimed at encouraging the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in developing countries who are signatories of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Bilateral Technical Co-operation

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the consultants, *(b)* the tasks for which they were employed and *(c)* the payments made to them from the Overseas Development Administration budget for bilateral technical co-operation in (i) 1992–93 and (ii) 1993–94.

Mr. Baldry: A list of the consultants, the projects on which they were engaged with the value of the contracts, has been placed in the Library of the House. Details of the actual payments made to each consultant could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Nepal (Dam)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the estimated risks to the success of the Arun III hydro-power project in Nepal from *(a)* glacier lake outburst flow, *(b)* earthquakes and *(c)* possible future irrigation or hydro-electric developments upstream in Tiber; and what efforts are being made by the projects planners to ensure that any such risks to the success of the dam and the prosperity of Nepal are fully researched and minimised.

Mr. Baldry: The geological risks and impact on upstream developments have been studied and taken into account in the design of the project. An independent panel of experts has been involved with the design, and in advising on safety aspects as well as geological, hydraulic, seismic, structural and environmental aspects.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has that the Arun III project in Nepal will contribute to the development of technical and managerial capacity in the Nepali private sector.

Mr. Baldry: The Nepalese authorities have drawn on local private sector expertise in preparing the project; and local staff will be responsible for a substantial proportion of the supervision contract. In addition, the Government of Nepal are committed to facilitating private sector investment in the power sector. The proposed project includes a facility to strengthen the capacity of the private sector to undertake feasibility studies and to provide partial financing in selected cases.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as to whether the rate of return, quoted in the World bank's staff appraisal report, as expected for the Arun III hydro-power project in Nepal, is a sufficient economic return to justify a World bank decision to fund the project.

Mr. Baldry: We are currently assessing the bank's appraisal of this project, including the economic analysis and justification.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what grounds the World bank has not established an inventory of the species at risk from the planned Arun III hydro-power project.

Mr. Baldry: One of the volumes in the environmental impact study, which was an important element in the bank's appraisal and was carried out by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, is devoted to a survey and catalogue of biodiversity in the Arun basin.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the World bank will make a final decision on funding for the Arun III dam project in Nepal.

Mr. Baldry: A date has not yet been fixed for consideration of this project proposal by the bank's board of directors.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis the Overseas Development Administration and the United Kingdom executive director to the World bank decide what constitutes a least-cost approach to meeting energy needs when evaluating projects; and if he will place in the Library the cost benefit analysis and least-cost study on the Arun III hydro-power project in Nepal.

Mr. Baldry: The least-cost approach to generation expansion and cost benefit analysis are standard project appraisal techniques employed by the bank. A copy of the least-cost generation expansion plan, excluding the detailed technical annexes, is being placed in the Libraries of the House. Under existing rules of procedure, the bank's appraisal report remains confidential for the time being; but a copy will be placed in the Libraries after board approval of the project.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis a comparative assessment of alternatives to the Arun III project in Nepal was performed; and what conclusions were reached regarding the suitability of small-scale and mini-hydro options for tapping the power potential of Nepal.

Mr. Baldry: The bank's appraisal report considers the option of smaller hydro-power schemes as an alternative investment strategy and concludes that the overall balance points in favour of the Arun project.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by the World bank to ensure that the Nepal electricity authority has the institutional capacity to manage and recover revenue from a completed Arun III hydro-power project.

Mr. Baldry: The Nepal Electricity Authority has engaged consultants to help it adopt measures to strengthen its financial management and cost recovery, including reducing system losses and improved revenue collection performance. The Asian development bank intends to provide technical assistance to the NEA to strengthen its environmental unit.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether the proposed Arun III dam project in Nepal is consistent with the country assistance strategy developed for Nepal by the world bank.

Mr. Baldry: This is among the issues covered in the staff appraisal report and is being taken into account in our assessment of the proposal.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of Nepali citizens are expected to benefit from access to the power generated by the Arun III hydro-power project, if completed.

Mr. Baldry: The project is designed to help meet the growth in demand for power in Nepal as a whole, for industrial users and domestic consumers alike. The World bank estimates that currently only 9 per cent. of Nepal's population of 20 million has access to electricity, and that this share is expected to double by the end of the project period.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guarantees have been provided to the World bank as to whether India will buy the excess energy to be generated by the Arun III hydro-power project planned in Nepal, and to ensure prompt payment for any electricity India undertakes to buy from Nepal.

Mr. Baldry: The project is not designed as a power export project, but to meet Nepal's domestic energy needs.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives the United Kingdom executive director of the World bank has taken regarding the development of the World bank's cost-accounting system for the World bank; and what input he has made to that development.

Mr. Baldry: The task force on portfolio management identified weaknesses in the bank's consideration of risk and sensitivity analysis in its loan appraisals. As a response to that report bank management are producing new guidelines on the use of risk/sensitivity analysis. The United Kingdom executive director has been active in pressing the bank to undertake full and thorough follow-up to the task force recommendations.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the early retirement of Martin Karcher, division chief for the south Asia region in the World bank.

Mr. Baldry: We are not in a position to comment on Mr. Karcher's early retirement.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the type of cost accounting methodology now applied by the World bank to the loans in its portfolio.

Mr. Baldry: The World bank applies well-established techniques of economic and financial analysis on all its loans, including cost benefit and cost effectiveness analysis where appropriate.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the total British contribution to the funds of the World bank was invested in the Sardar Sarova dam before the World bank withdrew finance from the project.

Mr. Baldry: The bank's board of directors approved an IBRD loan and two IDA credits for the Sardar Sarovar dam project and associated canal in March 1985. IBRD shareholder capital is not used to finance bank loans directly, but as a guarantee for the bank's borrowings on the international capital markets. In 1985, the United Kingdom held 6 per cent. of the IBRD's subscribed capital. At the end of June 1994, the share was 4·92 per cent. The IDA credits were committed under the seventh replenishment of IDA, the United Kingdom share of which was 6·70 per cent.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Monopolies and Mergers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what referrals to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission within his remit Her Majesty's Government have made since the creation of his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: None. All referrals to the MMC are a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Departmental Finances

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes he proposes to make to his Department's cash limits and running costs limits for 1994–95.

Mr. Dorrell: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates for class XI, the following changes will be made:

i) The cash limit for vote 1 (museums and galleries) will be increased by £100,000 from £223,022,000 to £223,122,000 to cover the costs of the transitional funding of the Yorkshire mining museum.

ii) The cash limit for vote 2 (arts) will be increased by £605,000 from £194,974,000 to £195,579,000. The increase provides for an additional £70,000 for research, surveys and other services and an increase of £535,000 in respect of the capital end-year flexibility scheme to meet residual Government contributions towards the costs for theatre restoration. This increase will be partly offset by savings on class XI, vote 3 (libraries), where the cash limit will be reduced by £70,000 from £139,373,000 to £139,303,000 in respect of a saving of expenditure on the public library development incentive scheme.

iii) The cash limit for vote 6 (Royal Palaces, Historic Royal Palaces Agency, Royal Parks Agency, historic buildings, ancient monuments and the national heritage) will be reduced by £100,000 from £195,062,000 to £194,962,000 to reflect a transfer to the Scottish Office to cover costs arising from a state visit to Edinburgh.

iv) The net increase in provision will be charged to the reserve, and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Satellite Broadcasting

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his Department's policy towards monopoly provision of satellite broadcasting in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: Any operator is free to establish a satellite service provided it meets the conditions laid out in the Broadcasting Act 1990. At present 87 non-domestic satellite broadcast services are licensed by the Independent Television Commission.

"Multimedia in the Home"

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will obtain a copy of the Inteco report "Multimedia in the Home"; and if he will make a statement on its implications for his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department is aware of the report's findings. Reports of this type are considered on a regular basis in order to monitor developments within the broadcasting and media industries.

British Broadcasting Corporation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will bring forward proposals to establish the BBC in statute law and to end its status as the creation of executive power; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Our White Paper on the future of the BBC concluded that the BBC should continue to be established by royal charter, in line with the recommendation of the National Heritage Select Committee.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes to the BBC are currently under consideration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We published our proposals for the future of the BBC in a White Paper on 6 July.

Cross-media Ownership

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those rules relating to cross-media ownership between television companies and newspapers which do not apply to non-domestic satellites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Restrictions on the proprietors of newspapers owning licensed broadcast services are set out in part IV of schedule 2 to the Broadcasting Act 1990. There are no restrictions relating to cross-holdings between newspaper proprietors and non-domestic satellite stations beyond the general provisions set out in chapter 1 of part 1 of the Act.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to publish the White Paper on cross-media ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government are considering the way ahead on media ownership and will make an announcement when these deliberations are concluded.

Broadcasting and Media

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what encouragement his Department is giving to develop digital services.

Mr. Dorrell: On 14 July, the Government announced plans for the introduction of digital terrestrial television. Together with the Department of Trade and Industry, my Department is continuing to look at how best to take advantage of the opportunities digital television offers.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when his Department expects to bring forward proposals arising from the BBC White Paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Comments on the White Paper were invited by 31 October. I will consider the comments received before preparing the new royal charter and agreement which will govern the BBC's activities in the future. I expect to prepare these documents during the course of 1995.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the latest information on his Department's exploration with the BBC of the privatisation of transmission services.

Mr. Dorrell: I have appointed consultants to consider the options for the future of the BBC's transmission service, and to make recommendations.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest published figures for the Department of National Heritage—that is, those given in "Public Bodies 1993"—are: out of a total of 651 public appointees 142 or 22 per cent. are held by women. The 1994 figures are still being collected and will be announced in due course.

Freedom of Information

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what are his Department's responsibilities on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in respect of freedom of information; and if he will make a statement on the current policy;

(2) if he will list the developments in freedom of information introduced by his Department since its creation.

Mr. Dorrell: In common with other Government Departments the DNH is implementing the code of practice on access to Government information introduced in April 1994. In response to this the Department has drawn up its own procedural note on the operation of the code and I am placing a copy in the Library of the House.

Audio-visual Media

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what response his Department has made to the European Community Green Paper on audio-visual media; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The United Kingdom's response to the European Commission's Green Paper on EU audio-visual policy was sent to the Commission on 10 August. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all those organisations for which his Department has oversight other than the BBC and not established in statute by royal charter or other executive powers.

Mr. Dorrell: Most of the non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department were set up under statute or royal charter. The exceptions are;

The Geffrye Museum, the Horniman Museum, the Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry and the National Film and Television School, all of which are companies limited by guarantee,

The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, set up by Royal Warrant in 1869 (reissued in 1959),

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, set up by Royal Warrant in 1908 (reissued in 1963 and 1992),

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, set up by Royal Warrant in 1908 (reissued in 1963 and 1992),

The Wallace Collection, established by Treasury Minute in 1987, and

National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, established under the Merseyside Museums and Galleries Order 1986.

The following advisory bodies were set up by the Department under its administrative powers;

The Advisory Committee on the Government Art Collection
The Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck sites
The Advisory Committee on the Public Lending Right
The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art
The Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation
The Royal Parks Advisory Group
The Historic Royal Palaces Advisory Group
The Treasure Trove Reviewing Committee
The Public Library Development Incentive Scheme Advisory Committee.

Information Super-highways

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consideration his Department has given to the report by Vice-President Gore on governmental involvement in the development of super-highways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government are aware of Vice-President Gore's views, and aim to help the United Kingdom industries to be well placed to take advantage of the new technologies.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave as Financial Secretary to the Treasury to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993, *Official Report* column *387*.

Archaeological Services

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he intends to take as a result of the review by Capita Consultants into the provision of archaeological services on London.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department commissioned the report, in partnership with the Museum of London, English Heritage and the Corporation of London, following a request from the museum to help the parties concerned to examine the problem. Those parties now have a copy of the consultant's report and it is for them to take what action they think appropriate. In this respect, responsibility for policy on archaeology in London rests with English Heritage, while the Museum of London has responsibility for the Museum of London archaeology service.

Clock Adjustment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many man hours were taken up by adjusting the clocks throughout his Department.

Mr. Sproat: My Department does not keep records of such estimates.

Film Industry

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to meet representatives of the British film industry to discuss development of the sector.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* I met the chairman and vice-chairman of the Producers' Alliance for Cinema and Television on 27 September and the chairman and director of the British Film Institute on 18 October. I have no plans to meet other representatives of the industry in the near future.

Channel 5

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if companies wishing to bid for the Channel 5 licence are allowed to do so on the basis of a digital transmission system; and if such bids will receive full consideration by the Independent Television Commission.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* The award of the Channel 5 licence is a matter for the Independent Television Commission. Procedures for awarding licences are set out in the Broadcasting Act 1990. The invitation to apply for Channel 5 issued by the ITC does not preclude an applicant from proposing the use of digital transmission. I am sure that any application made on this basis will receive due consideration.

Public Appointments

Mr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval including those not listed in *"Public Bodies"*; and if will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* I am responsible for making 375 appointments. In addition, a further 49 appointments require my approval.

Of the appointments which I am responsible for making, 178 are to executive bodies, 144 to advisory bodies and 53 are other appointments. Of those which require my approval all are "other appointments" by the definition used in the question.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Appointments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *423*, if he will provide a statistical analysis showing the (i) number of people and (ii) proportion of the total register who have volunteered information that they are members of *(a)* the Conservative party, *(b)* the Liberal Democrats, *(c)* the Labour party, *(d)* the Ulster Unionist party, *(e)* the Social Democratic and Labour party, *(f)* Plaid Cymru, *(g)* the Scottish National party, *(h)* the Democratic Unionist party, *(i)* the Popular Unionist party and *(j)* the Green party.

The Prime Minister: Nominees on the public appointments unit's register are not required to give any details of their political affiliation, but can volunteer it if they wish. Some 87·5 per cent. of nominees do not volunteer any information, and therefore no information about their affiliation is held.

The analysis of those who have volunteered to the public appointments unit the nature of their political affiliation is as follows:

Political party	*Number*	*Percentage*
Conservative	409	8·0
Labour	132	2·6
Liberal Democrats	50	1·0
Social Democratic Party	46	0·9
Green Party	1	0·02
Welsh Nationalist	1	0·02
Total	639	12·5
Total number on register	5,095	

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *423*, if his Office *(a)* adds information concerning the political affiliation of nominees on the public appointments unit's register, when it is known but not volunteered or *(b)* have access to other lists that provide such information.

The Prime Minister: No.

"Questions of Procedure for Ministers"

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to revise "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so at present. If the Committee on Standards in Public Life makes recommendations in respect of the conduct of Ministers I will, of course, consider whether "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" should be revised in the light of the recommendations.

Mr. Ghazanfer Ali

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the current position in the case of Mr. Ghazanfer Ali detained in prison in Azad Kashmir.

The Prime Minister: We continue to raise this case with the Pakistani authorities and await their response. Officials discussed it informally with Sardar Qayyum Khan of Azad Kashmir on 31 October.

Engagements

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for the evening of 28 May 1993.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* I attended a function in my constituency.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Haiti

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Haiti.

Mr. Baldry: We welcome the return of President Aristide, and congratulate the UN Secretary-General and the Organisation of American States on their efforts to restore the democratically elected Government.

The situation in Haiti remains calm. We hope that conditions will continue to improve, promoting regional stability, and that the return of President Aristide will bring about an end to human rights abuses in Haiti, and engender an atmosphere of reconciliation, allowing the return home to a secure environment of the thousands of migrants who fled Haiti during the years since the coup.

Rwanda

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: The situation in Rwanda is relatively stable, although still tense. The new Government have declared their intention of encouraging refugees and displaced persons to return home. We are doing what we can to assist this process.

Palestine

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to assist the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian people.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support the continuing negotiations and will provide £75 million to the Palestinians over the next three years.

Russia

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to promote the cause of democratic reform in Russia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall continue to give our full support to the process of democratic and economic reform in Russia through the know-how fund and other means. The know-how fund, through its programme for democracy, has funded a number of projects this year including a symposium for newly elected Duma deputies.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters in regard to nuclear terrorism, nuclear safeguards and nuclear materials control were raised with the Russian Government on his recent visit to Russia.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 20 October 1994]:* Nuclear matters were not discussed during my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's visit to Russia.

These issues were last discussed bilaterally with the Russians in the ambit of President Yeltsin's recent visit to the United Kingdom. Since then there has been a meeting of the Group of Eight informal consultation on non-proliferation at which the question of the smuggling of nuclear material was discussed.

Mozambique

Mr. Hunter: To ask the secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has recently made to, or received from, the main political parties in Mozambique in respect of the peace process and general election in that country.

Mr. Baldry: We have made continuous ministerial and other diplomatic contacts to promote the peace process. On 27 October my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker wrote to Mr. Dhlakama, the President of RENAMO to urge him to withdraw his boycott of the elections. I am pleased to say that he did so, following this and wider international pressure.

Eastern Europe

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions this year he has visited countries in eastern Europe to discuss democratic development there.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This year my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has paid visits to Poland and the Czech Republic. He has visited Russia three times, and has also been to Ukraine, Latvia and Estonia.

South Africa

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and South Africa.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom's relations with the new South Africa are excellent. They are built on long-standing historical, personal, economic and cultural ties. The Government are committed to supporting the revival of South Africa's economy, which is essential for its reconstruction and development, and promoting bilateral trade and investment.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's visit to South Africa in September included the announcement of a "fellowship for the future". We have established a practical framework for co-operation across a wide range of activities. My right hon. Friend and President Mandela signed agreements on aid, investment protection and military assistance. Our opportunity South Africa campaign aims at expanding our strong trade and investment base. We have also proposed practical support for health care, education, community policing, small business development, agriculture, sport, science and technology, and public administration. Parliamentary and ministerial links are being established in all these areas.

The Government are delighted that South Africa has joined the family of democratic nations and returned to the Commonwealth. The next task is to promote the stability and growth which will be essential for fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of all South Africa's people. All of Africa will benefit from that process.

Pakistan

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on British relations with Pakistan.

Mr. Baldry: Our relations with Pakistan are in excellent shape. We look forward to Ms Bhutto's visit next month.

Kuwait

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives Her Majesty's Government are taking to meet the threat from Sadam Hussein towards Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We responded rapidly to the threat from Saddam Hussein by deploying HMS Cornwall and HMS Cardiff, six additional Tornado GRI aircraft and the Spearhead battalion group to the region.

The UN Security Council unanimously passed SCR 949 on 15 October which demanded the complete withdrawal of all Iraqi military units. Iraq should not redeploy troops or enhance its military capacity in southern Iraq. Iraq should be in no doubt of our resolve.

European Union

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he considers it appropriate at this stage to rule out the use of a referendum to determine future questions affecting the terms of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union.

Mr. David Davis: We have not ruled out a referendum, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear that he is not in general in favour of referendums in our parliamentary democracy.

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards enlargement of the European Community.

Mr. David Davis: The European Union signed a treaty of accession with four EFTA states on 24 June this year. The people of Austria and Finland have voted in favour of joining: provided that the referendums in Sweden on 13 November and in Norway on 28 November are also positive, and that remaining parliamentary procedures in those countries are satisfactorily completed, all four will accede on 1 January 1995. On further European Union enlargement, the Copenhagen European Council in June

1993 agreed that the associated countries of central and eastern Europe that so wish will join as soon as they are able to assume the obligations of membership by satisfying the economic and political conditions required. The Corfu European Council in June 1994 agreed that the next phase of enlargement would involve Cyprus and Malta.

Former Soviet Union Countries

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with former Soviet Union countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom enjoys good bilateral relations with all the countries which gained independence following the break-up of the Soviet Union. The United Kingdom continues to support political and economic reform in those countries as the best way to achieve stability and prosperity in the region.

UK Foreign Policy (Far East)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit the far east to discuss the implications of United Kingdom foreign policy.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visited Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand and Vietnam in September. He has no immediate plans to visit the region again.

Kashmir

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet with groups in the United Kingdom campaigning for a resolution to the problems of Indian-held Kashmir.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no current plans to meet such groups.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future of Kashmir.

Mr. Baldry: We believe that the best way forward on Kashmir should involve simultaneous progress on dialogue between India and Pakistan as provided for under the 1972 Simla agreement; an improvement in human rights in Kashmir and a genuine political process there; and a clear cessation of external support for violence in Kashmir.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has promoted to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in advance of its 1995 review and renewal conference.

Mr. David Davis: We are working hard for the indefinite and unconditional extension in unamended form of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in 1995. We believe such an extension will send a clear message to would-be proliferators of the international community's resolve to prevent any proliferation of nuclear weapons. We are actively seeking with our European Union partners the universality of the treaty, which, with 165 members, is the most widely adhered to arms control agreement in history. We support work underway in the International Atomic Energy Agency to strengthen the agency's safeguards system which is key to the successful implementation of the treaty.

Taiwan

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Her Majesty Government's relationship with Taiwan.

Mr. Goodlad: Although the United Kingdom has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan, we attach great importance to our commercial, cultural and educational links. United Kingdom exports for the period January to August 1994 were £448 million, an increase of over 13 per cent. compared with the same period in 1993. The British trade and cultural office in Taipei is being reinforced with additional staff to develop these links.

Middle East

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in the middle east peace process.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support the middle east peace process and welcome the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, recent signs of progress on the Syrian track and continuing negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the likely impact of the closure of the Gaza strip and the west bank on the middle east peace process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Closure of the Gaza strip and west bank has a serious effect on the economy of the occupied territories. It is estimated that more than 60,000 Palestinians go to work in Israel from the occupied territories, and that about one third of the gross product of the territories comes from the wages of Palestinians working in Israel. We are pleased to hear that the closure was being lifted gradually from 1 November.

Hong Kong

Mr. Denis MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to bring trade union law in Hong Kong into line with International Labour Office conventions.

Mr. Goodlad: Trade union law in Hong Kong is already broadly in line with the standards specified in international labour conventions. For example, the five ILCs relevant to trade unions which have been ratified by the United Kingdom have been applied to, and implemented in, Hong Kong, mostly without modification. The Hong Kong Government review trade union law regularly to keep it in line with international standards.

China

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to hold discussions with the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met the Chinese Foreign Minister in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly last month. He has no plans to do so again in the immediate future.

Ganges and Bramaputra Rivers

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with India and Bangladesh about their dispute about the water from the Ganges and Bramaputra rivers.

Mr. Baldry: None. This situation can be resolved only through bilateral negotiations between the Indian and Bangladeshi Governments. I hope that both sides can work towards an agreement soon.

Angola

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in the Angolan peace talks.

Mr. Baldry: The Angolan Government and Unita initialled a peace agreement in Lusaka on 31 October. The next step is for the two sides to hold talks on military issues, including a ceasefire. After these have been concluded, the parties are then expected to sign the agreement.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *391*.

Bombing (Tel Aviv)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Israeli Government concerning their decision to seal off the Gaza strip and west bank in response to the Tel Aviv bombing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We raised with the Israeli Government the closure of the west bank and Gaza strip. We are pleased to hear that the closure is being lifted gradually from 1 November.

North Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations or communications he had from the United States Secretary of State prior to the agreement with North Korea over its nuclear programme; and what assistance or opportunities are available to Her Majesty's Government or British companies to meet the aims of the agreement.

Mr. David Davis: We have been in frequent contact with the United States at both ministerial and official level throughout the crisis over North Korea's nuclear programme. We have welcomed the framework agreement signed by the United States and North Korea on 21 October. As part of that agreement, the United States has undertaken to put together an international consortium, the Korean Energy Development Organisation, to provide North Korea with two light water reactors and to help it meet its energy needs while those reactors are under construction. We have told the Americans that we are prepared to offer technical advice to KEDO, but that no United Kingdom funds will be available. We shall, of course, facilitate the involvement of any United Kingdom companies that wish to bid for any part of the reactor project business. We understand that South Korea and Japan will play a central role in the financing and construction of the reactors.

School Fees

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs how many members of his Department are entitled to have school fees paid from public funds; what is the total current cost; and which schools receive the payments.

Mr. Goodlad: All Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff serving overseas, or expecting to serve overseas again after no more than five years in the United Kingdom, are entitled to boarding school allowance. A total of 726 diplomatic service and Overseas Development Administration staff currently receive the allowance, at a total cost of £8,690,277 in 1993–94. A list of the schools receiving payments is given below.

Officers whose children accompany them overseas are entitled to educate them at public expense where no suitable free schooling is available. Details of the number of officers receiving this local allowance or of the schools involved are not available. The total cost in respect of diplomatic service officers in 1993–94 is £2,310,477. There are not comparable figures for the ODA.

Abbotsholme School
Aberlour House
Ackworth School
Aldenham School
Aldro School
All Hallows School
Ampleforth College (Giling CS)
Ardingly College
Ashdown House School
Ashford School
Ashley Moor College
Ashville College
Atlantic College
Badminton School
Barrow Hills School
Battle Abbey School
Beaconhurst Grange
Bearwood College
Beaudesert Park
Bedales School
Bedford High School
Bedford School
Bedgebury School
Bembridge School
Benenden School
Bentham Grammer School
Berkhamsted School
Berkhamsted School for Girls
Bethany School
Bishop's Stortford College
Bloxham School
Blundell's School
Bootham School

Box Hill School
Bradfield College
Brambletye School
Bramcote School
Brandeston Hall
Brentwood School
Brighton College
Brockhurst
Bromsgrove School
Brooke House 6th Form
Bryanston School
Burgess Hill School
Bushey Place School
Caldicott
Cambridge Arts Tutors
Cambridge Centre
Canford School
Cannock School
Cargilfield
Carmel College
Caterham School
Catteral Hall
Charmandean School
Charterhouse School
Charters-Ancaster College
Cheadle Hulme
Cheltenham College Junior School
Cheltenham Ladies College
Chichester College of Tech
Christ College, Brecon
Christs College, London
Claremont Fan Court School
Clarendon School
Clayesmore School
Clifton College
Cobham Hall
Cokethorpe School
College of the Sacred Hearts
Combe Bank School
Cottesmore School
Cranbrook School
Cranleigh School
Croftdown School
Croftinloan School
Crown Woods Lodge
Cumnor House
d'Overbroeck's
Daniel Stewart's and Melville
Dauntseys School
Dean Close School
Dollar Academy
Dorset House School
Douai School
Dover College
Dover College Prep School
Downe House School
Downside School
Dragon School
Duff Millar 6 Form College
Duke of York's
Dulwich College
Dulwich College Prep School
Durham School
East Court
Eastbourne College
Edgarley Hall
Edgeborough
Edgehill College
Edinburgh Academy
Edinburgh House School
Ellerslie School
Ellesmere College
Elmhurst Ballet School
Elstree College
Embley Park School
Epsom College
Eton College
Farleigh School
Farlington School
Farringtons School
Felixstowe College
Felsted School
Feltonfleet School
Fernden School
Fernhill Manor
Ferrington Hall Prep School
Fettes College
Forest School
Forres School
Framlingham College
Freefolk House
Frensham Heights School
Friars School
Friends School
Fulneck Girls School
Giggleswick School
Glenalmond College
Godstowe School
Gordons School
Gordonstoun School
Grace Dieu Manor School
Grange House School
Great Walstead School
Greenacre School
Grenville College
Greshams School
Grove School
Guildford College of Technology
Haileybury Junior School
Handcross Park School
Hanford School
Harptpurey College
Harrow School
Harrowgate College
Hawtreys (Prep School)
Headfort School
Headington School
Heathfield School
Hetherset Old Hall School
Highfield School
Highgate School
Holly House
Holmewood House School
Holy Family (Convent of the)
Hordle House
Howell's School
Hunmanby Hall
Hurst Lodge
Hurstpierpoint
Hurtwood House
Indefatigable
Ipswich School
James Allen's Girls School
Kelly College
Kent College, Canterbury
Kent College, Tunbridge Wells
Keswick School
Kilgraston School
Kimbolton School
King Edward's School
King's College, Taunton
King's School (The), Canterbury
King's School, Bruton
King's School, Ely
Kingham Hill
Kings School
Kingswood School
Knighton House
Lambrook School
Lancing College
Landsdowne
Lavant House School
Lawnside School
Leighton Park School
Leys School
Licen Victs School
Lindisfarne College
Lockers Park
Lomond School
Longridge Towers School

Loretto School
Luckley - Oakfield School
Maltman's Green
Malvern College Junior School
Malvern Girl's College
Mander Portman Woodward Ltd.
Marlborough College
Marlborough House School
Marshcourt
Mary Erskine School
Mayfield College
Merchant Taylor's School
Merchiston Castle School
Methodist College
Michael Hall School
Micklefield School
Mill Hill School
Millfield School
Moira House School
Monkton Combe Junior School
Monkton Combe School
Monmouth School
Moor Park School
More House School
Morrison's Academy
New Hall School
Newlands Manor School
North Foreland Lodge School
Northaw School
Notre Dame Convent School
Oakdene School
Oakham School
Oratory Prep School (The)
Oratory School (The)
Oswestry School
Oundle School
Oxford Tutorial College
Padworth College
Pangbourne College
Papplewick
Parkside School
Parsons Mead School
Pennthorpe School
Philpots Manor School
Pierrepont School
Pilgrims' School
Pipers Corner School
Plymouth College
Pocklington School
Polam Hall
Port Regis
Princess Helena School
Prior Park College
Prior Park Prep School
Prior's Field School Priors Court
Quantock School
Queen Anne's School
Queen Margarets School
Queens College
Queenswood
Radley College
Rannoch School
Read School
Reading Blue Coat School
Reed's School
Repton Preparatory School
Rickmansworth Masonic School
Ripley Court
Rishworth School
Roedean School
Rosemead School
Rossall School
Royal Alex. & Albert School
Royal Hospital School
Royal Naval School
Royal Russel School
Rugby School
Rydal School
Rye St. Antony School
Sacred Hearts School
Sandroyd School
Scraborough College
School of St Clare
Seaford College
Sedbergh School
Sevenoaks School
Shapwick School
Sherborne Sch Int Study Centre
Sherborne School
Sherborne School for Girls
Shiplake College
Shoreham Grammar School
Shrewsbury School
Sibford School
Sidcott School
Sir Roger Manwood School
Skegness Grammar School
Slindon College
Southgate Technical College
St Andrew's School, Eastbourne
St Andrew's School, Pangbourne
St Andrew's School, Woking
St Antony's-Leweston School
St Augustine's College
St Bede's School, Eastbourne
St Bede's School, Wolseley Bridge
St Bees School
St Benedict's Convent
St Catherine's School
St Christopher School, Letchworth
St Christopher's School, Bernham on Sea
St Clare's Oxford
St Denis School
St Edmund's College, Ware
St Edmund's School, Canterbury
St Edmund's School, Hindhead
St Edwards School
St Felix School
St George's College
St George's School for Girls
St George's School, Ascot
St George's School, Windsor
St Helen's School
St John on the Hill
St John's School
St Joseph's College
St Lawrence College
St Leonards-Mayfield School
St Margaret's School
St Mary and St. Annes
St Mary's Convent, Shaftesbury
St Mary's Gate, Southbourne
St Mary's Hall School, Brighton
St Mary's Hall, Stoneyhurst
St Mary's School, Ascot
St Mary's School, Calne
St Mary's School, Cambridge
St Mary's Wantage
St Michael's
St Neot's School
St Paul's School
St Peter's School
St Stephens College
St Swithuns School
Stanbridge Earls School
Stoke College
Stonar School
Stonyhurst College
Stover School
Stowe School
Strathallan School
Streete Court School
Summer Fields School
Sunningdale School
Sutton Valence School
Swanbourne House School
Taunton School
Temple Grove School
Terrington Hall School
The Blue Coat School

The Mount School
The Nak Centre
The Old Malthouse
The Red Maid's School
The School of St Clare
Tockington Manor School
Tonbridge School
Towers School
Truro School
Tudor Hall School
Twyford School
United College of the Atlantic
Upper Chine School
Uppingham School
Ursline Covent School
Vinehall School
Wadhurst College
Walthampton School
Walthamstow Hall School
Warminster School
Wellesley House
Wellingborough School
Wellington College
Wentworth Milton Mount
West Buckland School
West Heath School
Westbourne House School
Westminster School
Westonbrit School
Winchester College
Windlesham House School
Wispers School
Wolborough Hill School
Woldingham School
Woodcote House
Worth Abbey School
Wrekin College
Wychwood School
Wycliffe College
Wycombe Abbey School
Yardley Court

Indonesia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what restrictions he places on the type of arms that could be sold to Indonesia; and if he will join the embargo on small arms sales to Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: The export to any destination of arms and other goods listed in the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1994 is prohibited without a licence issued by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. All applications for export licences for defence equipment are considered carefully on a case by case basis in the light of established criteria. In the case of Indonesia, we would not, for example, licence for export equipment likely to be used for internal repression. There is no United Nations or European Union embargo on arms sales to Indonesia.

British Embassies

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total annual running cost of the British embassy *(a)* in Paris, *(b)* in Cairo and *(c)* in Luanda.

Mr. Goodlad: The total annual running costs of the British embassies *(a)* in Paris, *(b)* in Cairo and, *(c)* in Luanda are £16·7 million, £3·3 million, and £1·5 million respectively.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *382*, if he will reconsider his refusal to release the names of the British suppliers of technology to the Iraqi nuclear programme listed in the International Atomic Energy Agency report; and what is his response to the statement by the director-general of the IAEA before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on 26 October regarding the release of such information.

Mr. David Davis: No. I have nothing to add to my reply of 21 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *382*.

Secret Intelligence Service

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many compulsory redundancies have been made in the Secret Intelligence Service during the past 12 months.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *711-12*. We do not intend to give detailed information on the staffing of the individual security and intelligence agencies.

Mr. Ib Riis

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what emergency support has been given to Mr. Ib Riis.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Ib Riis wrote to me on 10 June. He wrote to my hon. Friend and others at the same time. In late June he was told that officials were looking at his case. In late September he was asked to submit a claim for financial assistance. He responded in October and his claim is now being considered.

EU Directives

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many directives of the European Union have not in whole or part yet been incorporated into law in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Davis: The European Commission's Eleventh Annual Report on Monitoring the Application of Community Law (1993) document reference 6697/94, COM (94) 500 Final, records that the UK had by 31 December 1993 notified the Commission of implementing measures in respect of 1,060 directives out of a total of 1,148 directives applicable on that date. This record was bettered only by the Netherlands and Denmark. The Commission report is available in the Library.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what timetable exists setting out dates for the incorporation into United Kingdom law of European Union directives which remain outstanding.

Mr. David Davis: Separate deadlines for implementation are specified in each directive which is required to be transposed into national law. In some cases a directive will specify a number of deadlines, each of which is applicable to different provisions within the directive.

European Defence

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his speech to the Franco-British Council on Monday 24 October represents Government policy.

Mr. Hurd: It does. Because of misleading press reports, I have placed a copy in the Library.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, following his speech of 24 October, what is Government policy on earmarking forces for a nascent European army; what options he is considering for an independent European defence structure outside NATO; and what consideration he has given to making the Western European Union a formal fourth pillar of the EU.

Mr. David Davis: There is no question of a European army. As agreed at Maastricht, the Western European Union is being developed as the defence component of the European Union and as the means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic alliance. WEU has no standing forces of its own, but relies on NATO and other national forces, which can be made available on an ad hoc basis for WEU operations.

Hospitality Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *440*, how much of the wine purchased on the advice of the Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine comes from any of the committee members' companies.

Mr. Goodlad: Members of the Government advisory committee for the purchase of wine recommend wines as being suitable for use as a consequence of "blind" tastings when they are unaware of the provenance of the wine being assessed. Nor are members involved in decisions on purchasing which are the responsibility of officials of the fund.

One member of the committee has consultancy status with one company from which 6 per cent. of wines purchased in 1993–1994 were supplied.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 October, *Official Report* column *440*, how the wine purchased by the Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine is used.

Mr. Goodlad: The wines purchased on the recommendation of the Government hospitality advisory committee for the purchase of wine are used only at functions which GHF provides for Ministers when giving official hospitality on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *440*, what has been the annual cost of wine purchases undertaken by the Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine in each of the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine has purchased no wine; it is involved only in recommending suitable wines for use by the fund.

Decisions on quantities needed and actual purchases are the responsibility of officials of the fund itself.

Purchases of wine by officials of the Government hospitality fund for the past five years are as follows;

1989–1990 — £131,641
1990–1991 — £132,926
1991–1992 — £101,124
1992–1993 — £ 97,622
1993–1994 — £110,553

Bananas

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the United Kingdom has given the Windward Islands over the export of bananas to the EC.

Mr. David Davis: The United Kingdom strongly supports the European Community banana regulation, which offers Windward Islands producers preferential access to the single market. We have support a special Community aid scheme for African, Caribbean and Pacific banana-producing states. We have also given bilateral and regional assistance to the Windward Islands banana industry. We provided emergency assistance in the wake of tropical storm Debbie and are supporting special EC measures to protect the Windwards' marketing structure.

Gibraltar

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will clarify Her Majesty's governments's policy over the 1985 Moran proposals on the future of Gibraltar following recent Spanish statements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: We told the Spanish Government at the last Brussels process meeting in March 1993 that we could not accept the proposals put to Sir Geoffrey Howe by Mr. Moran in 1985,—the "Moran Proposals"—as a basis for talks because of their precondition that sovereignty would be transferred. That position has not changed.

Our commitment to the people of Gibraltar is clearly set out in the preamble to the 1969 constitution. We will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties,and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 26 October 1994]*: Between October 1993 and October 1994 Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office travelled abroad accompanied by their spouses at public expense on 13 occasions. The cost to public funds was £27,338. On each occasion the guidelines in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" were followed and accord with departmental practice which has existed since at least 1955.

There have been no occasions when such travel was undertaken at own cost.

TREASURY

Pension Schemes

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the tax treatment of small self-administered pension schemes which breach the conditions on which they receive approval for tax purposes.

Sir George Young: The tax approval system gives pension schemes very favourable tax treatment if certain conditions are met concerning the amount, timing and form of the benefits to be paid. The purpose of the tax reliefs is to encourage the provision of pensions to employees during their retirement.

Arrangements are now being encountered under which the trustees of some small self-administered occupational pension schemes have exploited the tax approval system. These arrangements involve initially taking advantage of the tax reliefs but then engineering loss of tax approval when access to the accumulated funds, in circumstances not allowed by the tax approval conditions, is desired by the scheme members or the sponsoring employer. An example is where the scheme wishes to lend all or a large part of its funds to the sponsoring employer.

The tax approval system is not intended to be used in this way. Arrangements of this kind undermine the pensions purpose for which the tax reliefs are given. Where a pension scheme wishes to take advantage of those reliefs it must accept all the conditions on which approval is granted.

In order to discourage the misuse of the tax approval system in this way a special 40 per cent. tax charge will be levied on the value of funds held by these schemes at the time tax approval is withdrawn. The new tax charge will apply where tax approval ceases on or after today. Further details are given in an Inland Revenue press release published today.

Family Incomes

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 3 November 1993, *Official Report*, column 257, on the number of families with children with taxable incomes below the income tax threshold.

Sir George Young: It is estimated that in 1994–95, 1·9 million single parents and married couples with children have no income tax liability.

Tax Statistics

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each year since 1979 the total tax yield from individual taxpayers liable for capital transfer tax, capital gains tax and inheritance tax; and if he will give for each year since 1989–90 the number of individual taxpayers liable for capital gains tax by their highest marginal rate of tax.

Sir George Young: The available information on net receipts each year since 1979–80 from capital gains tax, capital transfer tax and inheritance tax is given in the table. Separate figures on capital gains tax receipts for individuals and trusts are not available but, in terms of tax liabilities, individuals account for between 83 per cent. and 90 per cent. of the total.

£ million

	Inheritance Tax/Capital Transfer Tax[1]		*Capital Gains Tax*[2]
	Total	*of which charge on individuals*[3]	*Total*
1979–80	401	376	431
1980–81[4]	425	401	508
1981–82[4]	480	457	526
1982–83	499	475	632
1983–84	599	580	671
1984–85	658	621	730
1985–86	881	857	908
1986–87	988	963	1,064
1987–88	1,073	1,052	1,379
1988–89	1,067	1,042	2,323
1989–90	1,227	1,207	1,854
1990–91	1,259	1,233	1,852
1991–92	1,295	1,261	1,140
1992–93	1,201	1,170	982
1993–94	1,328	1,307	710

Notes:

[1] Excludes small residual receipts from estate duty which was replaced by capital transfer tax in 1975.

[2] Excludes tax on capital gains made by companies which is included under corporation tax.

[3] Includes charges on settled property where the individual has an interest in possession.

[4] The breakdown of receipts between 1980–81 and 1981–82 was estimated as they were affected by industrial action between March 1981 and July 1981.

The breakdown of capital gains taxpayers given in the table includes a separate column for trusts in order to reconcile with published figures on taxpayer numbers.

Number of capital gains taxpayers

	Highest rate of tax charged on individuals				
	Lower rate	*Basic rate*	*Higher rate*	*Trusts*	*All*
1988–89	—	51,500	86,500	17,000	155,000
1989–90	—	48,000	88,000	19,000	155,000
1990–91	—	44,000	57,500	13,500	115,000
1991–92	—	34,500	44,500	11,000	90,000
1992–93[1]	1,000	19,500	27,000	7,500	55,000
1993–94[1]	2,500	30,500	42,000	15,000	90,000

[1] provisional

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* the total income, both earned and unearned, *(b)* total national insurance contributions paid and *(c)* total income tax paid by (i) the top 1 per cent., (ii) the top 5 per cent., (iii) the top 10 per cent., (iv) the bottom 50 per cent. and (v) all taxpayers.

Sir George Young: Readily available estimates based on the survey of personal incomes are in the tables. For 1978–79 and 1989–90, married couples are counted as one taxpayer and their incomes are combined. Following the introduction of independent taxation, for 1990–91 onwards, husbands and wives are counted separately. The estimates of total income relate to income subject to income tax and exclude non-taxable income such as certain social security benefits.

Quantile group of taxpayers[1] *Per cent.*	*Total income £ million*	*Income tax liability £ million*
1978–79		
Top 1	5,000	2,300
Top 5	14,900	4,900
Top 10	24,200	7,000
Bottom 50	30,300	3,900
All taxpayers	102,800	20,300

[1] Tax units for years prior to 1990–91.

Quantile group of taxpayers[1] *Per cent.*	*Total income £ million*	*Income tax liability £ million*	*Employees' and self-employed national insurance contribution liability £ million*
1989–90			
Top 1	24,200	7,800	300
Top 5	61,700	16,600	1,400
Top 10	93,400	22,600	2,700
Bottom 50	86,600	8,500	3,900
All taxpayers	323,400	53,400	14,400
1990–91			
Top 1	28,300	9,200	300
Top 5	68,700	18,900	1,300
Top 10	102,800	25,400	2,700
Bottom 50	95,500	9,000	4,300
All taxpayers	358,300	60,400	15,500
1991–92			
Top 1	31,200	10,400	300
Top 5	73,900	20,700	1,500
Top 10	109,600	27,500	3,000
Bottom 50	98,200	9,300	4,200
All taxpayers	373,800	63,500	16,200
1992–93			
Top 1	29,300	9,200	300
Top 5	72,000	19,800	1,600
Top 10	108,100	26,500	3,100
Bottom 50	96,900	8,000	4,000
All taxpayers	373,700	60,700	16,300
1993–94			
Top 1	29,900	9,800	300
Top 5	73,900	20,400	1,700
Top 10	111,300	27,500	3,400
Bottom 50	96,800	8,100	3,900
All taxpayers	381,400	62,800	17,100
1994–95			
Top 1	32,000	10,800	400
Top 5	78,900	22,800	2,000
Top 10	118,700	30,900	3,900
Bottom 50	99,600	9,000	4,400
All taxpayers	401,000	69,700	20,000

[1] Tax units for years prior to 1990–91.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on the number of taxpayers in the financial year 1995–96 and on the number of higher rate taxpayers of *(a)* indexation, *(b)* raising the main personal allowances by 5 per cent. more than indexation and *(c)* raising personal allowances by 10 per cent. more than indexation, giving figures separately for each main allowance and a total for main allowances.

Sir George Young: Estimates based on statutory indexation of 2·2 per cent. in line with the September retail prices index and income levels projected to 1995–96 levels using the summer economic forecast are given in the table. The levels of the married couple's allowance and linked allowances in 1995–96 were set in the Finance Act 1994 and will therefore not be subject to the statutory indexation rules.

Estimated number of income taxpayers 1995-96	*Total millions*	*Of which higher rate taxpayers*
a) Indexation	26·5	2·6
b) Increasing personal allowance for those aged under 65 by 5 per cent. more than indexation	26·2	2·5
Increasing personal allowance for those aged 65 [illegible] over by 5 per cent. more than indexation.	26·4	2·6
Increasing all personal allowances by 5 per cent. more than indexation	26·1	2·5
c) Increasing personal allowance for those aged under 65 by 10 per cent. more than indexation	26·0	2·5
Increasing personal allowance for those aged 65 or over by 10 per cent. more than indexation	26·2	2·6
Increasing all personal allowances by 10 per cent more than indexation	25·7	2·5

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1994–95 levels of income from restricting *(a)* personal allowances, *(b)* relief from pension contributions and *(c)* other reliefs to relief at 25p and *(d)* 20p giving in each case the numbers of people affected.

Sir George Young: Estimated full-year yields at 1994–95 income levels based on a projection of the 1992–93 survey of personal incomes and other survey data are given in the table. The figures do not take account of any behavioural effects which might result from the introduction of such changes, and show the yield from restructuring each allowance of relief separately. If two or more were restricted the total yield would be greater than the sum of individual figures.

	Restriction to			
	Basic Rate		*20p*	
Effect of restricting	*Yield £ million*	*Numbers affected millions*	*Yield £ million*	*Numbers affected millions*
(a) Personal allowances	1,490	3·4	5,650	26·2
(b) Relief for pension contributions	700	2·0	1,350	11·5
(c) Other reliefs	140	0·7	[1]n/a	n/a

[1] Information on reliefs given at source is not available from the Survey of Personal Incomes so it is not possible to estimate the effect of restricting other reliefs to 20 per cent.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 5 November 1993, *Official Report,* column *549* on mortgage tax relief, giving estimates for 1995–96 and for a full year.

Sir George Young: Estimates for 1995–96 are given in the table. The figures are based on the conventional assumption of no changes in interest rates from current levels and allow for tax relief at 15 per cent. as set in the Finance Act 1994. They exclude any behavioural effects which might result.

Cost (yield) from increasing (decreasing) the limit on mortgage interest relief

Limit on size of loan £	*£ million*
40,000	400
35,000	200
32,000	100
31,000	50
29,000	(50)
28,000	(100)
25,000	(300)
20,000	(700)

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for 1993–94 the number of self-employed who will pay no income tax, giving figures separately for those with gross incomes *(a)* under £5,000 a year, *(b)* between £5,000 and £10,000 a year, *(c)* between £10,000 and £15,000 a year, *(d)* between £15,000 and £20,000 a year and *(e)* over £20,000 a year.

Sir George Young: There are about 770,000 self-employed with no income tax liability in 1993–94. Of these, 670,000 have gross income of under £5,000 and 100,000 have gross income of over £5,000.

The estimates are based on the projection of the latest annual survey of personal incomes and are provisional. The number with gross income above £5,000 is too small to allow any separate breakdown.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for 1995–96 or the latest year available an estimate of the yield and the number of taxpayers affected by restricting the capital gains tax allowance to relief at the *(a)* 25 pence rate and *(b)* 20 pence rate.

Sir George Young: Under current rules net chargeable gains below the capital gains tax annual exempt amount are totally exempt from tax. The effects of restricting this relief at the 25 per cent. and 20 per cent. rates are given in the table below based on forecast 1994–95 liabilities. The estimates assume the restriction would only affect individuals with gains above the annual exempt amount and do not allow for any consequential change in their behaviour.

	Number of taxpayers affected	*Capital gains tax yield (£ million)*
Restricting the relief to:		
(a) 25 per cent rate	45,000	35
(b) 20 per cent.	75,000	60

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax was remitted or written off as irrecoverable in 1993; and how much of this was pay-as-you-earn contributions.

Sir George Young: In 1993, £1·58 billion was written off as irrecoverable by the Inland Revenue and £400 million of this was pay-as-you-earn contributions.

Pig-producing Industry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will review the taxation and capital depreciation allowances available to the British pig producing industry between now and 1 January 1999 when the rules relating to stall and tether regulations change;

(2) if he will consider allowing pig producers to carry back losses over a three-year period; if he will change the tax regulations relating to buildings used by pig producers with a design life of less than 10 years so that they are regarded as plant and machinery and attract annual depreciation rates of 25 per cent.; if he will allow pig producers to defer claiming allowances until the following year; and if he will set full-year capital allowances for pig producers at 100 per cent. before the rules relating to stall and tether regulations change in January 1999.

Sir George Young: The hon. Member would not expect me to make a statement on taxation matters at this time of year.

Fraud

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to obtain an estimate of the percentage of fraud involving transactions between the United Kingdom and offshore tax havens.

Sir George Young: There are no steps that can be taken to obtain a reliable estimate.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many prosecutions were brought in each of the last five years as the result of tax fraud; and how many of these related to false accounts and income tax returns.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the annual report of the board of Inland Revenue for 1993–94—appendix, table 6—copies of which were laid before Parliament on 5 October 1994.

Offshore Tax Havens

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the additional revenues obtained for the Treasury by the measures he has adopted to limit tax avoidance via trusts and offshore tax havens since 1992.

Sir George Young: The comprehensive system for the taxation of capital gains on those setting up, and receiving benefits from, offshore trusts which was introduced in 1992 prevented an estimated revenue loss of up to £100 million in a full year. In addition, changes introduced in 1993 and 1994 to the legislation for controlled foreign companies and to the treatment of interest payments within multinational groups were expected to increase Exchequer yield by 200 million in a full year.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Departments have produced rules of conduct for members of non-departmental public bodies sponsored by those Departments as instructed in "Non-Departmental Bodies: A Guide for Departments"; and if he will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Nelson: This section of the guide has now been superseded. In June the Treasury circulated to sponsor Departments a model code of best practice for board members of public bodies. Copies were placed in the Library of the House of Commons in early July. Sponsor departments are now discussing with executive NDPBs how they may adapt the Treasury code to suit their particular circumstances or whether they should adopt a different code such as the Cadbury code.

European Expenditure

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been *(a)* in each year since 1979 and *(b)* over the whole period since 1979 the percentage increase in spending by the European Community; and what was the average percentage increase in inflation in the Community as a whole in each year since 1979 and over the whole period since 1979.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The percentage increase in spending by the European Community in each year since 1979 is as follows:

Year	*Percentage increase in Community expenditure (Payments)*
1994	4·7
1993	14·1
1992	8·9
1991	24·2
1990	5·3
1989	-0·4
1988	16·9
1987	3·3
1986	[2]21·7
1985	2·1
1984	13·2
1983	19·0
1982	14·8
1981	[1]9·2
1980	13·4
1979	20·0

Source:

Annual White Paper Statements on the Community Budget.

Notes:

[1] Greece acceded on 1 January 1981.

[2] Spain and Portugal acceded on 1 January 1986.

Spending by the European Community over the whole period since 1979, including additional member states from the date of their accession, has increased by 11·7 per cent. on average in nominal terms each year between 1979 and 1994.

The average percentage increase in inflation in the Community as a whole in each year since 1979 was as follows:

Year	*Percentage increase in inflation*
1994	3·3
1993	3·3
1992	4·3
1991	5·1
1990	5·7
1989	5·3
1988	3·6
1987	3·3
1986	3·7
1985	6·1
1984	7·2

Year	Percentage increase in inflation
1983	8·6
1982	10·9
1981	12·4
1980	13·7
1979	10·9

Source:
OECD Economic Outlook.

The average percentage increase in inflation in the Community as a whole over the whole period since 1979 was 6·6 per cent.

EC Accounting Systems

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's progress in persuading the institutions of the EC to move to accruals and resource-based accounting systems.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government are convinced of the advantages of resource accounting and budgeting for the United Kingdom public sector, along the lines of the outline proposals published in the Green Paper on resource accounting and budgeting, Cm 2626. We believe that the principles of resource accounting might usefully be applied to the finances of other institutions outside the United Kingdom, such as those of the European Community. The Government will be considering this issue further when the United Kingdom proposals have been worked out in more detail.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to apply his policy on accounting standards for stand-alone operating units within the public sector to the introduction of similar standards for units of the Commission of the European Communities, including agencies operated by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The proposals in the Green Paper on resource accounting and budgeting, Cm 2626, will apply both to the centre of departments and to their agencies, although in many cases the latter are already putting the principles of resource accounting into practice.

Mortgages

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he has taken with his colleagues to assist borrowers from building societies to avoid repossessions.

Mr. Nelson: On 19 December 1991, the then Chancellor announced a number of measures designed to reduce substantially the level of mortgage repossessions. The Government agreed to make mortgage payments in income support direct to lenders, and raised the stamp duty threshold from £30,000 to £250,000 for eight months, to stimulate the housing market. The lenders confirmed that they would not seek to take possession where mortgage interest payments were covered by income support; or where a borrower had suffered a sharp fall in income but was continuing to make reasonable, regular payments. They also agreed to provide counselling for borrowers in difficulties and to examine the possibility of setting up formal mortgage rescue schemes.

Together, these steps have contributed to a significant fall in repossessions. In the second half of 1991, 38,930 properties were repossessed. In the first half of 1994, the figure was down to 25,020, a reduction of 35·7 per cent.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he or his colleagues have had with building societies to explore ways to help borrowers and to reduce the number of defaults on mortgage repayments.

Mr. Nelson: Treasury Ministers meet representatives of building societies from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues.

Commemorative Coins

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans Her Majesty's Government has to issue new commemorative coins.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve my recommendation that a £5 coin be issued featuring a special commemorative design to commemorate Her Majesty's 70th birthday. Her Majesty The Queen has also been pleased to approve a proposal that a £2 coin be issued to commemorate the European Football Championship which will be held in England during 1996. It is not intended that these coins should go into general circulation although the coins will be available at most banks and post offices at face value and special versions will be issued in precious and base metal.

NHS Trusts

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the NHS trusts which deposit funds with him; and what changes there have been in the arrangements for the deposit of funds in each of the last two years.

Mr. Aitken: There are 25 NHS trusts that make use of the National Loans Fund temporary deposit facility, which requires a minimum deposit of £1 million. Previously deposits had to be in units of £1 million, but the arrangements were changed on 1 April 1993 to permit deposits above the minimum to be made in multiples of £1,000. All 507 NHS trusts hold bank accounts at the Paymaster Agency, on which interest is also payable. The 25 trusts that use the NLF temporary deposit facility are listed as follows:

Allington Trust
Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Royal Hospital Trust
East Gloucestershire Trust
East Hertfordshire Trust
East and Midlothian Trust
Guild Community Healthcare Trust
Gloucestershire Royal Trust
Hastings and Rother Trust
King's Lynn and Wisbech Hospital Trust
Milton Keynes Community Trust
Northern Birmingham Mental Health Trust
Northern Devon Healthcare
Norwich Community Health Services Trust
North Hampshire Hospitals Trust
Oxfordshire Mental Healthcare Trust
Pilgrim Health Trust
Pinderfields Hospitals Trust
Pontefract Hospitals Trust

The Mental Health Service of Salford Trust
South Buckinghamshire Trust
Stoke Mandeville Hospital Trust
Severn Trust
Wakefield and Pontefract Community Health Trust
Walsall Community Health Trust
Walsall Hospitals Trust

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average cost to his Department of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

Mr. Nelson: The average cost, across all Departments, of preparing an answer was assessed as £97 for a written question and £225 for an oral question in November 1993. Up-to-date costings should be available shortly.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions in the past year the spouse of a Minister in his Department has travelled abroad at public expense to accompany a Minister on public duties, and what has been the total cost to public funds; and on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 October 1994]:* There have been eight occasions since September 1993 where a Minister's spouse has accompanied the Minister, of these three have been at public expense at a total cost of £1,544.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval including those not listed in "Public Bodies"; and if he will give this figure in terms of (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has some responsibility for making or approving the following appointments:

Number of Appointments	*Executive Bodies*	*Advisory bodies*	*Other Appointments*
Listed in Public Bodies 1993 (including Royal Mint)	—	[1]57	40
Not listed in Public Bodies[2]	[3]27	[4]56	[5]146
Total	27	113	186

Notes:

[1] Of these, the 44 Pay Review Body appointments require the Chancellor's approval but the Prime Minister is responsible for appointing members; the 13 appointments to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee (listed separately in Public Bodies 1993) are Crown appointments made on the Chancellor's advice;

[2] These appointments relate to the bodies listed in the answer given response to on 3 March 1994 (*official report*, column *879*);

[3] Of these, the 12 appointments to the Public Works Loan Board are Crown appointments on the recommendation of the Prime Minister who is in turn advised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer;

[4] Of these, the 16 appointments to the Treasury Academic Advisory Panel are made by the Chief Economic Advisor to the Treasury with oversight by the Chancellor of the Exchequer;

[5] Of these, the 7 appointments to the Crown Estate Commission are Crown appointments on the recommendation of the Prime Minister who in turn is advised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Reception

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the nature of the reception held on 28 June 1993 at 11 Downing street; and what was the cost.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 31 October 1994]:* No reception was held at No. 11 on 28 June 1993.

DEFENCE

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Soames: Former membership of the House of Commons is not a relevant qualification for appointment and is not centrally recorded. We are aware of only one example. Sir Antony Buck QC, the then Member for Colchester, North, served on the independent board of visitors for the military corrective training centre, Colchester from 1980 to 1992. At the date he stood down as a Member of Parliament and relinquished his appointment. Appointments are reviewed every three years and Sir Antony's last reappointment was in 1989. The post was as a member of the board and was not salaried.

Eurocorps

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for Britain to join Eurocorps.

Mr. Soames: There are no plans for Britain to join the Eurocorps, although British forces are in principle available to the Western European Union.

Western European Union

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for upgrading the defence-related activities of the Western European Union.

Mr. Soames: We remain committed to developing the Western European Union as the means to strengthen the European pillar of the NATO alliance and as the defence component of the European Union. We shall continue to contribute to the development of its operational planning, and to other aspects of its work. As agreed at the NATO summit last January, this process will include the development of separable but not separate capabilities which could respond to European requirements and contribute to alliance security.

Puma

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, columns *173–74*, when the royal naval aircraft yard Fleetlands bid for the Puma NVG contract; if the bid was the lowest; if other contenders were invited to resubmit their tenders; and if the final bid accepted was lower than that for Fleetlands.

Mr. Freeman: The royal naval aircraft yard Fleetlands submitted a budgetary estimate for the Puma NVG modification which contained a number of qualifications and exclusions particularly relating to the timeliness of delivery of modified aircraft to the concurrent firm price Puma navigation update programme. It was decided that placing the work with Fleetlands or with any organisation other than the PNU prime contractor would have exposed the Department to considerable financial risk arising from late delivery to the Puma aircraft. For this reason the NVG modification was not offered for open competition. The work, including acceptance of all risks arising from NVG modification delays, was awarded at higher cost to the PNU prime contractor under single tender arrangements and priced under the Departments stringent "no acceptable price no contract" procedure.

Hunt Licences

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those areas designated as sites of special scientific interest where his Department has issued a licence to hunt in *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994.

Mr. Soames: The designated sites of special scientific interest where my Department has issued a licence to hunt in *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994 are as follows:

Area	*Year*
Ramsey's Burn Wood, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Holystone Burn Wood, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Billsmoor Park, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Grasslees Wood, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Durtrees Burn Grassland, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Harbottle Moors, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Barrow Meadow, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Unbrigg, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Barrow Burn, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Cottonshape Head Quarry, Otterburn Training Area	1993 and 1994
Appleby Fells, Warcop	1993 only
Spadeadam Mires, RAF Spadeadam	1994 only
Lower Swaledale Woods, Catterick	1993 and 1994
Foxlease and Ancell's Meadow, Minley	1993 and 1994
Thursley and Hankley Commons, Elstead	1993 and 1994
Woolmer Forest, Borden	1993 and 1994
Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heath, Surrey	1993 and 1994
Ash and Brookwood Heaths, Surrey	1993 and 1994
Salisbury Plain Training Area	1993 and 1994

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which hunts were issued licences to hunt on Ministry of Defence land for the 1993–94 and 1994—95 hunting seasons.

Mr. Soames: The hunts which had licences during the 1993–94 season and have licences for the 1994–95 hunting season are:

	Year
The North Shropshire Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The West Shropshire Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Tanatside Hunt	1994–95 only
The Border Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The West Percy Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Newcastle and District Beagles	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Tynedale Hunt	1994–95 only
The Ullswater Foxhounds	1993–94 only
The Lunesdale Foxhounds	1993–94 only
The Bedale Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The West of Yore Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Wensleydale Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Zetland Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Catterick Beagles	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Blankney Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Staff College and Royal Military Academy Drag Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Windsor Forest Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Surrey Union Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Brecon Farmer's Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Sennybridge Farmer's Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Irfon and Towey Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Glyn Celyn Beagles	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Avon Dale Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The Royal Artillery Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95
The South and West Wiltshire Hunt	1993–94 and 1994–95

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total income form licences to hunt on Ministry of Defence land in 1992, 1993 and to date for 1994; when the costs of such licences were reviewed; and whether such licences are open for public tender.

Mr. Soames: Total receipts from annual hunting licences were £729·85 for 1991–92, £292·80 for 1992–93 and £507·30 for 1993–94. The charge for individual licences are reviewed at different times so no specific date can be given for reviews of licence fees. The licences are granted on application and are not open to public tender.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many licences to hunt on Ministry of Defence land were issued in 1992, 1993 and to date in 1994 for which there was no charge; to which hunts or bodies the licences were issued; and which area of land were involved.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of licences to hunt on MOD land issued in 1992, 1993 and to date in 1994 for which there was no charge were 10, 10 and seven respectively. The hunts or bodies to which these licences were issued and the areas are as follows:

The Bedale Hunt—Feldom

The West of Yore Hunt—Feldom

The Wensleydale Hunt—Feldom

The Zetland Hunt—Feldom

The Catterick Beagles—Feldom

The Aldershot Staff College and Royal Military Academy Drag Hunt—MOD Training Areas in north east Hampshire and north west Surrey

The Windsor Forest Hunt—MOD Training Areas in north east Hampshire and north west Surrey

The Brecon Farmer's Hunt Sennybridge Training Area (not 1994)

The Sennybridge Farmer's Hunt Sennybridge Training Area (Not 1994)

The Irfon and Towey Hunt Sennybridge Training Area (Not 1994)

Birds and Game

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total income from licences to shoot birds and game on Ministry of Defence land in 1992, 1993 and 1994; what are the annual charges for each licence; and if these are open for public tender.

Mr. Soames: The total income from licences to shoot birds and game on my Department's land in 1992, 1993 and 1994 was £12,012·61, £9,582·84 and£15,349·05 respectively. The annual fees for individual licences are commercial in confidence. Licences to shoot birds and game are not generally let by public tender.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many hares have been captured on Ministry of Defence land at Foulness in each of the past three years; what methods of capture have been employed; to which locations the hares have been transported; which expert bodies have been utilised to supervise the capture, transportation and release of such hares and which organisations were consulted for advice; what were the costs of this exercise in 1993 and 1994 and who was responsible for the costs; and what costs were incurred by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Soames: Under the provisions of the Ground Game Act 1880, tenant farmers on Foulness Island have the absolute right to take ground game. This is a private matter and my Department does not maintain records relating to the capture of game.

Fox Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list details and dates of when the Household Cavalry participated in fox hunting; with which hunts; and on how many occasions since February 1993.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

The Belvoir Hunt		*The Quorn Hunt*		*The Cottesmore Hunt*	
Date	*Number*	*Date*	*Number*	*Date*	*Numbe*
6 March 1993	4	5 March 1993	4	11 November 1993	4
20 October 1993	1	8 March 1993	2	11 January 1994	1
23 October 1993	2	25 October 1993	2	27 January 1994	1
27 October 1993	3	29 October 1993	4	8 February 1994	2
30 October 1993	2	1 November 1993	1		
1 November 1993	1	5 November 1993	1		
3 November 1993	4	8 November 1993	4		
8 November 1993	4	15 November 1993	4		
10 November 1993	2	19 November 1993	4		
13 November 1993	3	22 November 1993	5		
17 November 1993	4	26 November 1993	4		
24 November 1993	3	29 November 1993	3		
27 November 1993	3	3 December 1993	4		
1 December 1993	4	6 December 1993	5		
4 December 1993	7	10 December 1993	4		
8 December 1993	2	13 December 1993	1		
11 December 1993	4	17 December 1993	3		
15 December 1993	4	20 December 1993	4		
18 December 1993	4	24 December 1993	4		
22 December 1993	4	27 December 1993	5		
5 January 1994	4	30 December 1993	4		
8 January 1994	3	2 January 1994	4		
12 January 1994	3	3 January 1994	3		
15 January 1994	2	10 January 1994	3		
19 January 1994	4	14 January 1994	4		
22 January 1994	4	17 January 1994	2		
26 January 1994	4	21 January 1994	4		
29 January 1994	2	24 January 1994	5		
2 February 1994	2	28 January 1994	3		
5 February 1994	4	31 January 1994	4		
9 February 1994	3	4 February 1994	4		
12 February 1994	4	7 February 1994	2		
2 March 1994	2	11 February 1994	2		
5 March 1994	4	18 February 1994	2		
9 March 1994	2	21 February 1994	2		
		28 February 1994	4		
		4 March 1994	4		
		7 March 1994	1		

No additional costs to public funds were incurred as a result of this activity.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which mounted regiments have participated in fox hunting in 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Soames: Officers and soldiers of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment and the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery have taken part in fox hunts during 1993 and 1994. No additional costs to public funds were incurred as a result of this activity.

UN Convention on Inhumane Weapons

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ratify the 1980–81 United Nations convention on inhumane weapons.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 31 October, *Official Report* column *911*.

RAF Support Management Group

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel in *(a)* mobile and *(b)* non-mobile grades employed at the RAF support management group in Harrogate have moved or have agreed to move to RAF Wyton.

Mr. Freeman: As at 1 November 1994, some 294 personnel in mobile grades and 80 personnel in non-mobile grades have moved or agreed to move to HQ RAF Logistics Command at RAF Wyton and RAF Brampton.

Market Testing

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans are being drawn up for market testing in logistical support for each of the armed services.

Mr. Freeman: The defence cost study "Front Line First" has had a significant effect upon the size and shape of the Department's competing for quality initiative. The programme has been reviewed and we are currently finalising a much expanded version which will include a broad range of support activity. The 1994–95 programme is expected to cover activities valued at some £330 million. Details of individual market tests are published in the Cabinet Office's market testing bulletin.

RAF Runways

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many airfields and how many runways are available to the Royal Air Force in each region of the United Kingdom; and how many of those runways will be lost to the service during the next five years.

Mr. Soames: Details of all airfields in the United Kingdom available to the RAF, including the number of runways at each location, can be found in the RAF flight information publication—En Route Supplement British Isles and North Atlantic—a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. Over the next five years there is planned to be a reduction of eight in the number of runways operated by my Department.

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Rendel : To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence he has of nuclear contamination at the former airbase, RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Soames: There is no evidence that RAF Greenham Common contains any nuclear contamination attributable to its former military use. The Defence Radiological Protection Service recently undertook an environmental radioactivity survey of the site. The levels of radioactivity present were similar to those prevailing throughout the United Kingdom.

European Defence

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his policy to *(a)* pool and *(b)* merge the British Army with French and other European Union armies, leading to the eventual formation of a European army.

Mr. Soames: No.

Landing Platform Helicopter

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for defence what changes there have been in the specification of the landing platform helicopter and in the contract price.

Mr. Freeman: In line with the assurances given to the Public Accounts Committee, my Department controls specification changes very carefully. Only a small number of essential changes to the specification have been agreed. These represent an additional cost of less than one half of 1 per cent. of the contract value.

VSEL

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy in relation to the future ownership of VSEL, with particular reference to competition for future supply to the Navy.

Mr. Freeman: My Department will, in the usual way, be giving its views to the regulatory authorities on the competition and any other relevant aspects of the possible takeover of VSEL. These views are confidential.

Defence Contracts

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the outturn prices, *(b)* the estimated prices at the time of Ministry of Defence approval, *(c)* the actual time and *(d)* the estimated time to completion of defence projects valued at over £50 million undertaken for the Ministry of Defence since 1979 by GEC, where GEC was the prime contractor or was a member of a consortium with joint and several liability.

Mr. Freeman: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Military Survey Defence Agency

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the director general of the Military Survey defence agency for the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Soames: The Military Survey defence agency key targets for 1994–95 are:

1. To meet 100 per cent. of operational requirements for geographic support to the required standard and on time.

2. To achieve an operational evaluation (Opeval) status of "substantially effective" and to improve the Opeval concept by developing new Opeval criteria including two operational scenarios

3. To meet the agreed production programme, to the extent to which operational requirements allow, which is quantified as:

   a. Originate or revise 275 maps and charts equating to 10,610 work units.

   b. Produce 763 digital products equating to 2,506 work units.

   Note: One work unit equates to five man days of effort.

4. To achieve an efficiency target of at least 3.9 per cent.

5. To operate within ±3 per cent. of the £53,708,000 budget, subject to in-year management direction.

Although these targets are similar to those set last year, the way in which production targets have been set has been refined. The move to work units as the measure of performance recognises that no two products are the same with equal effort required.

The agency performed well against last year's targets although the increase in support to operations lead to some production targets not being fully met. A copy of the agency's annual report will be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

AWE Aldermaston

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the oral statement of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement of 18 October, *Official Report*, column 240, when he expects AWE Aldermaston to obtain a safety licence.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 1 November 1994]*: Experience in the civil sector suggests that preparations for licensing, including the production of prescribed documentation for assessment by the nuclear installations inspectorate, takes some time. The picture in respect of the AWE will become clearer during the discussions with the regulatory bodies to which I referred during the defence debate on 18 October 1994, *Official Report*, column 240, and which are now in progress. I expect to be able to give an indication of the likely timescale before Easter next year.

HEALTH

Abortions

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if general practitioner fundholders can use their funds to purchase abortions for their patients.

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently announced that the fundholding scheme will be expanded from April 1996. Details are set out in an executive letter of 20 October 1994, a copy of which has been laid in the Library. In brief, there will be three new options: community fundholding, for those practices with a minimum list size of £3,000 patients; standard fundholding, an enlarged version of the current scheme, for which the list size requirement will be reduced to £5,000 patients; and total purchasing, where larger groups of practices will pilot the purchasing of all hospital and community health services. As part of this expansion, terminations of pregnancy will be included within standard fundholding from April 1996. Guidance will make it clear that, where a general practitioner has ethical objections to purchasing terminations of pregnancy, arrangements will be made for patients to have access to these services either through another GP fundholder or through services purchased by the district health authority.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were linked to rubella last year and 10 years ago.

Mr. Sackville: In 1982 in England and Wales there were 226 legal abortions associated with rubella, compared with only 12 in 1992—a reduction of 95 per cent.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the risk of developing breast cancer for women who have had abortions; and what assessment her Department has made of Canadian research on the links between abortion and breast cancer.

Mr. Sackville.: We have no information on such risks. We await the full findings of the Canadian research with interest.

Psychiatric Beds

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the national guidance to purchasers on levels for bed occupancy for acute beds and for psychiatric beds.

Mr. Sackville: We do not issue guidance on bed occupancy levels.

Supervision Registers

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health authorities had set up supervision registers as at 1 October.

Mr. Bowis: Early reports indicate that supervision registers were in place in the large majority of health districts by 1 October. They were well on the way to being in place in most of the remainder. The national health service executive is taking action to ensure that the guidance HSG(94)5, on supervision registers is fully implemented in all health districts as soon as possible. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Open House Hospice

Miss. Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what grounds the funding commitment for the Open House hospice in Manchester, for people with HIV and AIDS, was reduced in October 1993 from the figure announced in March 1993; and on what grounds no money for the hospice has yet been released by the North Western region health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The initial sum was approved in principle on the assumption that a full independent assessment of the need for palliative care across the region had been carried out, and that the need for an HIV specific hospice had been established. As this was not the case, a sum of £750,000 has been allocated to North Western region to carry out a thorough assessment of palliative care for all client groups in the region and to implement the report's recommendations.

My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State will write in more detail to the hon. Member about this matter and a copy of her letter will be placed in the Library.

Day Nurseries

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she has made in reviewing the system of regulation for day nurseries.

Mr. Bowis: The Department monitors the Children Act through the social services inspectorate. In January 1993 we issued a circular LAC(93)1 to clarify existing guidance on the registration of day care facilities, including nurseries. Copies of the circular are available in the Library.

Special Transitional Grant

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are to reflect the special needs of elderly people in respect of community care in the next year's special transitional grant for social service authorities.

Mr. Bowis: An announcement on next year's grant will be made in due course.

Burnley NHS Healthcare Trust

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will investigate and make public the circumstances at Burnley NHS Healthcare trust in which the chief executive and chairman each called for the other's resignation.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 1 November. The chief executive resigned on 28 October.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what qualities she took into account in deciding to appoint Mr. James Rawson as chairman of Burnley NHS Healthcare trust.

Mr. Sackville: Mr. Rawson was re-appointed as chairman of Burnley NHS Healthcare trust from 1 December 1993 following his performance as chairman of the trust between 1 December 1991 and 31 November 1993.

Growth Hormone

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the responsibilities of fundholding general practitioners for the payment of the cost of growth hormone treatment for their patients;

(2) if she will make a statement on the division of responsibilities for the prescribing of growth hormone treatment between the prescribing hospital and the patient's general practitioner.

Mr. Malone: As for all drug therapies, the responsibility for prescribing for a particular patient rests with the doctor who has clinical responsibility for that aspect of the patient's care. This applies irrespective of whether the general practitioner is fundholding or not. This is clearly set out in guidance to the NHS, EL(91)127, copies of which are available in the Library.

Hepatitis and Dysentery

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage change in the number of cases of *(a)* hepatitis and *(b)* dysentery since the privatisation of the water authorities.

Mr. Sackville: The data provided are for notification—England and Wales—to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys of dysentery and hepatitis A, the form of viral hepatitis most likely to be transmitted by water, between 1988 and 1993. The data for 1993 are provisional. These notifications may be made before the diagnosis is firmly established. Notifications are therefore subject to withdrawal or amendment.

Year	*Dysentery*	*Per cent. change*	*Hepatitis A*	*Per cent. change*
1988	3,692	—	3,190	—
1989	3,278	-11	5,278	+65
1990	2,756	-16	7,316	+39
1991	9,935	+260	7,430	+2
1992	16,960	+71	7,856	+6
1993	6,837	-60	4,457	-43

Dysentery and viral hepatitis both show a periodicity in their incidence with natural peaks and troughs every eight to 10 years. The most recent peaks in the annual incidence of dysentery were seen in 1984 and 1992 and the most recent peaks in the annual incidence of hepatitis A were seen in 1982 and 1992.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what study she has commissioned regarding any correlation between the number of dysentery cases and the price of water;

(2) what study she has commissioned into any correlation between the number of hepatitis cases and the price of water.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Road Traffic Accidents

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the income received from the Road Traffic Act 1988 charges for treatment of road traffic accident victims in each region in each of the last five years for which figures have been kept.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Asthma

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of asthma in children under five years were recorded in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Numbers of hospital in-patient cases of children suffering from asthma are available from hospital episode statistics for the years shown in the table. Figures for earlier years are not available.

0–4 age group,
Finished consultant episodes—England

	Number
1988–89	38,759
1989–90	32,676
1990–91	32,343
1991–92	32,177

Source:
Hospital Episode Statistics.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration is being given to donor convenience and the views of doctors and hospitals in the current review of the blood transfusion service.

Mr. Sackville: Donors' interests are a key feature in the national blood authority's proposals. Under the proposals, blood collection would be readily accessible to donors. Mobile teams would go out to donors in all areas whether the centres are amalgamated or not.

The national blood authority's proposals are the result of a strategic review which included the views of doctors and hospitals. The authority is consulting with hospitals locally and drawing up a detailed plan to cover all their requirements. Views have also been sought from various bodies representing the medical profession. The National Blood Authority is undertaking a national consultation on its proposals. The results will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much blood is currently held at the blood transfusion centre, Liverpool; what capacity it has for the storage of blood; and what capacity for storing blood exists in the hospitals served by the centre.

Mr. Sackville: The blood stock held at the Liverpool blood transfusion centre varies from day to day. The centre can comfortably hold between 3,500 and 4,000 units. Figures are not available centrally for blood storage capacity in the hospitals served by the centre. The proposals to reorganise the national blood service include improved blood stockholding units so that all hospitals, including those in Liverpool, have easy access to supplies.

Food Poisoning

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures available for the current year for the number of reported cases of human salmonellosis in England and Wales.

Mr. Sackville: Data on salmonella infections in humans are published in the "Communicable Disease Report", copies of which are available in the Library.

There was a decrease of 2·8 per cent. in the figures recorded for January to September 1994 compared with the same period in 1993.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of food poisoning notifications to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for 1993 up the nearest available date to 7 October.

Mr. Sackville: Up to 7 October 1993 there were 56,428 notifications.

Figures for 1993 are provisional. These notifications may be made before the diagnosis is firmly established and are therefore subject to withdrawal or amendment.

Glaucoma

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new patients with glaucoma were referred to out-patient departments for each year from 1985 until the latest for which current figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected by medical condition.

Camden and Islington Health Authority

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fundholding general practitioner practices there are in Camden and Islington health authority area; what proportion of the lists they cover; and for what proportions of hospital admissions they are responsible.

Mr. Malone: There are two general practitioner fundholding practices in Camden and Islington serving 6 per cent. of the population. The information requested on the proportion of hospital admissions is not currently available.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussion she has had with the Camden and Islington health authority concerning its level of financial resources in the current financial year.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is proposing to take to restore non-emergency health services to the people of Islington; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Camden and Islington health authority and the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. Roland Everington, for details.

Public Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names of the members of chairs of *(a)* the NHS supplies authority and *(b)* the Bromley health authority on 1 April.

Mr. Malone *[pursuant to his reply 21 April 1994, c. 668]:* I regret that potentially misleading information was given in the previous reply concerning the membership of the National Health Service Supplies Authority. The reply stated that there is no statutory bar to the appointment of chairman and members of other health authorities to the NHS Supplies Authority. The reply omitted to state that the regulations governing NHS trusts do not allow individuals to be appointed to NHS trusts if they are members of the NHS Supplies Authority. One of those listed in the reply, Mr. Frederick Hoult, was chairman of the Freeman Group of Hospitals NHS trust, and has subsequently been found to have become technically disqualified from his trust appointment when he was appointed to the NHS Supplies Authority on 1 October 1991.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by name and position those chairs, members and non-executive directors of district health authorities, FHSA, NHS trusts, shadow NHS trusts and other NHS authorities which have dual appointments as chairs, members or non-executive directors of other district health authorities, FHSAs, NHS trusts, shadow NHS trusts and other NHS authorities.

Mr. Malone *[pursuant to his reply 25 April 1994, c. 68–69]:* I regret that potentially misleading information was provided in the previous reply. The reply included a list of dual national health service appointments which included five cases which have subsequently been found to be invalid. The reply also stated that appointees to other NHS bodies are permitted to be appointed as members of the NHS Supplies Authority and the Mental Health Act Commission. This was accurate in relation to some NHS bodies but did not reflect the position for NHS trusts, whose chairmen and non-executive directors may not be appointed to special health authorities.

Corrective action has been taken and 11 individuals whose appointments were invalid now hold only valid appointments. These individuals are listed as follows. The posts in which individuals continue are marked with an asterisk:

Mr. Frederick Hoult: Chairman of the Freeman Group of Hospitals NHS Trust, and member of the NHS Supplies Authority*.

Mrs. Phyllida Entwistle: Chairman of the Furness Hospitals NHS Trust*, and member of the Mental Health Act Commission.

Miss Georgina Linton: Non-executive director of Guy's and Lewisham Mental Health NHS Trust*, and member of the Mental Health Act Commission (Miss Linton resumed as a non-executive director of the Trust after her term at the Mental Health Act Commission ended on 31 October 1994).

Mrs. Lotte Mason: Non-executive director of Ravensbourne Priority Health NHS Trust, and member of the Mental Health Act Commission*.

Professor Elaine Murphy: Non-executive director of North West London Mental Health NHS Trust, and member of the Mental Health Act Commission*. (Professor Murphy will resume as non-executive director of the Trust after her present term at the Mental Health Act Commission ends on 30 November 1994).

Ms Rosalie Szasz: Non-executive member of Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster FHSA*, and member of the Dental Vocational Training Authority.

Mr. Brian Westbury: Non-executive member of Redbridge and Waltham Forest FHSA*, and member of the Dental Vocational Training Authority.

Mr. John Mooney: Non-executive member of Bury FHSA*, and member of the Dental Vocational Training Authority.

Mr. Julian Bedford: Non-executive member of North Yorkshire FHSA*, and member of the Dental Vocational Training Authority.

Mr. John Renshaw: Non-executive member of North Yorkshire DHA*, and member of the Dental Vocational Training Authority.

Professor Alasdair Geddes: Non-executive member of North Birmingham DHA, and member of the Health Education Authority*.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each NHS trust within the North Nottinghamshire and Nottingham district health authority areas, those non-executive directors who live *(a)* within and *(b)* outside the boundaries of each district health authority.

Mr. Malone *[pursuant to his reply, 25 May 1994, c. 214–15]:* I regret that there were errors in the previous reply.

I have today placed in the Library a revised list of those chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts who live outside the boundaries of the health authority in which their trust is situated.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list, for each NHS trust within the Sheffield district health authority area, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live *(a)* within and *(b)* outside the Sheffield district health authority boundary;

(2) pursuant to her answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *324*, if she will list, for each NHS trust in the Trent region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority area within which that trust is situated;

(3) if she will list, for each NHS trust in the former Northern region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(4) if she will list, for each NHS trust in the former East Anglian region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(5) if she will list, for each NHS trust in the former Mersey region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(6) if she will list, for each NHS trust in the former Wessex region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(7) if she will list for each NHS trust, in the former North Western region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(8) if she will list for each NHS trust, in the former South Western region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(9) if she will list for each NHS trust in the West Midlands region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(10) if she will list for each NHS trust in the former Oxford region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(11) if she will list for each NHS trust in the former North West Thames region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(12) if she will list for each NHS trust in the former South West Thames region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(13) if she will list for each national health service trust in the former North East Thames region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(14) if she will list for each national health service trust in the former Yorkshire region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated;

(15) if she will list, for each NHS trust in the former South East Thames region, those chairman and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Mr. Malone: *[pursuant to his replies, 16 May 1994, c. 324, 14 June 1994, c. 374–75, 1 July 1994, c. 741–44, 4 July 1994, c. 102–4, 5 July 1994, c. 193–96, 6 July 1994, c. 219–22, 7 July 1994, c. 313–17 and 8 July 1994, c. 371–74]:* I regret that there were errors in the previous replies.

I have today placed in the Library a revised list of those chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts who live outside the boundaries of the health authority in which their trust is situated.

Allitt Report

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress there has been in implementing the recommendations made in the report [illegible] Allitt inquiry published in February 1994.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The following progress has been made:

Recommendation 1.

We recommended that, for all those seeking entry to the nursing profession, in addition to routine references the most recent employer or place of study should be asked to provide at least a record of time taken off on grounds of sickness.

From April 1995, there will be consistent and agreed guidelines on seeking references from the most recent employer or place of study on a record of time taken off on grounds of sickness. The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (ENB) has issued draft regulations and guidelines which will meet this recommendation. Additionally, the University and Colleges Admission Service has agreed to harmonise their arrangements with those of the ENB.

Recommendation 2.

We recommend that in every case Coroners should send copies of post mortem reports to any consultant who has been involved in the patient's care prior to death whether or not demanded under Rule 57 of the Coroner's Rules 1984.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, in whose area of responsibility this recommendation falls, intends to commend the principles of the recommendation in a circular to be issued to all coroners in England and Wales later this month.

Recommendation 3.

We recommend that the provision of paediatric pathology services be reviewed with a view to ensuring that such services be engaged in every case in which the death of a child is unexpected or clinically unaccountable, whether the post mortem examination is ordered by a Coroner or in routine hospital practice.

This recommendation has been considered by the Strategic Review of Pathology Services which advises that more work is required on a number of detailed operational issues. A Working Group to look at the issues involved will be set up.

Recommendations 4,5,6,7,8 and 9

Recommendation 4.

We recommend that no candidate for nursing in whom there is evidence of major personality disorder should be employed in the profession.

Recommendation 5.

We recommend that nurses should undergo formal health screening when they obtain their first posts after qualifying. We acknowledge that in Allitt's case this was done.

Recommendation 6.

We recommend that the possibility be reviewed of making available to the Occupational Health Departments any records of absence through sickness from any institution which an applicant for a nursing post has attended or been employed by.

Recommendation 7.

We recommend that procedures for management referrals to Occupational Health should make clear the criteria which should trigger such referrals.

Recommendation 8.

We recommend that further consideration be given to how the suggestion of the Chairman of the Association of NHS Occupational Physicians could be applied in practice.

The Chairman suggested that applicants who show one or more of (excessive absence through sickness, excessive use of counselling or medical facilities or self-harming behaviour) should not be accepted for training until they have shown the ability to live an independent life without professional support and be in employment for at least two years.

Recommendation 9.

We recommend that consideration be given to how GPs might, with the candidate's consent, be asked to certify that there is nothing in the medical history of a candidate for employment in the NHS which would make them unsuitable for their chosen occupation.

Guidance on occupational health is to be issued shortly which will cover all these recommendations. Together with the English National Board's new guidelines, this guidance will establish better procedures for selection of student nurses for training, the selection of staff to work on children's wards and the follow up of staff who have a history of excessive absence through sickness.

Recommendation 10.

We recommend that the Department of Health should take steps to ensure that its guide "Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital", is more closely followed.

The guide referred to make clear that hospitals themselves should determine the number of staff they require to look after the children in their care. It also made a number of recommendations about staffing levels. We have surveyed the current staffing arrangements in paediatric nursing and identified a need for further improvement in some places. For daytime shifts nearly 50 per cent. of hospitals meet the recommendations and among those units not yet there some 40 per cent. have plans in place for increasing the numbers of trained childrens nurses. The results of the survey will be made available shortly and a copy will be made available in the Library. There has been a considerable growth in the number of nurses entering training for paediatric nursing in recent years: up from 183 in 1988 to 819 in 1992–93 for pre-registration training and from 628 to 811 for post registration training over the five year period. Training commissions for paediatric nurses rose by 36 per cent. between 1991–92 and 1994–95 (from 879 per year to 1198) reflecting increased employer demand.

Recommendation 11.

We recommend that in the event of a failure of an alarm on monitoring equipment, an untoward incident report should be completed and the equipment serviced before it is used again.

This recommendation has been considered by the Expert Advisory Working Group appointed by the Medical Devices Agency who have responsibility for the safety and quality of medical devices. The draft recommendations of this Expert Group go further than those of recommendation 11. The Group is expected to present its final report later this month.

Recommendation 12.

We recommend that reports of serious untoward incidents to District and Regional Health Authorities should be made in writing and through a single channel which is known to all involved.

We will shortly be writing to all Regional Directors requiring them to establish lines of reporting with Chief Executives of all NHS Trusts so that there can be swift and effective reporting of any such untoward incidents.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 3 November 1994

DEFENCE

RAF Board of Inquiry

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he intends to divulge to the next of kin of those killed in the accident between a helicopter and a RAF Tornado on 23 June 1993, in Cumbria the results of the board of inquiry.

Mr. Soames: A summary of the findings of the board of inquiry into this accident has already been provided to the next of kin of those killed.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the RAF board of inquiry to report into the accident involving a civilian helicopter and an RAF Tornado in Cumbria on 23 June 1993.

Mr. Soames: The board of inquiry into this accident is complete and a summary of its findings has been placed in the Library of the House.

VSEL

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the powers accruing to him from the Government's golden share in VSEL.

Mr. Freeman: The principal rights attaching to the special share in VSEL are:

> (a) to veto disposal of the whole, or a material part, of the assets, and any voluntary winding-up, of the company;
>
> (b) to speak at shareholders' meetings; and
>
> (c) to veto changes to certain of the Articles of Association which prevent any one party controlling more than 15 per cent. of the equity and require that the Chairman, Chief Executive, Managing Director and a majority of all Directors are citizens of the United Kingdom.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with *(a)* GEC–Marconi and *(b)* British Aerospace over a takeover of VSEL.

Mr. Freeman: Ministers and officials of my Department have had a number of discussions with both GEC and British Aerospace on this subject.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment he has made of the implications of the possible takeover of VSEL by *(a)* GEC or *(b)* British Aerospace for future decisions for the procurement of batch 2 Trafalgar class nuclear submarines;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications of a takeover of VSEL by *(a)* GEC or *(b)* British Aerospace for the Government's competition policy in the defence sector.

Mr. Freeman: My Department will, in the usual way, be giving its views to the regulatory authorities on the competition and any other relevant aspects of the possible takeover of VSEL. Those views are confidential.

Competition

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy concerning competition in the defence industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My Department recognises the importance of a healthy and competitive defence industry. Any restructuring of the defence industry is primarily a matter for the market, subject, of course, to the regulatory authorities, to whom my Department makes its views known, in confidence, on particular cases.

Gulf War

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what exposure to chemical agents was experienced by United Kingdom forces in the Gulf war.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive of the CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Dr. David Clark, dated 3 November 1994:

> 1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him what exposure to chemical agents was experienced by United Kingdom Forces in the Gulf War has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.
>
> 2. During Operating GRANBY, the potential hazard to Service personnel resulting from the bombing of Iraqi targets at which chemical weapons were stored was recognised by the Ministry of Defence. The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment made an assessment of the potential downwind hazard distances based on various assumptions for the quantity of agent that might be released as a result of a bombing attack and for the associated meteorological conditions.
>
> 3. The result of the assessment indicated that even assuming simultaneous release of the majority of agent from several bunkers under meteorological conditions which favoured the downwind travel of the agent cloud and ignoring the fact that chemical agents are organic materials which are destroyed by combustion, the maximum distance at which there would be any hazard was of the order of a few tens of kilometres. In practice, simultaneous release is unlikely to occur, agent will be destroyed by combustion and meteorological conditions will be less favourable resulting in a significantly reduced downwind hazard distance.
>
> 4. The conclusion was that there was no evidence that British Servicemen and women would be exposed to chemical warfare agent as a result of bombing attacks. Our appreciation is that the US Department of Defense carried out similar studies and reached similar conclusions. In addition, there was no confirmed detection of chemical warfare agents at any time by the UK Forces in the Gulf War.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what purposes organo-phosphate malathion pesticide was used by British forces in the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: A dusting powder containing 1 per cent. malathion was used by British forces environmental health personnel to treat about 50 lice-infested Iraqi troops at the prisoner of war enclosure at Quaisuma. Owing to the small number involved, each prisoner was treated individually and no lengthy collective treatments took place.

Malathion is recommended in standard therapeutic textbooks as a treatment of choice for lice infestation and several preparations are commercially available in the United Kingdom, including body lotions and hair shampoos.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British troops were exposed to organ-phosphorous pesticides, including malathion, during the Gulf War; and what research his Department has undertaken into the links between the use of these pesticides and Gulf war syndrome.

Mr. Soames: I am aware of only 10 British service personnel who would have been involved with organ-phosphorous pesticides used by United Kingdom forces during the Gulf conflict. These 10 were members of a medical team involving in delousing some 50 Iraqi troops with a dusting powder containing 1 per cent. malathion at the prisoner of war enclosure at Quaisuma. Malathion is recommended in standard therapeutic textbooks as a treatment of choice for lice infestation and several preparations are commercially available in the United Kingdom, including body lotions and shampoos.

No clinical evidence indicative of exposure to organo-phosphates has been found among the service personnel who have come forward with concerns about their health related to service in the Gulf. No specific research into organo-phosphorous has therefore been carried out in relation to the alleged Gulf war syndrome, though evidence from all relevant sources is closely monitored.

LSD Experiments

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the use of LSD in experiments on British service personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Dr. David Clark, dated 3 November 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him if he will make a statement on the use of LSD in experiments on British Service personnel has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of that programme, evaluation is carried out of chemicals that may be utilised by an aggressor as a chemical warfare agent.

3. An appreciation of the effects of LSD on man and the knowledge that LSD could be synthesised led to research in the 1960s at the then Chemical Defence Experimental Establishment which was renamed the Chemical Defence Establishment in 1969 into whether LSD might be used by an aggressor as an incapacitating CW agent and one which might lead to the loss of will to fight.

4. The work carried out by CBDE Porton Down was solely to determine that protective measures were appropriate and were largely concerned in assessing the effects of LSD on troops in a military setting, where the behaviour of volunteers who had taken LSD was compared with that of control volunteers who had not taken LSD. All volunteers were subjected to stringent medical and psychological screening.

The assessment was made that although LSD could be synthesised, it was immensely expensive and being a solid it would be difficult to disseminate further and as the effects were not highly predictable, the conclusion was reached that LSD would not present a significant battlefield hazard.

Kuwait

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what documentary evidence he has regarding the nature of the substances found by 21 EOD Squadron, British Royal Engineers in August 1991 at a school in Kuwait.

Mr. Soames: The report by 21st EOD Squadron was received by my Department in August 1991 and, in accordance with its recommendations, samples of the substance collected in Kuwait city were submitted for laboratory analysis. The CBDE analytical report showed that the samples were consistent with being fuming nitric acid, a rocket motor propellant; there was no evidence of any chemical warfare agent being present.

Defence Industry

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he last met the chief executive of British Aerospace;

(2) when he last met the chairman of GEC-Marconi.

Mr. Freeman: Ministers of my Department meet senior representatives of the defence industry frequently. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence met Mr. Dick Evans, the chief executive of British Aerospace plc, on 11 July and I met him on 1 November. I met right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) joint chairman of GEC-Marconi Ltd., on 31 October.

Defence Procurement Policy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department's defence procurement policy requires the availability of more than one facility to build large naval vessels.

Mr. Freeman: My Department's procurement policy is based on competition wherever practicable.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers,*(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Soames: The only property available to Ministers in my Department is a flat in Admiralty house, Whitehall, which is occupied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. Admiralty house is a freehold property managed by Property Holdings—a division of the DOE—to which my Department pays and annual rent of £56,276 for the flat, together with an annual maintenance charge of £18,396. The estimated value of the property is unknown. During the last financial year, 1993–94, £13.35 was spent on furniture and fittings for the flat; £13 was spent on official entertainment; and £245 was spent on other costs. There are no staff costs attributable to the Defence budget as the Secretary of State employs his own cleaner. The flat is used regularly by the Secretary of State during the working week.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Soames: There have been no centrally placed contracts with Spencer Stuart consultants. While lower value contracts many have been let with the company by subordinate budget-holders, the information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Lockheed

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *440*, when he expects to write to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley, on visits to Lockheed facilities in the United States of America.

Mr. Freeman: I have written to the hon. Member today. I regret the delay in responding to his original question.

RAF Doctors (Training)

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances it would be possible for a civilian junior hospital doctor—house officer—in general medicine to take up a post in a Royal Air Force medical centre as a Royal Air Force medical officer without attending the courses at RAF Cranwell, RAF Halton and RAF Farnborough.

Mr. Soames: I am not aware of any circumstances in which a house officer would be employed in a Royal Air Force medical centre, as the term "house officer" implies that full medical registration has not been achieved.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the lengths and locations of the courses for junior doctors entering the Royal Air Force as junior medical officers for *(a)* officer training, *(b)* medical administration, occupational health and forces classification training and *(c)* aviation medicine training.

Mr. Soames: The lengths and locations of the courses are:

a. Officer Training - eight weeks at RAF Cranwell.

b. Initial Medical Officer Training (Administration) - two weeks at the Institute of Health and Medical training, RAF Halton.

c. Initial Medical Officer Training (Aviation Medicine) - two weeks at RAF Farnborough and the Aviation Medicine Training Centre at RAF North Luffenham.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Freeman: The MOD's competing for quality programme, which includes the market testing of activities, aims at achieving long-term savings and quality improvements in relation to the resources required to undertake the services involved. In the period April 1992 to September 1993, some £346·2 million of activities were exposed to the competing for quality process, creating gross savings of £19·8 million. Final details for the year ending September 1994 are not yet available, but activities in excess of the target £216 million have been exposed to the competing for quality process with expected saving of 20 per cent. A breakdown of the Department's costs from April 1992 to June 1994 is as follows:

Consultancy costs £3·1 million

Other costs £5·4 million

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances individuals or companies will be prohibited from bidding for his Department's work in respect of market testing or contracting out.

Mr. Freeman: In selecting companies to tender for MOD work, the Department has a responsibility to ensure that the companies are satisfactory in terms of financial standing, and that they have the technical capability and capacity to perform the work.

Turnhouse Airport

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities his Department operates at Turnhouse airport; and what plans he has to close them.

Mr. Soames: The following units are located at RAF Turnhouse:

East Lowlands University Air Squadron

No. 12 Air Experience Flight

No. 3 Flt Army Air Corps (Volunteers)

Joint Maritime Operational Training Staffs

Headquarters Provost and Security Services (Scotland)

The Air Cadets Regional Headquarters (Scotland and Northern Ireland)

Air Cadets (CCF) RAF Liaison Officer for Scotland and Northern Ireland

RAF Turnhouse also parents a number of minor off-site units.

There are no current plans to close any of these units. The defence costs study concluded, however, that there was scope for rationalising university air squadrons, and this work is currently underway. Should any proposals be made which would affect the East Lowlands UAS, or any of the other units at RAF Turnhouse, they would of course be subject to consultation in the normal way.

Al Yamamah Agreement

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *495*, on the Al Yamamah agreement, if he will now make it his policy to request from *The Sunday Times* the original tape recordings and other evidence.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Slovakia (Low flying)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has made to the offer from the Government of Slovakia about low flying; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence visited Slovakia in August. During informal discussions, the then Slovak Defence Minister proposed a range of areas for closer bilateral defence co-operation, in the context of partnership for peace; including opportunities for low flying. We are looking closely at those proposals.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will investigate the methods by which procedures could be changed so that hon. Members could table questions for written answer during parliamentary recesses, other than in August, and receive answers.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend may wish to ask the Procedure Committee to look into his suggestion.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The information available is as follows:

Name	*Post*	*Salary*	*Duration*	*Party*
Sir Julian Ridsdale	Member of the Simpler Trade Procedures Board	Unpaid	27 October 1992–31 December 1994	Conservative
Charles Longbottom	Non-Executive Director of British Shipbuilders	£5,000	Since 1988 (renewed on a yearly basis)	Conservative
Robin Hodgson	Member of the West Midlands Industrial Development Board	Unpaid	1 January 1989–31 December 1994	Conservative

Oil and Gas Industry

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations will be held regarding the possible withdrawal of any nominated blocks from the 16th round on environmental grounds.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers I gave the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 25 October, *Official Report*, columns *556-58* and *559-60*.

My officials recently met members of the Wildlife and Countryside Link consortium to discuss their views on the nominated blocks for the round. I will, of course, take the WCL's comments into account when deciding which blocks should or should not be offered for licence in the 16th round.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what environmental criteria were used to exclude blocks from the 14th offshore oil and gas licensing round; and whether it is planned to use the same criteria for the 16th round.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A number of blocks were not offered in the 14th round because it was felt that, on balance, it would not be possible to agree licence conditions which would allow the prospective operator to carry out exploration activities without compromising the interests of other users of the sea and environmental sensitivities.

Decisions on which blocks can be offered for licence in the 16th round and what conditions will be attached to them will be taken on the basis of consultations with interested parties, including the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and other environmental bodies, about the sensitivities present in individual areas.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what environmental criteria will be imposed on licences granted in the 16th round; and what special conditions there will be upon activity which might affect protected areas.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Any environmental conditions applied to blocks offered in round will be consistent with our commitment to protect the environment. As such, we will take account of the views of our consultees in formulating them. In some cases, the conditions may include restrictions on the timing and extent of seismic and drilling activities.

Nuclear Review

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if there will be a further period of consultation following the publication of the nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: No decisions have yet been taken about publication of the conclusions of the nuclear review. An announcement will be made in due course.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish the findings of the nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *239*.

Fluorocarbons

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if it is his policy that refrigeration systems that avoid the use of fluorocarbons are best practice and eligible for inclusion in his Department's best practice or DEMOS programme.

Mr. Ian Taylor: DEMOS—DTI's environmental management options scheme—is no longer open to applications for grant assistance.

The joint DTI/DoE environmental technology best practice programme aims to promote better environmental performance and to increase the competitiveness of United Kingdom industry and commerce. Emphasis will be on waste minimisation and reducing pollution at source in the manufacturing process. In the selection of projects for inclusion in the programme, preference is given to those lying within the areas to which the programme is currently giving special attention.

These areas are currently foundries, metal finishing/surface engineering and releases of volatile organic compounds. However, any project encompassing the use of cleaner technology can be considered for inclusion in the programme if it has sufficient merit and satisfies the announced selection criteria, including those relating to potential for stimulating national cost savings.

Those wishing to propose technologies and techniques to the programme should in the first instance contact the environmental helpline on 0800 585794.

Wavertree Technology Park

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when an announcement will be made about the application of Sony for regional grant assistance for the development of a site at Wavertree technology park, Liverpool; how many jobs are involved; what representations he has received from hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: An announcement will be made shortly. Two hundred and fifty new jobs are involved. The only other representation on this matter, received by my Department has been from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle).

Electricity Disconnections

Ms Gordon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many electricity disconnections have been carried out since 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Disconnection figures are kept by the Office of Electricity Regulation. However, I can confirm that 3,297 electricity customers were disconnected in 1993, and for the first six months of 1994, 654 customers were disconnected.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Ian Taylor: None.

Electricity

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the average household electricity bill for each of the regional electricity companies for each year since 1985 and *(b)* the combined average for England and Wales in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Annual bills for households consuming 3,300 KWh[1] of electricity in a year for each regional electricity company in England and Wales are given in the tables.

Average annual household[1] electricity bills in current price terms[2]

£ per year

Regional electricity company	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
East Midlands Electricity	200	210	208	217	229	247	273	288	282
Eastern Electricity	193	200	196	208	222	241	266	279	281
London Electricity	217	221	212	224	238	259	288	296	292
Manweb	213	222	220	233	249	269	296	307	309
Midlands Electricity	204	211	208	220	234	253	279	288	281
Northern Electricity	204	212	205	220	236	260	290	304	307
Norweb	202	210	208	217	230	248	274	283	284
Seeboard	205	210	205	218	233	252	279	290	285
South Wales Electricity	211	219	214	228	245	273	304	315	313
South Western Electricity	210	216	208	228	246	270	299	313	316
Southern Electric	194	200	196	213	230	249	275	287	283
Yorkshire	202	211	209	222	238	256	279	289	282
England and Wales[3]	205	212	207	221	236	257	284	295	293

Average annual household[1] electricity bills in real (1990) price terms[2, 4]

£ per year

Regional electricity company	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
East Midlands Electricity	262	266	251	247	244	247	257	259	246
Eastern Electricity	253	254	236	237	237	241	250	251	245
London Electricity	284	280	256	255	253	259	270	267	254
Manweb	280	282	265	266	265	269	278	277	269
Midlands Electricity	268	268	251	251	249	253	262	260	244

Average annual household[1] electricity bills in real (1990) price terms[2,4]
£ per year

Regional electricity company	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Northern Electricity	268	269	248	250	251	260	273	274	267
Norweb	265	267	251	247	245	248	258	255	247
Seeboard	268	267	247	248	248	252	262	261	248
South Wales Electricity	277	278	258	260	261	273	285	284	272
South Western Electricity	276	274	251	259	262	270	280	282	275
Southern Electric	255	254	237	243	244	249	258	258	246
Yorkshire	264	267	252	252	253	256	262	260	245
England and Wales[3]	268	269	250	251	251	257	266	266	255

Notes:

[1] 3,300 kWh is the average United Kingdom consumption of a household on the standard domestic electricity tariff.

[2] No account has been taken of any rebates paid by some electricity companies in recent years nor of discounts for direct debit payments.

[3] England and Wales figures are a simple average of the bills of the constituents regional electricity companies.

[4] Real prices are the cash figures adjusted to 1990 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP (market prices) deflator.

Mr Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the board of Trade how many and what percentage of households are currently supplied by each regional electricity company.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number and percentage of households supplied by each regional electricity company in England and Wales in 1993 are given in the table:

Regional electricity company	*Number of domestic consumers (thousand)*	*Percentage of total domestic consumers*
Eastern Electricity	2,776·4	13·3
East Midlands Electricity	2,033·1	9·7
London Electricity	1,692·6	8·1
Manweb	1,224·3	5·8
Midlands Electricity	1,990·1	9·5
Northern Electricity	1,322·5	6·3
Norweb	1,942·2	9·3
Seeboard	1,781·3	8·5
Southern Electric	2,313·0	11·0
South Wales Electricity	856·9	4·1
South Western Electricity	1,148·8	5·5
Yorkshire Electricity	1,870·0	8·9
Total	20,951·2	100·0

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the percentage change in average household electricity bills for each of the regional electricity companies for each year since 1985, and the combined average for England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage change on the previous year in average annual household electricity bills in current price terms[1,2]

Regional Electricity Company	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
East Midlands Electricity	+4·8	−1·0	+4·4	+5·9	+7·7	+10·6	+5·3	−2·0
Eastern Electricity	+3·4	−2·0	+6·5	+6·7	+8·4	+10·5	+4·8	+0·7
London Electricity	+1·9	−4·2	+5·7	+6·4	+8·7	+11·0	+3·0	−1·5
Manweb	+4·0	−1·1	+6·3	+6·7	+8·0	+10·0	+3·9	+0·5
Midlands Electricity	+3·5	−1·6	+5·9	+6·4	+8·1	+10·4	+3·3	−2·7
Northern Electricity	+3·7	−3·1	+7·1	+7·2	+10·4	+11·6	+4·8	+0·7
Norweb	+4·0	−1·2	+4·5	+6·0	+7·9	+10·4	+3·2	+0·2
Seeboard	+2·6	−2·6	+6·6	+6·8	+8·3	+10·5	+3·9	−1·5
South Wales Electricity	+3·6	−2·4	+6·8	+7·3	+11·5	+11·1	+3·9	−0·8
South Western Electricity	+2·7	−3·7	+9·5	+8·0	+9·8	+10·5	+5·0	+0·8
Southern Electric	+3·1	−2·1	+8·7	+7·7	+8·3	+10·7	+4·3	−1·4
Yorkshire Electricity	+4·5	−1·0	+6·3	+7·2	+7·9	+9·0	+3·3	−2·5
England and Wales[3]	+3·5	−2·2	+6·5	+6·9	+8·8	+10·5	+4·1	−0·8

Notes:

[1] Based on the assumption that the average household consumes 3,300 kWh of electricity each year.

[2] No account has been taken of any rebates paid by some electricity companies in recent years nor of discounts for direct debit payments.

[3] England and Wales figures are based on a simple average of the bills of the constituent regional electricity companies.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the change in the average household electricity bill for each of the regional electricity companies for each year from 1985, and the combined average change each year for England and Wales in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is as follows:

Change on the previous year in average annual household electricity bills in current price terms [1, 2]

£

Regional electricity company	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
East Midlands Electricity	+10	–2	+9	+13	+18	+26	+14	–6
Eastern Electricity	+7	–4	+13	+14	+19	+25	+13	+2
London Electricity	+4	–9	+12	+14	+21	+29	+9	–4
Manweb	+9	–2	+14	+16	+20	+27	+12	+1
Midlands Electricity	+7	–3	+12	+14	+19	+26	+9	–8
Northern Electricity	+8	–7	+15	+16	+24	+30	+14	+2
Norweb	+8	–2	+9	+13	+18	+26	+9	+1
Seeboard	+5	+5	+13	+15	+19	+26	+11	–4
South Wales Electricity	+8	–5	+14	+17	+28	+30	+12	–2
South Western Electricity	+6	–8	+20	+18	+24	+28	+15	+3
Southern Electric	+6	–4	+17	+16	+19	+27	+12	–4
Yorkshire	+9	–2	+13	+16	+19	+23	+9	–7
England and Wales[3]	+7	–5	+13	+15	+21	+27	+12	–2

Notes:

[1] Based on the assumption that the average household consumes 3,300 kWh of electricity each year.

[2] No account has been taken of any rebates paid by some electricity companies in recent years nor of discounts for direct debit payments.

[3] England and Wales figures are based on a simple average of the bills of the constituent regional electricity companies.

Change on the previous year in average annual household electricity bills in real (1990) price terms [1, 2, 4]

£

Regional electricity company	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
East Midlands Electricity	+4	–15	–4	–3	+3	+10	+2	–14
Eastern Electricity	—	–17	+1	–1	+4	+9	+1	–7
London Electricity	–4	–25	–1	–2	+6	+11	–3	–13
Manweb	+2	–17	+1	–1	+4	+9	–1	–8
Midlands Electricity	—	–17	—	–2	+4	+9	–3	–15
Northern Electricity	+1	–21	+3	—	+9	+13	+1	–7
Norweb	+2	–16	–4	–2	+4	+9	–3	–8
Seeboard	–2	–20	+1	–1	+5	+9	–1	–12
South Wales Electricity	+1	–20	+2	+1	+13	+12	–1	–12
South Western Electricity	–2	–23	+8	+2	+8	+10	+2	–7
Southern Electric	—	–17	+6	+1	+4	+10	—	–12
Yorkshire Electricity	+3	–15	+1	—	+4	+6	–2	–15
England and Wales[3]	—	–19	+1	—	+6	+10	–1	–11

Notes:

[1] Based on the assumption that the average household consumes 3,300 kWh of electricity each year.

[2] No account has been taken of any rebates paid by some electricity companies in recent years nor of discounts for direct debit payments.

[3] England and Wales figures are based on a simple average of the bills of the constituent regional electricity companies.

[4] Real prices are the cash figures adjusted to 1990 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP (market prices) deflator.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the price charged in pence per kWh by the regional electricity companies to typical standard tariff domestic customers for each year since 1985, and the combined figure for England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is as follows:

Price of electricity to domestic consumers (p/kWh) [1, 2]

Regional electricity company	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
East Midlands Electricity	6.06	6.35	6.29	6.57	6.95	7.49	8.29	8.72	8.55
Eastern Electricity	5.85	6.05	5.93	6.32	6.74	7.31	8.07	8.46	8.52
London Electricity	6.58	6.70	6.42	6.79	7.22	7.85	8.71	8.98	8.85
Manweb	6.47	6.73	6.66	7.07	7.54	8.15	8.97	9.32	9.36
Midlands Electricity	6.19	6.40	6.30	6.67	7.09	7.66	8.46	8.74	8.50
Northern Electricity	6.19	6.42	6.22	6.66	7.15	7.89	8.80	9.23	9.29
Norweb	6.13	6.38	6.30	6.58	6.98	7.53	8.31	8.58	8.60
Seeboard	6.21	6.37	6.20	6.61	7.06	7.65	8.45	8.78	8.65
South Wales Electricity	6.41	6.64	6.48	6.92	7.42	8.28	9.20	9.52	9.48
South Western Electricity	6.37	6.55	6.30	6.90	7.45	8.18	9.05	9.50	9.58

Price of electricity to domestic consumers (p/kWh)[1, 2]

Regional electricity company	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Southern Electric	5.89	6.07	5.94	6.46	6.96	7.53	8.34	8.70	8.58
Yorkshire Electricity	6.11	6.38	6.32	6.72	7.20	7.77	8.47	8.75	8.53
England and Wales[3]	6.21	6.43	6.29	6.69	7.15	7.79	8.61	8.95	8.89

Notes:

[1] These are current prices, based on standard domestic tariffs and an annual consumption of 3,300 kWh. Standing charges have been taken into account.

[2] No account has been taken of any rebates paid by some electricity companies in recent years nor of discounts for direct debit payments.

[3] England and Wales figures are a weighted average price of the constituent regional electricity companies' prices using average annual bills as weights.

Receptions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *782*, if he will provide a list of names and employers of the people attending the receptions organised by his Department.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The receptions referred to in my previous answer were public events. Attendees were as follows:

Name	*Employer (at the time of the receptions)*
Helen ApSimon	Imperial College
Janis Bailey	Chambernet UK
Diana Barron	Enskilda Asset Management
Sue Birley	Imperial College
Moira Black	Price Waterhouse
Margaret Boden	University of Sussex
Jane Bradford	Nat West Small Firms Service
Elaine Brant	Self Employed
Gisela Burg	Expotus Ltd.
Alison Carnwath	J. Henry Schroder Wagg
Paddy Challens	Kuwait Investment Office
Shiela Clark	Packaging Innovation Ltd.
Janet Cockcroft	Bottoms Mill Co. Ltd.
Hilary Cropper	FI Group plc
Peggy Czyzak-Dannenbaum	La Fornaia Ltd.
Brenda Dean	Graphical, Paper and Media Union
Irene Dorner	Midland Montagu
Ilana Duncan	British Gas plc
Sue Farr	Thames Television plc
Amelia Fawcett	Morgan Stanley International
Clare Frankl	Self Employed
Jackie Gourlay	Cheval Investment Management Ltd.
Pamela Gray	Sphinx Ltd.
Anne Hacker	Biocompatables Ltd.
Jan Hall	Coley Porter Bell
Judith Hanratty	British Petroleum plc
Pauline Harrison	University of Sheffield
Rosaline Hedley-Miller	Kleinwort Benson Ltd.
Patricia Hodgson	BBC
Sara Holmes-Woodhead	Ricardo International plc
Penelope Hughes	Schweppes Beverages Ltd.
Jane Irvine	Post Office
Catherine James	Grand Metropolitan plc
Kate Jenkins	Self Employed
Kazimiera Kantor	Grand Metropolitan plc
Geraldine Kaye	Gaaps
Joanna Kennedy	Ove Arup and Partners
Pat Kenrick	Industrial Training Services Ltd.
Janet Langdon	GEC Alsthorn
Eva Lauermann	British Airways plc
Alicja Lesniak	J. Walter Thompson Group Ltd.
Janet Lewis-Jones	Self Employed
Morag Macdonald	Post Office
Anna Mann	Whitehead Mann Group plc
Pat Marsh	Sandwell College
Margaret Matheson	Island World Productions Ltd.
Christine McNulty	Applied Futures
Janet Morgan	Self Employed
Gillian Nott	British Petroleum plc
Christina Osbourne	Business Solutions
Jane Priestman	Self Employed
Gail Redwood	British Airways plc
Gillian Reynolds	Lloyds Register of Shipping
Ann Robinson	Institute of Directors
Bridget Rosewell	Business Strategies Ltd.
Lynda Rouse	Barclays de Zoete Wedd Ltd.
Patricia Scott	Thorn EMI plc
Juduth Skiff	Forum UK
Sarah Springman	St Catherines College, Cambridge
Fiona Steele	CBI
Rosemary Thorne	Sainsbury plc
Jane Tozer	Softwright Systems Ltd.
Claire Tritton	Severn Trent Council plc
Anna Vinton	The Reject Shop plc
Ann Warner	Universtity College London
Mandy Webb	APV Vent-Axia
Dorothy Wedderburn	City of London Polytechnic
Joy Weston	Gatwick Airport
Anne Wright	Sunderland University
Ministers	
Gillian Shepherd	Secretary of State for Employment
[1]Baroness Denton	PUSS Consumer Affairs, DTI
[1]Timothy Eggar	Minister for Energy, DTI
Tim Sainsbury	Minister for Industry, DTI
Richard Needham	Minister for Trade, DTI
Neil Hamilton	PUSS Corportate Affairs, DTI
Department of Trade and Industry	
Rolande Anderson	
Catherine Bell	
Pauline Birch	
John Cooke	
David Evans	
Rose Ferguson	
Elliot Finer	
Adrian Green	
Colin Hicks	
Valerie Hillman	
Charles Henderson	
Peter Joyce	
Keith Levinson	
Michael Lunn	
William Macintyre	
Alison McMillan[1]	
Jonathan Phillips[1]	
Kenneth Poulter	
Robert Priddle	
Christopher Robbins	
Jim Roddie	

Name	*Employer (at the time of the receptions)*
Arthur Russell	
Paul Salvidge	
Keith Shotton[1]	
Robin Simpson[1]	
Stephen Speed	
Jonathon Spencer	
Alec Sugden	
Timothy Walker	
Christopher Wilcock[1]	
Ann Wilks	
Angie Wilson	
Cabinet Office	
Anthony Merifield	
David Barrows[1]	
Women's National Commission	
Moira Jones	

[1] Attended both receptions.

Coal Industry

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the consultancies undertaken by Warden Armstrong, mining consultants; what were their terms of reference; when they were started and completed; and at what cost.

Mr. Eggar: Wardell Armstrong were engaged from 5 August 1991 to provide advice to the Secretary of State on technical matters, including licensing, in connection with the privatisation of the coal industry. This work is continuing. Details of Wardell Armstrong's fees are commercially confidential.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to publish the bids for the British Coal opencast contract in south Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: British Coal frequently lets contracts to manage various aspects of its opencast coaling operations in South Wales and elsewhere. Publication of bids for such contracts would be a matter for British Coal.

There are no plans to publish the bids for the sale of the South Wales Regional Coal Company. This information is commercially confidential. It was announced on 12 October that the preferred bidder for South Wales is Celtic Energy.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what salaries the part-time members of the coal authority receive.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The part-time members of the Coal Authority receive a salary of £5,500 per annum.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines or procedures his Department has in place to ensure there are no conflicts of interests between managers at British Coal who manage tenders to the private sector and who subsequently sit on the board of a firm set up to operate such tenders or contracts.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each coal stocking site in the county of Durham the length of planning consents for the stocking of coal, the owners of the sites and the tonnage of coal stocked on each site.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is a matter for British Coal. However, I understand that the only such site in the county of Durham is the former Easington colliery site.

Face Paints

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will revise his Department's procedures for detecting dangerous products, with particular reference to face paints; and if he will ensure that measures are taken to license face paint;

(2) if he will institute an immediate inquiry into the company selling the children's face paint which has resulted in children in Edinburgh being taken to hospital, with particular reference as to how the product came to be made available; and if he will ensure that his consumer safety unit co-ordinates the recall of all Aqua Fantasy face paint products.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Face paints for children are subject to the requirements of the Toys (Safety) Regulations 1989, as amended in 1993 and the Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1989, as amended in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994. These regulations implement EC directives. Day-to-day enforcement of safety legislation is the responsibility of local authority trading standards departments. Trading standards officers have all the necessary powers to enforce safety legislation and to take appropriate action when an unsafe product is found on sale.

There are no requirements to license face paints but the toys regulations require manufacturers or their authorised representative to maintain a dossier to demonstrate the safety of their products and to make this available to the enforcement authorities on request. A similar provision will be introduced for cosmetics by an amendment to the cosmetics directive.

The consumer safety unit of my Department is in close contact with the Department of Health and the trading standards administration about the face paints sold under the name of "Aqua Fantasy". It has been established that there are two importers of the products, both of whom are co-operating with trading standards officers in the recall of the products. Tests are also being carried out on the paints to establish whether they meet the safety regulations applicable to them.

The Department of Health issued a press release on 31 October alerting the public to the dangers associated with the face paints. Information is also being sought from the manufacturer and the United Kingdom importers on the possible causes of the recent accidents given that these products have been on the market for four years.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Department is not aware of any contracts for consultancy advice awarded centrally to Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years. I have asked the chief executives of the agencies to reply direct to this question, as it falls into the category of their day-to-day operational matters. I will arrange for copies of these letters to be placed in the Library of the House.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice he has received on the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations with regard to the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: No decision to contract out work of official receivers has yet been taken.

In the circumstances it is far too early to consider the issue of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, the implications of which may not become clear until the nature of proposals in any bidding process could be assessed.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the full Stoy Hayward report on the privatisation of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Stoy Hayward's report has been published by placing copies in the Libraries of the House and DTI library. The published version of the report does not include the appendices produced by the consultants as these contain financial information which is commercially confidential.

Easington Colliery

Mr. Cummings: To as the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the various interested bodies on the future development of the Easington colliery site.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is a matter for British Coal. I understand that British Coal, which occupies the site under a long lease, is currently in discussion with the freeholder over the future of the site.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the board of Trade when he expects the coal at present stocked on the Easington colliery site to be sold or removed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is a matter for British Coal.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that Sir Peter Levene will not be involved in discussions of references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Decisions on references of mergers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, after receiving independent advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. Anyone may put views to the Director General on possible references. In reaching his decision, the President takes great care to ensure that no conflicts of interest arise. He will naturally not discuss with Sir Peter Levene any case in which there might be such a conflict.

Bankruptcy

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what legal advice he has received on the impact that privatisation could have on future disqualification of bankrupts.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Stoy Hayward Consulting reported that the contracting out of official receivers' case administration work would enable official receivers to concentrate more on their investigative role and I have not been advised that contracting out would have any impact on the Insolvency Service's disqualification effort.

Nolan Committee

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to make available to the Nolan committee documents held by his Department on British-registered companies with which Ministers of former Ministers of Her Majesty's Government had a business involvement before becoming Government Ministers after they had entered Parliament.

Mr. Heseltine: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Al-Bilad (UK) Ltd.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will institute an investigation into the trading activities of Al-Bilad (UK) Ltd.

Mr. Heseltine: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the chairs and non-executive directors of each national health service trust board indicating the gender and occupation of each individual.

Mr. Moss: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) on 17 October, *Official Report*, column 88.

Agricultural Development Operational Programme

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claims are still outstanding in respect of the agricultural development operational programme; how long on average they are outstanding; and what arrangements he is making for urgent payment.

Mr. Ancram: My hon. Friend Baroness Denton will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and, housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I will write to the hon. Member.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Sir John Wheeler: Our records show that Spencer Stuart consultants were not employed by any of the Northern Ireland Departments or agencies during the financial year 1992–93 and 1993–94.

Student Accommodation

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inspection and supervision of student accommodation in the private sector is carried out by university representatives in respect of students living away from home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Sir John Wheeler: The costs shown in the table are a cumulative total of the costs incurred by the Northern Ireland civil service departments and the Northern Ireland Office in support of the delivery of the competing for quality programme.

	1 April 1992– 30 September 1993 £	*1 October 1993– 31 December 1993* £	*1 January 1994– 30 June 1994* £
Total Consultancy Costs	278,900	56,000	283,600
Other Departmental Costs	144,300	181,300	431,500
Total	423,200	237,300	715,100

Prison Service

Mr. Ellestson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for the future management of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

Sir John Wheeler: Following completion of a prior options study into the future management of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Government have decided that the service should now begin preparations to become a next steps agency on 1 April 1995. That will give the service greater freedom to manage its resources within a framework which sets out its responsibilities, targets and appropriate performance measures. The Prison Service will continue to be accountable to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

Military Complaints Procedures

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has received from the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland to the recommendations contained in the first annual report of the independent assessor of military complaints procedures.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have received a detailed reply from the General Officer Commanding, Sir Roger Wheeler, to the proposals contained in David Hewitt's first annual report. I very much welcome the positive response from the GOC, which states that he will be able to adopt five of the seven recommendations and all 11 suggestions made by Mr. Hewitt.

I wish to pay due credit to the complaints procedures operated by the army in Northern Ireland, which have helped to establish and maintain a good and improving relationship with the community. The GOC has made it clear to me that procedures are constantly reviewed so that improvements can be made where necessary, and Mr. Hewitt's proposals will play a central part in this. Both the GOC and I look forward to receiving his continued suggestions and advice.

PRIME MINISTER

Media and Broadcasting

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister which individual or institution will receive from the President of the EU Parliament the resolution of the EU Parliament on media ownership.

The Prime Minister: The President of the European Parliament will submit the resolution on the Commission Green Paper "*Pluralism and Media Concentration on the Internal Market*" to the Commission and the Council.

Book Purchase

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will obtain for the 10 Downing street library, a copy of a recently published book details of which have been supplied to him; and if he will seek clarification from the United States Government regarding the references to it therein;

(2) if he will instigate an investigation into matters in the letter from the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent on 26 October.

The Prime Minister: I have not seen the book referred to. If I have anything to add at a later stage, I will write to the hon. Member.

The Guardian Newspaper

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister when the Cabinet Secretary first knew of the alleged use of House of Commons notepaper by *The Guardian* newspaper to obtain information about the hotel bill of the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken); when the Prime Minister was informed; and what steps he took to bring the matter to the attention of the House authorities.

The Prime Minister: The matter first came to the attention of my right hon. Friend, the Member for Thanet, South following the publication of an article in *The Guardian* on 10 May 1994; he reported it to me and the Cabinet Secretary on 11 May 1994.

My right hon. Friend considered raising a complaint immediately but decided not to pursue the matter at that time. What has since been revealed is that the forgery was part of a concerted attempt to cover up collusion.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I will be presiding at a meeting of the Cabinet and having meetings with ministerial colleagues and others.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister what properties are owned or leased by his Office for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

The Prime Minister: None.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

The Prime Minister: So far as I am aware, none.

Police Finances

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister which Department of State is responsible for *(a)* setting and *(b)* publishing standard spending assessments regarding police force areas in (i) England and (ii) Wales.

The Prime Minister: The Department of the Environment for England, and the Welsh Office for Wales, are responsible for setting and publishing the standard spending assessments for all local authorities.

In England, there is a distinct component of the SSA for police; this is prepared in discussion with the Home Office. In Wales, there is no such distinct component, but the SSAs for county councils include provision for the police service.

Nolan Committee

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if allegations of illegal donations to the election funds of political parties are to be brought to the attention of Lord Nolan's committee on the standards of conduct in public life.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnyddd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 31 October 1994, *Official Report,* column *911.*

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what remuneration will be received by each member of the Nolan committee in regard to their time commitments; what expenses are to be made available to members of the Committee; for what duration each committee member is appointed; and from what budget administrative and support resources for the Nolan committee will be drawn.

The Prime Minister: I will write to the hon. Member.

Lobbying Organisations

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Prime Minister (1) on what occasions in the past two years he has acceded to requests from former Ministers to meet or otherwise contact lobbying companies; and what guidance he gives to former Ministers as to what services they may offer to such companies;

(2) what lobbying organisations he has met over the last year; and on what dates he met representatives of each organisation.

The Prime Minister: I will write to the hon. Member.

Ministers (Remunerated Employment)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Prime Minister which Ministers pursue remunerated employment outside their ministerial duties; and if he will list in each case the employment, how much time is spent on it, and what financial gain the Minister receives from it.

The Prime Minister: I will write to the hon. Member.

Member for Norfolk, South

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what advice the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), while acting as Secretary of State for Transport gave to the British Railways Board in connection with the employment of Hill Samuel to provide advice on its disposal programme; and on what date;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 31 October, *Official Report,* column *914,* if he will now state the date on which the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) indicated his intention to leave the Government;

(3) if Messrs Hill Samuel paid pension contributions on behalf of the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) during his period of ministerial office or any part thereof; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I will write to the hon. Member.

Council of Europe

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Prime Minister what changes he has made to the composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the 1994 session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend, the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward), has resigned as a full member of the delegation, following his appointment as my parliamentary private secretary, and has been replaced by my hon. Friend, the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant), who is currently a substitute member. My hon. Friend, the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir I. Patnick), will be appointed as a substitute member of the delegation in place of my hon. Friend, the Member for Reading, West. These changes take effect from today.

Al Yamamah Agreement

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will ensure that Mr. Christopher Prentice, a Foreign Office diplomat working at the British embassy in Washington in the mid-1980s, is interviewed about the Yamamah deal.

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) of 25 October, *Official Report*, column *520*, regarding the Al Yamamah agreement, if he will set out the nature of the errors to which he refers.

The Prime Minister: I will write to the hon. Member.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Probate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) if he will introduce legislation to enable banks and other institutions in England and Wales to comply with instructions on the disposal of assets from a person granted probate under the law of Scotland without the need for the grant to be resealed under the law of England and Wales;

(2) whether a grant for a registrar in Scotland under rule 19 of the Non-contentious Probate Rules 1987, may have effect in England and Wales if it has not been resealed by the English courts;

(3) if he will introduce legislation to enable banks in England and Wales to release money from a bank account to a person or persons granted probate by the crown courts to administer the estate of a deceased person holding that account without a need for the grant to be resealed by a court in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Administration of Estates Act 1971 already makes provision for the reciprocal recognition in any one part of the United Kingdom of grants and confirmations issued in any other part, without the need for resealing.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether Scotland is regarded as a foreign country for the purposes of rule 19 of the Non-Contentious Probate Rules 1987; and whether the registrar may accept under sub-paragraph *(a)* an affidavit as to the law of Scotland from a person who is not a notary practising in Scotland.

Mr. John M. Taylor: For the purposes of rule 19, "foreign law" includes the law of any part of the United Kingdom other than England and Wales. By virtue of the Civil Evidence Act 1972, it is not necessary for a witness giving evidence of foreign law to be a practitioner of the system of law in question, provided he is otherwise suitably qualified to do so.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what properties are owned or leased by the Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers and cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Excluding Departmental offices, the Lord Chancellor's Department has no properties which are owned or leased for the use of Ministers.

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will identify individuals who have received more than £1 million from the legal aid fund towards their legal costs in the past 10 years; what has been the total amount paid in each case; and what was the nature of the legal proceedings.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before prorogation. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) if he will list by region the number of fraudulent legal aid claims by solicitors for the period 1992–93 and 1993–94;

(2) what percentage of total moneys paid out by the legal aid fund in each region relate to fraudulent claims by solicitors in the last three years;

(3) how many cases of possible fraudulent claims for legal aid are being investigated by him in each region.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many civil cases in 1993–94 both parties were in receipt of legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans the Government have to improve control of the green form scheme.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The green form scheme is an important means of access to legal advice for people on low incomes. In 1993–94, over 1,600,000 people received help from the green form scheme. Over recent months however the Government and the Legal Aid board have become increasingly concerned about the opportunities for abuse which exist in the scheme.

As a result, the Legal Aid board has conducted an internal review of its systems for detecting fraud and abuse of the green form scheme, and has put in place a number of administrative changes designed to ensure that suspect claims under the green form scheme are speedily detected and acted upon.

In addition, the Legal Aid board has, with the Government's support, proposed a number of other changes to the green form scheme:

i) that there should be a new, more detailed, green form claims form to be used by solicitors who are not franchised by the Legal Aid board;

ii) that a solicitor should be required to seek prior authority from the Legal Aid board before giving advice under more than one green form to the same client within any period of 12 months;

iii) that the Legal Aid board's powers for dealing with cases where fraud or breaches of the legal aid regulations are suspected should be clarified in regulations.

The Legal Aid board is at present consulting the Law Society on the details of these changes. Subject to the outcome of that consultation, the necessary regulations to make these changes will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in last two years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is no record of any contract being entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Small Claims

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to alter the small claims procedure to enable a plaintiff to recover solicitors' costs from the defendant.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I will write to the hon. Member.

Deaths in Custody

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to extend legal aid to allow the families of those who have died whilst in custody to be represented at inquests.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. However, subject to financial eligibility, legal advice and assistance may be sought before the hearing from a solicitor under the green form scheme.

ENVIRONMENT

SSSIs

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about threats to Britain's sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Atkins: The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides a sound basis for the protection of sites of special scientific interest. Some 6,700 SSSIs have now been notified throughout Britain. This affords protection to the habitats of key species of flora and fauna and to a range of the main geological and landform features. In addition, in the determination of development proposals, the land use planning system takes careful account of nature conservation interests.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether all contracts entered into by local authorities, before reorganisation in accordance with Local Government Commission recommendations, will be fully honoured following implementation of Local Government Commission proposals; and whether the rights of employees will be fully protected.

Mr. Curry: Contracts of employment will transfer to the successor authority for all staff who transfer by statutory transfer order or under TUPE regulations. Transfer of rights and liabilities concerning contracts and property is currently the subject of consultation by my Department. We are also consulting on the implications of local government reorganisation for compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost to date of the review of local government in England.

Mr. Curry: The Local Government Commission for England incurred expenditure of £2·056 million in 1992–93 and £5·146 million in 1993–94. We are making available grant in aid of some £8·300 million to the Commission for 1994–95.

We do not have overall figures for the expenditure incurred indirectly by central Government, or directly by local authorities, on the local government review.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount of capital receipts accumulated by local authorities in England at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Returns to the Department show that about £1·9 billion of usable capital receipts were held by authorities at 1 April 1994.

New Home Completions

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new homes were completed by local authorities in England in 1978–79 and 1993–94; and how many he expects will be completed in 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Housing associations are now the main providers of new social housing. Local authorities' primary housing tasks are the efficient management of their own stock of housing and enabling other organisations to provide new housing.

Local authorities in England completed 76,494 new dwellings during the financial year 1978–79; new towns completed a further 7,984 dwellings. Local authorities completed 1,387 new dwellings during 1993–94.

The Department does not forecast the number of new dwellings to be built by local authorities.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Sir Paul Beresford: Excluding departmental offices, the Department of the Environment does not own or lease any apartments for the use of DOE Ministers.

Dioxins

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has now had time to consider the United States Environmental Protection Agency's report on dioxins; and what account will be taken of the decisions to license the burning of recycled liquid fuel in cement kilns in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The US Environmental Protection Agency's report, although both detailed and in parts highly technical, is still a preliminary draft, issued for public comment. It does not represent EPA policy. Its content and findings will be revised during the coming year in the light of comments received. The Government are studying the draft report, and intend to complete their own preliminary assessment of it by the end of this year. The Government will also seek the advice of the chief medical officer about the implications of this report, any decisions taken in the light of this assessment and the advice of the chief medical officer, will apply to all processes which might produce dioxins.

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to modify his Department's policy on encouraging waste to energy incinerators following the recent report by the United States Environmental Protection Agency on the health effects of dioxins; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The US Environmental Protection Agency's report is a preliminary draft issued for public comment and its contents and findings will be revised during the coming year in the light of comments received. The Government are studying the draft report carefully and intend to complete their own preliminary assessment of it by the end of the year.

In their response to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report on incineration of waste, the Government have already given a public assurance that, in deciding their policy on the use of incineration for waste disposal, they will take into account the advice of the chief medical officer on the implications of this and other major dioxin studies.

Water Bills

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the average household bill for unmetered water and sewerage for each water company for each year since 1985, and the combined average for England and Wales in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms;

(2) what was the percentage change in average household water and sewerage bills for each water company for each year since 1985, and the combined average change for England and Wales;

(3) what was the change in the average household water and sewerage bill for each water and sewerage company for each year since 1985, and the combined average rise each year for England and Wales in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms;

(4) what was the change in the average household water and sewerage bill for each water company for each year since 1985, and the combined average change each year for England and Wales in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms;

(5) what was the average household bill for unmetered water and sewerage for each water and sewerage company for each year since 1985, and the combined average for England and Wales in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms;

(6) what was the percentage change in average household water and sewerage charges for each water and sewerage company for each year since 1985, and combined average for England and Wales.

Mr. Atkins: Information on individual water company and water and sewerage company charges since 1985 is contained in "The Water Industry: United Kingdom Services and Cost and Charges for Service", published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, and the "The United Kingdom Water Industry: Charges for Water Services", published annually by the Centre for the Study of Regulated Industries, copies of which are available in the Library.

European Administration

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department holds about the introduction of European departments, European officers and offices in Brussels or Strasbourg by district, county and metropolitan councils; and if he will publish this information together with an estimate of the number of people employed and the costs incurred.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My Department does not hold such information.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Sir Paul Beresford: To the best of my knowledge, there have been no contracts that this Department, or Government agencies responsible to it, have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Water Supplies

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many and what percentage of households are supplied by each of the water companies;

(2) how many, and what percentage of households are supplied by each of the water and sewerage companies.

Mr. Atkins: Information about the number of households supplied by water companies and water and sewerage companies is to be found in "*Waterfacts*", published annually by the Water Services Association, copies of which are available in the Library.

Public Investment Projects

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much private capital has been invested in public investment projects within his Department's responsibility since the 1992 autumn statement;

(2) if he will list those public investment projects within his Department's responsibility which have attracted private capital and which have been commenced since November 1993.

Sir Paul Beresford: It is not practicable to list individually the very large number of public projects which have benefited from private investment over the last two years. However, the Department and its sponsored bodies attracted some £3 billion of private investment in support of departmental programmes in 1993–94, and similarly expect to lever in over £3 billion of private funding in 1994–95. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 31 October further proposals to make it easier for local authorities to co-operate in joint ventures with the private sector. A summary of the proposals, which we aim to implement with effect from 1 April 1995, has been placed in the Library.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 31 October, *Official Report*, column *972-73*, if he will place in the Library the submission made to him on water charging systems by the water services and water companies associations.

Mr. Atkins: It is for the two associations to decide whether they wish to make public the contents of their letter to my right hon. Friend.

Housing (Multiple Occupation)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate (1) *(a)* how many hostels exist in England and Wales, *(b)* how many people live in these hostels and *(c)* how many of these people are on housing benefits;

(2) how many people live in houses in multiple occupation of the type described in section 345 of the Housing Act 1985; how many of these are on housing benefit; how many of these are students; and how many of these are families with children;

(3) how many houses in multiple occupation are estimated to exist under the present definition contained in section 345 of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: A Department of the Environment survey of local authorities estimated that in England and Wales in 1983–84 there were between 1·25 and 2 million people living in houses in multiple occupation. There is no information available on how many of these people receive housing benefit or how many are students or families with children.

The definition of a house in multiple occupation in section 345 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended, is wide; it is a house or flat which is occupied by persons who do not form a single household, so there is therefore no simple way of identifying those properties. However, the English house condition survey 1991 estimated the following:

	Number
Bedsits	75,000
Sheltered accommodation & hostels	51,000
Shared houses	220,000
Households with lodgers	213,000
Total	559,000

The information is not complete, however, as other types of accommodation which could fall within the definition of houses in multiple occupation, such as converted owner-occupied flats and bed and breakfast accommodation, are not included. There is no further specific information about hostels.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses in multiple occupation fall under the high risk category in respect of fire safety.

Mr. Curry: Taking high risk to imply large houses in multiple occupation of at least three storeys with a gross floor area of at least 500 sq m, for which local authorities have a mandatory duty to ensure that there are adequate means of escape from fire, research carried out by the Campaign for Bedsit Rights estimated that 8 per cent. of houses in multiple occupation were in this category.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were killed and injured in houses in multiple occupation in *(a)* 1992–93 and *(b)* 1993–94 as defined in section 345 of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Curry: Statistics are available only for death or injury from fire in England and Wales. The Home Office statistics do not correlate exactly with the definition of houses in multiple occupation in section 345 of the Housing Act 1985. However, the best estimate for multi-occupied houses, excluding shared houses—that is, by students or families taking in lodgers—is as follows:

Deaths from fire in England and Wales, 1987–1992

Year	*Multiple Occupancy Houses*	*All Hotels/ Boarding Houses*	*All Hostels*
1987	80	9	—
1988	72	6	—
1989	77	5	2
1990	61	1	—
1991	44	3	1
1992	76	6	1

Non-Fatal Casualties from Fires in England and Wales, 1987–1992

Year	*Multiple Occupancy Houses*	*All Hotels/ Boarding Houses*	*All Hostels*
1987	1,199	77	40
1988	1,052	125	53
1989	1,100	106	93
1990	1,182	137	59
1991	1,214	118	67
1992	1,320	101	47

Performance Indicators

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department gives to local authorities on the advertising of their performance indicators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My Department gives no such guidance. Within the statutory framework including directions issued by the Audit Commission under section 1 of the Local Government Act 1992, the publication of performance indicator information is a matter for individual local authorities. To assist authorities, the Audit Commission has published this year guidance in its booklet "Read All About It".

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the costs to local government of the publishing of performance indicators in newspapers.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: As was said at the time that the legislation requiring the publication of performance indicators was sought, the publication is not expected to cause any significant increase in costs to local authorities, and any initial costs incurred by them are likely to be offset by longer-term efficiency savings arising due to performance indicators.

Flooding

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses in each water company area in England are at risk of flooding.

Mr. Atkins: That information is not collected centrally either by my Department or by that of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who has policy responsibility for flood defence matters.

Dentists (Pollution)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the pollutionary consequences of dentists washing materials containing mercury and other heavy metals down wash—basins; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: A provisional estimate of one tonne per year of mercury going to sewer from dental clinics has been suggested on the basis of a limited study of inputs of heavy metals to sewers published in June 1994. Two other on-going research projects, aimed specifically at examining emissions of mercury to the environment, should provide additional information on the possible significance of this source.

High Voltage Power Lines

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assistance his Department is giving to local authority associations to research into health risks in the development of domestic properties close to high voltage power lines; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what advice he gives to local authorities considering planning applications for development of domestic properties close to high voltage power lines; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: Responsibility for advising on radiological matters, including exposure to electromagnetic fields from high voltage electricity cables, rests with the National Radiological Protection Board. The NRPB undertakes research and has issued guidance about known health risks with which electricity supply companies comply.

Medomsley Prison

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has been notified by the Home Office of the objections from Derwentside district council, local residents and the hon. Member of Durham, North West to the proposed secure unit on the site of the former Medomsley prison.

Sir Paul Beresford: No.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Sir Paul Beresford: As at 30 June 1994, the total cost of external consultancy fees paid by the Department in preparation for and in support of market testing both internally and in its agencies, amounted to £1·1 million.

Expenditure on other market testing costs for the same period amounted to £2·5 million.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to whom members of the public should apply for information about the audited financial decisions of the Leeds development corporation.

Sir Paul Beresford: Copies of the annual report and audited financial statements of the Leeds development corporation are available from the chief executive of the corporation, South Point, South Accommodation road, Leeds LS10 1PP.

Retired Caravaners' Association

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations underlay his refusal of the request of the Retired Caravaners' Association to be granted concessions under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

Mr. Atkins: We grant exemptions under paragraph 4 of schedule 1 of the 1960 Act only to a few large, national organisations with sufficient standing to prove their administrative capability. Following consultation with the Association of District Councils, the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the National Caravan Council, the British Holiday and Home Parks Association, the Caravan Club, the Camping and Caravaning Club, the Motor Caravaner's Club, the Association of Caravan and Camping Exempted Organisations and the Welsh Office, it was decided that the Retired Caravaners' Association does not meet all the criteria. It is open to the association to apply for membership to the Association of Caravan and Camping Exempted Organisations, which enjoys exemption for extended rallies.

Police Forces

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations underlie the policy of providing a list of standard spending assessments for police forces in England but not Wales.

Mr. Curry: In England, the total of standard spending assessments is sub-divided among the main blocks of services. There is a separate SSA formula for each block. In Wales, the total of SSAs is not at present divided among blocks of services, but the SSAs for county councils in Wales include provision for the police service.

Housing, Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* council houses and *(b)* New Town Commission houses have been sold in Basildon since (i) 1983 and (ii) 1979.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I shall write to the hon. Member.

HEALTH

Staff Cuts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the ratio of the planned staff cuts at regional health authorities as a percentage of the total number of extra management and administrative staff in the national health service since April 1991.

Mr. Malone: I will write to the hon. Member.

General Practitioners

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what incentive plans she has for the recruitment and retention of high quality GPs in London.

Mr. Malone: I will write to the hon. Member.

Minimum Wage

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimated financial effect on the national health service of a minimum wage of *(a)* £3.50 an hour and *(b)* £4.05 an hour.

Mr. Malone: No such estimate has been made.

NHS Salary Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *451*, if she will provide a table listing the total salary costs for *(a)* general and senior managers, *(b)* administrative and clerical staff and *(c)* nursing and midwifery staff in each region for each of the past five years (i) in actual prices and (ii) in 1993 prices.

Mr. Malone: The information available will be placed in the Library. Information for 1993–94 is not available until December 1994.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by her Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if she will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of each appointment and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 20 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *110* with the following additions:

National Health Service Authorities and Trusts

Member	
Mrs. R. Barnes	Re-appointed as Director, Greenwich Healhcare NHS trust, 1 November 1994–31 October 1998. (Social Democratic Party)
Lord Jenkin of Roding	Re-appointed as Chairman, Forest Healthcare Trust, 1 December 1993–30 November 1997. (Conservative)
Sir David Price	Re-appointed as Director, Southampton University Hospital NHS Trust, 1 November 1994–31 October 1996. (Conservative)
Mr. A. Favell	Appointed as Chairman, Tameside and Glossop Acute Service NHS Trust, 1 November 1993–31 October 1997. (Conservative)
Mrs. M. Hicks	Appointed as Director, South Warwickshire Mental Health Services NHS Trust, 23 February 1994–31 October 1995. (Conservative)

Chairman of district health authorities and National Health Service trusts are currently remunerated at between £15,125 and £19,285 a year. Non-executive directors of NHS trusts receive £5,000 a year.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies

Member	
Mrs. R. Barnes	Appointed as Member, Gene Therapy Advisory Committee, 15 November 93–15 November 96. (Social Democratic Party) paid £128 per meeting plus expenses.
Mr. J. Wellbeloved	Re-appointed as Member, Unrelated Live Transplant Regulatory Authority, 1 April 94–31 March 96. (Labour) Paid expenses only.

Dr. Clive Froggatt

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the dates on which she has met Dr. Clive Froggatt of Chelthenham since her appointment as Secretary of State for Health;

(2) in what capacities Dr. Clive Froggatt of Cheltenham has provided advice to the NHS Executive, the Department of Health or to Health Ministers personally; and whether he was paid for this advice;

(3) what official committees of the NHS Executive or the Department of Health, Dr. Clive Froggatt is, or has been, a member; and what dates he served on them.

Mr. Sackville: There is no record of Dr. Clive Froggatt serving on any official committees of the national health service executive or the Department of Health.

Dr. Froggatt has on occasion given unpaid advice to successive Health Ministers. The dates when such advice was given are not recorded.

Remand (Juveniles)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many juveniles have been remanded in prison due to lack of secure accommodation in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when there will be sufficient secure accommodation for juvenile offenders in Greater London.

Mr. Bowis: The provision of secure accommodation for young people whom they are looking after, including juvenile offenders, is the responsibility of individual local authorities.

The Government have made capital funds available to build an additional 170 secure places nationally for criminal justice purposes. Sixteen of those places are to be provided within Greater London by the London borough of Southwark. London boroughs may also have access to additional places being planned by authorities around London, including a new 16—place unit by Essex county council.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what properties are owned or leased by her Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not own or lease properties for the use of Ministers. The only departmental accommodation used by Ministers is their offices in Richmond house, Whitehall which are provided for their official duties.

Patients

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *449*, if she will itemise, by family health service authority, the number of patients removed from general practitioner's lists during each of the last five years.

Mr. Malone: Information for all family health services authorities is available only for the year 1992–93 and will be placed in the Library. Data for 1993–94 are being collected. General practitioners have always had the right, subject to necessary safeguards, to remove patients from their list without giving a reason. Patients also have the right to withdraw from a doctor's list without giving reasons.

Public Investment Projects

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list those public investment projects within her Department's responsibility which have attracted private capital and which have been commenced since November 1993;

(2) how much private capital has been invested in public investment projects within her Department's responsibility since the 1992 autumn statement.

Mr. Sackville: Since the private finance initiative was launched in November 1992, 35 projects have been approved, each with a capital value of £1 million or over. These would bring in private sector capital worth over £90 million to the national health service. Details of the 35 projects are available in the Library.

No information is available on projects with a capital value below £1 million because they do not need central approval.

Information on which projects have been commenced since November 1993 is not available. The information in the Library shows the current status of projects.

Hospital for Tropical Diseases

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the request from the Hospital for Tropical Diseases that it should move to facilities under the control of the University College hospital trust; and when she expects a decision to be finalised.

Mr. Sackville: The Hospital for Tropical Diseases is a constituent part of University College London hospitals national health service trust. Proposals by the trust to relocate the services of the Hospital for Tropical Diseases to the Middlesex and University College hospitals have been considered by the North Thames regional office of the NHS Executive. It has been decided, in agreement with the trust, to postpone the proposed move of the hospital pending the outcome of the option appraisal for the whole trust.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what treatment units there are operating in the NHS to treat obsessive compulsive disorders.

Mr. Bowis: Treatment for those suffering from obsessive compulsive disorders is available as part of the provision of general mental health services.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many contracts her Department or Government agencies responsible to her Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Sackville: We have no record of any contracts between the Department of Health or its agencies and Spencer Stuart consultants.

Disciplinary Suspensions

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses and *(c)* consultants (i) are currently suspended on pay from their duties for disciplinary reasons, (ii) were suspended on pay in each of the last five years from their duties for disciplinary reasons and (iii) were suspended before their case was heard for *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* between three and six months, *(c)* between six and 12 months and *(d)* over 12 months; and what is and was the cost of (i) and (ii) including temporary or locum replacement.

Mr. Malone: We do not collect such information. Decisions, including possible suspensions, rest with the employing authority.

Health Commissions

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the new health commissions that have been formed as a result of the merger of health authorities and family health service authorities.

Mr. Malone: None.

Hospital Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 May, *Official Report*, columns *1–2*, if she will update the table on vacant hospital consultant posts.

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table.

Because these are consultant vacancies notified to the Department as at 30 September of each year, they may not fairly reflect the trend for the number of vacancies over the year as a whole.

Vacant hospital consultant posts by specialty group England—30 September 1989–1993

Specialty Group	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
General Medicine Group	119.7	129.2	92.7	118.1	103.5
Accident and Emergency	15.0	18.4	14.4	19.6	15.3
Surgical Group	88.2	135.3	87.1	90.0	95.7
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	17.9	23.4	18.0	23.0	21.8
Anaesthetics	70.3	87.9	50.3	88.0	80.6
Radiology Group	34.6	33.9	18.8	21.9	18.4
Clinical Oncology (formerly Radiotherapy)	4.2	7.2	6.0	5.0	2.0
Pathology Group	39.0	49.9	36.6	23.4	20.7
Psychiatry Group	193.4	217.3	150.1	152.7	126.9
Dental Specialties	10.0	10.5	12.3	9.0	5.7
All Specialties	592.3	713.0	486.4	550.7	490.6

Note:

The table shows whole time equivalent.

Children of God

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he will take to deal with the situation discovered in relation to the organisation entitled the Children of God; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: I will write to the hon. Member.

Vaccinations

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the medical reason for the abortion from which foetal tissue was obtained from which vaccine was originally derived for vaccinating children against measles and rubella; when that abortion took place; what was the age of the foetus when aborted; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The cell line in which the vaccine is grown was derived from cells from a single foetus. The termination was carried out in 1966 in a national health service hospital. The foetus was aged 14 weeks. The termination was carried out for psychiatric reasons. Those details were published in "*Nature*" in 1970, volume 227, pages 168–170. The rubella virus used in the vaccine was isolated from a foetus terminated in the 1960s in the United States 17 days after the mother contracted confirmed rubella. Copies of the publication are available in the Library.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional action she is taking to persuade the maximum numbers of parents in the United Kingdom to consent to their children being vaccinated against measles and rubella; what action is being taken to allay religious reservations about the origins of the vaccine used in the current vaccination programme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Health Education Authority has produced an information leaflet with a consent form for parents. Television advertisements and other forms of media have also been used to provide advice and information about the immunisation campaign. This has included advertisements in the ethnic press and on ethnic radio programmes. The Department has been working with leaders of all the faith communities to make available information about the production of rubella vaccine and the public health benefits of immunisation. The chief medical officer met representatives of the various faith communities to discuss the campaign on 1 November; a copy of the press statement released following that meeting has been placed in the Library. We hope that parents of all faiths will be able to participate fully.

Homeopathic Medicines

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her policy in respect of directive 92/73/EEC regulating medicinal homeopathic products;

(2) what is the Government's timescale for implementing directive 91/73/EEC.

Mr. Sackville: Regulations fully implementing directive 92/73/EEC came into force on 14 February 1994. The principal effect of those regulations was to establish a simplified registration scheme for homeopathic medicinal products, thereby extending the opportunities for the marketing of such products in the United Kingdom. Currently marketed products were not affected.

Electromagnetic Fields

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment her Department has made into the existence of any link between child leukaemia and electromagnetic fields;

(2) what research her Department has conducted into any link between electromagnetic fields and health problems;

(3) if she will make a statement on the health implications of living close to major sources of electricity supply with particular reference to overhead power cables and electricity sub-stations.

Mr. Sackville: The National Radiological Protection Board and the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment have considered epidemiological studies and laboratory research and concluded that they do not establish that exposure to electromagnetic fields causes cancer. Some epidemiological studies have reported associations between electromagnetic fields and some types of cancer. However, the significance of an epidemiological study depends, among other things, on the strength of the association, the presence of a dose-response relationship, supporting experimental evidence and a credible biological explanation. These tests for causality are not satisfied for the link between electromagnetic fields and cancer. The two bodies have not recommended the adoption of a policy of prudent avoidance of electromagnetic fields on the basis of present evidence. The position is being kept under review.

The Department is contributing to the funding of the United Kingdom childhood cancer study organised by the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee for Cancer Research. The study, which is well under way, is examining the possible influence of a number of agents, including electromagnetic fields on the incidence of childhood cancer.

The Department also provides funding to the National Radiological Protection Board which undertakes a programme of research into the effects on health of electromagnetic radiation. This includes sources of electromagnetic radiation such as power lines and electrical equipment.

Asthma

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many recorded cases of asthma in children of school age there were for each year from 1979 to 1993.

Mr. Sackville: It is estimated that between 4 and 6 per cent. of children suffer from asthma sufficiently seriously to require medical supervision. Numbers of hospital in-patient cases of children suffering from asthma are available from hospital episode statistics for the years shown in the table. Figures for earlier years are not available.

Finished consultant episodes—ordinary admissions and day cases—in which asthma was the main diagnosis for the five to 18 age group, England

	Number
1988—89	27,547
1989—90	23,175
1990—91	20,536
1991—92	22,965

Source:
Hospitals Episode Statistics, estimate from a 25 per cent. sample.

Pay Scales

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give details of the current pay scales for consultants;

(2) if she will give details of the current pay scales for doctors;

(3) if she will give details of the current pay scales for nurses.

Mr. Malone: The revised pay rates for nurses and those for hospital medical and dental staff and doctors in public health medicine and the community health service effective from 1 April 1994 were announced in Advance Letters (NM)3/94 and (MD)1/94 respectively. Copies of those letters will be placed in the Library.

Bull Bars

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cyclists injured in collision with vehicles fitted with bull bars were admitted to hospital in the last 12 months.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Parliamentary Questions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions in the present Session she has answered parliamentary questions with the single word "no".

Mr. Sackville: A search of POLIS shows that of a total 5,312 parliamentary questions answered by the Department up to 2 November this session, 24 received an answer with the single word "no"—0·45 per cent.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the date of appointment, salary and previous post of each of the chief executives of the NHS trusts in England.

Mr. Malone: The information is not available centrally.

Foetal Material

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all the medicines, vaccines and treatments which have been developed from the cells of aborted foetuses or use foetal material as part of their ingredients.

Mr. Sackville: Foetal cells have been used to generate cell lines subsequently used in the manufacture of rabies, rubella, hepatitis A and polio vaccines.

The polio vaccine mainly used in the United Kingdom however, was not developed or manufactured using foetal material.

We are not aware of any other licensed medicinal products where their manufacture would have involved the use of such material.

Performance-related Pay

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 1 November, what proportion of the responses she has received have supported the proposal to introduce performance-related pay into the national health service.

Mr. Malone: I will write to the hon. Member.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in her Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Sackville: For the period 1 April 1992 to 30 September 1993, the Department market tested activities valued at £19 million with annual savings of £3·5 million. The one-off consultancy and other costs for this period amounted to £409,118 and £263,000 respectively.

The value of services market tested in the period 1 October 1993 to 30 September 1994 was £25 million. Related savings are not yet available. The consultancy and other costs for the period to 30 June 1994 - the latest available - were £213,731 and £81,000 respectively.

Pelvic Cancer

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *393*, what audit she undertook of those people who were treated for pelvic cancer; and if she will publish the results.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is not undertaking an audit of those people who were treated for pelvic cancer.

The Department commissioned an audit of breast cases because they were all suffering from the same cancer and had similar radiotherapy. Patients who had pelvic radiotherapy had different cancers and underwent different techniques of radiotherapy. It is easier to detect common features between members of the first group than between members of the second. For that reason, we have commenced an audit of women exhibiting adverse effects following breast radiotherapy.

Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *863*, if she will place in the Library copies of the hospital league tables—qualitative, patient's charter literature research and hospital league tables qualitative, post publication, surveys.

Mr. Malone: I will write to the hon. Member.

Herbal Medicines

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what consultations she undertook with organisations representing consumers and practitioners of herbal medicines prior to drafting the proposed Medicines for Human Use (Marketing Authorisations, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations;

(2) if she will make a statement on the future availability of herbal medicines; and if she will indicate in particular the effect upon that availability of the implementation of *(a)* the proposed Medicines for Human Use (Marketing Authorisations, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations and *(b)* the implementation of any other European directives which have been agreed, which are being negotiated, or which are expected in the near future;

(3) which sections of the Medicines Acts currently exempt certain herbal medicines from the requirement to obtain a product licence; by which procedure products are exempted; and if she will take steps to ensure that such exemptions are sustained when she brings forward for consideration and implementation *(a)* the proposed Medicines for Human Use (Marketing Authorisations, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations and *(b)* the implementation of any other European directives which have been agreed, which are being negotiated, or which are expected in the near future.

Mr. Sackville: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Treddinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list those herbal products which are currently exempt from the requirement for a product licence under the terms of Medicines Acts and which would become unavailable should the European Community bring forward harmonisation procedures following the acceptance of the provisions of the proposed Medicines for Human Use (Marketing Authorisations, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations;

(2) if she will list those organisations specialising in herbal medicines which were consulted about the proposed Medicines for Human Use (Marketing Authorisations, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations; and what steps she is taking to ensure that such organisations are routinely consulted on future occasions;

(3) what information she has concerning the number of individuals in the United Kingdom who currently use herbal medicines; what information she has to suggest that there is a serious health risk posed by the use of such medicines; upon what basis she believes legislation in this area is necessary; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what consultations she undertook with right hon. and hon. Members prior to the drafting of the proposed Medicines for Human Use (Marketing Authorisations, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations; and what steps she will take to ensure that such consultations are undertaken in future;

(2) what information she currently has about the average cost associated with the supply of all necessary information and research data by a manufacturer in connection with an application to the Medicines Control Agency for a product licence; and what assessment she has made of the implications of such expenses for the suppliers of herbal medicines should such products be brought within the scope of the licensing regime either through the implementation of the proposed Medicines for Human Use (Marketing Authorisations, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations, or subsequent harmonisation moves by the European Community.

(3) what steps she intends to take to guarantee the availability of herbal medicines within the United Kingdom should the European Community bring forward moves towards harmonisation in the availability of such products following the implementation of the proposed Medicines for Human Use (Marketing Authorisations,Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations, and the implementation of any other European directives which have been agreed, which are being negotiated, or which are expected in the near future.

Mr. Sackville: I will write to my hon. Friends.

National Blood Authority

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedure is being adopted for consideration of the National Blood Authority's reorganisation proposals; when the National Blood Authority will complete its consideration of the responses to the consultation; and when she will consider their recommendations.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority is undertaking a national consultation on its proposals which ends on 11 November. The results will be carefully considered before decisions are made. The detailed procedure and timescale for assessing the results is under consideration.

Children in Hospital

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received since January 1993 on the "Too Dear to Visit" campaign and the issue of parents visiting their sick children in hospital; how many letters she has received from *(a)* parents of sick children, *(b)* professionals, *(c)* voluntary organisations and *(d)* hon. Members; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received some 98 letters from hon. Members who have enclosed a copy of one prepared by the organisers of the "Too Dear to Visit" campaign and forwarded by constituents. The organisers have also written directly to the Department. In addition we have received a small number of letters from members of the public in support of the campaign. We have carefully considered these representations in the light of current provisions for parents to visit their children in hospital. There are no plans to extend these arrangements.

TREASURY

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Nelson: The Chancellor of the Exchequer has some responsibility for making or approving 97 public appointments, 23 per cent. of which are held by women, as shown in "Public Bodies 1993", including the Royal Mint.

In addition to the above appointments, he also has some responsibility for making or approving a further 229 public appointments which are not shown in "Public Bodies". A total of 17 per cent. of these appointments are currently held by women.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Nelson: Since 1988 the Treasury has appointed two former Members of the House to quasi non-governmental organisations. Lord Stewartby, a Conservative, was appointed to the Securities and Investments board in December 1993 for a period of two years at a salary of £13,500 per annum. Dr. Oonagh McDonald —Labour—was appointed to the Securities and Investments board in December 1993 for a period of three years at a salary of £13,500 per annum.

Airports Customs Officers

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many United Kingdom airports receiving scheduled flights from abroad do not have permanent, full-time customs staff stationed at the airport.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are six United Kingdom airports receiving scheduled flights from abroad at which there are no permanent, full-time customs staff stationed.

BSkyB

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax consequences and payments to public funds accrue from the sale of 10 per cent. of BSkyB shares.

Sir George Young: The normal rules of confidentiality prevent me commenting on the affairs of particular taxpayers.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross national product were representing *(a)* gross United Kingdom contributions to the European Community, *(b)* direct expenditure by Government Departments, *(c)* expenditure by executive next steps agencies, or other self-accounting units within the public sector and *(d)* Her Majesty's Government grants to local authorities, at the latest available date; and on what value of gross national product these proportions are calculated.

Mr. Aitken: The table shows figures for expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product for the financial year 1993–94, the latest year for which final outturn figures are available.

	Percentage of GDP
Gross EC contributions	1·3
Central government's own expenditure[1]	28·4
Central government grants to local authorities[2]	8·8

Notes:

[1] Government Departments' and other central Government bodies' expenditure within the control total excluding net EC contributions and including cyclical social security.

[2] Excludes credit approvals.

The figures are based on a gross domestic product figure of £630 billion. It is the Government's usual practice to use gross domestic product in preference to gross national product when comparing Government expenditure aggregates with total economy expenditure.

Separate information on the expenditure by next steps executive agencies is available in individual Departments' annual departmental reports. Information on the expenditure of non-departmental public bodies can be found in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies".

Income Tax

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the tax take, in each year since 1990–91 of *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers and *(g)* all taxpayers;

(2) what was the percentage of total income, in each year since 1990–91, received by *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent. and *(e)* the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers;

(3) what was *(a)* the total income, *(b)* the average income and *(c)* the earned income, in each year since 1990–91, of (i) the top 1 per cent., (ii) the top 5 per cent., (iii) the top 10 per cent., (iv) the bottom 70 per cent, (v) the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers and (vi) in all taxpayers;

(4) what was the percentage of the tax take, in each year since 1990–91, from *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent. and *(e)* the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers.

Sir George Young: Estimates are given in the table.

Quantile group of taxpayers Per cent.	*Total income*[1] *£ million*	*Average income £*	*Total earned income*[2] *£ million*	*Income tax liability* *£ million*	*Per cent.*
1990–91					
Top 1	28,300	107,800	21,100	9,200	15
Top 5	68,700	52,200	54,400	18,900	31
Top 10	102,800	39,100	83,900	25,400	42
Bottom 70	161,400	8,800	147,700	18,700	31
Bottom 10	12,100	4,600	11,300	300	1
All taxpayers	358,300	13,600	316,400	60,400	100

Quantile group of taxpayers Per cent.	*Total income*[1] *£ million*	*Average income £*	*Total earned income*[2] *£ million*	*Income tax liability* *£ million*	*Per cent.*
1991–92					
Top 1	31,200	120,600	23,400	10,400	16
Top 5	73,900	57,100	60,100	20,700	33
Top 10	109,600	42,300	91,800	27,500	43
Bottom 70	166,300	9,200	152,700	19,300	30
Bottom 10	12,600	4,900	11,300	300	1
All taxpayers	373,800	14,400	335,000	63,500	100

Quantile group of taxpayers Per cent.	*Total income*[1] *£ million*	*Average income £*	*Total earned income*[2] *£ million*	*Income tax liability* *£ million*	*Per cent.*
1992–93					
Top 1	29,300	115,300	22,900	9,500	16
Top 5	72,000	56,700	61,300	19,800	33
Top 10	108,100	42,600	93,700	26,500	44
Bottom 70	165,300	9,300	153,000	17,500	29
Bottom 10	12,500	4,900	11,100	300	—
All taxpayers	373,700	14,700	340,800	60,700	100

Quantile group of taxpayers Per cent.	*Total income*[1] *£ million*	*Average income £*	*Total earned income*[2] *£ million*	*Income tax liability* *£ million*	*Per cent.*
1993–94					
Top 1	29,900	117,600	24,300	9,800	16
Top 5	73,900	58,200	64,800	20,400	33
Top 10	111,300	43,800	99,900	27,500	44
Bottom 70	166,900	9,400	156,800	18,000	29
Bottom 10	12,200	4,800	11,100	300	—
All taxpayers	381,400	15,000	354,600	62,800	100

Quantile group of taxpayers Per cent.	*Total income*[1] *£ million*	*Average income £*	*Total earned income*[2] *£ million*	*Income tax laibility* *£ million*	*Per cent.*
1994–95					
Top 1	32,000	124,200	25,800	10,800	15
Top 5	78,900	61,200	68,900	22,800	33
Top 10	118,700	46,000	106,200	30,900	44
Bottom 70	173,300	9,600	163,000	19,900	29
Bottom 10	12,300	4,800	11,200	300	—
All taxpayers	401,000	15,500	373,100	69,700	100

Note:

[1] Income subject to tax. Excludes non-taxable income such as certain social security benefits.

[2] Income from employment, self-employment and pensions.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that I cannot answer substantively before Parliament is prorogued. I will, however, write to the hon. Member.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury neither owns nor leases buildings for the use of Ministers.

Lloyd's Names

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the Inland Revenue's estimate of tax relief since 1988 for Lloyd's names; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what basis tax relief will be given to Lloyd's names for the years of account since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Lloyd's names are traders under general law and tax legislation follows this. Accordingly, trading losses incurred by Lloyd's names are eligible for relief on the same lines as those of other traders: Lloyd's trading losses of any year can be set against other tradeable income of the same tax year or of the previous year, or can be carried forward and set against Lloyd's trading profits of later years.

Changes from the 1991–92 year or assessment enabling trading losses to be set against capital gains apply to all traders, including Lloyd's names.

Information on tax relief is not centrally available. Income tax and capital gains tax repaid to Lloyd's underwriters by the underwriters unit of Inland Revenue in each year to 5 April since 1988–89 is shown in the following table. The figures cover refunds of tax made over a range of earlier years, and include any repayment supplement attracted by the tax refunded. For comparison purposes, the table also shows the tax charged on initial assessments made during each year on underwriting profits and gains, including estimated assessments.

Fiscal Year	*Total tax repaid £ million*	*Total tax assessed £ million*
1988–89	157·7	157·3
1989–90	118·2	308·9
1990–91	91·0	228·2
1991–92	126·7	101·8
1992–93	386·6	10·3
1993–94	479·1	3·7

Public Investment Projects

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much private capital has been invested in public investment projects since the 1992 autumn statement.

Sir George Young: Nearly £8 billion by the end of 1994–95, including about £500 million under the private finance initiative.

Bank Accounts

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance has been issued to the clearing banks by the Bank of England concerning personal and business bank accounts held by Iraqi nationals resident in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Bank of England issued a notice on 7 August 1990, and supplements on 25 August, 3 September and 13 September 1990, which detailed the administrative arrangements for blocking personal and business accounts held in the United Kingdom by Iraqi nationals. Further guidance is given to individual banks on application to the sanctions emergency unit at the Bank of England.

Copies of the Bank notice and the three supplements are being placed in the Library.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Ron Davies.: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many households in Wales receive mortgage tax relief; and at what total cost to the Exchequer.

Sir George Young: It is estimated that 450,000 married couples and single people receive mortgage interest relief in Wales in 1994–95 at a cost to the Exchequer of £130 million. The estimates are based on the regional distribution of mortgages shown by the 1993 family expenditure survey applied to the United Kingdom total estimates for 1994–95.

Black Economy

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made about the growth in the black economy since 1979.

Sir George Young: It is not possible to make a reliable assessment.

VAT

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the increase in inflation for the year to September 1994 would have been if VAT on fuel at 8 per cent. had not been introduced in April.

Mr. Nelson: The extension of VAT to domestic fuel and power is estimated to have added just under 0·4 per cent. to the retail prices index since April 1994.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Nelson: Expenditure to date by the Treasury on payments to external consultants for work related to market testing amounts to £141,675. Other costs of £59,400 have also been incurred.

Loans (Taxation)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the Inland Revenue taxes loans which replace cheap or interest-free loans provided to employees by their employer.

Sir George Young: Cheap or interest-free loans provided by employers are taxable benefits in kind. At present under, the technical rules introduced in 1976 to prevent avoidance, any loan which replaces a cheap or interest-free loan provided by an employer is also taxable, unless the replacement loan qualifies for exemption.

Some employers would like to stop providing cheap loans to staff. They want to do so by transferring their staff's existing loans to subsidiaries of commercial lenders set up for the purpose of giving replacement loans in such circumstances. However, the replacement loans from the subsidiary companies, which are on arm's length terms, could still be taxable. They would not be exempt as "commercial loans" because the subsidiary companies do not lend to the public.

In order to remove a possible obstacle to the provision of replacement loans to employees, we intend to propose legislation in the next Finance Bill. This would replace the rule which makes all replacement loans potentially taxable by new rules which focus more precisely on the potential for tax avoidance. The new rules would allow the subsidiary companies to provide replacement loans on arm's length terms without the replacement loans being taxable. We intend that this provision should apply from 6 April 1995.

The Inland Revenue is making available today a draft clause which would implement these changes. A copy of the draft clause will be placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Tax Statistics

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 25 February 1993, *Official Report*, columns *682-84*, on the tax liabilities of taxpayers in different income bands, giving figures for 1994–95 and estimates for 1995–96 based on the assumption of statutory indexation and including measures already announced in the 1993 budgets.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* Latest estimates of the average reductions in income tax and national insurance liabilities in 1994–95 and 1995–96 assuming statutory indexation and inclusion of measures already announced, compared with liabilities under an indexed 1987–88 regime are in the table. An equivalent assumption has been made about indexation of the national insurance regime for 1995–96. The 1987–88 income tax regime has been indexed to 1994–95 and 1995–96 levels by reference to the statutory formula and allowing for the effect of the independent taxation of husbands and wives.

	Average reduction or increase (-) in 1994–95 compared with 1987–88 indexed regime (£)	
Range of individuals income in 1994–95 (£)	*Income tax*	*Income tax and National Insurance*
Under 5,000	40	60
5,000–10,000	150	200
10,000–15,000	200	270
15,000–20,000	250	280
20,000–25,000	330	290
25,000–30,000	370	290
30,000–40,000	–70	–160
40,000–50,000	140	50
50,000–70,000	1,460	1,360
70,000–80,000	4,040	3,930
Over 80,000	17,800	17,700
Average	330	350

	Average reduction or increase (-) in 1995–96 compared with 1987–88 indexed regime (£)	
Range of individuals income in 1995–96 (£)	*Income tax*	*Income tax and National Insurance*
Under 5,000	30	50
5,000–10,000	70	110
10,000–15,000	10	80
15,000–20,000	–60	–40
20,000–25,000	–90	–120
25,000–30,000	–120	–180
30,000–40,000	–640	–710
40,000–50,000	–620	–700
50,000–70,000	620	530
70,000–80,000	3,120	3,020
Over 80,000	16,900	16,800
Average	110	130

For the purpose of the calculations the indexed regime of 1987–88 has been applied directly to the income bases of 1994–95 and 1995–96. In practice, retention of the 1987–88 regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will add to the table in his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 3 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns *245-56*, estimating the tax liabilities in 1995–96 for the given income ranges showing the effects of all tax changes including those announced in 1993 budgets and including both indirect taxation and intermediate taxation.

Sir George Young *[holding answer October 1994]:* The impact of indirect and intermediate taxation depends on individual spending patterns and the effect of indirect and intermediate taxes on prices.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the information provided in the Treasury's tax ready reckoner and tax reliefs on the basis of the September retail prices index.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* Updated information for tables 2 to 6, and part of table 7, is as follows. Figures for the rest of table 7, as well as tables 8 to 10, have not been revised as these are not dependent on the September retail prices index.

Table 2 Income tax

	£ 1994–95	1995–96
Personal allowance	3,445	3,525
Personal allowance (age 65–74)	4,200	4,300
Personal allowance (age 75 and over)	4,370	4,470
Married couple's allowance	1,720	[1]1,720
Married couple's allowance (age 65–74)	2,665	[1]2,995
Married couple's allowance (age 75 and over)	2,705	[1]3,035
Additional personal[2] and widow's bereavement allowance	1,720	[1]1,720
Aged income limit[3]	14,200	14,600
Lower rate band	3,000	3,100
Basic rate limit[4]	23,700	24,300

Notes:

[1] The values of these allowances were announced in the November 1993 Budget. The additional £330 for taxpayers aged 65 or over ensures that they lose no more from the restriction of the married couple's allowance to 15 per cent. than taxpayers aged under 65.

[2] Primarily for single parents.

[3] If the total income, less allowable deductions, of a taxpayer aged 65 or over exceeds this limit, the age-related allowances are reduced by £1 for each £2 of income over the limit until the basic levels of the personal and married couple's allowances are reached.

[4] Higher rate income tax is payable on income (less those allowances and reliefs that are allowed at the higher rate) in excess of the basic rate limit.

Table 3 Inheritance tax

	£'000 1994–95	1995–96
Threshold	150	1[illegible]4

Table 4 Capital gains tax

	£ 1994–95	1995–96
Annual exempt amount:		
individuals	5,800	6,000
trustees	2,900	3,000

Table 5 Cost of indexation for 1995–96

	£ million 1995–96	1996–97
Indexation of income tax allowances, lower rate band and basic rate limit[1]	700	920
of which:		
increases in allowances	450	560
increase in the lower rate band[2]	80	100
increase in the basic rate limit[2]	170	260
Indexation of inheritance tax threshold	15	25
Indexation of capital gains tax annual exempt amount	—	2

[1] Cost includes the consequential effects of capital gains tax, but excludes the cost of changes in the married couple's allowance and related allowances as these allowances were announced in the November 1993 Budget.

[2] Additional cost after previous change has been introduc[illegible]

Table 6 Direct effects of illustrative changes in income tax[1]

	£ million cost/yield 1995–96	1996–97
Rates		
Change lower rate by 1p[2]	[3]770	[3]650
Change basic rate by 1p	1,700	2,100
Change higher rate by 1p	310	520
Allowances		
Change personal allowance £100	490	63
Change age-related personal allowance by £100[4]	45	60
Change married couple's allowance by £100[5]	120	150
Change age-related married couple's allowances by £100[4]	11	14
Change aged income limit by £500	6	11
Change all personal allowances by 1 per cent.[6]	190	240
Change all personal allowances by 10 per cent.[6]	1,850	2,400
Change married couple's and related allowances by 1 per cent.[6]	25	30
Change married couple's and related allowances by 10 per cent.[6]	240	310
Lower rate band		
Increase lower rate band by 10 per cent.[6]	250	320
Basic rate limit		
Change basic rate limit by 1 per cent.[6]	65	95
Change basic rate limit by 10 per cent.[6]		
increase (cost)	590	870
decrease (yield)	740	1,050
Allowances, lower rate band and basic rate limit		
Change all main allowances, lower rate band and basic rate limit by 1 per cent.[6]	300	400
Change all main allowances, lower rate band and basic rate limit by 10 per cent.[6]:		
increase (cost)	2,900	3,900
decrease (yield)	3,200	4,250

[1] The estimates are rounded. The extent of rounding reflects the desire to avoid undue compounding of its effects when numbers are pro-rated, rather than the accuracy of the estimates. The figures include consequential effects on the yield of capital gains tax. Changes are assumed to take effect from April 1995.

[2] Including the effects of the changes on receipts of ACT and on consequential liability to mainstream corporation tax.

[3] In last year's Ready Reckoner it was assumed that a change in the lower rate would affect the married couple's allowance and related allowances and mortgage interest relief. These allowances and mortgage interest relief have since been restricted to 15 per cent. with effect from April 1995 and will not consequentially reduce the effects of a change in the lower rate.

[4] Allowances for those aged 65–74 and aged 75 and over.

[5] Figures include revenue effects of changing the additional personal allowance and widow's bereavement allowance by £100.

[6] Percentage changes are calculated with reference to 1994–95 levels, except for the married couple's allowance and related allowances, where they are calculated with reference to the 1995–96 levels announced in the November 1993 Budget.

Table 7 Direct effects of illustrative changes in other direct taxes[1]

	£ million cost/yield 1995–96	1996–97
Capital gains tax		
Increase annual exempt amount by £500 for individuals and £250 for trustees	—	6
Inheritance tax		
Change rate by 1 percentage point	16	33
Increase threshold by £5,000	17	33

[1] The estimated revenue effects of the changes on receipts are rounded. The extent of rounding reflects the desire to avoid undue compounding of its effects when numbers are pro-rated, rather than the accuracy of the estimates. The figures include consequential effects on the yield of capital gains tax. Changes are assumed to take effect from April 1995.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 1 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *20*, to provide similar estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes for 1995–96 based on the assumption of statutory indexation and including measures already announced in the 1993 budgets.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* The burden of direct and indirect taxes for 1995–96 will depend on the levels of earnings in that year. The impact of pre-announced Budget measures averaged over all households will be about £3 a week in 1995–96.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 3 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *254*, to include estimates for taxing child benefit for 1995–96 based on the assumption of statutory indexation and measures already announced in the 1993 budgets; and if he will include estimates for the effect on revenues if child benefits was taxed at the higher rate only.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* Were child benefit to be taxed on the assumption given the yield would be:

		Yield in a full year (£ million) *1994–95*	*1995–96*
Child benefit taxed as:			
Father's or lone mothers income	—All taxpayers	1,200	1,300
	—40 per cent. taxpayers only	300	300
Mother's or lone father's income	—All taxpayers	650	700
	—40 per cent. taxpayers only	40	40

The estimates for 1995–96 are based on the assumption that child benefit will be increased in line with the September retail prices index.

Duties

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the impact on the retail prices index of a *(a)* 3 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* 10 per cent. increase in duties on (i) beer and cider, (ii) wine, (iii) spirits, (iv) tobacco, (v) petrol, (vi) diesel and (vii) vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Heatcoat-Amory *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* The table shows the impact on the RPI, excluding mortgage interest payments of various duty increases.

	3 per cent. Non-indexed	*5 per cent. Non-indexed*	*10 per cent. Non-indexed*
Beer and Cider	0·02	0·04	0·08
Wine	0·02	0·03	0·06
Spirits	0·02	0·03	0·07
Tobacco	0·07	0·12	0·24
Petrol	0·07	0·12	0·23
Diesel	0·01	0·01	0·02
VED	0·02	0·04	0·08

Value Added Tax

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on Treasury revenue in 1995–96 and in a full year of extending value added tax at *(a)* 8 per cent. *(b)* 17·5 per cent. to all those zero-rated, giving figures separately for each item.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* The Treasury publication "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" shows the expected cost of zero rating items currently zero-rated in 1994–95. It is possible to derive an estimated revenue gain from taxing these items at both 8 per cent. and 17·5 per cent. These figures make no allowance for behavioural changes.

	£ million *8 per cent.*	*17·5 per cent.*
Food	3,270	7,150
Construction of new dwellings	890	1,950
Domestic Passenger Transport	525	1,150
International Passenger Transport	525	1,150
Books, newspapers and magazines	525	1,150
Children's clothing	275	600
Water and sewerage services	320	700
Drugs and medicines on prescription	230	500
Supplies to charities	90	200
Ships and aircraft above a certain size	205	450
Vehicles and other supplies to disabled people	70	150

Economic Developments

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will press the International Monetary Fund board of directors to release the document, entitled "Recent Economic Developments".

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* The IMF executive board decided on 11 July 1994 that, subject to the consent of the member concerned, "Recent Economic Developments" documents should be published. Since that date there have been no "Recent Economic Developments" documents on the United Kingdom.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirements

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the reasons for the difference between the forecast public sector borrowing requirement for 1994–95 contained in table 2·1 of the Treasury's 1994 summer economic forecast and the earlier forecast for the same financial year contained in the March 1991 Financial Statement and Budget Report; and if he will estimate how much of the difference was due to *(a)* discretionary changes to public expenditure plans, taxes or other receipts, *(b)* changes resulting from errors in forecasting the level of out-put, *(c)* changes resulting from errors in forecasting the rate of inflation, *(d)* errors in forecasting debt interest and *(e)* other errors.

Mr. Aitken: I regret that I cannot answer substantively before Parliament is prorogued. I will, however, write to the hon. Member.

Family Expenditure

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the average weekly expenditure in 1997–98 and 1996–97 of *(a)* all households, *(b)* families with children, *(c)* non-retired households and *(d)* retired households, on domestic fuel, showing separately for 1995-96 the extra expenditure as a result of VAT at 17·5 per cent.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* The table shows figures for 1993 based on the family expenditure survey, the most recent data available. Making projections for 1996–97 and 1997—98 would require hypothetical assumptions on the development of earnings, the distribution of income between household types and future energy prices.

	Average weekly expenditure 1993 £	*Extra expenditure from 17½ per cent. VAT* £
All households	13·24	1·81
Families with children	15·25	2·08
Non retired households	13·40	1·83
Retired households	11·03	1·51

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Prosecution (Immunity)

Mr. Allason: To ask the Attorney-General how many people are the subject of an immunity from prosecution; and if he will name them.

The Attorney-General: The term "immunities" is variously used to signify specific assurances given by prosecuting authorities that an offender will not be prosecuted for a particular offence or offences as well as the assurance which may be implied when a prosecuting authority concludes that the public interest is being served by using an individual who may have played some part in a crime as a witness rather than prosecuting that individual.

The term may also be used to describe assurances given to an individual that answers to questions given before a particular tribunal —for example, a public inquiry—will not be used in evidence against that person; albeit a prosecution may still be brought if evidence from other sources is available and sufficient to justify the institution of proceedings.

No central record of "immunities" is maintained.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Attorney-General what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

The Attorney-General: Excluding departmental offices, no such properties are owned or leased by the Departments for which I am responsible.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Attorney-General how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

The Attorney-General: None.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Broadcasting and Media

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his latest estimate of *(a)* the export value of United Kingdom broadcasters programmes and *(b)* the value of imports into the United Kingdom of foreign programmes.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

In 1993, exports and imports by United Kingdom television companies were £113 million and £228 million respectively. These figures include the making of television programmes and the buying and selling of completed programmes.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he made to and what assessment he has made of the decision of the European Parliament regarding cross–media ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department is aware of the view of the European Parliament, which is likely to be reflected in the European Commission's forthcoming communication on pluralism and media concentrations.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what contact his Department has had with the European Commission Council of Ministers arising from the European Parliament's decision in January to request draft legislation from Commissioner Vanni d' Archirapi on diversification of media ownership.

Mr. Dorrell: There has been no discussion within the Culture Council on the issue of media ownership. The Industry/Telecommunications Council on 28 September 1994 noted the European Commission's response to the Bangemann group report on the Information Society, which included reference to media concentration.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what response his Department has made to the EU Commission's communication on the information Society in respect of European regulation of media concentrations.

Mr. Dorrell: The European Commission's communication on the Information Society indicated that the Commission will shortly present a communication to the Council and Parliament on the follow-up to the Green Paper on pluralism and media concentration in the internal market. I shall consider any response once the communication is available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the research papers produced by his Department or commissioned from consultants in the last year on matters which fall under the scope of the broadcasting policy and media divisions of his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: "Setting the level of the television licence fee", a report by management consultants, Touche Ross, was published on 4 November 1993. No other research papers have been produced in the last year in the areas falling within the scope of my Department's broadcasting policy and media divisions.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the franchises for the regional television companies are to be re-auctioned; and what amendments to the proceedings he will introduce.

Mr. Dorrell: The channel 3 licences which came into force on 1 January 1993 are valid for ten years. An application for renewal may be made by the current licence holder any time after six years from the start of the licence. The terms of any renewal will be set by the Independent Television Commission. I have no plans to amend the procedures.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met representatives of the ITN network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I met Michael Green, who is the chairman of ITN, on 6 October and discussed a number of broadcasting issues.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what response his Department has made to the European Green Paper on pluralism and media 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department has discussed the Green Paper with officials from the European Commission on a number of occasions. I shall consider any response to the Commission's forthcoming communication on this matter once the communication is available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to change the ownership rules for ITV franchises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The ownership rules for all broadcasters, including the ITV franchises, are being considered as part of the Government's review of cross-media ownership. An announcement about the outcome will be made once the Government have determined the way ahead.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what is his Department's policy towards extending the diversity of ownership of the press and broadcasting media;

(2) what is his Department's policy on the extension to broadcasting of the existing laws of libel and obscenity as apply to other media;

(3) what was the income received by Her Majesty's Government from each of the independent television companies for the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will list separately the levy, the annual bid price and other sources of revenue.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Public Appointments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the quangos to which his Department is due to make appointments over the next year.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department will be making appointments to the following non-departmental public bodies over the next 12 months;

The Arts Council of England
The British Film Institute
The Geffrye Museum
The British Library Board
The British Tourist Authority
The Broadcasting Complaints Commission
The Broadcasting Standards Council
The Crafts Council
English Heritage
The English Tourist Board
The Football Licensing Authority
Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry
The Horniman Museum
The National Film Development Fund
The National Film and Television School
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside
The Public Lending Right Advisory Committee
The Royal Armouries
The Sports Council
The Theatres Trust

In addition, I will be making appointments to the new Library and Information Commission and to a new advisory council which will take over the statutory functions of the Library and Information Services Council (England).

Depending on when they are established, I may also be making appointments to the new United Kingdom and English Sports Councils.

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on index linking the television licence fee to maintain its value; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: As announced by my predecessor on 4 November 1993, *Official Report,* columns *309–10,* the Government's policy, in the light of a study by independent management consultants, Touche Ross, is to link increases in the television licence fee to the retail prices index for the remaining years of the BBC's current royal charter, that is, until the end of 1996.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what would be the cost of free television licences to all pensioners.

Mr. Dorrell: If free television licences were made available to all pensioners, regardless of their means, the cost to the BBC, in terms of lost licence fee revenue, is currently estimated at £510 million.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations his Department has made on the subject of concessionary television licences in warden-aided accommodation being available to some and not to others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: As indicated in the White Paper "The Future of the BBC", published on 6 July 1994, the Government have considered the possibility of reviewing the concessionary television licence scheme, as recommended by the National Heritage Select Committee. We have, however concluded that any attempt to remove the perceived anomalies of the scheme would most likely only have the effect of creating fresh ones. The Government therefore have no plans for any changes in the concessionary regulations.

Privacy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the proper balance between investigative journalism and protection of private individuals from intrusion and harassment.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's conclusion on this matter will be set out in our response to the National Heritage Select Committee's report on privacy and media intrusion.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will make it his policy to incorporate a public interest defence into any forthcoming legislation on privacy;

(2) when he expects to publish a White Paper on privacy and the media arising from the Lord Chancellor's review and the Calcutt report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrel: The Government's conclusions on the need for fresh legislation to protect privacy will be set out in our response to the National Heritage Select Committee's report on privacy and media intrusion. I cannot yet say when that will be published.

Press

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what is his Department's assessment of the effectiveness of the Press Complaints Commission;

(2) what is his Department's policy on the establishment of a right to free speech and a free press; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's conclusions on the effectiveness of the Press Complaints Commission, and on the proper balance between the right to privacy and the freedom of the press, will be set out in our response to the National Heritage Select Committee's report on privacy and media intrusion.

Information Super-highways

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what interest his Department has in the development of information super-highways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department's interest is in contributing to the development of broadcasting, telecommunications and computer networks by providing a regulatory structure for broadcasting that recognises the needs of both consumers and industry.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what his Department's policy is on the European Commission's proposals for a European information super-highway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The European Commission has stimulated an interesting debate on these matters, to which my Department continues to contribute. We remain of the view that it is primarily for the market to determine how to proceed and to grasp the opportunities that the new technologies and continuing liberalisation of world markets will bring.

Tourism

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list his official engagements for 27 October and also those of his Parliamentary Under-Secretary with responsibility for tourism.

Mr. Dorrell: On 27 October, I held a number of departmental meetings, attended Cabinet and flew to the US on private business immediately thereafter. My hon. Friend, the Under-Secretary of State, Viscount Astor, also held departmental meetings and attended a British hospitality association dinner.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all independent consultants or firms who have been awarded contracts to carry out tourism-related work for each of the last five years, specifying which body was responsible for the appointment, the dates of appointment, the name of the consultant or firm, the value of the contract and the subject of the consultant's work.

Mr. Dorrell: I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Media Ownership

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage in what form his Department keeps records of who owns *(a)* newspapers and *(b)* television stations and what his statistics indicate about the concentration of ownership.

Mr. Dorrell: Ownership concentrations within the broadcasting sector must conform to the limits prescribed by the Broadcasting Act 1990. Information about the ownership of broadcasters is collected by the Independent Television Commission in accordance with its responsibilities outlined in chapter 1 of part 1 of the Act. My Department does not itself regularly collect ownership information about the newspaper industry.

Departmental Advice

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the occasions on which his Department has expressed a view on the advisability of any item or programme being published or broadcast.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of National Heritage is not consulted in advance about individual publications or programmes.

European People's Party

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which official functions involving the European People's party he has attended since his appointment.

Mr. Dorrell: None.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomas non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Dorrell: Former Members of the House of Commons who have been appointed since my Department was set up in April 1992 are as follows. Information from prior to this is not held centrally. No salaries are paid except where otherwise indicated.

The right hon. The Lord Barnett (Labour)

Reappointed as Chairman of the National Film Development Fund in July 1993. His term of appointment is due to expire in December 1994 (Salary £2,205).

Mr. John Lee (Conservative)

Appointed Chairman of the Board of the Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry in October 1992 for 3 years, and as Member of the Board of the English Tourist Board in November 1992 for 2 years (Salary £6,550).

Mr. Bryan Magee (Labour 1974–82, SDP 1982–83)

Appointed Member of the Arts Council of Great Britain in January 1993 for 4 years (resigned January 1994).

Mr. Matthew Parris (Conservative)

Appointed Member of the Broadcasting Standards Council in January 1993 for 5 years (Salary £12,510).

Lord Dubs (Labour)

Appointed Member for the Broadcasting Standards Council in April 1992 for 8 months, and reappointed in January 1993 for 6 months (Salary £10,900).

The right hon. The Lord Younger of Preswick KCVO TD (Conservative)

Appointed Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Armouries in October 1994, for 5 years.

British Television Programmes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what restrictions currently exist relating to the percentage of programmes made in Britain which must be shown by television and cable companies in the United Kingdom;

(2) what quotas currently exist for the use of British programming by *(a)* satellite, *(b)* cable and *(c)* terrestrial channels;

(3) what is his Department's policy on the right to reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Sproat: My Department neither leases nor owns any property for the personal use of Ministers.

Arts Council

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to reverse the most recent reduction in the budget of the Arts Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Sproat: Neither my Department nor its agencies have entered into any contracts with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Sproat: My Department incurred consultancy costs of £481,866 between 1 April 1992 and 30 June 1994 in preparation for market testing. No other costs in respect of the programme were incurred over this period.

Wembley Stadium

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will take steps to ensure the ownership of Wembley stadium is kept in British hands.

Mr. Sproat: No. The future ownership of Wembley stadium is a matter for the current owners, Wembley plc, to determine.

Team Sports

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what co-ordination he has with other Government Departments in order to facilitate the teaching of team sports in schools.

Mr. Sproat: The Government are currently considering ways of enhancing the position of team sports in schools. An announcement will be made in due course. All interested Departments are contributing to the review.

Sports Council

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the current salary of the chairman and other officers of the Sports Council; and if they are on performance-related pay.

Mr. Sproat: The salary of the chairman of the Sports Council is published annually in the Cabinet Office's publication "Public Bodies", and is currently £20,546. This is reviewed in line with the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Body, subject to satisfactory performance. It is not practice to publish the salaries of individual employees. Performance-related pay has however been introduced in line with the arrangements which apply in the civil service.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to announce that changes to the Sports Council have been implemented.

Mr. Sproat: As I announced to the House on 8 July, *Official Report,* columns *584-86,* I expect the restructuring of the Sports Council to be achieved during the next financial year.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what basis the Sports Council will continue to fund the English School Sports Association and its members.

Mr. Sproat: Within the broad policy framework which the Government set, it is for the Sports Council to determine its own policies and priorities for spending.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the availability of non-vocational qualifications in sport; and if he will list those that will be available by 1 January 1995.

Mr. Sproat: Sport NVQs are currently available in playwork—levels 2, 3 and 4—sport and recreation—level 1—sport and recreation—facility operations—level 2, sport and recreation (development) (level 3), sport and recreation (outdoor education) (level 3), sport and recreation (supervision) (level 3), sport and recreation management (facilities) (level 4) and sport and recreation management (sports development) (level 4). In addition, coaching NVQs, which must be delivered through a specific sport, are currently being developed. It is likely that by 1 January 1995, coaching NVQs will be available in swimming, windsurfing, football, karate, basketball, fitness, hockey and lawn tennis.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary for National Heritage which sports will be funded under the reorganised Sports Council.

Mr. Sproat: As I announced to the House on 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *584-86*, it will be for the new English Sports Council to decide on which sports to concentrate its resources.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the Sports Council; what was discussed at the meeting; and what conclusions were agreed.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, met members of the Sports Council on an informal basis on 12 September and discussed a range of issues with them. I met the council on 17 October to hear its views on our proposals for the future structure and focus of the new United Kingdom and English Sports councils.

European Football Championships

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what role he plans for the football supporters associations in the planning of the European football championship.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for planning the 1996 European Football Championship rests with the tournament organisers, the Football Association. The FA, together with the Football league, the FA Premier league and the Football trust hold regular meetings with the football supporter organisations to discuss, amongst other things, the arrangements for the championship.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on co-operation with the Football Association in the planning and running of the 1996 European Football Championship.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage has worked closely with the Football Association from the start, both in securing the tournament for England, and on promotional and diplomatic matters. My officials are involved in the detailed arrangements for the championship through representation, with observer status, on the FA's central co-ordinating committee, and a separate FA working group on security and safety.

National Lottery

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects the start up costs for the National Lottery to be repaid.

Mr. Sproat: The national lottery distribution fund—NLDF—will receive its first payment from proceeds of the national lottery on Tuesday 22 November 1994. The setting up and administration costs of the Office of the National Lottery, and any administrative costs incurred by the distributing bodies in preparing to process applications for national lottery grants, including sums to be repaid to the Treasury in respect of set up costs already paid for from public funds, will be drawn down from the NLDF as required after that date.

The setting up costs of Camelot Group plc are a commercial operations matter. I have asked the director-general of the national lottery to write to the hon. Member on this point and to place copies of his response in the Library of the House.

Channel 5

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if any decision has been taken to make Channel 5 an analogue television service, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* The basis on which the Channel 5 licence is being advertised was published on 1 November 1994 by the Independent Television Commission. It allows bidders to apply on the basis of analogue or digital transmission.

Hearing Disabilities

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has for *(a)* providing assistance for and *(b)* funding sport for people with a hearing disability.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* The Great Britain Sports Council has offered the British Deaf Sports Council a grant for 1994–95 of £52,000, channelled through the British Sports Association for the Disabled. We have also emphasised the importance of people with disabilities being able to benefit from national lottery funds.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of public appointments were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I refer the hon. Member to the Cabinet Office entry in the 1993 edition of "Public Bodies". The figures for the 1994 edition are still being collected and will be published in due course.

Cash and Running Costs Limit

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals there are to change the 1994–95 cash limit or running costs limit in respect of security and intelligence services.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon Friend the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) on 1 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *1096-97*.

Next Steps Agencies

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the list of *(a)* the chief executives of the next steps agencies together with their salaries and *(b)* the salaries of the civil servants who were responsible for similar functions prior to the establishment of those agencies.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Quangos

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which former hon. Members of this House have been appointed since 1988 by his Department to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will list, in each case, the title of the post, the salary, the duration of the appointment, and the party which each represented as an hon. Member.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes:

Name	*Post*	*Salary*	*Duration*	*Party*
The right Hon. the Lord Carlisle of Bucklow QC	Chairman, Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOBA)	None	1 November 1988 to 31 December 1994	Conservative
The right Hon. the Lord Thomson of Monifieth KT PC	Member of ACOBA and Political Honours Scrutiny Committee (PHSC)	None for either	ACOBA: 1 November 1989 to 31 October 1995 PHSC: 9 November 1992 for duration of current Government	Labour
The right hon. the Lord Cledwyn CH PC	Member of PHSC	None	9 November 1992 for duration of current Government	Labour

Nolan Committee

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the estimated costs of the proposed new body to investigate standards in public life in respect of *(a)* premises, *(b)* hon. Members and *(c)* civil servants supporting it; and how many civil servants will be involved.

Mr. David Hunt: Arrangements for the setting up and operation of the standing committee on standards in public life are not yet completed.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how and by whom the members of the proposed new body or standards in public life have been chosen; and how and why a particular judge was chosen as chairman.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister appointed the chairman of the committee on standards in public life after consultation with the Lord Chancellor; he appointed the members of the committee following consultation with Lord Nolan, and with the leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Democratic party.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what remit the proposed body on standards in public life will have in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Lord Nolan's Committee's remit extends to Scotland as elsewhere and it is free to set its own priorities within that remit.

Advisory Panel on Equal Opportunities

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what are the terms of reference for the new advisory panel on equal opportunities in the civil service;

(2) when he expects the report of the advisory panel on equal opportunities in the civil service to be completed.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The advisory panel's terms of reference are:

> "to advise the Head of the Home Civil Service on steps to be taken to improve the representation in senior management positions of people of ethnic minority origin and people with disabilities, with particular reference to recruitment, career development, retention and other factors identified by the Panel as relevant; and to make recommendations".

The panel first met on Monday 12 September. It is expected to meet regularly over the next few months and plans to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to Sir Robin Butler by April 1995.

Official Report

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will arrange for the *Official Report*, to be distributed free to public libraries and sold to the public at the marginal cost after official demand has been met.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Under long-standing arrangements aimed at facilitating public access to Government information, local authority libraries already qualify for a considerable discount on all HMSO publications, including the *Official Report*.

Market research on the prospects for increasing the distribution of the *Official Report* has recently been undertaken by MORI on behalf of HMSO. The findings are currently under consideration.

Charterline

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the final total cost to public funds of the Charterline, broken down into component costs; and what was the final total of calls it received.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Cabinet Office, its agencies, HMSO and COI have not entered into any contracts with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

"Permanent Secretary's Handbook"

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will review the case for placing a copy of the "Permanent Secretary's Handbook" in the Members' Library and explain to the House the decision he reaches.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: No. The reply of 9 March, *Official Report*, column 256, given to the hon. Member by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) remains valid.

Citizens Charter

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will ensure that every departmental version of the citizens charter is available to the public from a central source in his office.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Individual public service organisations are responsible for publishing and distributing their charters to uses of their services.

My Department runs a citizens charter publication line on 0345 223242 which sends out citizens charter publications, including copies of the guides to the citizens charter White Papers. It also sends out a list of departmental contact points from which copies of any of the 40 follow-up charters can be ordered:

Table 1: Published charters and how to obtain them.

	Telephone number
United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	
Contributors' Charter Social Security Contributions Agency	091 225 7522
Employers' Charter Social Security Contributions Agency	091 225 7522
Taxpayer's Charter H.M Customs and Excise	Please see Table II
Taxpayer's Charter Inland Revenue	Tax Offices, Tax Enquiry Centres or phone: 071 438 6420
Traveller's Charter H.M. Customs and Excise	From Ports and Airports or phone: 071 202 4227
Great Britain: England, Scotland and Wales	
Benefits Agency Customer Charter Social Security Benefits Agency	Please see Table II
Child Support Agency Charter Child Support Agency	0345 133 133
Jobseeker's Charter Employment Service	Please see Table II
Passenger's Charter British Rail	Please see Table II
Redundancy Payments Service Charter Employment Department	0800 848 489
England and Wales	
Courts Charter Lord Chancellor's Department Home Office Crown Prosecution Service	Court Service Secretariat 071 210 1722
England Only	
London Underground's Customer Charter: "the best possible service" London Underground Ltd.	Customer Service Centre 071 918 4040
Charter for Further Education Department for Education	Publications Centre 081 533 2000
Charter for Higher Education Department for Environment	Publications Centre 081 533 2000
Council Tenant's Charter Department of the Environment	071 276 0900
Parent's Charter Department for Education	Publications Centre 081 533 2000
Patient's Charter Department of Health	Please see Table II
Road User's Charter The Highways Agency	Please see Table II
The London Bus Passenger's Charter London Transport Buses	Passenger Services 071 918 4300
Scotland Only	
Council Tenant's Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741

Table 1: Published charters and how to obtain them.

	Telephone number
Further and Higher Education Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741
Justice Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741
Parent's Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741
Patient's Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741
Wales Only	
Charter for Further Education Welsh Office	0222 825862
Charter for Higher Education Welsh Office	0222 825829
Council Tenant's Charter for Wales Welsh Office	0222 825282
Parent's Charter for Wales Welsh Office	0222 761456 Xt 5364
Patient's Charter for Wales Welsh Office	0222 823219
Northern Ireland Only	
Bus Passenger's Charter Ulsterbus/Citybus	From all Ulsterbus offices or phone: 0232 354042
Child Support Agency Charter Northern Ireland Child Support Agency	0345 139 700 outside Belfast (local rate) or 0232 896700 within Greater Belfast
Tenant's Charter for NI Northern Ireland Housing Executive	0232 240588
Courts Charter for Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Courts Service	0232 328594
The Citizen's Charter for Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel	Full report from HMSO (£8.50). For copy of summary Guide, phone: 0800 243 174
Parent's Charter Department of Education for NI	0247 270077 Xt 2366
Charter for Patients and Clients Department of Health and Social Services, NI	HPSS Management Executive 0232 524282
Railway Passenger's Charter NI Railways	Northern Ireland Railways Headquarters 0232 235282
Royal Ulster Constabulary Charter Royal Ulster Constabulary	From police stations, or phone RUC Headquarters: 0232 650222 Xt 22525
Social Security Agency Charter NI Social Security Agency	Chief Executive's Office 0232 522826
Training and Employment Agency Charter Training and Employment Agency	0232 244300

Table Part II

Taxpayer's Charter (Customs and Excise)

Available from your Local VAT Enquiry Office. Their addresses and telephone numbers can be found in the phonebook under "Customs and Excise".

Benefits Agency Customer Charter

Available from all District Offices of the Agency. Their addresses and telephone numbers can be found in the phonebook under "Benefits Agency".

For bulk orders you can write to:

DSS Distribution Centre
DSS Leaflets Unit
Manchester Road
Heywood
Lancashire OL10 2PZ (Quote CUST 1)

Jobseeker's Charter

Available from all local Jobcentres and Unemployment Benefit Offices. The addresses and telephone numbers of which can be found in the phonebook under "Employment Service".

Passenger's Charter

Available from all British Rail stations and outlets or by writing to:

British Railways
Euston House
24 Eversholt Street
PO Box 100
London NW1 1DZ

Patient's Charter

Copies of the Patient's Charter for *England* can be obtained by writing to (no stamp required):

The Patient's Charter
FREEPOST
London
SE99 7XU

Road User's Charter

Copies are available from most motorway service areas, AA shops and offices, the regional offices of the Department of Transport and the Highways Agency or from the Agency's Headquarters at the following address:

The Highways Agency
Room 12/33
St. Christopher House
Southwark Street
London
SE1 0TE

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in by a Minister.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Excluding departmental office buildings, we have no such properties for the use of Ministers.

TRANSPORT

Road Schemes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the European Community directives that have to be taken into consideration in the preparations for new road schemes.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 3 November 1994:

John Watts, the Minister for Railways and Roads, has asked me to write to you about your question in the House on which European Community directives are taken into consideration in the preparations for the new road schemes.

The Highways Agency takes into account all relevant European Community Directives that have been implemented in United Kingdom law in the preparation of new Trunk Road schemes.

The directives which have a major impact on the work of the Highways Agency are listed in the attached Annex.

European Community Directives - Having an impact on Highways Agency Work

Number	*Title*
93/36/EEC	Public Supplies Contracts
93/37/EEC	Public Works Contracts
92/50/EEC	Public Services Contracts
89/665/EEC	Remedies
83/189/EEC	Notification of Standards and Regulations
88/182/EEC	
90/230/EEC	
89/106/EEC	Construction Products
89/686/EEC	Personal Protective Equipment
93/95/EEC	Personal Protective Equipment
89/336/EEC	Electromagnetic Compatibility
92/31/EEC	Electromagnetic Compatibility
89/391/EEC	Health and Safety
89/392/EEC	Machine Safety
91/368/EEC	
93/44/EEC	
73/23/EEC	Low Voltage
71/354/EEC	Units of Measurement
80/181/EEC	Units of Measurement
85/384/EEC	Architects Professional Qualifications
89/48/EEC	Professional Qualifications
85/337/EEC[1]	Environmental Assessment
92/43/EEC[1]	Habitats

[1] These are examples of EC Environmental Directives that affect HA, it is not possible to list all of them or assess their impact on HA work.

M42 (Planning Blight)

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will act to purchase those houses suffering from planning blight as a result of his proposals to widen the M42 in the constituency of Meriden; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will reconsider his proposal for widening the M42 by two lanes each side in the constituency of Meriden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: These questions are operational matters for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Iain Mills, dated 3 November 1994:

The Minister of State for Railways and Roads has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Questions about the M42 widening in Meriden since they are operational matters for the Highways Agency.

I can confirm that all properties which fulfil the conditions of the statutory blight legislation will be bought by the Highways Agency. In addition, those properties which satisfy the criteria for discretionary purchase will also be bought. The criteria require that the proposed roadworks should be predicted to have a serious effect on a property, as defined in the criteria and that there should be a case on hardship grounds for acquiring it. Twenty one properties in the vicinity of junction 5 have so far been purchased and other applications are being considered. I understand that Steven Norris has now written to you about enquiries from four of your constituents.

Compensation is also available after construction for depreciation in value of property caused by widening and eligibility for noise insulation will be assessed.

The proposals for the widening were presented to the public earlier this year. This was so that they could express views about the options. The many comments received since then are still being assessed, but will be taken into account by the Secretary of State in deciding on the future progress of the proposals.

Railway Disasters

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what sums were made available from public funds to the relatives of victims in respect of expenses arising for the public inquiries concerning *(a)* the King's Cross and *(b)* Clapham railway disasters.

Mr. Watts: I will write to the hon. Member.

Traffic and Parking Control

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to take steps to monitor the effectiveness of traffic control and parking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Counties, metropolitan districts and London boroughs, as local traffic authorities, are primarily responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of traffic control and parking on all local roads in their areas. My right hon. Friend monitors the effectiveness of the legal framework within which the local traffic authorities must work.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not own or lease any property for ministerial use as an official residence.

Horse Riding (Safety)

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 31 October, what representations he has received regarding the adequacy of the guidance laid down in the highway code governing the safety clothing and markings for horse riders at night; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We received 34 communications in the last year on road safety for horse-riders. Ascertaining how many of these mentioned conspicuity could be done only at disproportionate expense.

Underground Stations, London

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what report he has received from London Underground Ltd. as to when Westminster underground station will reopen;

(2) what steps he is taking to prevent further disruption of transport services in London following the incidents at Heathrow and Westminster underground stations.

Mr. Norris: The prevention of further disruption of transport services in London following the incidents affecting Heathrow and Westminster underground stations is a matter for the transport operators concerned.

At Heathrow, the British Airports Authority has set up an inquiry into the causes of the Heathrow express project tunnel collapse, and are working with the contractors to secure the continued safe operation of the airport and minimise inconveniences to passengers. London Underground Limited will resume services through the Piccadilly line underground tunnels serving Heathrow terminal 4 as soon as it and the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate have determined that it is safe to do so.

At Westminster, London Underground is taking urgent remedial measures to prevent further incidents associated with the construction works there, and to enable the earliest possible reopening of the station.

Traffic Levels

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the relationships between changes in traffic and *(a)* increases in road capacity and *(b)* economic growth.

Mr. Watts: During the last 15 years, traffic has grown at about one and a half times the rate of growth in gross domestic product. The Department's publication "National Road Traffic Forecast Great Britain (1989)" describes the close relationship between national traffic growth and national economic growth.

The relationship between traffic growth and increases in road capacity is a complex subject, which has been studied by the Department's standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment. The report will be published with the Government's response in due course.

Investment Projects

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those public investment projects within his Department's responsibility which have attracted private capital and which have been commenced since November 1993;

(2) how much private capital has been invested in public investment projects within his Department's responsibility since the 1992 autumn statement.

Mr. Norris: The following such projects have been commenced since November 1993

Ashford International Passenger Station (£40 million)

London Underground Track Maintenance £0·5 million)

London Underground Information Technology Services (£10 million)

Between the 1992 autumn statement and the end of the current financial year, an estimated £370 million of private capital will have been invested, with forward commitments for a further £1·1 billion.

Additional schemes with an estimated total value of some £3·5 billion are currently subject to competition.

Cyclists (Safety)

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 31 October, what representations he has received regarding the adequacy of the regulations and the guidance contained in the highway code in respect of lamps, reflectors and safety clothing for cyclists riding at night; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: In the past 12 months I have replied to seven representations about the adequacy of the Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations 1989. In addition, the Department receives a large number of representations on bicycle safety. Ascertaining how many of these mentioned conspicuity could be done only at disproportionate expense.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in last two years.

Mr. Norris: None.

Road Casualties

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the next sets of road casualty figures.

Mr. Norris: Third quarter 1994 provisional estimates will be announced on 12 January 1995.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he *(a)* has conducted and *(b)* plans to conduct into the speed at which buses complete their journeys using bus-only lanes compared to journey completion times for buses without the benefit of bus-only lanes on same route.

Mr. Norris: We are monitoring several schemes to see what effect they have on bus journey times. Reports will be published in due course.

Congestion and Pollution

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will conduct a study of the extent to which bus-only lanes cause increased traffic congestion and pollution.

Mr. Norris: I have no plans to do so at present.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made as to whether stationary traffic causes more pollution than moving traffic in urban areas.

Mr. Norris: Research is regularly undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory and other laboratories to assess the emissions characteristics of motor vehicles operating under a variety of driving conditions. This shows that below an optimum speed of some 40 to 50 miles per hour, the slower the speed the greater the level of emissions from the vehicle. The higher density of stationary or very slow moving traffic compared with free moving traffic will also affect overall levels of emissions.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will conduct a review of the extent to which left-turn only and right-turn only lanes have slowed down traffic flow through junctions.

Mr. Norris: Traffic management is a matter for the local highway authority. Right—and left—turn only lanes are necessary in some cases for the safe and efficient flow of traffic through junctions and we have no evidence that they are in general being used inappropriately. I do not currently plan to review their use.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of reductions in queuing at junctions on traffic congestion and urban pollution.

Mr. Norris: Delays and queues at junctions are the primary cause of traffic congestion in urban areas, thus reducing queuing at junctions has a direct effect on congestion. Where road and junction schemes in urban areas are proposed to reduce congestion, the impact of reductions in queuing at junctions is assessed as a matter of course.

Stop-start traffic generates more exhaust gases per vehicle than smoothly flowing traffic. A reduction in queuing can be expected to reduce local air pollution levels.

Traffic Lights

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made on whether traffic light phasing at junctions where congestion occurs regularly is examined and, if necessary, re-phased frequently enough.

Mr. Norris: The timing of traffic lights is for local highway authorities, who make their own arrangements for assessment. In London, reviews are normally on a three year cycle, to allow for changes in traffic densities. But modern systems of urban traffic control where they are installed are self-adapting and so do not need regular review.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit the United States of America to examine the effect on urban traffic flow of permitting traffic to turn right through red lights if the driver is satisfied that there is no oncoming traffic entering the junction from the left.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will take every opportunity to listen to United States experience on a range of topics including all aspects of urban traffic flow.

Cones Hotline

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what have been the costs to date of advertising and running the cones hotline.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Bollards

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many traffic bollards have been installed in the most recent 12-month period of which figures are available.

(2) what information he has on how many bollards are currently in place.

Mr. Norris: The Department is not responsible for monitoring the installation of bollards on local authority roads and no information is held centrally about the number installed in any 12-month period. Research carried out for the Department is 1993 suggests that there are approximately 131,000 bollard-mounted traffic signs in England.

Road Markings

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether visual amenity is part of the planning consideration for the acceptability of white lines or yellow lines on all roads other than trunk roads.

Mr. Norris: DOT guidance to local authorities advises that a lighter shade of yellow may be used for regulatory road markings in environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Department of the Environment regarding the extent of white lines and yellow lines on country lanes, minor roads and suburban roads.

Mr. Norris: We are engaged in ongoing discussions with other interested Departments, including DOE, on the use of road markings in environmentally sensitive areas, but we have not received any representations on this particular issue.

Traffic Lights

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many traffic lights there are in England and Wales currently; and how many there were in *(a)* 1984, *(b)* 1974 and *(c)* 1964.

Mr. Norris: The information is not available in the form requested.

Motorways

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a further statement on the implementation of his policy on the introduction of private sector management of motorways;

(2) if he will make a further statement on the implementation of his policy on motorway tolling;

(3) what response he has received from the private sector to his policy on electronic charging for motorway use and the private management of motorways.

Mr. Watts: Policy on these matters was set out by the then Secretary of State for Transport on 2 December 1993 at column *650*.

Some 30 consortia comprising over 70 companies have submitted proposals for electronic tolling systems for the programme of research, development and trials announced in that statement. We are now assessing these in order to select a limited number for test-track and on-road trials next year.

The statement also announced our intention to identify projects under which the private sector would design, build, finance and operate roads for which they would receive payment from Government in relation to use. Four such DBFO projects have been identified for the first contracts, two of which will involve private sector management of motorways. Pre-qualifying bids have been received from 17 consortia comprising over 70 firms.

Railway Rolling Stock

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements currently exist for the refurbishment of railway rolling stock; and when he expects the arrangements needed under the Railways Act 1993 to be in place.

Mr. Watts: Refurbishment of British Rails's passenger rolling-stock is the responsibility, within BR, of the three rolling-stock leasing companies.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much revenue was raised by vehicle excise duty in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Norris: The net receipts after allowing for refunds and other adjustments were:

Year	*Vehicle Excise Duty £ millions*
1984–85	2,264
1985–86	2,426
1986–87	2,520
1987–88	2,598
1988–89	2,767
1989–90	2,948
1990–91	2,923
1991–92	2,931
1992–93	3,225
1993–94	3,655

Operation Seafire

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the times at which, during exercise Operation Seafire on 17 October off the west Wales coast *(a)* a call was received from Stena Sea Lynx for helicopter assistance and firefighters, *(b)* a request was made by HM Coastguard for helicopter assistance from RAF Chivenor and RAF Valley, *(c)* helicopters took off from RAF Chivenor and RAF Valley, *(d)* a helicopter from RAF Chivenor landed in West Glamorgan to pick up firefighters, *(e)* the helicopter took off from West Glamorgan, *(f)* the helicopter arrived over Stena Sea Lynx, *(g)* firefighters began to be lowered on to Stena Sea Lynx and *(h)* lowering firefighters was completed.

Mr. Norris: During exercise Seafire on 10 October:

a) 0625
b) 0628
c) RAF Chivenor at 0649 and RAF Valley at 0658 and 0706
d) 0705
e) 0710
f) 0730
g) 0749
h) not recorded.

Road (West Yorkshire)

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will consider taking no further action on road development schemes in west Yorkshire until the Secretary of State for Health publishes the results of all current studies on air pollution; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations his Department is involved in with the Department of Health on the impact of road schemes on west Yorkshire on the health of communities and in particular the health of children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: These are operational matters for the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Norris: Payments to consultants for work on those items in the Department's 1992–93 and 1993–94 competing for quality programmes completed by 30 June 1994 totalled £1·815 million. Expenditure on the Department's own market testing staff amounted to £0·268 million up to 30 June 1994.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding compensation for people living alongside rail lines being used by channel tunnel passenger and freight services who are affected by increased noise and vibration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: A number of representations have been received. The Land Compensation Act 1973 provides for compensation to be paid in certain circumstances when the value of property is reduced as a result of physical factors such as noise and vibration arising from the use of new or altered public works or where there has been a change of use in respect of the works - other than an intensification of an existing use. It is for people who believe they have claims for compensation to submit them to the responsible authority, in this case Railtrack, for consideration. Further information is given in a guide recently produced by Railtrack for householders who may be considering claims. A copy is being placed in the Library.

Kidderminster Bypass

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the inspectors' report into the Kidderminster, Blakedown and Hagley bypass.

Mr. Watts: The report is currently being considered by the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport. It will be published at the same time as their decision on the orders for the scheme.

Bull Bars

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many reported accidents in the last 12 months involving cyclists resulted in injury following collision with vehicles fitted with bull bars.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what analysis he has made of research into the severity of injuries to cyclists from vehicles fitted with bull bars.

Mr. Norris: The Department is currently carrying out research into accidents involving vehicles with bull bars to determine whether or not they are causing increased injuries to cyclists as well as pedestrians.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish the report of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment.

Mr. Watts: We will publish our response, together with the report, in due course.

Accident Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will estimate the total reduction in costs of fatal and serious accident casualties in each year since 1986 at the 1993 values used in the table C.I of the 18th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution; and if he will give the cumulative total;

(2) if he will estimate the effect on fatal and serious injuries of the national roads programme spending.

Mr. Norris: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Lorries

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will include piggyback lorries in the legislation allowing heavier lorries to be used in combined rail-road journeys;

(2) if he will start work immediately on the upgrading of a rail route from Scotland to the channel tunnel to allow piggyback traffic.

(3) if he will make it his policy to press for standardisation of dimensions of containers, rail gauges and related matters;

(4) what plans he has to increase the attractiveness of railways as an element in an inter-modal transport system.

(5) what plans he has to support the Piggyback Consortium plans as outlined in its final report published in April.

Mr. Watts: I will write to the hon. Member.

Traffic

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the report on the generation of traffic submitted to him by SACTRA.

Mr. Watts: I will publish my response, together with the report, in due course.

Highway Contracts

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many highway contracts with an estimated value of £1 million or more have been advertised in the *Official Journal of the European Communities,* by each EU country, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 2 November 1994]:* This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 3 November 1994:

You put down a Parliamentary Question for answer by the Secretary of State about the number of highways contracts worth in excess of £1 million advertised in the Official Journal of the EU.

As the information requested relates to operational matters for which the Highways Agency is now responsible, as promised by the Minister, John Watts, I am replying to your Question.

However, I regret I am unable to provide the information you requested.

The Highways Agency voluntarily advertise all highways works contracts with an estimated value of £1 million or more in the Official Journal. The EU threshold for compulsory advertisement is those worth ECU 5 million (currently equivalent to about £3·7 million) or more. The Agency does not keep a central record of the number of such advertisements and the information cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Regarding similar advertisements placed by other EU countries, it is not the Agency's policy to monitor these and I regret, therefore, that this information is not available within the Agency.

M11 Link

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the proposed M11 link road's environmental barriers along all its route comply with the highest standard in his Department's design guide for environmental barriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 3 November 1994:

The Minister for Transport in London has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about the design of environmental barriers on the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 Link Road since this is an operational matter for the Highways Agency.

The design of the barriers which it is intended to provide on the Link Road complies with the Department of Transport's current standards which are contained in the Specification for Highway Works and Technical Memorandum H14/76.

The design guide to which you refer has been widely circulated in draft but will not emerge in its final form until the end of this year. Clearly it will be possible to take account fully of its recommendations only in future road designs, and there will be no requirement to revise existing designs or schemes retrospectively. However, we shall strive to provide the highest standard of environmental protection on the Link Road consistent with budget and programme.

Trans-European Road Network

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes in the Trans-European road network he has recommended to the European Commission as part of its 1995 review of the network; and if he will publish a map of the proposed TERN.

Mr. Watts: The amendments the Government have proposed to the European Commission as part of the review of the Trans-European road network were announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) on 30 June. They are listed in my Department's press notice of that date, to which was attached a map of the proposed network in the United Kingdom. A copy is in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many licences were issued in 1992, 1993 and to date in 1994 to allow hunting on Forestry Commission land; what was the total income from such licences; and whether these were open to public tender.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission issued 73 permits to allow hunting on its land in 1992, 78 permits in 1993 and 81 permits in 1994. The Commission makes no charge for hunting and permits are not subject to public tender.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many licences to shoot birds and game on Forestry Commission land were issued in 1992, 1993 and 1994; to which bodies or organisations; and what was the total income from such licences;

(2) which hunts have licences to hunt on Forestry Commission land; and in which areas.

Sir Hector Monro: I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of public appointments made by his Department were held by women at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Badgers

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many licences have been granted in Scotland for interference with badger setts following the Badger Act 1991, now the Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and for which purposes listed in section 10 of the 1992 Act such licences were issued.

Sir Hector Monro: Eight licences to interfere with badger setts in Scotland have been issued by the Agriculture Department. I am advised that Scottish Natural Heritage has issued 42 such licences. A detailed breakdown including the purposes for which these licences were issued is set out in the following table:

	Agricultural or Forestry operations	*Preventing serious damage to land, crops etc.*	*Scientific, educational or conservation purposes*	*Development under Town and Country Planning (S) Act 1972*	*Investigation of a possible offence or the gathering of evidence*
1992	2	1	1	1	1
1993	—	3	4	1	23
1994	—	2	3	1	7

Health Care International

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, (1) pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column 722, how much regional selective assistance has been paid up to date to Health Care International in Clydebank;

(2) whether there have been regular consultations between Health Care International in Clydebank and his Department over nurse recruitment and training; and what was the outcome;

(3) whether Health Care International in Clydebank is now free to tender for any NHS work anywhere in Britain;

(4) if he will place in the Library a copy of the terms under which his Department undertook to give regional selective assistance to Health Care International in Clydebank.

(5) what reimbursement of nurse training costs has been made by Health Care International in Clydebank in respect of the authorisation he gave to the hospital in 1987;

(6) what contacts there have been at ministerial level between the Ministry of Defence and his Department over the future of Health Care International in Clydebank; and what was the outcome;

(7) whether Health Care International in Clydebank now has exactly the same competitive status as the Western infirmary, Glasgow royal infirmary and Gartnavel general hospital when the Greater Glasgow health board seeks bids for its works.

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Paramedical Professions

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are currently employed, and were employed in the last four years in each health board, as *(a)* speech and language therapists, *(b)* clinical psychologists, *(c)* hospital pharmacists, *(d)* medical laboratory scientific officers, *(e)* estate officers, *(f)* community and psychiatric nurses, *(g)* hospital physicists, *(h)* radiographers, *(i)* medical technical officers, *(j)* chiropodists, *(k)* occupational therapists, *(l)* physiotherapists, *(m)* dieticians and *(n)* district nurses.

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Caledonian MacBrayne

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the consultants report on the future of Caledonian MacBrayne.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Probate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to allow banks and other institutions in Scotland to give effect to instructions regarding the disposal of assets in Scotland belonging to a deceased person in respect of whose estate a court in England and Wales has granted probate to a person resident in England and Wales without having to have grant of probate resealed in Scotland.

Mr. James Douglas-Hamilton: The Administration of Estates Act 1971 already makes provision for the reciprocal recognition in any one part of the United Kingdom of grants and confirmations issued in any other part, without the need for resealing.

Super-quarries

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation he has had with the British Geological Survey over proposed super-quarries in Harris.

Mr. Stewart: On 28 February 1994 my right hon. Friend directed that Redland Aggregates Ltd, should provide a written statement further to illustrate the visual impact of working the proposed Lingarabay quarry in South Harris to different contour levels. In an official letter dated 21 July 1994, the British Geological Survey was invited to comment on the written statement produced. This letter and the associated replies were subsequently circulated to the parties to the current public local inquiry. My right hon. Friend has not otherwise consulted the British Geological Survey about proposed super-quarries in Harris.

Homes

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new homes were completed by local authorities in Scotland in 1978–79 and 1993–94; and how many he expects will be completed in 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish local authorities reported the completion of 6,131 dwellings in 1978–79 and 440 dwellings in 1993–94. Local authorities are free to decide what proportion of the substantial capital resources at their disposal for 1994–95 and future years for investment in housing in their area should be used for new building.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Public Investment Projects

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much private capital has been invested in public investment projects within his Department's responsibility since the 1992 autumn statement.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers have not yet received payment of their advance payments with respect to the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme.

Sir Hector Monro: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Electricity Bills

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the average household electricity bill for each Scottish electricity company for each year since 1985, and the combined average for England and Wales, *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* real terms;

(2) what was the percentage change in average household electricity bills for each Scottish electricity company for each year since 1985; and the combined average for Scotland;

(3) what was the change in the average household electricity bill for each Scottish electricity company for each year since 1985, and the combined average change each year *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* real terms;

(4) what was the price charged in pence per kWh by each Scottish electricity company to typical standard-tariff domestic customers for each year since 1985, and the combined figure for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify for each local authority in Scotland the amount of accumulated capital receipts.

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the number of households and *(b)* the percentage of all households supplied by each Scottish electricity company.

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Water Boards

Mr. Donhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when, and at what cost, the post of chief executive of the new water boards in Scotland will be advertised;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *728*, how much the Scottish Office has spent in employing Andrew Rait Ltd. to assist the Scottish Office in recruiting the chief executives and chairmen of the new water and sewerage authorities;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *728*, when the Scottish Office appointed Andrew Rait Ltd., to assist in the search for chief executives of the water authorities.

Mr. Stewart: The three chief executives posts will be advertised after Royal Assent has been obtained to the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. Andrew Rait Ltd. was appointed on 24 August 1994 to assist in identifying potential chief executives. The cost of the exercise, including cost of advertisement, is estimated to be about £50,000.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *728*, if the Scottish Office has now decided on the names of the chief executives and the chairmen of the new water and sewerage authorities; and when these names were decided upon.

Mr. Stewart: These decisions have not yet been made.

Licensing Laws

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are for extending licensing laws to allow shops to sell alcohol on a Sunday.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provisions permitting off-sale premises in Scotland to sell alcoholic liquor on Sundays between 12.30 pm and 10 pm are contained in section 22 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994. An announcement about commencement of the provisions will be made shortly.

Public Investment Projects

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those public investment projects within his Department's responsibility which have attracted private capital and which have been commenced since November 1993.

Mr. Lang: Contracts for the following projects have been signed since November 1993:

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board: elderly care beds.

Dundee Teaching Hospitals Trust: biochemical analysing equipment.

Lothian and Forth Valley Trusts: clinical waste disposal.

Lothian Health Board: Western General Hospital Molecular Medicines Centre.

Northern Trusts Consortium: clinical waste disposal.

There may also be projects which have been started by, for example, health trusts which have not been notified to the Scottish Office because they are within delegated spending limits and so the information is not held centrally.

There are also around 10 projects started before November 1993.

In addition, many projects undertaken by bodies such as Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Homes and the New Towns attract private capital.

Voluntary Bodies

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given Scottish Natural Heritage over the grant of financial assistance to voluntary bodies; and if he will list those areas of work undertaken by voluntary organisations which are eligible for such assistance.

Sir Hector Monro: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Library of the House.

National Health Service

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much money has been transferred from each health board in Scotland to local authorities under resource transfer arrangements in respect of reductions in NHS continuing care beds for *(a)* learning disabilities, *(b)* psychiatric care, *(c)* geriatric care, *(d)* psycho-geriatric care and *(e)* physical disabilities in each year since 1991–92; and if he will make a statement on the level of resource transfer to local authorities;

(2) how much money will be transferred from each health board in Scotland to local authorities under resource transfer arrangements in respect of planned reductions in NHS continuing care beds from 1 April for *(a)* learning disabilities, *(b)* psychiatric care, *(c)* geriatric care, *(d)* psycho-geriatric care and *(e)* physical disabilities;

(3) how many NHS continuing care beds were available in each health board area in Scotland for *(a)* learning disabilities, *(b)* psychiatric care, *(c)* geriatric care, *(d)* psycho-geriatric care and *(e)* physical disabilities for each year since 1991–92;

(4) how many NHS continuing care beds were staffed in each health board area in Scotland for *(a)* learning disabilities, *(b)* psychiatric care, *(c)* geriatric care, *(d)* psycho-geriatric care and *(e)* physical disabilities in each year since 1991–92;

(5) how many additional NHS continuing care beds each health board in Scotland plans to close from 1 April for *(a)* learning disabilities, *(b)* psychiatric care, *(c)* geriatric care, *(d)* psycho-geriatric care and *(e)* physical disabilities and over what timescales; and what Government targets have been set for such closures;

(6) what was the average number of occupied NHS continuing care beds in each health board area in Scotland for *(a)* learning disabilities, *(b)* psychiatric care, *(c)* geriatric care, *(d)* psycho-geriatric care and *(e)* physical disabilities for each year since 1991–92.

Mr. Lang : I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Library of the House.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount in grants and compensation given to landowners for protecting sites of special scientific interest in each of the last three years; and if he will list those grants or compensations which exceed £10,000 in any financial year.

Sir Hector Monro: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Trusts

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the provisions of section 9 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 conferring concurrent jurisdiction on the Sheriff court in respect of trusts below an annual income threshold will be brought into force; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Only a small number of cases has so far been brought before the Court of Session. We are studying how these cases have progressed in order to consider the need to confer concurrent jurisdiction on the sheriff court.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Forestry Commission

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of the Ordnance Survey grid references for each tract of land disposed of by the Forestry Commission during the years 1992 and 1993.

Sir Hector Monro: Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission in each calendar year since 1981 are held in the Library of the House. These do not include the Ordnance Survey grid references which could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, columns *852-56*, if he will place in the Library copies of the awareness of right to buy and rents to mortgages, public knowledge and perception of local government, water and sewerage, sustainable development, car crime, Scottish crime, NHS staff in Scotland, further and higher education for Scotland and Scottish Office central inquiry unit surveys.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of his Department's funding for HIV and AIDS has been allocated to the voluntary sector for each year since 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Forestry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has instructed the director general of the Forestry Commission to create a next steps agency of the Forestry Authority; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to create a next steps agency of the Forestry Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1994]:* I shall write to hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of the House.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were admitted to hospital with kidney stones in each year of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* Numbers of in-patient and day case admissions to hospital where the principle diagnosis was calculus of kidney and ureter (ICD9 592) for calendar years 1989–1993 are shown in the table.

1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
2,510	2,650	3,286	3,722	3,646

Land Ownership and Use

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of land owned by the Scottish Office, in hectares; and how much of this land is held for productive agricultural reasons.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the signed letter in the Libraries of House.

WALES

M4

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to remedy the lengthwise defect in the newly surfaced inside lane of the eastbound carriageway of the M4 on the approach to Junction 47.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Yesterday I had the opportunity of passing along the M4 motorway at junction 47. Having spoken to my officials I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no lengthwise defect in the newly surfaced inside land of the eastbound carriageway. The present thin layer of material was laid on what was already a sound foundation and has been examined and checked by road engineers.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount of accumulated capital receipts for each local authority in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available information is given in the following table.

Usable cash backed accumulated capital receipts at 31 March 1994 (a)

	£ 000
Alyn and Deeside	967
Colwyn	924
Delyn	—

Usable cash backed accumulated capital receipts at 31 March 1994 (a)

	£ 000
Glyndwr	283
Rhuddlan	334
Wrexham Maelor	981
Carmarthen	1,857
Ceredigion	2,069
Dinefwr	370
Llanelli	1,056
Preseli Pembrokeshire	2,,725
South Pembrokeshire	1,641
Blaenau Gwent	2,876
Islwyn	359
Monmouth	4,905
Newport	8,125
Torfaen	3,271
Aberconwy	1,793
Arfon	207
Dwyfor	314
Meirionnydd	—
Ynys Mon	60
Cynon Valley	—
Merthyr Tydfil	1,072
Ogwr	3,326
Rhondda	1,570
Rhymney Valley	1,107
Taff Ely	3,003
Brecknock	1,769
Montgomeryshire	1,574
Radonrshire	450
Cardiff	20,383
Vale of Glamorgan	5,716
Lliw Valley	2,211
Neath	481
Port Talbot	550
Swansea	268
Clwyd	2,216
Dyfed	1,318
Gwent	7,205
Gwynedd	2,615
Mid Glamorgan	3,915
Powys	431
South Glamorgan	2,563
West Glamorgan	1,971
Total Districts	78,597
Total Counties	22,234
Total Wales	100,831

Housing

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new homes were completed by local authorities in Wales in 1978–79 and 1993–94; and how many he expects will be completed in 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of local authority dwellings built, for calendar years since 1975 and quarterly since 1989, has been published in table 2.3 of "Welsh Housing Statistics No 14 1994", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Forecasts of completions in 1994–95 and 1995–96 are not available.

Sheep Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *661*, how many farmers in Wales have not yet received payment of their advance payments with respect to the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme other than those whose claims involve queries or quota problems.

Mr. Redwood: All claims, other than those on which there are queries, or quota problems, have now been passed for payment.

Public Appointments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many public appointments his predecessor was *(a)* responsible for making in 1979 or which *(b)* required his approval; and if he will divide these figures into (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments;

(2) if he will list the bodies to which he or his predecessor was responsible for appointing or where appointment required his or his predecessor's approval in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* today; and if he will list the total funding from the Welsh Office for these bodies in *(a)* cash prices and *(b)* current prices;

(3) if he will list the bodies that his Department funded *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* today; and if he will list the total funding from the Welsh Office for these bodies in *(a)* cash prices and *(b)* current prices.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Departmental Running Costs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total running costs each of his Department in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* today in cash and current prices.

Mr. Redwood: The available information is as follows:

Welsh Office running costs

	Cash terms £ million	*1994–95 prices £ million*
1979–80	17·8	45·0
1994–95	68·3	68·3

The increase in running costs reflects the assumption of additional functions by the Welsh Office, for example, further responsibilities for industry, higher education and training and agricultural grants. In addition, the figures for 1994–95 reflect superannuation charges, which were not included in the data for 1979–80.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list showing the total number of employees in his Department broken down by grade for *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* today; and what is the corresponding pay bill in each case in cash prices and current prices.

Mr. Redwood: The total number of permanent staff employed by my Department in December 1979, broken down by grade is:

Grade	*Total Number Employed*
Grade 1	1
Grade 2	2
Grade 3 and Equivalents	13
Grade 4 and Equivalents	3
Grade 5 and Equivalents	55
Grade 6 and Equivalents	98
Grade 7 and Equivalents	159
SEO and Equivalents	150
HEO and Equivalents	219
EO and Equivalents	412
AO and Equivalents	643

Grade	Total Number Employed
AA and Equivalents	537
Industrial Staff	227
Fast Streamers	11

The corresponding pay bill in this year was £14,900,000. This equates to £37,000,000 in current prices.

The total number of permanent staff employed by my Department on 1 November 1994, broken down by grade is:

Grade	Total number employed
Grade 1	1
Grade 2	2
Grade 3 and Equivalents	12
Grade 4 and Equivalents	7
Grade 5 and Equivalents	49
Grade 6 and Equivalents	33
Grade 7 and Equivalents	178
SEO and Equivalents	145
HEO and Equivalents	300
EO and Equivalents	505
AO and Equivalents	603
AA and Equivalents	450
Industrial Staff	142
Fast Streamers	21

The corresponding paybill for this year is £47,805,000.

The staffing and paybill figures for 1979 include details for ancient monuments and schools inspection. The figures for 1994 include Cadw but not the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. The 1994 paybill figures include superannuation charges.

The Welsh Office employs 54 fewer staff of grades one to seven and SEO than in 1979, and 84 fewer of all grades. During this period it has also taken on extra functions.

Investment Projects

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list those public investment projects within his Department's responsibility which have attracted private capital and which have been commenced since November 1993;

(2) how much private capital has been invested in public investment projects within his Department's responsibility since the 1992 autumn statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Private finance forms a significant part of many programmes. The Welsh Office and its sponsored bodies levered in £400,000,000 of private funding in 1993–94 and this is forecast to increase to £407,000,000 in 1994–95. It is not practicable to list individual projects.

Health Service Staff (Suspension)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses and *(c)* consultants (i) are currently suspended on pay from their duties for disciplinary reasons, (ii) were suspended on pay in each of the last five years from their duties for disciplinary reasons and (iii) were suspended before their case was heard for *(A)* less than three months, *(B)* between three and six months, *(C)* between six and 12 months and *(D)* over 12 months; and what is and was the cost of (i) and (ii) including temporary or locum replacement.

Mr. Richards: This information is not held centrally.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office has not entered into any contracts with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two financial years. Information for Government agencies responsible to the Welsh Office is not held centrally.

Cardiff Royal Infirmary

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 17 October, *Official Report*, column *80*, what assessment the director of the Welsh Office health department made of the report on the implementation of fire prevention works at Cardiff Royal infirmary in the course of discussions with South Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Redwood: The report confirmed the health authority's previous assessment of the fire and clinical risks at Cardiff Royal infirmary, which had been shared with the director of the health department. These risks have driven the work to find alternative arrangements and for this reason I was keen that the public should see the full report. My decision announced on 20 October to agree in principle the authority's strategic plan clears the way to tackle the risks.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Redwood: The costs of supporting my Department's programme of market testing in the period 1 April 1992 to 30 June 1994 are as follows: *(a)* consultancy support £246,000 and *(b)* other costs £691,000.

On average market testing to date results in savings of one fifth in the costs being tested.

Morriston Hospital

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make an announcement in relation to the contract for operating the Morriston hospital cardiac surgery unit.

Mr. Redwood: I hope to make a decision early next year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list each occasion on which he or his Department met each of the bidders for the contract tendered for the Morriston hospital cardiac surgery unit; how many of the meetings took place *(a)* before and *(b)* after the submission of the tender; and in each case whether the initiative for the meeting took place at (i) his or (ii) the bidders' request.

Mr. Redwood: I have not met any of the bidders since the competitive tendering process began. I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the completed tenders were first received from each of the bidders for the Morriston hospital cardiac surgery unit; and on what date he received any completed re-tendering exercises from any of the bidders.

Mr. Redwood: The tenders were received by the project board's deadline of 15 June, 1994. There has been no re-tendering.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement in relation to the tendering procedure for the Morriston hospital cardiac surgery unit; and if he will give details of rules and regulations pertaining to variations to the terms of the contract under the tender procedure, to the prohibitions and exclusions relating to re-tendering *(a)* prior to and *(b)* after the closing date specified, and contacts between bidders and his Department in relation to re-tendering procedures.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Police Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the reasons for not publishing standard spending assessments for police authorities in Wales;

(2) if he will now publish the standard spending assessments for police forces in Wales *(a)* for 1994–95 and *(b)* for each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 4 July at column *91*.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the answer by the Secretary of State for Health of 17 October, *Official Report*, column *131*, what consultations he has had with South Glamorgan health authority concerning the provision of accommodation for the national TB reference laboratory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have had no formal consultations with South Glamorgan health authority on accommodation for this unit. Management of the unit is a matter for the Public Health Laboratory Service board.

Between 1988 and 1992 officials at the Welsh Office convened discussions between South Glamorgan health authority, the PHLS and the University of Wales college of medicine about the implementation of the recommendations of the Evans report into microbiology services, including the TB reference laboratory, in south Glamorgan.

Dentists

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many community dentists were employed in each family health service authority area of Wales in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Redwood: Information relating to staff in post in the community dental service is given in the following table.

Family health service authority areas	*Staff in post as at 30 September 1993*[1]
Clwyd	10.4
Dyfed	12.6
Gwent	14.1
Gwynedd	8.3
Mid Glamorgan	9.3
Powys	5.0
South Glamorgan	15.5
West Glamorgan	11.8

[1] Whole-time equivalents. Excluding locum staff. Includes staff in NHS trusts within the FHSA areas.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate of the number of community dentists who will be employed in Wales in *(a)* 1996, *(b)* 1998 and *(c)* 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: It is a matter for health authorities to decide how many community dentists to employ in light of local circumstances. The Green Paper "*Improving NHS Dentistry*" restates the Government's commitment to the NHS and its intention to strengthen the safety net function of the community dental service.

National Botanic Garden

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 17 October, *Official Report*, column *79*, what consultants were commissioned by his Department to consider the feasibility of establishing a national botanic garden for Wales; by what method the consultants were chosen; and if he will give the approximate capital cost within which they have been asked to work.

Mr. Redwood: The consultants commissioned by my Department to consider the feasibility of a national botanic garden for Wales are ERES, Castle buildings, Womanby street, Cardiff CF1 2RG. They were chosen following a competitive tendering procedure. No approximation of the capital costs of the project were given to the consultants.

Ethnic Health Projects

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the answer given by the Secretary of State for Health of 17 October, *Official Report*, column *135*, what proposals he has to extend funding in Wales for experimental projects comparable to those being offered by the NHS ethnic health unit in England.

Mr. Redwood: I have no proposals at present.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Countryside Council

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he will review the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales with a view to those functions being transferred to local and national Government;

(2) what plans he has to reduce overhead costs of the Countryside Council for Wales.

Mr. Redwood: A recently conducted review of the work of the Council has indicated that there could be scope for elected bodies to play an increased role in the delivery of certain of its present functions. My Department will now be discussing these proposals, and the general issue of running costs, with the council.

Quangos

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total expenditure on quangos, training and enterprise councils and the national health service in Wales by his Department for each year since 1979, in cash and 1994–95 prices.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 October 1994]:* The information requested is shown in the following table:

Welsh Office expenditure 1979–80 to 1994–95 (£ million)

	NDPBs[1]		*TECs*[2]		*NHS*	
	Cash	*1994–95 prices*[3]	*Cash*	*1994–95 prices*[3]	*Cash*	*1994–95 prices*[3]
1979–80	N/A	N/A	—	—	465·5	1,179·1
1980–81	N/A	N/A	—	—	598·6	1,281·5
1981–82	100·0	195·2	—	—	682·1	1,331·5
1982–83	86·0	156·7	—	—	750·2	1,367·0
1983–84	74·0	128·9	—	—	796·2	1,386·5
1984–85	78·0	129·3	—	—	861·0	1,427·7
1985–86	74·0	116·3	—	—	919·5	1,444·5
1986–87	70·0	106·8	—	—	988·2	1,508·3
1987–88	100·0	144·9	—	—	1,097·5	1,590·4
1988–89	130·0	176·5	—	—	1,220·5	1,657·3
1989–90	250·0	317·4	—	—	1,324·4	1,681·5
1990–91	320·0	376·0	—	—	1,490·6	1,751·3
1991–92	370·0	408·9	—	—	1,710·1	1,890·1
1992–93	400·0	425·4	103·6	110·2	1,912·9	2,034·1
1993–94	678·0[4]	698·3[4]	98·9	101·9	1,986·6	2,046·2

Sources:

[1] "*Public Bodies*"; first published in 1982 and successive years by the Cabinet Office.

[2] Responsibility for TECs in Wales transferred on 1 April 1992 from the Department of Employment to the Welsh Office.

[3] Figures derived using latest GDP deflators.

[4] Provisional figures only until publication of 1994 "*Public Bodies*".

General Practitioner Lists

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in the mid Glamorgan family health services authority area have been removed from the GP's list and how many have been *(a)* under 18 years, *(b)* women over 60 years, *(c)* men over 65 years of age, *(d)* registered disabled people, *(e)* in receipt of repeat prescriptions and *(f)* recorded as having been previously removed from a GP's list in each of the last four years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* This information is not available in the form requested.

I understand that some 50,858 patients were removed from GP's lists in mid Glamorgan during 1993, according to data held by the mid Glamorgan family health services authority. A further 33,904 patients were removed between 1 January and 31 August 1994.

The most common reasons for the removal of 99 per cent. of these patients were moving home, emigration, adoption, death and the retirement of the GP.

In 1993 only 0.8 per cent. or 407 patients were deregistered at the request of the GP. They all had the opportunity to register with another GP. We do not keep records by age in the Welsh Office.

Dental Services

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the adequacy of NHS dental provision in Newtown, Llanidloes, Machynlleth and Dolgellau; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* It is for health authorities to assess the adequacy of NHS dental services in their locality.

Family health services authorities are encouraged to seek my permission to employ salaried dentists in areas where there is a shortfall in service provision. Gwynedd and Powys family health services authorities have applied for permission to employ salaried dentists in their areas. As a result, the Gwynedd family health services authority has permission to employ four salaried dentists, to be deployed at such centres as that authority judges best to ensure the availability of general dental services, and the Powys authority has permission to employ a salaried dentist at Builth Wells.

Powys family health services authority has since made further applications to employ salaried dentists at Machynlleth and Newtown. With the agreement of the authority, the Machynlleth application is being held in abeyance pending the result of a Welsh Office sponsored advertising campaign to attract further independent practitioners to the area. The application in respect of Newtown is presently under consideration. Newtown has recently been declared a designated area under the dental location incentive scheme. My Department will provide the funding for those who qualify for the grants which are now available for dentists wishing to set up or expand practices in the Newtown area.

On 20 October my Department provided additional funding of £50,000 to the Gwynedd health authority to purchase additional treatment sessions to support the community dental service safety net role.

European Regional Funds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of European Union expenditure in Wales on an *(a)* gross and *(b)* net basis; and if he will place a copy in the Library of such recent documentation on the above calculation as he has available.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 20 October 1994]*: Expenditure figures in Wales are available from the structural funds on a gross basis only. Information on other areas of European Union expenditure is not available for Wales. Neither is it possible to present this information on a net basis.

I will place in the Library of the House a copy of the information available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Security Officers

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* registered and *(b)* non-registered security officers currently operating in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There is no central system of registration for security officers.

Merseyside Police

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what projections he has made of the future budget needs of Merseyside police.

Mr. Maclean: The budget requirement for the Merseyside police is a matter for the Merseyside police authority.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet representatives of Merseyside police authority to discuss their funding requirements for 1995–96.

Mr. Maclean: A letter setting out the basis of the revised new police funding formula will be going to the Merseyside police authority shortly. Detailed proposals for central Government support for the Merseyside police in 1995–96 will be available shortly after the Budget on 29 November.

Neighbourhood Security Patrols

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions he has had about the possibility of vetting and regulating firms offering neighbourhood security patrols.

Mr. Maclean: Home Office Ministers and officials have frequent contacts with the police and the private security industry in which the question of regulation can arise. Last year we published a Green Paper on the arrangements for criminal record checks on people seeking employment in sensitive areas. We intend to publish a white paper setting out the results of our review in the new year.

Firearms

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were 1993's figures for crimes of violence where firearms were used.

Mr. Howard: In 1993, 8,777 notifiable offences of violence were recorded by the police in England and Wales in which firearms were reported to have been used.

Seventy four involved offences of homicide, 1,047 attempted murder and other acts, including wounding, endangering life, 1,738 other offences of violence against the person and 5,918 of robbery.

Immigration

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what importance he attaches to retaining the system of intergovernmental co-operation on European immigration issues.

Mr. Howard: The Government attach the utmost importance to the continuation of the present intergovernmental arrangements under title VI of the treaty on European Union.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to announce the Government's response to his Department's consultation on wheel clamping.

Mr. Maclean: As soon as possible.

Closed Circuit Television

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide finance to local authorities to facilitate the implementation of the CCTV system in town centre locations.

Mr. Howard: Last month I announced a new challenge competition to set up more CCTV systems in England and Wales with £2 million Government funding in 1994–95. Local authorities will be able to bid for funds in partnership with the police and other organisations, including the private sector.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list areas in which crime has fallen as a result of the installation of closed circuit television systems.

Mr. Maclean: Towns and cities all over the country report decreases in crime due to the presence of the cameras and the availability of video evidence to help convict criminals. Examples include Kings Lynn, Newcastle and Bradford, to name but a few.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Government plans to incorporate the draft directive on article 8 of the European convention on human rights in reporting the use of closed circuit television systems into United Kingdom law.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to proceed in this way.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the guidelines that are available for the use of closed circuit television cameras in public areas.

Mr. Maclean: We shall shortly be issuing a good practice guide on the use of closed circuit television in public places. Copies will be sent to all police forces, local authorities and large businesses.

Police Authorities

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure that best practice spreads between police authorities.

Mr. Howard: The Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 codifies best practice and sets out clearly what is expected of police authorities.

Under the provisions of the Act, I laid a code of practice yesterday which should promote good practice on financial management.

Special Constables

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the assistance provided by special constables in routine police patrolling.

Mr. Howard: No specific assessment has been made. Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary are told that specials spend a large part of their time on duty supporting regular police officers on patrol, and that this support is of real value to regular officers and the local community.

The Government recognise the importance of police foot patrol to members of the public, even in low crime areas. I recently announced the launch of a new type of special constables—the neighbourhood constable—who will patrol, on foot, their own neighbourhood.

Overseas Domestic Workers

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is planning to strengthen measures to protect overseas domestic workers from abusive employers during their stay in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We are keeping the arrangements for the admission of domestic workers to the United Kingdom under review in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Employment Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of state for the Home Department what public funding is available to voluntary organisations for help to overseas domestic workers seeking advice or help in cases of gross exploitation.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information about funding specifically for this purpose is not available.

DNA Sampling

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the use of DNA sampling to fight crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Almost all the correspondence we have received has been supportive of our proposals to allow DNA samples to be taken in all recordable offences. The police have warmly welcomed our plans. They help bring the law into line with the capabilities of modern technology. The full force of modern science will be brought to bear upon the modern criminal.

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on criminal justice regarding DNA sampling.

Mr. Maclean: Our proposals for legislation arising from the Royal Commission's recommendations on DNA are contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Drugs (Sentencing)

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to set minimum jail sentences for those who sell category A drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. The courts should be left to determine appropriate sentences in individual cases.

The maximum penalty for supplying category A drugs is life imprisonment. We look to the courts to pass very long prison sentences in the most serious cases.

European Court of Justice

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list issues affecting his Department that are due to come before the European Court of Justice for adjudication; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A number, including the exclusion orders against Mr. Adams and Mr. Gallagher and interpretation of article 7a of the treaty of Rome.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the applicability of citizens charter principles to electoral registration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Electoral registration officers have a statutory duty to include in the electoral register the names of all people who appear to them to be eligible. If the rights of electors have been denied, remedies are available through the courts. My right hon. and learned Friend therefore has no plans to introduce a charter covering electoral registration.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures on recorded crime in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Maclean: In the 12 months to June 1994, 54,268 offences were recorded by the police in Hertfordshire. This represents a decrease of eight per cent. on the corresponding period for the previous year.

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has formed of current trends in the figures for recorded crime.

Mr. Maclean: The most recent figures, for the 12 months to June 1994, show that the number of crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales decreased by 5·5 per cent. compared with the previous 12 months. This is the largest fall over 12 months for 40 years. I very much hope that, following on as it does from the one per cent. fall for the whole of 1993, this will serve to reassure the public that recent rises in recorded crime can not only be slowed but actually reversed.

Prison Places, North-west

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase the number of prison places in the north-west.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Over the next five years more than 2,200 additional places will be provided.

Violent Crime

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of trends in violent crime.

Mr. Howard: Between 1981 and 1993, violent crime recorded by the police increased at a rate of 6 per cent. per year, compared with an increase in all recorded crime of 5 per cent. per year. In the 12 months to June 1994, violent crime accounted for 6 per cent. of all crimes recorded by the police.

The British crime survey provides an insight into people's experience of crime, whether or not they report it to the police. The survey suggests that for those offences that can be compared with the police figures, violent crime increased at a rate of less than 3 per cent. per year between 1981 and 1993.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to visit the Cheshire probation service to discuss crime prevention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to visit the Cheshire probation service.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to visit police cells in Greater Manchester to discuss the number of remand and convicted prisoners being held therein.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no plans to do so.

Home Leave (Prisoners)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy on home leave for prisoners.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A comprehensive review of the existing arrangements for home leave and temporary release has recently been completed. As a result of this work, new arrangements, which place greater emphasis on the safety of the public, will be announced shortly.

In the meantime, instructions are being issued to governors that all temporary absence from prison will be subject to a tighter and more rigorous risk assessment. The police and probation service will be consulted about the release of prisoners, particularly those convicted of serious violent offences.

Prisoners who are released temporarily will be subject to spot checks, and those who breach the terms of their licence will be dealt with according to the prison disciplinary system. These changes will be implemented in full by no later than 1 December 1994.

Cannabis

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many adult cautions were issued by the Metropolitan police for the possession of cannabis for personal use.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the latest provisional figures for 1993 record that 8,050 persons received adult cautions for possession of cannabis within the Metropolitan police district.

Squatting

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what impact he expects the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to have on the practice of squatting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend is confident that the Bill will provide much greater protection to property owners who wish to remove squatters from their property. Through the provision of a quick and effective remedy for aggrieved property owners, squatters will no longer be able to delay the eviction procedure while remaining in possession of the property.

Crime

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to encourage people to help the police tackle crime.

Mr. Maclean: On 28 September, my right hon. and learned Friend launched the partners against crime initiative, encouraging individuals actively to help the police. This initiative has three main strands—neighbourhood watch, street watch and neighbourhood constables, and is linked into the expansion of the special constabulary.

Neighbourhood Watch, London

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about progress of neighbourhood watch in London.

Mr. Maclean: I am pleased to report the success of neighbourhood watch in London. There are over 10,887 schemes covering more than 1 million households. I understand that in my hon. Friend's own constituency 50 per cent. of all households are members of neighbourhood watch.

Rapists

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what facilities are available in Her Majesty's prisons for the counselling and rehabilitation of convicted rapists; how widespread are these facilities; and if their use is compulsory.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. David Faber, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the counselling and rehabilitation of convicted rapists. Since 1992, the Prison Service in England and Wales has been running substantial treatment programmes for sex offenders, both rapists and child molesters, in 17 adult prisons and one young offender institution. Four more establishments will shortly join the programme.

During the year ending 31 March 1994, the Prison Service assessed the treatment needs of 904 sex offenders and treated 439 inmates on this programme.

Originally inmates serving sentences of four years or more for a sex offence were targeted and we are now able to offer the programme to all adult male offenders in this category. We are expanding the programme to any prisoner who wishes to have treatment and has sufficient sentence length to complete the programme, including suitable young offenders.

The programme is not compulsory because an inmate must be motivated to change his behaviour for the programme to be effective. However, since successful completion of the programme is regarded as an essential part of preparation for release, a prisoner's participation and performance during the programme will be considered when parole decisions are made.

Private Security Firms

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what checks his Department makes in respect of *(a)* criminal records and *(b)* training of employees of firms contracted by his Department to carry out private security work.

Mr. Maclean: The checks made in respect of criminal records of employees of private security firms contracted to undertake security work on behalf of the Home Office vary according to the requirements of the contract, or the sensitivity of the work. Units will make checks in appropriate cases. Any particular training requirements will be specified in the invitation to tender and checked before award of contract.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *874*, what plans he has to introduce regulations to prevent a person with a criminal record from offering security services.

Mr. Maclean: There are no present plans to introduce such regulations, but we keep the case for intervention under review.

Mr Kani Yilmaz

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many previous occasions Mr. Kani Yilmaz has visited the United Kingdom; and what action was then taken by his Department.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Mr. Yilmaz previously entered the United Kingdom on 23 June 1993, 2 October 1993, 4 December 1993 and 12 April 1994. On each occasion he was admitted as a visitor.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he first became aware of the intention of Mr. Kani Yilmaz to enter the United Kingdom on his most recent visit.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: On 24 October after his arrival the previous day.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contacts his Department had with Mr. Kani Yilmaz on his previous visits to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I am not aware of any such contacts other than with officers of the Immigration Service on arrivals and departures from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mr. Kani Yilmaz entered the United Kingdom; and what action was then taken by immigration officers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Mr. Kani Yilmaz last entered the United Kingdom on 23 October 1994. An immigration officer gave him leave to enter for three months.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Mr. Kani Yilmaz has ever entered the United Kingdom unlawfully, or been in breach of immigration rules by overstaying or for any other reason; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: According to our records Mr. Yilmaz has never previously entered or remained in the United Kingdom in breach of the immigration rules.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he first became aware of the arrival of Mr. Kani Yilmaz in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I first became aware of Mr. Kani Yilmaz's arrival in the United Kingdom on 24 October.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he decided to issue a notice of intention to deport Mr. Kani Yilmaz; and when it was served.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: My right hon. and learned Friend directed on 25 October 1994 that Mr. Faysal Dunlayici, also known as Kani Yilmaz, should be served with a notice of intention to deport and detained. The notice was served on Mr. Dunlayici on 26 October.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are currently detained under Immigration Acts powers in Her Majesty's prison Doncaster; and how long on average these detainees are being held under these powers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many asylum seekers released from detention on bail by the Immigration Appellate Authority have subsequently absconded or otherwise failed to comply with the terms of such bail *(a)* in the last five years and *(b)* since 26 July 1993;

(2) how many asylum seekers detained under Immigration Act powers have been released on bail by the Immigration Appellate Authority *(a)* in the past five years and *(b)* since 26 July 1993.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on the number of asylum seekers released from detention on bail by the Immigration Appellate Authority could be obtained only at disproportionate costs. Information on those released on bail that subsequently abscond is not separately identifiable in the statistics.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many asylum seekers have been detained under the provisions of section 7 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 since 26 July 1993;

(2) how many asylum seekers are currently detained under the provisions of section 7 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Section 7 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 refers to the curtailment of leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom after an asylum applicant has had their claim for asylum refused. It has no provision for the detention of asylum seekers. However, there have been no cases detained since 26 July 1993 who were awaiting removal or an appeal because their leave to remain had been curtailed.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department approximately what proportion of those applying for asylum in the United Kingdom in 1993 arrived *(a)* without travel documents and *(b)* in possession of fraudulent travel documents.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The available information relates to asylum applications lodged at the United Kingdom ports of Heathrow, Gatwick and Dover. In 1993, of the 6,725 applications for asylum, excluding dependants, lodged at these ports, an estimated 40 per cent. were without travel documents and 20 per cent. were in possession of fraudulent travel documents.

Deaths in Custody

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total number of deaths in custody for young offenders and the coroners' verdicts returned for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 3 November, 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question if he will list the total number of deaths in custody for young offenders and the coroners' verdicts returned for the last five years for which figures are available.

The attached table records the information requested for the year 1990 to November 1st 1994.

Young offender deaths 1990–1994

	Suicide	*Misadventure*	*Accidental*	*Open*	*Other*	*Total*
1990	5 (2)	—	—	5	—	10
1991	4	—	1	—	—	5
1992	4	1	—	2	[1]1	8
1993	1	—	—	2	—	3
1994[2]	1	1	—	1	—	10

The figure in brackets refers to verdicts where a 'lack of care' rider has been used as a qualification. It does not relate to the concept of civil negligence nor does it indicate a breach of duty by anyone.

[1] Cell mate charged with murder.

[2] 1994 figures are up to November 1. Verdicts are awaited in 7 cases for 1994.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of deaths in custody in the last five years which have resulted in disciplinary proceedings being brought against custodial officers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question about the number of deaths in custody in the last five years which have resulted in disciplinary proceedings.

I will write to you as soon as possible.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the rules in relation to the publication of reports into the circumstances surrounding a death in custody; and what plans he has to change them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question about the rules in relation to the publication of reports into the circumstances surrounding a death in custody; and the plans he has to change them.

Subject to considerations of security and to the Coroner's consent, the Prison Service is generally prepared to disclose, in advance of any inquest, copies of documents which are provided to the Coroner for the purpose of the inquest to anyone who is a "properly interested person" under the Coroners' Rules.

However reports of follow-up internal investigations, including statements taken by the investigating Governor, are not disclosed. It is necessary that the Prison Service should be able to conduct its own review of the case in confidence. The Coroner is at liberty to take statements separately for the purpose of the inquest and any requests for disclosure of such statements would be for him or her to consider. There are no plans to change this policy.

A similar policy applies in relation to deaths of persons in the custody of the Prison Service detained under the Immigration Act.

Security Service

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps are being taken to recruit more women from outside the service into senior positions within the Security Service;

(2) what positive steps are being taken to promote women within the ranks of the Security Service;

Mr. Howard: The Security Service operates an equal opportunities policy. Recruitment and promotion are based on merit not gender.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the grades of post in order of seniority within the structure of the Security Service;

(2) how many personnel are currently employed by the Security Service; and how many are women;

(3) how many women are employed in each grade of post within the Security Service as a percentage of the total number of staff in that grade.

Mr. Howard: The Security Service employs about 2,000 people of whom just over 53 per cent. are women. The senior management group which is responsible for the overall direction of the service's work, and the general intelligence duties group, who are responsible for the service's investigative, assessment and policy work as well as operational tasks, together comprise 367 staff of whom 144—39 per cent.—are women. For operational reason I am not prepared to give a breakdown of the remaining occupational groups.

Secure Training Centres

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the organisations who have expressed an interest in running one or more secure training centres.

Mr. Maclean: A total of 25 organisations have expressed an interest in tendering for the financing, designing, building/refurbishing, operating and maintaining of five secure training centres. The names of the organisations invited to tender will be announced when the invitations to tender are issued.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines will be put in place on the prevention of suicides and self-harm at the new secure training centres.

Mr. Maclean: Each secure training centre will be required to develop and maintain a suicide and self-harm management and assessment policy which will ensure that each trainee is assessed for the risk of suicide and/or self-harm on arrival at the centre and is re-assessed on a regular basis. The requirement to design the regime and the buildings to minimise these risks will be a prominent feature of the invitation to tender, and will be given close attention in assessing bids.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the projected average level of occupancy for the secure training centres.

Mr. Maclean: Each secure training centre will provide 40 places. The actual level of occupancy will be determined by the courts and their use of the secure training order.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce the names of the private sector contractors who will be running the secure training centres.

Mr. Maclean: An announcement will be made once the competitive tendering exercise has been completed.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the national curriculum will be taught in the new secure training centres.

Mr. Maclean: Secure training centres will provide a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to the age, aptitude and ability and special educational needs of the individual trainee. It will reflect the national curriculum as far as possible.

Remand (Juveniles)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his oral answer of 14 May, *Official Report 1992*, columns 737–38, if he is now in a position to state when he intends to end the practice of remanding juveniles to adult prisons.

Mr. Maclean: It is the Government's policy to end remands of juveniles to prisons as soon as possible. To this end, local authorities have begun building programmes to increase the stock of secure accommodation specifically for this purpose.

Citizenship Applications

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the use of an honorific title by Mr. Ali Fayed in regard to his application for British citizenship.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: No.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for British citizenship have been outstanding for more than 21 months.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: There were 752 applications outstanding on 31 October 1994.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to introduce a system of checks on the use of honorific titles by foreign nationals applying for British citizenship.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: No.

Immigration Detention Centres

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost in the financial year to 31 March to the Immigration Service of administering its immigration detention centres.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The costs met by the Immigration Service in the financial year 1993–94 were about £7·5 million.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average net operating cost per inmate per week in Harmondsworth immigration detention centre for the financial year to 31 March;

(2) what was the average net operating cost per inmate per week in Campsfield house immigration detention centre for the financial year to 31 March.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: This information is not available in the form requested, but over the whole estate the average weekly cost per detainee is estimated at just over £800.

Drug Abuse

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to encourage charity shops selling clothing to young people to display warnings about drug abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are in favour of any initiative which effectively raises young people's awareness of the facts about drug misuse and the associated risks. The Government's consultative document on a drug strategy for 1995–98, published last month, contains new proposals to help young people to resist drugs, including publicity campaigns and support for schools in providing effective drugs education.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards slogans promoting the use of drugs appearing on clothing for young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government are totally opposed to the encouragement or glamorisation of drug misuse. Section 19 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 makes it an offence for a person to incite another to commit an offence under this Act. The investigation and prosecuting of offences is entirely a matter for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service. The decision as to whether an offence has been committed is a matter for the courts.

Re-convictions

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders were re-convicted within two years of release from *(a)* local authority secure accommodation and *(b)* young offender institutions for each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested on re-conviction rates for local authority secure accommodation is not centrally available.

The latest available information on re-conviction rates of young offenders is contained in chapter 9 of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1992", Cm. 2581, and relates to offenders discharged from prison during 1987. Relevant figures are contained in tables 9.7 and 9.9. Figures are not given for young offender institutions as they did not replace detention centres and youth custody until 1988.

Stolen Vehicles

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what recovery rate has been achieved of stolen vehicles for each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) what records are kept detailing recovery rates of vehicles reported stolen.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of vehicles recorded as stolen and subsequently recovered is available for 42 of the 43 police force areas in England and Wales, and is provided to the Home Office by those forces. The recovery rate for the last five years is given in the following table.

Notifiable offences of theft and unauthorised taking of motor vehicles recorded by the police

England and Wales	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Offences recorded	393,399	494,209	581,901	587,856	597,519
Vehicles recovered	267,094	328,797	372,412	363,956[1]	350,862[1]
Percentage recovered	68	67	64	65[1]	59[1]

[1] Excluding Dyfed-Powys.

Travellers

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been spent on tracking the movement and activities of travellers by specialist police units during 1991–92 and 1993–94; and what is the planned budget for 1995–96 to 1997–98.

Mr. Maclean: No Home Office records are maintained of specific operational costs incurred by police forces. The deployment of resources for police operations is a matter for individual chief officers of police.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners are currently held in police station cells.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question about the number of remand prisoners currently held in police cells.

On 31 October there were 132 remand prisoners held in police cells.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* juveniles and *(b)* young adults were held in (i) prison and (ii) young offenders' institutions or remand centres, (1) on remand and (2) after sentence for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Director General of the Prison Service will write to the hon. Member.

Haslar Home Office Holding Centre

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average net operating cost per inmate per week in the Haslar Home Office holding centre for the financial year to 31 March.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter for Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question about the average net operating cost per inmate per week in the Haslar Home Office holding centre for the financial year to 31 March.

In the financial year to 31 March 1994 the net operating cost per prisoner per week for Haslar holding centre was £300.

Prison Service Costs

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average net operating cost per inmate per week in all Prison Service establishments for the financial year to 31 March.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question on the average cost per inmate per week.

The average cost per prisoner place per week in 1993–94 was £437 (£22,712 per year). This figure excludes exceptional items: the cost of holding prisoners in police cells and compensation for abandonment of plans to relocate the Prison Service headquarters to Derby.

Young Offender Institutions

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research he has commissioned which indicates that young offender institutions are more effective than secure units in the local authority community home system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: In 1992, the Home Office published research and planning unit paper 66—"Juveniles Sentenced for Serious Offences: A comparison of Regimes in Young Offender Institutions and Local Authority Community Homes". The paper reported the results of a comparison of young offender institutions and local authority community homes, including the education and training provided, costs, reconviction and absconding rates.

Police Posts

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police posts have been privatised or individualised in the last five years in each of the following areas *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Northern Ireland, *(d)* the west midlands and *(e)* H division, Walsall.

Mr. Maclean: No police posts have been privatised in England and Wales, but as a consequence of contracting out of the court escort function there is to be a phased reduction of 271 officers in the Metropolitan police from October 1994 to March 1995.

The position in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Prisons (Suicide Prevention)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines exist in relation to the handling of prisoners at risk of harming themselves.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what guidelines exist in relation to the handling of prisoners at risk of harming themselves.

Instruction to Governors 1/1994 'Caring for the Suicidal in Custody'

introduced new arrangements for the care of prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm, which updated and expanded arrangements set out in the previous instructions issued in May 1989. The new guidelines came into force on the 1 April 1994.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons currently implement official suicide prevention strategies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on which prisons currently implement official suicide prevention strategies.

The Prison Services' revised suicide prevention strategy was laid out in Instruction to Governors 1/1994, which updated and expanded arrangements set out in a previous instruction issued in May 1989. The new instruction was issued in February of this year and came into force on 1 April 1994 in all establishments.

Police (Representation)

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to alter the provisions for local representation on police consultative and community groups in London.

Mr. Maclean: Under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, it is for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to make arrangements for obtaining the views of people in the Metropolitan police district about matters concerning the policing of the area. We have issued guidance to the commissioner concerning arrangements for the Metropolitan police district emphasising that consultative groups should be as representative as possible of the local community. We have no present plans to revise that guidance.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Howard: The Home Office leases one property used, for security reasons, as the London residence of the Home Secretary of the day. The value of the property is not known. There are no Home Office staff employed at the property and the Home Secretary is responsible for meeting all expenditure on food, private telephone calls and hospitality. Running costs in 1993-94 totalled £79,781 comprising:

	£
(a) Furniture and fittings	1,076
(b) Maintenance	[1]40,385
(c) Staff	nil
(d) Food and hospitality	nil
(e) Other costs	38,320

Note:

[1] of which 23,285 was for the replacement of the roof

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) by what dates he intends that the proposed body to investigate alleged miscarriages of justice shall be *(a)* established and *(b)* fully operational;

(2) what is his best estimate of the running costs in a full year of the proposed body to investigate alleged miscarriages of justice.

Mr. Maclean: We are committed to establishing such a body as soon as is practicable. I am not yet in a position to say when the necessary legislation will be brought forward but information on the body's running costs will be made available, in the usual way, when the Bill is introduced.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the United Kingdom post in Islamabad asked for inquiries to be made in the United Kingdom into the application by Mrs. Abida Khatoon (Ref: IMM/C3052) to join her husband in the United kingdom; when he expects those inquiries to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I will write to the hon. Member.

EU Common Visa List

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what Representations he is making to remove New Zealand and Jamaica from the common visa list of the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: New Zealand and Jamaica are not among the countries proposed by the Commission for inclusion on the common visa list.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Home Office has not let any contracts to the named company during the specified period.

Tiger Products

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *769*, what progress has been made in the investigations by the Metropolitan police arising from information passed to them by the World Wide Fund for Nature; and how many people have been charged with offences arising from the possession of tiger products in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis that the investigation is still in progress. Information on the number of people charged so is not collated centrally.

Electoral Register

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to allow electors not to have their addresses printed on the Electoral Register for specified reasons.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: This question was considered by the working group on electoral registration, set up as part of our general review of electoral law and practice. Officials are due to report to Ministers on the findings of the review shortly.

Police Finances

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has now abandoned his draft formula for setting police force finances; when he intends to present new proposals for setting police force finance in England and Wales; and what scheme he intends to use for the 1995–96 financial year.

Mr. Maclean: The setting of police force budgets is a matter for police authorities.

A version of the new police funding formula was issued for consultation to police and local authority associations in September. This version of the formula did not take sufficient account of the need to provide stability and continuity in policing. We therefore concluded that, for 1995–96, police establishment should be included in the funding formula as an indicator of the need for policing. Police authorities will be notified of their allocations of central Government support in the same way as other classes of local authorities. Details of the proposed local government settlement for England and Wales for 1995–96 will be available very shortly after the Budget announcement.

Workplace Fires

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in fires in places of work in (i) 1992–93 and (ii) 1993–94.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Figures on fire deaths are provided on a calender year basis. In the United Kingdom in 1992 there were 50 deaths from fires in places of work and 2,087 non-fatal casualties.

Secure Training Unit, Medomsley

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department expects to respond to letters from Derwentside district council of 1 September, 15 September and 6 October regarding planning permission for the proposed secure training unit at Medomsley; and what are the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the letters from Derwentside district council concern an application for planning permission made under section 299 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The letter of 1 September was an acknowledgement of the application and a response was not requested. The letters of 15 September and 6 October invited payment of a planning fee in connection with the application. Payments of this kind are not normally made until the enabling legislation has been enacted. I apologise for the delay in responding to the correspondence. My officials will shortly be writing to Derwentside district council about the application.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what guidance or regulation the Home Office made an application for planning permission to Derwentside district council for a secure unit on part of the former site of Medomsley prison; and for what reason his Department was unable to pay the statutory fee.

Mr. Maclean: Applications have been made for the development of a secure training centre on part of the site of the former detention centre at Medomsley under DOE circular 18/84 and also section 299 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

In respect of any planning fee due, payments of this kind are not normally made until the enabling legislation has been enacted.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: From 1 April 1992 to 30 June 1994 expenditure by the Home Office including the Prison Service in support of the competing for quality programme was approximately £1·5 million on payments to consultants—including advice on efficiency improvements for units subject to competition—and approximately £6·5 million on other costs. It is estimated that annual savings of £27 million have been generated by this programme so far.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those parts of the Prison Service which are scheduled to be market-tested, giving in each case the projected timetable and the estimated cost of the market-test.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about those parts of the Prison Service scheduled to be market-tested.

Work is currently underway to market test the management of the vehicle fleet. In addition, plans are being developed to market test the Parole Board Secretariat and one or two establishments. Invitations to tender for the management of the vehicle fleet are expected by the end of 1994 and a decision on the preferred supplier by June 1995. The anticipated staff and consultancy costs of managing this market test are £30,000. The timetable for the market testing of the Parole Board Secretariat has not yet been planned and therefore the estimated costs are not known.

Once the Prison Board has decided on which one or two establishments will be market tested, it is estimated that the preferred supplier will be identified within about nine months. The projected staff and consultancy costs for managing each test are expected to be about £100,000.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify, for each individual prison and department within the Prison Service, the exact benefits, financial or otherwise, which have accrued directly as a result of market testing and/or the contracting out of the management of the Wolds, Blakenhurst, Doncaster and Strangeways prisons, and any other market-testing exercise within the agency to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Director General of the Prison Service will write to the hon. Member.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those parts of the Prison Service which have been market-tested to date, giving in each case the cost of the market-test, the date of the market-test and the outcome.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about those parts of the Prison Service which have been market tested.

Work in the Prison Service which has been exposed to competition as part of our Competing for Quality programme comprised of the following market tests and contracting:

1992–93 Programme

	Contract award
Court Escort and Custody Services East Midlands and Humberside Decision announced 6 November 1992	Contracted to Group 4.
Blakenhurst Prison Decision announced 3 December 1992	Contracted to UKDS
Prison Education service	Previously outsourced
Decision announced 11 February 1993	All competitions completed and contracts in place.
Prison Service Information	Contract awarded to SERCO.
Technology Group Decision announced 31 August 1992	Contract awarded to SERCO
Manchester Prison Decision announced 15 July 1993	In-house win following a market test.
Warehousing and Distribution Decision announced March 1993	In-house win following a market test.
Facilities Management at Newbold Revel Decision announced 31 August 1994	In-house win for services previously provided in-house, following a market test. Taylorplan awarded contract for catering and house-keeping.
Court Escort and Custody Service Metropolitan Area Decision announced 16 December 1993	Contracted to Securicor
Doncaster Prison Decision announced 12 January 1994	Contracted to Premier Prison Services
Buckley Hall Prison Decision announced 19 July 1994	Contract awarded to Group 4 following a market test

Notes:

In addition a number of candidates, initially identified for competition, were withdrawn before formal testing.

The overall cost of managing our Competing for Quality programme up to June 1994 has been about £3 million. This includes all direct running costs, consultancy and overheads.

Savings of at least £17 million a year have been produced and therefore net savings of £14 million have been generated.

Overseas Domestic Workers

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many overseas domestic workers sought assistance from *(a)* official and *(b)* voluntary bodies in cases of exploitation in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: This information is not available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many overseas domestic workers suffering *(a)* physical abuse, *(b)* denial of food, *(c)* reduced or no pay, *(d)* passport confiscation or *(e)* imprisonment in the employer's home were reported to him in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: This information is not recorded.

Fire Certificates

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fire certificates issued under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 are in force in places of work.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: In 1993–94 there were 126,417 such certificates in force.

Police Finances

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how soon police forces in England and Wales will be notified of their financial allocation for 1995–96.

Mr. Maclean: Police authorities will be notified of their allocations of central Government support in the same way as other classes of local authorities. Details of the proposed local government settlement for England and Wales for 1995–96 will be available very shortly after the Budget announcement.

House Fires

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in residential house fires in (i) 1992–93 and (ii) 1993–94.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Figures on fire deaths are provided on a calendar year basis. In 1992 there were 594 fire deaths in dwellings and 11,206 non-fatal casualties. Provisional figures for 1993 show that there were 535 deaths from fires in dwellings and 11,370 non-fatal casualties.

Prison Staff Statistics

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of *(a)* staff posts by rank and *(b)* actual numbers in post at the following prisons: Wolds, Blakenhurst, Manchester and Doncaster at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the staffing levels at Wolds, Blakenhurst, Manchester and Doncaster prisons.

The table below shows the staffing figures at these prisons at 19 October 1994.

	Wolds	*Blakenhurst*	*Doncaster*	*Manchester*
Prisoner Custody Officers	82	222	228	[1]395
Supervisory Prisoner Custody Officers	39	53	29	[2]78
Other staff	100	92	164	247
Total staff	221	367	421	720

[1] Prison Officers.

[2] Senior Officers and Principal Officers.

Children of God

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect recent discoveries about the organisation entitled the Children of God will have on his proposed changes in the responsibilities of the Obscene Publications Department of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Maclean: The obscene publications branch—SO1(4)—is within the scope of the Commissioner's intended restructuring exercise. This aims to make the best possible use of resources in the fight against crimes, including all forms of obscene publications and paedophilia.

I understand that the Commissioner intends responsibility for paedophilia and top level criminality uncovered by investigations into pornography to remain centralised within SO1(4). These recent changes within the Metropolitan police will not effect their ability to investigate allegations of child abuse against organisations such as the Children of God.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to deal with the situation discovered in relation to the organisation entitled the Children of God; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Government understand the concerns about the activities of certain organisations. The Government have no power to ban such groups.

Where allegations of child abuse or any other wrong doing are made against groups or individuals it would be a matter for the police to investigate.

Prisons (Drugs)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the estimated cost of introducing drug testing in prisons in 1994–95 and each of the next five years;

(2) in which prisons pilot drug testing schemes will be conducted;

(3) what is the timetable for the introduction of drug testing in prisons.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 provides prison officers with the power, where an authorisation is in force for that prison, to require prisoners to produce a urine sample for the purpose of testing for controlled drugs. New prison rules will make it a disciplinary offence for a prisoner to misuse controlled drugs. It will also be an offence for a prisoner to refuse to provide a sample for testing purposes.

I intend to use these powers to introduce a random testing programme covering all inmates. Prisons will be required to test a set proportion of their population each month.

In addition, prison officers will require prisoners to provide a sample for testing at any time if the officer has reasonable suspicion that the prisoner has been misusing drugs.

Persistent offenders will be tested at a much greater frequency than the general prison population.

Eight prison establishments have been chosen for the initial phase of the drug testing programme. These are Bristol, Holloway, Lindholm, Pentonville, Wakefield and Wayland prisons, and HMYOI/RC Feltham and HMP/YOI Stoke Heath.

The initial phase will commence once the necessary legislation is in place early next year. It is our intention that the drug testing programme will then be developed quickly across the remaining prison establishments.

Initial estimates of the costs of the first phase are approximately £200,000 in 1994–95 and, in the light of the pilot schemes, the estimate will be revised for the next five years.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the proportion of prisoners who are drug addicts using shared injection equipment; and if prison management will provide *(a)* needles or *(b)* bleach for cleaning needles.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Ken Eastham dated 3 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office to reply to your recent Question on the proportion of prisoners who are drug addicts using shared injection equipment and the provision of needles and bleach in prisons.

The Prison Service views, as a top priority, the reduction of drug misuse in the English and Welsh prisons. There is no research on the proportion of prisoners who are drug addicts and use shared drug injecting equipment.

The policy is that neither needles or bleach are provided in prisons.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of unemployed people went on from restart interviews to *(a)* restart or other training, *(b)* full-time jobs, or *(c)* part-time jobs of fewer than 24 hours a week in the last 12 months.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Mr. Jim Dowd, dated 3 November 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the proportion of unemployed people who went on from Restart interviews to a Restart course or other training and full or part time employment.

Unfortunately, not all of the information you have requested is available as we do not differentiate between full and part time employment placings.

Between October 1993 and September, 842,857 clients started Employment Department (ED) employment or training programmes following a Restart Interview. This figure includes Jobclub, Jobplan, Job Review Workshop, Work Trials, Business Start-Up Scheme, Community Action and Job Interview Guarantee as well as Restart Courses and training options like Training for Work and Learning for Work. This represents 29·4 per cent. of the total Restart interviews conducted.

Restart interviews also achieve other positive outcomes including clients moving on to other benefits and signing off for other reasons. Between October 1993 and September these additional positive outcomes totalled 6·3 per cent. of all Restart interviews. The total positive outcomes figure therefore for the 12 months to September equalled 37·2 per cent. of all Restart interviews.

In terms of immediate jobs, between October 1993 and September, Restart interviews led to 43,880 clients being placed into jobs. This represents 1·5 per cent. of the total Restart interviews conducted.

I should emphasise that the figures quoted above represent only the immediate result of Restart interviews. Many other people subsequently take up a job or a place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview. Independent researchers who have studied the Restart Interview programme have all concluded that this indirect effect is extremely significant.

I hope this is helpful.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State of Employment what percentages of the *(a)* male and *(b)* female population aged between 55 and 65 years are currently in paid (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employment.

Mr. Oppenheim: The "Labour Force Survey" for spring 1994 shows that, of men aged 55–64, 50 per cent. were in full-time employment and 6 per cent. in part-time employment. The equivalent figures for women were 15 per cent. and 23 per cent. respectively.

Employment on Trial Scheme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the latest period for which figures are available took advantage of the employment on trial scheme leaving a job within six weeks without any benefit sanction.

Miss Widdecombe: Unemployed claimants who find work are not required to notify the Employment Service that they are taking advantage of the employment on trial rule. There are as a result no records available of how many people successfully stay in their new jobs rather than returning to unemployment. ES does not currently maintaim records of the number of people who are not sanctioned on leaving a job after the sixth week of their trial period.

Factory Inspectors

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory inspectors were employed in England and Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. Oppenheim: The following table gives *(a)* the total number of factory inspectors employed on inspection duties, based in the Health and Safety Executive's area offices in England and Wales and *(b)* the total numbers of factory inspectors employed in HSE in Great Britain.

1 April	*(a)*	*(b)*
1979	579·0	742·5
1980	585·5	759·5
1981	569·5	735·0
1982	531·0	678·5
1983	507·5	654·5
1984	487·0	627·0
1985	504·0	651·0
1986	492·0	623·0
1987	490·5	621·5
1988	468·0	592·5
1989	481·0	604·0
1990	509·5	634·5
1991	521·0	651·0
1992	561·0	698·5
1993	567·0	707·5
1994	562·5	702·5

Figures show full–time equivalent staff: part–time staff counted as 0·5.

Not including specialist inspectors, who were part of the factory inspectorate prior to 1986.

Workplace Accidents

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accidents at work resulting in serious injuries occurred in each year since 1979.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information is not available in the form requested. For the calender years 1981 to 1985 injuries at work were reported under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations; from 1 April 1986 definitions were extended under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations. The number of accidents that led to these injuries cannot be separately identified.

Refuge Holes

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the statutory requirements in respect of refuge holes by the roadways of working collieries.

Mr. Oppenheim: Section 40 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 requires the mine manager to provide refuge holes at prescribed intervals on roads along which vehicles operate. More detailed requirements concerning the intervals between refuge holes in coal mines, their dimensions and other matters are set out in regulation 59 of the Coal and Other Mines (Shafts and Outlets) Regulations 1960.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of *(a)* the number of refuge holes which have been removed from the roadways of working collieries and *(b)* the extent of new roadway which has been provided without such refuge holes, together with an estimate of the shortfall in the number of such holes; what reasons he has been given for such removal or non-construction; and who authorised such removal or non-construction.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Health and Safety Executive is not aware that any refuge holes have been removed from the roadways of working collieries or that any new roadway has been built without the required refuge holes. Any shortfall in provision arises from the repair of rebuilding of existing refuge holes necessitated by strata movement. It is not possible to estimate the extent of this work at any one time.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the current short-fall in refuge holes in the roadways of working collieries with reference to the legal requirement.

Mr. Oppenheim: This information is not available. Conditions below ground are constantly changing due to the dynamic effects of strata movement which requires refuge holes to be repaired or remade as appropriate.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many special breaches of regulation have occurred in the last two years in respect of the removal of or failure to provide refuge holes by the roadways of working collieries.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of re–establishing refuge holes on *(a)* the established rock bolting pattern and *(b)* the affected roadways.

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 28 October 1994]:* The design of roadway support systems always take account of refuge hole formation.

In re–establishing refuge holes, the method of supporting them in conjunction with the support system adopted for the roadway has to be fully considered in the preparation of the manager's support rules.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what transitional protection will be afforded to non–employed status trainees hitherto eligible to benefit under his Department's analogous industrial injuries scheme, following the enactment of the Social Security (Incapacity For Work) Act 1994; and what transitional arrangements will apply for participants in other schemes funded through his Department and affected by this legislation.

Mr. Paice: With effect from 13 April 1995, non–employed status participants who are injured, or who contract a prescribed disease, will need to make their initial claim to the Department of Social Security. Where a trainee does not satisfy the contribution requirements for the receipt of incapacity benefit, income support can be claimed.

Payment of disablement benefit and severe disablement allowance is unaltered by the new legislation. Non–employed status participants who qualify for these benefits, whether adults or young people, will continue to receive equivalent payments through the Department under the analogous industrial injuries scheme.

The new arrangements are not retrospective. Payments to participants injured prior to 13 April 1995 will continue for as long as medical evidence confirms this to be necessary.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Department group does not own or lease any properties for the specific use of Ministers.

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to investigate the incident affecting the Jubilee line extension project which has caused the closure of Westminster underground station.

Mr. Oppenheim: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive have already commenced an investigation into the incident at Westminster underground station on 31 October.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now investigate the safety of both the Jubilee line extension and Heathrow express projects.

Mr. Oppenheim: On 27 October the Health and Safety Commission announced that it had asked the Health and Safety Executive to investigate the partial collapse of tunnels under construction at Heathrow airport. The tunnelling technique being used, the new austrian tunnelling method—NATM—has also been adopted for use on part of the Jubilee line extension project; contractors have suspended the use of the NATM technique as a precautionary measure. HSE has asked for tunnelling not to re-start at Heathrow or on the Jubilee line until it is clear that this can be done safely.

Apart from NATM, HSE will continue to address health and safety matters in connection with other aspects of work on both projects as part of its general programme of inspection visits.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Miss Widdecombe: I know of no such contracts.

Work Permits

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement regarding the issuing of work permits to non-European Community citizens resident in other European Community countries.

Mr. Oppenheim: A work permit is normally required by an overseas national from outside the European economic area who is seeking to take employment in Great Britain, irrespective of his current place of residence.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Oppenheim: The total costs for the Employment Department group for the period to 30 June 1994 have been estimated as follows:

(a) £1·9 million for consultancy fees, which covers consultancy support to in-house bid teams and to the Department;

(b) £4·4 million for other departmental costs, which covers set up and running costs for central market testing units.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Quotas

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many category 3(c) applications his Department has received for *(a)* sheep quota and *(b)* suckler cow quota for each year for which figures are available; and how many of those applications have been successful.

Mr. Jack: Some 2,541 applications for sheep quota and 1,606 applications for suckler cow quota from category 3(c) of the national reserve have been received. Allocations will be made later in November. I will write to my hon. Friend with further details as soon as I am able.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects allocation of further sheep quota from the national reserve to be made; and how long a period of time will be given thereafter for leasing and transferring of quotas.

Mr. Jack: The processing of sheep quota from the national reserve categories 3 to 7 will be completed by mid-November and allocations will be made thereafter. The second period for notifying transfers and leases will open after reserve allocations have been made and is expected to last for six weeks.

Animal Importation (Slaughter)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep and other animals are being imported annually for slaughter, from where, and to which destinations.

Mrs. Browning *[pursuant to his reply, 21 April 1994, column 625-26]:* The table included in my predecessor's reply showed imports of small numbers of live animals from Nicaragua and Iran. Subsequent investigation by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has established that in all cases these imports were in fact from the Irish Republic but had been miscoded.

A revised table, included other revisions, follows.

Numbers of live animals imported into the United Kingdom during 1992

	All bovines	*of which* [1]*fat*	*Sheep*	*Goats*	*Pigs*	*All horses*
France	2,746	202	261	—	—	515
Belgium-Luxembourg	11	—	59	—	—	416
Netherlands	4,577	538	392	—	—	393
Germany	177	35	5	—	—	354
Italy	19	—	—	—	—	104
Irish Republic[2]	72,269	40,430	205,300	71	109,652	4,360
Denmark	329	91	—	—	—	214
Greece	—	—	—	—	—	13
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	15
Spain	—	—	—	—	—	11
Iceland	—	—	—	—	—	20
Norway	—	—	—	—	—	6
Sweden	—	—	—	—	—	27
Finland	—	—	—	—	—	3
Switzerland	—	—	—	—	—	20
Austria	—	—	—	—	—	25
Turkey	—	—	—	—	—	2
Poland	187	—	—	—	—	122
Czechoslovakia	250	—	—	—	—	2
Hungary	—	—	—	—	—	55
Former USSR	—	—	—	—	—	83
Canada	234	—	—	—	—	13
USA	—	—	—	—	12	488
Austral-Oceania	29	—	—	—	—	—
Puerto-Rico	—	—	—	—	—	1
Colombia	—	—	—	—	—	1
Chile	—	—	—	—	—	7
Argentina[3]	—	—	—	—	—	116
Barbados	—	—	—	—	—	3
Sudan	—	—	—	—	—	2
Jordan	—	—	—	—	—	8
Kuwait	—	—	—	—	—	5
Guyana	—	—	—	—	—	—
Israel	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senegal	—	—	—	—	—	—
Guinea	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ghana	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cameroon	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Africa	—	—	—	—	—	—
Namibia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dubai	—	—	—	—	—	3
Japan	—	—	—	—	—	1
Australia	—	—	—	—	—	12
New Zealand	—	—	—	—	—	41
Hong Kong	—	—	—	—	—	1
Malaysia	—	—	—	—	—	—
China	—	—	—	—	—	—
Philippines	—	—	—	—	—	—
Indonesia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	80,828	41,296	206,017	71	109,664	7,462

Source:

Her Majesty's Customs and Excise

Notes:

[1] Recorded as "fat" and covers heifers and steers for slaughter.

[2] Some sheep import data estimated from weight of animals concerned.

[3] Some horse import data estimated from weight of animals concerned.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many consignments of calves have been exported since 1 October 1994 from *(a)* Humberside airport, *(b)* Bournemouth Hurn airport, *(c)* Aldergrove airport and *(d)* other United Kingdom airports; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many *(a)* calves and *(b)* sheep and lambs have been exported since 1 October 1994 from (i) Poole, (ii) Portsmouth, (iii) Plymouth, (iv) Grimsby, (v) Dover, (vi) Newhaven (vii) Fishguard, (viii) Holyhead, (ix) Shoreham-on-Sea, (x) Sheerness and (xi) other United Kingdom ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: The information is not collected centrally but the hon. Member will know that the export of live animals for slaughter or further fattening on new routes is allowed only when we are satisfied with the arrangements for protecting the welfare of the animals.

No shipments of these categories of animal have been authorised since 1 October from the ports of Newhaven, Shoreham-on-Sea and Sheerness.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has advised that three consignments of calves have been exported from Aldergrove airport.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library the account of the Government veterinary surgeon of the first flight of calves from Bournemouth Hurn airport.

Mrs. Browning: I will write to the hon. Member shortly with a full account of the journey.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 17 October, *Official Report*, column *142*, what was the nature of the French memorandum briefly discussed in any other business at the Agriculture Council meeting in Brussels on 20 September; and what were the French proposals on the future of European agriculture.

Mr. Jack: The memorandum, tabled by the French Agriculture Minister, is entitled "Ambitions for European Agriculture". It includes various ideas on the implementation of GATT obligations in relation to market access and exports, and points to the need both for further simplification of the common agricultural policy and for greater stress on subsidiarity. The memorandum also argues for a reduction in the set-aside rate for 1994–95, which was the subject of a Commission proposal discussed at the Council on 24–25 October.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Waldegrave: Excluding departmental offices, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food does not own or lease any property for the use of Ministers.

Sheep Annual Premium Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers in England have not yet received payment of their advance payments with respect to the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme.

Mr. Jack: As at 28 October 1994 first and second advance payments of 1994 sheep annual premium have been made on 36,300 claims, 92 per cent. of all non-rejected claims received. The number of unpaid claims is 3,164. Payment on the majority of outstanding claims will be made when allocations from the national reserve of quota are made and, in some cases, once producers have been given a further opportunity to acquire quota in the second transfer and lease period.

Dioxins

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made as to whether current tests properly identify the presence of dioxins in *(a)* milk and *(b)* elsewhere in the food chain.

Mrs. Browning: The Ministry's analysis of dioxins in milk and other foods has been conducted by the Central Science Laboratory's food science laboratory in Norwich. All the data that the laboratory has provided on dioxins in food meet strict, published acceptance criteria. Furthermore, the laboratory has demonstrated in independent, international inter-laboratory trials that its data are accurate and reliable. As a result, the laboratory is highly regarded by other analysts, enforcement authorities, and researchers in the broader scientific community. I am satisfied that the analysis conducted for the Ministry properly identifies and quantifies dioxins in food.

Castle Cement Works

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish results of the monitoring of the effects of emissions from Castle Cement Works on the food chain.

Mrs. Browning: The results were announced in the October 1994 issue of the "Food Safety Information Bulletin". Full details of the work and the analytical results are given in the supplementary food surveillance information sheet No. 44 and have been made available to the relevant local authority and other interested parties. I have placed copies of the bulletin and information sheet in the Library.

Castle Cement Works

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department are taking to continue monitoring *(a)* the Castle Cement Works plant and *(b)* other plants where recycled liquid fuel is being burnt.

Mrs Browning: Tests on samples of cows' milk taken in July this year from farms around the Castle Cement Works in Clitheroe gave no indication of any elevation in levels of dioxins, heavy metals or arsenic. The Ministry has no plans for further monitoring around the Castle Cement Works or any other plants where similar fuel is used.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Jack: From the Ministry's central records, excluding Agencies, covering the financial year 1990–91 to 1993–94 inclusive, no contracts were entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants. Full returns for the financial year 1994–95 are not due until May 1995. For Government agencies responsible to the Minister, information is currently being gathered and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as this is available.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what issues he expects to discuss at the forthcoming Fisheries Council meeting.

Mr. Jack: The Council agenda has not yet been finalised but it is expected to include further discussions on future arrangements for access and control in western waters' fisheries, and a first discussion of a proposed amendment to the basic market regulation. The Commission is also likely to make proposals on tariff arrangements for a limited range of imports and on prices for fish and fish products for 1995.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Jack: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Drift Nets

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the results of the current European drift net regulation limiting their length to 2.5 km.

Mr. Jack: The derogation which allowed certain French vessels to use drift nets up to 5 km in length lapsed on 31 December 1993. Subsequently, all EU vessels have been required to use drift nets which do not exceed 2·5 km long—except in the Baltic which is managed by the International Baltic Sea Commission. This rule was applied in the north-east Atlantic fishery during the 1994 season, when French, Irish and United Kingdom vessels fished with draft nets. Subsequent consideration of this matter will be guided by the results of further scientific guidance.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (1) what is his policy on the motion agreed by the European Parliament on 29 September to ban the use of drift nets beyond EU member state's 12-mile zones; whether he expects this proposal to be raised at the next Fisheries Council meeting; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans there are to improve the enforcement of current regulations on the use of drift nets in European waters; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans there are to ban the use of drift nets in European waters; if he will be supporting these; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government's view is that drift nets up to 2·5 km long should continue to be legally acceptable both in coastal waters and elsewhere in the absence of scientific evidence that demonstrates a case for a ban; but that there is no justification for nets to be used which are more than 2·5 km long. The European Parliament's view that drift nets used in member state's 12-mile limit should be specifically authorised by the Commission appears to be unnecessarily bureaucratic and inconsistent with subsidiarity. We support cost-effective and practical enforcement arrangements, and discussions on this will take place before next year's fishery opens.

Decisions on the Commission's proposal are not expected to be made by the Council in the advance of further work which has been commissioned from the EU's scientific technical and economic committee on fisheries which is scheduled to meet in December.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what research has been carried out into the social effects on traditional fishing communities of the use of drift nets in European waters;

(2) what research has been carried out into the effects of the use of drift nets in European waters on the population of *(a)* the striped dolphin and *(b)* other marine wildlife.

Mr. Jack: I am not aware of any research into the social effects on traditional fishing communities of the use of drift nets in European Waters, although the Commission's report on drift nets issued in April 1994 refers to the difficulties that certain communities would experience if drift netting was to be banned, because they are so dependent on drift net fisheries. IFREMER, the French marine research institute, reported last year on its research work into the effects of drift nets on a range of marine creatures including striped dolphins.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many drift nets in use by *(a)* United Kingdom, *(b)* Irish, *(c)* French and *(d)* Spanish fishing vessels were measured by the north-east Atlantic tuna fishery this summer; which was the longest drift net recorded and how many times it was measured; how and by whom this net was measured (i) at sea and (ii) on land; and what lengths were recorded on each occasion.

Mr. Jack: The only information of net measurement that we hold is carried out by the United Kingdom fisheries inspectorate. We measured 13 nets. The longest net recorded was 3 km.

Farming Subsidies

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current average subsidy paid to farmers in the United Kingdom from all Government and European Economic Community sources.

Mr. Jack: Farmers benefit from direct payments and through other CAP support measures, but these can change over short periods of time due, for example, to exchange rate fluctuations, so no figure which accords with a current average figure is maintained. However, details of public expenditure under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies are contained in table 9.1 of "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1993", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Set-aside Land

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the current payment per acre for set-aside land; and what is the total amount which he expects to pay to British farmers for this arrangement in the current year;

(2) on what grounds he has proposed to the Commission that recipients of the set-aside scheme should be permitted to grow trees on such land;

(3) if he will make a statement outlining the subsidies, grants and allowances which are available for the growing of trees in the United Kingdom; and if such payments would be available to occupiers of set-aside land in the

event of the Commission agreeing to his proposals for the flexible use of set-aside land.

Mr. Jack: I will write to the hon. Member.

Less Favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his predecessor's answer of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *564*, if he will provide an amended table to the numbers of workers on agricultural holdings encompassing *(a)* all agricultural holdings in the less favoured areas, including those beneath eight ESUs and *(b)* all part-time workers, including those employed on farms beneath eight ESUs; and if he will provide a further breakdown for each district authority which features less favoured area land within its boundaries.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 24 October 1994]:* The table provides the information requested for the counties in England. I will write to the hon. Member with details for local government districts.

Total labour force and total part-time workers by county in England
June 1992 Census (excluding minor holdings)

	Total Labour force[1]		*Regular part-time labour force*[2]	
	All holdings	*Holdings wholly or mainly in the LFA*	*All holdings*	*Holdings wholly or mainly in the LFA*
Avon	6,032	—	1,450	—
Bedfordshire	3,602	—	815	—
Berkshire	2,372	—	611	—
Buckinghamshire	4,697	—	1,370	—
Cleveland	1,102	306	213	61
Cambridgeshire	11,063	—	2,244	—
Cheshire	11,285	419	2,440	132
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	15,509	2,756	3,786	739
Cumbria	14,501	5,942	2,863	1,101
Derbyshire	8,711	3,078	2,175	796
Devon	24,836	5,543	6,137	1,355
Dorset	8,305	—	2,097	—
Durham	5,085	2,590	1,056	531
Essex	12,544	—	3,256	—
Gloucestershire	8,327	—	2,201	—
Hampshire	10,548	—	2,776	—
Humberside	11,475	—	1,958	—
Hereford and Worcester	19,111	715	4,333	171
Hertfordshire	3,683	—	912	—
Isle of Wight	1,488	—	368	—
Kent	20,627	—	4,652	—
Lancashire	15,476	3,781	3,577	884
Leicestershire	7,095	—	1,683	—
Lincolnshire	-21,694	—	-4,410	—
Merseyside	1,533	—	338	—
Greater London	1,498	—	394	—
Greater Manchester	3,517	742	893	185
Norfolk	18,407	—	3,769	—
Northamptonshire	5,165	—	1,308	—
Northumberland (inc Tyne and Wear)	7,184	3,867	1,400	807
Nottinghamshire	5,997	—	1,353	—
Oxfordshire	5,956	—	1,408	—
Shropshire	12,521	1,650	2,752	384
Somerset	14,503	942	3,409	254
Staffordshire	11,258	1,942	2,450	435
Suffolk	12,909	—	3,032	—
Surrey	5,553	—	1,670	—
East Sussex	6,385	—	1,792	—
West Sussex	8,988	—	2,172	—
Warwickshire	6,385	—	1,556	—
Wiltshire	8,217	—	1,913	—
West Midlands	1,246	—	320	—
South Yorkshire	3,668	647	802	154
North Yorkshire	22,936	5,456	4,512	1,083
West Yorkshire	7,080	2,589	2,057	810
England	420,074	42,965	96,683	9,882

[1] Includes all farmers, partners and directors, spouses, salaried managers and regular whole-time and part-time hired and family workers and seasonal and casual workers.

[2] Includes part-time farmers, partners and directors, regular part-time family and hired workers but excludes seasonal and casual workers.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his predecessor's answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *145*, if he will provide a further breakdown for each local government district authority of the number of less favoured area holdings.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will write to the hon. Member with the information as soon as possible.

Gulf War Syndrome

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of evidence suggesting a link between exposure to organo-phosphorous pesticides used for delousing during the Gulf war, and Gulf war syndrome; and what plans his Department has to take steps to outlaw the use of organo-phosphorous pesticides.

Mrs. Browning: I have made no assessment of this suggested link and have no plans to ban the use of organo-phosphorous pesticides. Pesticides cannot be marketed or used in the United Kingdom unless shown to be effective, humane and to pose no unacceptable risks to humans, non-target species or the environment. Pesticides are also routinely reviewed and may be reviewed urgently if new evidence emerges.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will press the European Commission to lift without delay the export ban on animals exposed to BSE.

Mrs. Browning: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits (Savings)

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the saving in the whole range of social security benefits, including unemployment benefit and training payments, and exemption from prescription charges and other associated benefits, if everybody who was fit and able to work were deemed to have earned £120 per week between the ages of 18 years of age and state retirement age, and if all young people between 16 and 17 years of age were deemed to have earned £60 per week.

Mr. Roger Evans: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Incomes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the percentage change in income since 1990 before and after housing costs, of each decile group in the population.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information is given in the table. The data source is the Department of Social Security's households below average income—HBAI—analysis.

A copy of the latest edition is in the Library.

Data are for the combined years 1990 and 1991 (1990–91) and 1991 and 1992 (1991–92) as in the publication. This is in line with HBAIs stocktaking report of November 1991 which recommended that two years' data be combined to improve the accuracy of estimates. However, small changes from period to period are unlikely to be significant.

Percentage change in real income for each decile group, 1990–91 to 1991–92

	Before housing costs	*After housing costs*
Decile 1 (bottom decile)	(1)	(–4)
Decile 2	1	0
Decile 3	(0)	(–1)
Decile 4	(–1)	(0)
Decile 5	(0)	(1)
Decile 6	(0)	(1)
Decile 7	0	0
Decile 8	0	(1)
Decile 9	(0)	(1)
Decile 10	(0)	(0)

Small changes from 1990–91 to 1991–92 are unlikely to be significant.

Figures in brackets are particularly uncertain; the range in which the true change lies is greater than +/– 2·5 percentage points and greater than 30 per cent. of the estimate.

Figures are rounded to the nearest whole per cent.

Income Support

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people *(a)* below the age of 20 years, *(b)* aged 20 to 29 years and *(c)* aged 30 years or over without accommodation were in receipt of income support in Scotland at the latest available date; and how many of them were unemployed at the time.

Mr. Roger Evans: Since publication of income support statistics for May 1991, collation of this information in local benefit offices is no longer undertaken by clerical means but by the income support computer system. However, although all main functions are in place, work is incomplete on some functions less central to everyday operation. This includes the process to retrieve information on claimants without accommodation. Steps have been taken to introduce an appropriate retrieval process from the May 1994 statistical inquiry, information from which is expected to be available in early 1995.

Figures for May 1991 show that there were 1,000 income support recipients in Scotland without accommodation.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates have been made of the take-up rate of income support by those potentially able to apply in the 55 to 65 years age group of *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mr. Roger Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 21 June at column *142*.

Mr. Eddie Chapman

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures have been taken in response to the appeal for financial assistance from Mr. Eddie Chapman.

Mr. Arbuthnot: This is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the War Pensions Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Rupert Allason, dated 2 November 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the response to the appeal for financial assistance from Mr. Arnold Edward Chapman.

You may recall that I wrote to you on 19 July 1994 to say that a claim form had been sent to Mr. Chapman so that he could claim a War Disablement Pension. The completed form was not returned by

Mr. Chapman until 19 October and then only after follow up action by the Agency.

Mr. Chapman's claim is now being considered and I will keep you informed of progress.

I hope you find my reply helpful.

Habitual Residence Test

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated administration cost of the habitual residence test from 1 August 1994 to 1 August 1995; and what is the amount of income support the Government estimate will be saved by the application of this test.

Mr. Roger Evans: The estimated annual cost to the Benefits Agency of administering the habitual residence test is £368,000. The estimated income support saving for the same period is in excess of £7 million.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what medical assessment is made of persons whose disability living allowance is now to be determined on the middle rate which was previously determined at a higher rate;

(2) when he introduced a middle rate on disability living allowance; and how many people have been affected by the introduction of such a rate.

Mr. Hague: Disability living allowance was introduced on 1 April 1992 with three rates of the care component and two rates of the mobility component. The higher and middle rates of the care components are the same as the higher and lower rates of the old attendance allowance. The higher rate of the mobility component is the same as the old mobility allowance. On the introduction of the new benefit we took the opportunity to introduce a new lower rate for each component to extend the new arrangements to people who were unable to qualify for help before. The table shows the number of awards of the different rates of each component since February 1992 when claims could first be made.

A key feature of the adjudication system for disability living allowance is self-assessment. However, a claimant can ask to be examined by an examining medical practitioner if he or she wishes. Whether an adjudication officer seeks a medical report depends on the particular circumstances of the case.

Awards of DLA by component
1 February 1992 to 30 September 1994

Component	*Number of awards*
Higher rate care	141,221
Middle rate care	147,065
Lower rate care	231,878
Higher rate mobility	375,611
Lower rate mobility	189,584

Note:

The figures are the number of components awarded and include top-up claims. Some people may receive both components

Source:

Analytical Services Division 100 per cent. count.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* reviews and *(b)* appeals were (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful in each year since 1992–93 and the first quarter of 1994–95 for (1) care and (2) mobility components of *(x)* disability living allowance and *(y)* attendance allowance.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* The available information is in the table.

	Disability Living Allowance			*Attendance Allowance*		
Period	*Total decisions*	*Favourable decisions*	*Success rate per cent.*	*Total decisions*	*Favourable decisions*	*Success rate per cent.*
Reviews						
1992–1993	46,429	19,580	42	99,709	79,378	80
1993–1994	293,199	135,187	46	118,589	90,742	77
April 1994–June 1995	65,623	34,595	53	24,995	19,888	80
Appeals						
1992–1993	276	92	33	Statistics not available in the form requested.		
1993–1994	18,459	9,310	50			
April 1994–June 1995	7,150	4,056	57			

Notes:

1. Decisions made in the period shown may not relate to requests for review and appeal made during the same period.
2. Appeals figures for DLA in 1992–93 include a number of mobility allowance appeals.
3. Favourable decisions are those where the rate of the award has been increased, figures include cases where the claimant's condition has deteriorated since the initial decision was made

Child Support Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will investigate urgently reports that staff of the Child Support Agency are improperly disposing of correspondence.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 3 November 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the disposal of correspondence in the Child Support Agency.

Stories reported in the press stem from the fact that four files were found at the bottom of the lift shaft in the Agency's centre at Dudley earlier this year. No other correspondence has been found in comparable circumstances.

The Agency's regional centres will typically receive some thousands of items of post each week, every one of which is recorded by registration staff before being sent to the appropriate section for action. Any evidence of post being disposed of improperly would be fully investigated, and disciplinary action taken as appropriate in the circumstances.

I hope this reply is helpful, but if you want further information I will be happy to write to you further.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many employees of the Child Support Agency have been sent on outward bound courses since the agency was established; what was the cost per employee; and what was the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Iain Mills, dated 3 November 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of employees the Child Support Agency has sent on "outward bound" courses.

No member of the Agency's staff has been sent on an outward bound course but, like the whole of the Civil Service and any large employer, the Agency does on occasion send suitable management staff on external developmental training courses—including Outward Bound Trust "City Challenge" courses. Such courses may contain an element of outdoor activity.

I hope that this reply is helpful, but if you want further information, I will be happy to write to you further.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many deductions from earnings orders were made by the Child Support Agency in the year 1993–94; and what proportion of these were in relation to interim assessments.

Mr. Burt *[pursuant to his reply, 21 July 1994, column 616–17]:* Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency, has written further to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Jonathan Evans, dated 3 November 1994:

On 21 July, John Hughes, the Business Development Director, wrote to you in reply to PQ 2406/1993–94 which concerned the number of Deductions from Earnings Orders made by the Child Support Agency during 1993–94.

Due to a typographical error, you were incorrectly advised that 2,200 such orders were issued. The correct figure is 2,600.

Please accept my apologies for this error.

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many interviews have now been carried out by each benefits agency branch office to investigate whether a person should be required to co-operate with the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Jamie, Cann dated 2 November 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of interviews the Child Support Agency has carried out in relation to the requirement to co-operate.

Information is not available in the form you request, but I can tell you that to the end of August 1994, over 82,000 interviews had been undertaken by the Agency concerning the requirement to co-operate.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Pension Application Form

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what considerations led to the decision to include a request for information on the time, place and nature of marriage ceremonies undergone on the form of request for a state pension.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The administration of Retirement Pension is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Winnick, dated 3 November 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to our Parliamentary Question about information requested on the time, place and nature of marriage ceremonies in the claim to a state pension.

The state pension claim form is form BR1 and this form does request the date of marriage for a spouse or former spouse. If the form BR1 is being completed by a woman we also request the marriage certificate. This form does not ask for the time, place and nature of marriage ceremonies.

We need to verify the date of marriage if the customer is a married woman claiming wholly or partly on her husband's contributions. In these circumstances it is essential to establish that the woman is married to the person on whose contributions her claim is to be based.

For marriages that took place in the UK where the customer does not supply a certificate with the BR1, a form is sent to her requesting the certificate and giving information on how to obtain it if she does not have it. If this does not result in the production of the certificate a reminder is sent out. This reminder should be completed only if the customer is still unable to supply the certificate and it requests details including the date and place of the marriage, but not of the nature of marriage ceremony. This information is required so that the Benefits Agency can obtain verification of the marriage from the General Registrar's Office.

In cases where marriage took place in a country which permits polygamy details are requested at the time, place and the law, religion or custom under which the marriage was performed. This information is required in order to enable the adjudication officer, whose responsibility it is to decide claims to benefit, to determine whether the marriage in question is monogamous on the day when all the entitlement conditions are satisfied.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Benefit Upratings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of whether it would be operationally feasible to base April benefit upratings on the level of prices in a later month than the previous September.

Mr. Hague: The retail prices index information for the previous September is used as the basis for uprating benefits as this is the latest information which can be reasonably taken into account when assessing the Department's future expenditure plans as part of the unified budget process. The use of the September figure also allows the timely award of the new rates from the date of the uprating. We have no plans to change the existing arrangements.

Overpayments

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will exercise his discretion not to recover an overpayment of sickness benefit and income support from Mr. Steven Heward of 137 Acklam road, Middlesbrough, reference NH398490C.

Mr. Roger Evans: An officer acting on behalf of the Secretary of State has considered the matter carefully and had decided that in the particular circumstances of this case no further action will be taken to recover the overpaid sums from Mr. Heward.

Home Responsibilities Protection Scheme

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many employed *(a)* women and *(b)* men are currently earning below the lower earnings limit; and how many of these are covered by the home responsibilities protection scheme.

Mr. Arbuthnot: It is estimated that 2·2 million women and 800,000 men earn less than the lower earnings limit in any week. The number of these covered by the home responsibilities protection scheme is not known, but those who satisfy the normal conditions for caring have potential access to the scheme.

Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of holders of appropriate personal pensions who are contributing only their national insurance rebate; and if he will provide this information by relation to the income of the holder.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is not available in the form requested. The number of APP holders who made no contribution in addition to the DSS payment in the financial year 1992–93—the latest year for which figures are available—was 3,050,000. The number of individuals contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme into APP as at 31 March 1993 was 5,004,000.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of holders of appropriate personal pensions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The answer is 4,993,930.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to ensure that those who are holders of appropriate personal pensions but who would be better off rejoining SERPS are advised to do so.

Mr. Arbuthnot: All new appropriate personal pension holders automatically receive a copy of the DSS leaflet "Making the most of your Personal Pension—PP2". The leaflet advises APP holders to monitor continually their pension arrangements in the light of any changes in their circumstances and that they should seek expert financial advice before coming to any decision on whether to alter those arrangements.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men applied to his Department requesting a projection of their future state pension entitlement in the last year for which figures are available; and how much it cost to provide.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 22 June at column *184*.

Information regarding gender breakdown is not available.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of holders of appropriate personal pensions who have *(a)* reduced their contribution to the APP and *(b)* matched their contributions to their APP in each of the past five years.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of individuals who have opted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme for whom it would be financially beneficial to rejoin.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information requested is not available. The decision whether to contract out of SERPS depends on an individual's circumstances. Any appropriate personal pension holder who is concerned that he or she may be better off by rejoining SERPS should contact his or her pension provider.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the projected average income for single *(a)* female and *(b)* male pensioners between 1994 and the year 2000 and the projected average full-time earnings over the same future period.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will update the information on average pensions at retirement given in his answer of 5 May, *Official Report*, column *615*;

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of holders of appropriate personal pensions who have rejoined SERPS in each of the past five years; and if he will provide this information by relation to the income of the holder.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men reaching retirement age in the years 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2020 the Government estimates will not qualify for a full basic state pension.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 21 June at column *146*.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of *(a)* the average amount total payment by employer and employees made on behalf of each member of occupational pension schemes and *(b)* what is the average annual total payment made by employers and employees on behalf of each member of personal pension schemes; and if he will publish a table indicating these average payments by relation to the income band of pension fund members.

Mr. Arbuthnot: In 1992–93 the average total amount paid by employers for each member of an occupational pension scheme was £1,700. The average total amount paid by each employee was £750.

The average annual total payment made by employers on behalf of each employee holding a personal pension was £90. The average annual total payment made by each employee was £670, including minimum contributions.

Information about average payments by relation to the income band of pension fund members is not available.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will, as a matter of urgency, seek to increase the extra pension payment to those who are over 80 years of age.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Rent Allowance

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's guidance to officials who become aware that housing allowance is not being paid over by the individual concerned to his or her landlord.

Mr. Roger Evans: Where a local authority is made aware that an individual has failed to pay their housing benefit, there is a statutory provision for benefit to be withheld, or for the local authority to commence direct payments to the landlord.

Additionally, there is a mandatory provision for benefit to be paid direct to a landlord where there are eight or more weeks arrears of rent.

Job Seeker's Allowance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people in Wales who will experience changes in their income if the job seeker's allowance is introduced.

Mr. Roger Evans: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Benefits (Abolition)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates his Department have made of the numbers of people in Wales who will be affected by the abolition of income support and unemployment benefit; and, of these, how many will lose their entitlement to benefit after six months, because they have savings or redundancy money or partners in full-time work; how many households will have their income reduced as partners are forced to give up work in order to meet the means test; and how many women will have a change in their status.

Mr. Roger Evans: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the entitlement conditions for an adult dependency increase of severe disablement allowance will be the same as those for an increase of incapacity benefit from April 1995.

Mr. Hague: Currently the conditions for receiving an adult dependency increase with severe disablement allowance are the same as for increases of invalidity benefit. We plan to introduce regulations shortly bringing them into line with the rules proposed for incapacity benefit. Under these rules, provision will be better targeted. Increases will be available in cases where: the beneficiary has a spouse who is aged 60 or over; the beneficiary has a spouse aged under 60 and dependent children; there is an adult, other than a spouse, who is caring for the beneficiary's dependent children. As now, there will be no payment where the dependent has earnings above a certain level. The earnings rule will be the same as for long-term incapacity benefit. Increases will continue to be available from the start of the severe disablement allowance award.

The new rules will apply to people claiming severe disablement allowance on or after 13 April 1995. There will be transitional protection for existing beneficiaries in line with that for transitional awards of long-term incapacity benefit.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a minister.

Mr. Hague: Excluding departmental offices, this Department does not own or lease any properties for the use of Ministers.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to allow women to receive full invalidity benefit past the age of 60 years.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to pay invalidity benefit at the same rate to men and women between the ages of 60 and 65 years.

Mr. Hague: After state pension age, currently 60 for a woman, 65 for a man, the weekly rate of invalidity benefit is based on a person's retirement pension entitlement. We have no plans to change this at present. It has been the position since invalidity benefit was introduced in 1971, and a feature of the national insurance scheme since July 1948.

There is a case before the European Court of Justice concerning the rate of invalidity benefit payable to women on reaching state pension age. A ruling is not expected before July 1995.

From 13 April 1995, invalidity benefit and sickness benefit will be replaced by incapacity benefit. When a person reaches state pension age payment of incapacity benefit will normally cease as retirement pension is the appropriate benefit.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress of current legal actions in respect of the granting of full invalidity benefit to women past the age of 60 years.

Mr. Hague: The hon. Member is referring to the case of Mrs. Rose Graham, which has been appealed to the Court of Appeal. At a hearing on 18 January 1994, the Court of Appeal decided to refer questions of European law arising in the case of the European Court of Justice. The questions to be referred were agreed by all parties. The court's procedure involves inviting all member states to submit observations on the points at issue. A ruling is not expected before July 1995 at the earliest.

Incapacity Assessment Panel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 25 October, *Official*

Report, column *564*, on what date the members of the panel on assessment of incapacity were informed that their names would be published only with their agreement.

Mr. Hague: A letter was sent to panel members on 25 August 1994, in which they were invited to contact the Department if they did not agree to their names being published in the report "The medical assessment for Incapacity Benefit".

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Hague: None.

Child Benefit

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many families in Wales *(a)* received child benefit and *(b)* were eligible to receive it at the latest available date;

(2) how many children there are in families in receipt of child benefit in Wales; and how many there are in families which are eligible.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that on 31 December 1993 there were 356,575 families in Wales receiving child benefit in respect of 642,400 children. Information on numbers eligible for child benefit is not available, but take-up in Great Britain is estimated to be nearly 100 per cent.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken by the United Nations to prevent the reformation of a Rwandan Hutu army within refugee camps.

Mr. Baldry: The UN Secretariat is preparing a consolidated report on the security situation in the refugee camps.

The report, which is due shortly, is expected to cover the possibility of separating out the remnants of the army of the former Rwanda Government and to contain options for international action.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what precautions he is taking to ensure that aid being provided to Rwandan refugees in Zaire is not used by those responsible for genocide in Rwanda to re-establish their authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We maintain a close dialogue with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. She is considering with donor Governments and other United Nations organisations a number of options to improve security in the camps, to help ensure that emergency aid is delivered unimpeded to the refugees in genuine need.

Turkey

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made recently to *(a)* the Council of Europe, *(b)* the European Union, *(c)* the United Nations and *(d)* the Committee on Security and Co-operation in Europe, regarding the abuse of human rights by the Government of Turkey.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We regularly contribute to discussion in international fora on the abuse of human rights in Turkey. The subject was discussed most recently at the CSCE review conference in Budapest.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of Turkey regarding the presence of Mr. Kani Yilmaz in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: No formal representations have been received from the Government of Turkey. We understand the Turkish authorities are aware of Mr. Yilmaz's detention.

Mr. Austin -Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he was first informed of the arrival of Mr. Kani Yilmaz in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Davis: We were informed on 24 October of the arrival of Mr. Kani Yilmaz in the United Kingdom the previous evening.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made regarding the imprisonment and requested execution of elected members of the Turkish Parliament.

Mr. David Davis: We have repeatedly made plain to the Turkish authorities the damage that these arrests have done to Turkey's international reputation. Her Majesty's embassy in Ankara is monitoring carefully the trial which began on 3 August. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs also raised the issue of human rights in Turkey with the Prime Minister Mrs. Ciller when they met in Istanbul on 14 October.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact his Department had with Mr. Kani Yilmaz on his previous visits to the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Davis: My Department had no contact with Mr. Kani Yilmaz on his previous visits to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made on whether arms supplied to Turkey by the United Kingdom are being used against the civilian population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: Proposed arms sales to Turkey, as to other countries, are considered on a case by case basis and are subject to stringent licensing procedures. Before a licence is granted, a number of considerations are taken into account, including an assessment of the recipient country's human rights record. We do not grant licences for the sale of equipment which we believe is likely to be used for internal repression.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he was first informed of the intention of Mr. Kani Yilmaz to enter the United Kingdom on his most recent visit.

Mr. David Davis: We were not informed of the intention of Mr. Kani Yilmaz to enter the United Kingdom on his most recent visit.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to other NATO countries and to Pakistan to cease the supply of arms to Turkey, with particular reference to bombs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: Turkey is a NATO ally and has legitimate defence requirements. All countries, including the United Kingdom, which are members of the EU, NATO and CSCE are guided by common principles on arms sales. It would not be appropriate for Her Majesty's Government to make representations to other countries to cease the supply of arms to Turkey.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is seeking an agreed EU position on the proposal to submit a resolution to the United Nations General Assembly requesting that the International Court of Justice give its advisory opinion on the legal status of the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. David Davis: We have consulted EU partners who agreed that a United Nations General Assembly resolution on the subject would be inappropriate while the International Court of Justice was already considering a similar appeal from the World Health assembly.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decisions have been made in the Council of Ministers in respect of the plan of the non-aligned movement to submit a resolution to the United Nations General Assembly requesting that the International Court of Justice give its advisory opinion on the legal status of the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. David Davis: The issue has not been discussed in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he will vote in the United Nations General Assembly on the resolution requesting that the International Court of Justice give its advisory opinion on the legal status of the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. David Davis: The United Kingdom will vote against any such resolutions.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what co-ordination and contacts have been established between the European Union and NATO in respect of the proposal of the non-aligned movement to submit a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly requesting that the International Court of Justice give its advisory opinion on the legal status of the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. David Davis: There have been no formal contacts between the European Union and NATO on this issue.

China

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the prospects for an improvement in Sino-British relations *(a)* pre-1997 and *(b)* post-1997.

Mr. Goodlad: We aim to intensify our practical co-operation with China on the basis of shared interests both in relation to Hong Kong and more widely. We have put forward a number of proposals to that end and hope that they will provide the basis for an increasingly co-operative long-term relationship.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what properties are owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Goodlad: 1 Carlton gardens is leased by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office from the Crown Estate Commissioners. This is for the use of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. It is his official London residence.

The total running costs for 1 Carlton gardens in the financial year 1993–94 were £320,725.

This is broken down as follows:

(a) Furniture and furnishings £13,750

(b) Maintenance:

(i) rent and rates £120,085

(ii) utilities £16,728

(iii) day to day maintenance (including contract up) £38,255

(c) and (d)

(i) no household or catering staff are employed at

1 Carlton gardens. Staff are engaged on an ad hoc basis when official hospitality is provided. Twenty-five functions for a total of 519 guests were held in FY 1993–94. £24,157

(ii) Messagerial and security staff provided by the FCO. £107,750

(e) There were no other running costs.

The value of the property is not known; the freehold is owned by the Crown Estate Commissioners. When in London, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary resides at 1 Carlton gardens.

Recruitment

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if questions pertinent to the sexuality of potential recruits to his Department are still being asked during recruitment interviews.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes, in the case of recruits to the diplomatic service, so that homosexual officers maybe given suitable advice before bidding for postings to certain countries where homosexual practices might be illegal or socially unacceptable.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department operates a policy of non-discrimination against homosexuals in recruitment to all sections of the Department.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards those members of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who have now admitted their homosexuality, but who were originally recruited when homosexuality was a bar to recruitment to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Each case is taken on its merits. Officers who concealed during their vetting process the fact that they were homosexual have come forward without any resulting problems. The Department will continue to be as sympathetic as possible in the circumstances of any such cases in the future.

Burma

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is now Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The situation in Burma remains of great concern. Together with our EU partners we suspended all non-humanitarian official aid in 1988 and imposed an arms embargo in 1991. We have made clear that normalisation of our relations will depend on progress in key areas, including human rights and democratic reform.

Iran

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is now Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Government policy on Iran remains as stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 25 January 1994, at column *144–45*.

Spencer Stuart Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many contracts his Department or Government agencies responsible to his Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Goodlad: The FCO and ODA can find no record of any contracts with Spencer Stuart in the last two years.

Western Sahara

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what plans Her Majesty's Government have to expand the scope of operations designed to register Sahrawi voters and ensure that the referendum for self-determination in Western Sahara is carried out in a fair and democratic manner, and is free from either intimidation or manipulation by the Moroccan Government; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans Her Majesty's Government have to encourage negotiations between the Polisario and the Moroccan Government prior to the 1995 United Nations referendum in Moroccan-held territory;

(3) if he will make a statement regarding the exclusion of the international media and other independent observers from Western Sahara by the Government of Morocco;

(4) what plans Her Majesty's Government have to prevent the harassment by the Moroccan military of Sahrawis who attempt to register to vote in the 1995 United Nations referendum in Moroccan-held territory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will write to the hon. Member.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in his Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Goodlad: The cost of payments by the FCO to consultants for preparation for market testing between 1 April 1992 and 30 June 1994 was £277,272. Other departmental central support costs were £679,970.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to reconvene his periodic round table with non-governmental organisations concerned with proliferation and arms exports issues, prior to the final preparatory committee meeting in New York in January for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty conference.

Mr. David Davis: I will write to the hon. Member.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has had from Sir Terence Clark, the ambassador to Iraq from 1985 to 1989, about the condition of Her Majesty's embassy in Baghdad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No such representations have been received, though we are aware of Sir T. Clarke's concerns.

Remedial work on the embassy is unfortunately impractical in present circumstances.

Atomic Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) for what reason it has been proposed to extend article III bis to the Anglo-American mutual defence agreement on atomic energy matters, of 3 July 1958; what criteria were adopted for deciding on a 10-year extension; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when Her Majesty's Government first received the proposed amendments from the United States Government to the agreement between the United Kingdom and United States on the co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes, of 3 July 1958, as published by the United States President on 23 May 1994;

(3) what plans he has to lay before Parliament the proposed amendments to the agreement for the

co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes between the United States and United Kingdom of 3 July 1958;

(4) what is the reason for introducing the proposed amendment F to article VI of the United States-United Kingdom agreement for the co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes, of 3 July 1958; and if he will make a statement on the adequacy of material control and accountability to date in the implementation of the agreement.

Mr. David Davis: I will write to the hon. Member.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 27 October to the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) on the 3 to 4 October Foreign Affairs Council, *Official Report*, columns *765–66*, if he will consult with expert non-Governmental organisations in the preparation of the British input to the report for the Council on plutonium smuggling and deposit a copy of the final report in the Library.

Mr. David Davis: I will write to the hon. Member.

Pakistan

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has access to any information provided to Her Majesty's Government before May 1979 in regard to the status of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme.

Mr. David Davis: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Intelligence Service

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, (1) how many personnel are currently employed by GCHQ; and how many of these are women;

(2) what steps are being taken to promote women within the ranks of the Secret Intelligence Service;

(3) what percentage of women is employed in each grade of post within GCHQ;

(4) if he will list the grades of post in order of seniority within the structure of the Secret Intelligence Service;

(5) what steps are being taken to recruit more women from outside the service into senior positions within the ranks of the Secret Intelligence Service;

(6) what percentage of women is employed in each grade of post within the Secret Intelligence Service;

(7) what steps are being taken to promote women within the ranks of Government Communications Headquarters;

(8) what steps are being taken to recruit more women from outside the service into senior positions within the ranks of GCHQ;

(9) if he will list the grades of post in order of seniority within the structure of GCHQ;

(10) how many personnel are currently employed by the Secrety Intelligence Service; and how many of these are women.

Mr. Hurd: GCHQ and the Secret Intelligence Service employ about 6,100 and 2,000 people respectively. I am not prepared to give a more specific breakdown of the employment structure of the intelligence agencies.

Both GCHQ and the Secret Intelligence Service operate an equal opportunities policy. Recruitment and promotion are based on merit, not gender.

Government Communications (Encryption)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the United Kingdom Government have to develop encryption technology systems for Government and public service communication systems.

Mr. Hurd: We are continuing to develop encryption technology for Government and public service communications.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to use the Clipper chip encryption system.

Mr. Hurd: There are no plans to use this system in the United Kingdom.

Philippines

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visa applications were received from Philippine nationals in the last year for which records were kept; and how many were *(a)* accepted and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Goodlad: Our entry clearance posts overseas do not record a separate breakdown of visa applications by nationalities. In 1993 the British embassy in Manila received 13,339 applications for United Kingdom visas, of which 11,895 were issued and 1,232 refused. The remainder were still being processed as at 31 December 1993.

Surveys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, columns *759-60*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the Gallup survey results.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The survey was commissioned on a private basis and was not intended to be made public.

Plutonium Smuggling

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government's permanent representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency put to the special round table meeting on plutonium smuggling convened by the IAEA Director-General in Vienna on 2 November; and if he will place a summary of discussions and decisions taken at the meeting in the Library.

Mr. David Davis: I will write to the hon. Member.

European Union

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements exist to fill the positions of Fisheries Commissioner and Interior Judicial Affairs Commissioner in the event that the Norwegian and Swedish electorates reject joining the European Union.

Mr. David Davis: I will write to the hon. Member.

European Court of Justice

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those parts of the treaty of Rome and other treaties which confer jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice over defence matters.

Mr. David Davis *[holding answer 1 November 1994]:* The European Court of Justice has no jurisdiction over the provisions of the Maastricht treaty which refer to defence-article B and article J.4. The ECJ does have jurisdiction to interpret articles 36, 48, 56, 66, 223, 224 and 225 of the treaty of Rome which deal with derogations from the treaty justified on grounds on public or national security. There are similar provisions in international agreements relating to the Communities such as certain co-operation agreements and the European economic area agreement, as well as the technical security provisions in articles 24, 25, 27, 28 and 84 of the European atomic energy treaty.

Immigration

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the waiting list for interview to consider applications for immigration into the United Kingdom at each high commission and embassy.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 17 October 1994]:* I will arrange for the information requested to be placed in the Library of the House shortly, in view of its length.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Thailand

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) pursuant to his answers of 30 March, *Official Report*, column 779, if he has yet reached a decision on whether the project to improve the quality of drinking water supplies in Thailand should receive support under the aid and trade provision; and if so at what cost;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *503–4*, if he will list all Ministers involved in negotiations with the Government of Thailand about possible projects to be funded under the framework agreement with Thailand of May 1989;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *503–4*, what projects have been funded or agreed to date arising from the framework agreement with Thailand of May 1989; and at what cost in each case;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *503–4*, what projects had been considered as possible candidates for support under the framework agreement with Thailand of May 1989 at the time the agreement was made.

Mr. Baldry: I shall write to the hon. Member.

EDUCATION

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total number of grant-maintained schools eligible to submit bids for capital grant allocations for named projects in each year from 1990–91 to 1994–95.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total numbers of GM schools operating on 1 January in each of the last five years are as follows:

Year	*Number of GM schools*
1990	20
1991	50
1992	142
1993	333
1994	812

All of these schools were wholly eligible to bid for capital grant allocations in each of the financial years after which they became grant-maintained, and eligible to varying degrees, depending on their actual date of incorporation, to bid in the financial year in which they became grant-maintained.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what applications have been received from promoters for the establishment of new grant-maintained schools under section 49 of the Education Act 1993; and, in each case, what is the character of the proposed school.

Mr. Robin Squire: Two proposals have been received from promoters for the establishment of new grant-maintained schools under section 49 of the Education Act 1993. One, published on 14 October, is for the establishment of a Jewish secondary school in Leeds for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. The other, published on 17 October, is for the establishment of an interdemoninational Christian school in Bradley Stoke, Avon for boys and girls aged five to 16.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which grant-maintained schools have applied for a change of character; and, in each case, what was the nature of the change and what was her decision.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have placed in the Library a table that lists by category of change proposed, the grant-maintained schools which have published statutory proposals for a significant change of character or significant enlargement, and gives the decision where one has been made.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total number of parental ballots on grant-maintained status which have taken place in *(a)* the primary and *(b)* the secondary sector; and, in each case, how many of these have resulted in a majority of eligible parents voting in favour of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows:

Type of School	Number of ballots on GM status	Number of ballots with a majority of eligible parents voting in favour
Primary	625	286
Secondary	913	284

The governing body of a school is required to publish proposals for grant-maintained status if the majority of those eligible parents who vote in a ballot are in favour of so doing. If fewer than 50 per cent. of eligible parents vote a second ballot is required. To date, 75 per cent. of parental ballots at primary schools and 73 per cent. at secondary schools have resulted in a vote in favour of seeking grant-maintained status.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what was the total number of grant-maintained schools which submitted bids for capital grant allocations for named projects in each year from 1990–91 to 1994–95;

(2) what was the total value of bids submitted by grant-maintained schools for capital grant for named projects in each year from 1990–1 to 1994–95;

(3) what was the total number of grant-maintained schools for which a capital grant allocation for named projects was approved in each year from 1990–91 to 1994–95;

(4) what was the total value of capital grant allocations to grant-maintained schools for named projects in each year from 1990–91 to 1994–95;

(5) what was the total number of schools new to the grant-maintained sector since the previous year for which a capital grant allocation for named projects was approved in each year from 1990–91 to 1994–95.

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested as soon as possible.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the 10 smallest schools that have become grant-maintained; and how many were on the roll of the smallest.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 11 smallest grant-maintained schools are as listed, together with their numbers on roll in January 1993.

School name	[1] Number on roll
Hollinsclough CE Primary School, Staffordshire	24
St Mildred's GM CE Primary School, Staffordshire	25
Kettleshulme St James CE GM Primary School, Cheshire	33
Gilsland CE Primary School (Grant-Maintained), Cumbria	37
Orton Church of England School, Cumbria	39
The Corbett CE GM Primary School, Staffordshire	48
Clifford CE Grant-Maintained School, Sheffield	51
Lady Elizabeth Hastings CE Primary School, Leeds	51
Wingfield CE Primary School, Wiltshire	61
Bowness-On-Solway GM Primary School, Cumbria	62
Hallbankgate (Grant-Maintained) Primary School, Cumbria	62

[1] Information on numbers on roll is derived from the Department for Education's Schools' Census for January 1993.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the percentage of eligible parents taking part in ballots on grant-maintained status for primary schools, *(a)* voting yes, *(b)* voting no and *(c)* not voting (i) from 1 September 1988 to 31 August 1989, (ii) from 1 September 1989 to 31 August 1990, (iii) from 1 September 1990 to 31 August 1991, (iv) from 1 September 1991 to 31 August 1992, (v) from 1 September 1992 to 31 August 1993, (vi) from 1 September 1993 to 31 August 1994, and (vii) from 1 September 1988 to 31 August 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of eligible parents

School Year	Voting yes	Voting no	Not voting
1988–89	45	26	29
1989–90	39	26	35
1990–91	42	22	36
1991–92	45	18	37
1992–93	40	23	37
1993–94	33	30	37
1988–94	40	23	37

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the percentage of eligible parents taking part in ballots on grant-maintained status for secondary schools, *(a)* voting yes, *(b)* voting no and *(c)* not voting (i) from 1 September 1988 to 31 August 1989, (ii) from 1 September 1989 to 31 August 1990, (iii) from 1 September 1990 to 31 August 1991, (iv) from 1 September 1991 to 31 August 1992, (v) from 1 September 1992 to 31 August 1993, (vi) from 1 September 1993 to 31 August 1994, and (vii) from 1 September 1988 to 31 August 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of eligible parents

School Year	Voting yes	Voting no	Not voting
1988–89	—	—	—
1989–90	19	52	29
1990–91	48	23	29
1991–92	44	23	33
1992–93	46	22	32
1993–94	38	31	31
1988–94	43	25	32

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total number of pupils in the grant-maintained schools eligible to submit bids for capital grant for named projects in the January prior to the start of each financial year from 1990–91 to 1994–95.

Mr. Robin Squire: Pupil numbers at grant-maintained schools on 1 January of each of the last five years are as follows.

Year	Number of pupils (FTE)
1990	13,750
1991	36,450
1992	109,000
1993	242,700
1994	555,500

These pupils were at schools which were wholly eligible to bid for capital grant allocations in each of the financial years after that in which they became grant-maintained, and eligible to varying degrees, depending on their actual date of incorporation, to bid in the financial year in which they became grant-maintained.

Numbers shown are derived from the Department for Education's annual schools' census, with part-time primary pupils included as full-time equivalents. All figures are rounded to the nearest 50.

Overseas Students

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *416*, how much funding will be made available to students from the United States of America to study in the United Kingdom in 1994–95.

Mr. Boswell: Students from the United States of America will receive £3·001 million of Government funding in financial year 1994–95, which is made up from DFE, FCO and British Council scholarship schemes for overseas students.

Russell Group

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to concentrate funding for research to a group of 10 universities.

Mr. Boswell: None. The Government's 1991 White Paper "Higher Education: A New Framework" stated that, while research funds should be allocated selectively on the basis of assessment of research quality, all higher education institutions should be able to compete for those funds. Some will inevitably succeed more than others in the competition, but all remain eligible for funding.

School Books

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the expenditure on school books, in real terms, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total expenditure on books and equipment in local authorities' maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools is shown in the following table. Not all authorities' returns identify spending on books separately. Figures are in constant—1993–94—prices.

	£ million
1979–80	407·4
1980–81	374·2
1981–82	370·8
1982–83	385·2
1983–84	387·8
1984–85	384·1
1985–86	375·0
1986–87	433·0
1987–88	435·0
1988–89	435·7
1989–90	461·6
1990–91	441·0
1991–92	511·0
1992–93	523·4

The figures do not include returns in respect of grant-maintained or independent schools.

Capital Grant

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total value of the formula allocation of capital grant in each year from 1990–91 to 1994–95.

Mr. Robin Squire: Capital allocations within the Department's programme take the form either of annual capital guidelines to local authorities or of capital grant, which for the most part is disbursed by the Higher Education and Further Education funding councils and the Funding Agency for Schools. The total value of the main formula elements within the grant component is set out as follows. It covers grants to grant-maintained and voluntary-aided schools, higher education institutions and further education institutions.

Formula allocation of capital grant: total value

	£ million
1990–91	173·3
1991–92	189·0
1992–93	225·7
1993–94	314·4
1994–95	323·3

School Buildings

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much has been spent on repair and maintenance on school buildings, in real terms, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested as soon as possible.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 25 October, *Official Report*, column *524–25*, what was the total cost of public opinion surveys conducted since 1 January 1994.

Mr. Boswell: The total cost of public opinion surveys conducted by DFE and its agencies since 1 January 1994 is some £133,000.

Departmental Property

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what properties are owned or leased by her Department for the use of Ministers; what was the total running cost for each property for the latest year available broken down into *(a)* furniture and fittings, *(b)* maintenance, *(c)* staffing, including the number of butlers, cooks and housekeepers, *(d)* food and hospitality and *(e)* other costs; what is the estimated value of each property; and how many times in the latest year the property was stayed in overnight by a Minister.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not own or lease any properties for ministerial use.

Student Grants

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the treatment of the child of *(a)* a co-habiting couple and *(b)* a married couple in identical financial circumstances when assessment is made of student grant entitlement on the standard scale.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations the assessment of a married student's requirements for the maintenance of his dependants compared with one in identical personal financial circumstances who is cohabiting may vary according to the number of dependants and any income these may have.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the definition of residual income on page 33 of "Student Grants and Loans: A Brief Guide for Higher Education Students 1994–95" as being income after tax and allowances are taken off.

Mr. Boswell: The definition of residual income on page 33 of "Student Grants and Loans: a Brief Guide for Higher Education Students 1994–95" was inaccurate. An erratum slip was issued to all local education authorities immediately after publication. It explained that the correct description of the calculation of residual income appears on page 29 of the booklet. Reprints of the booklet did not include the incorrect definition.

Governors

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many additional governors she has appointed; and at which schools;

(2) how many additional governors she has appointed to grant-maintained schools; if she will list the schools; and what has been the total cost to date of such appointments.

Mr. Robin Squire: By virtue of section 67 of the Education Act 1993, which re-enacts section 53(6) of the Education Reform Act 1988, the Secretary of State has the power in certain circumstances to appoint additional governors to grant-maintained schools only. Four such appointments have been made, all to Stratford grant-maintained school. There has been no cost to the Department.

Stuart Spencer Consultants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many contracts her Department or Government agencies responsible to her Department have entered into with Spencer Stuart consultants in the last two years.

Mr. Forth: None.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is her current calculation of the costs of preparation for market testing in her Department in terms of *(a)* payments to consultants and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Boswell: The figures requested are £280,000 on consultancy fees in support of the Department's market testing programme and £184,000 on departmental support costs up to the end of June 1994.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list for each local education authority area, *(a)* the total number of secondary schools, *(b)* how many of these are, or if grant-maintained, were, (i) county, (ii) voluntary aided, (iii) special agreement and (iv) voluntary controlled, *(c)* how many have held parental ballots on grant-maintained status, *(d)* how many are operating as grant-maintained schools and *(e)* what percentage of pupils are in grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested cannot be collated in the time available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is ready.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the pay scales for head teachers in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The pay spine for headteachers and deputy headteachers is as follows:

Spine Point	*Annual Salary from 1 April 1994* £
1	23,055
2	23,430
3	23,811
4	24,186
5	24,567
6	24,942
7	25,323
8	25,695
9	26,079
10	26,457
11	26,832
12	27,210
13	27,585
14	27,969
15	28,344
16	28,722
17	29,097
18	29,481
19	29,856
20	30,234
21	30,741
22	31,239
23	31,743
24	32,250
25	32,754
26	33,255
27	33,759
28	34,266
29	34,770
30	35,403
31	36,030
32	36,657
33	37,287
34	37,923
35	38,550
36	39,180
37	39,810
38	40,692
39	41,571
40	42,456
41	43,335
42	44,214
43	45,102
44	45,981
45	46,860
46	47,745
47	48,627
48	49,509
49	50,391
50	51,270
51	52,152

Further details may be found in the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1994, or Department for

Education circular 7/94, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if she will list the pay scales of teachers in primary schools;

(2) if she will list the pay scales of teachers in secondary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Qualified teachers other than head teachers or deputy head teachers in both primary and secondary schools are paid on a single 18-point pay spine. The values of the 18 points are as follows:

Spine Point	*Annual Salary From 1 May 1994* £
0	11,571
1	12,264
2	12,999
3	13,779
4	14,607
5	15,480
6	16,410
7	17,394
8	18,438
9	19,614
10	20,832
11	22,068
12	23,832
13	25,419
14	27,450
15	28,683
16	29,976
17	31,323

Further details may be found in the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1994, or the Department for Education circular, No. 7/94, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Health Education

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if her Department is sending a delegate to the European seminar on health education and HIV/AIDS prevention in schools on 3 November in Rome; and what was the basis for her decision.

Mr. Forth: The Department will not be represented directly. Officials have requested conference papers and arranged for United Kingdom delegates who are attending to report back on the proceedings.

Public Investment Projects

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list those public investment projects within her Department's responsibility which have attracted private capital and which have been commenced since November 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department for Education is not directly responsible for the disbursement of grants to educational institutions except for allocations to voluntary aided and special agreement schools, technology colleges and to city technology colleges. Information on voluntary aided and special agreement schools is held on a financial year basis only and cannot be adapted to the form requested. The list of projects for technology colleges and city technology colleges is as follows:

Technology Colleges

Aldersley High School, Wolveerhampton
All Hallows RC High School, Preston, Lancashire
All Saints Catholic School, Barking and Dagenham
Applemore Technology School, Southampton
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School, Rossendale, Lancashire
Baines School, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire
Belper School, Derbyshire
Bexley-Erith Technical High School for Boys, Bexley
Bishop Stopford VA School, Northamptonshire
Central Technology College, Gloucester
Chalvedon School, Basildon, Essex
Chatham Grammar School for Girls, Chatham, Kent
Collingwood School, Camberley, Surrey
The Cornwallis School, Maidstone, Kent
Deacon's School, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire
Deanery High School, Wigan
Denefield School, Reading, Berkshire
George Spencer School, Nottingham
Glyn School, Epsom, Surrey
Harraby School, Carlisle, Cumbria
Herschel Grammar School, Slough, Berkshire
Highbury School, Salisbury, Wiltshire
Hugh Christie School, Tonbridge, Kent
John Kelly Boys Community School, Neasden, Brent
John Kelly Girls Community School, Neasden, Brant
Kemnal Technology College, Sidcup, Bromley
The Kings School Grantham, Lincolnshire
Lancaster Royal Grammar School, Lancashire
Lincoln School of Science and Technology, Lincolnshire
Lodge Park School, Corby, Northamptonshire
Lynn Grove GM High School, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk
Mill Hill County High School, Barnet
New Wellington School, Altrincham, Cheshire
Northampton School for Boys, Northamptonshire
The Philip Morant School, Colchester, Essex
Prospect School, Reading, Berkshire
Rastrick High School, Brighouse, West Yorkshire
Ravens Wood School for Boys, Bromley
Saffron Walden County High School, Essex
Sale Moor School, Sale, Cheshire
Sawtry Community College, Cambridgeshire
Senacre Technology School, Maidstone, Kent
Small Heath School, Birmingham
Soham Village College, Cambridgeshire
St. Aidan's Church of England VA High School, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire
St. Alban's Catholic High School, Ipswich, Suffolk
St. Bonaventure's School, Newham
St. George's Technology School, Sleaford, Lincolnshire
St. Peter's Collegiate Church of England School, Wolverhampton
St. Thomas More School, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear

City Technology Colleges

ADT College, Wandsworth, London
BRIT School, Croydon, Surrey

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much private capital has been invested in public investment projects within her Department's responsibility since the 1992 autumn statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not held centrally. The Department keeps records of voluntary aided capital projects all of which have a private component of at least 15 per cent. City technology colleges also receive a large element of private capital input. In both cases we are not able to determine the time the investment was made. Responsibility for other public funded education facilities rests with the funding councils and individual local education authorities.

Universities (Extremist Groups)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received regarding the disruption to university life from the activities of extremist groups.

Mr. Boswell: None, on this specific point.

Physical Education

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of primary school teachers have qualifications in physical education; and what plans there are to increase this number.

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to the hon. Member.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of primary school children receive swimming lessons every school week.

Mr. Forth: The national curriculum specifies that all children should be able to swim 25 m by the age of 11. It is for individual schools to decide how and when to provide swimming lessons in order to meet this requirement and their own priorities for swimming. The information on the percentage of children receiving swimming lessons each week is not collected centrally.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what co-ordination he has with other Government Departments in order to facilitate the teaching of team sports in schools.

Mr. Forth: The Government are currently considering ways of enhancing the position of team sports in schools. An announcement will be made in due course. All interested Departments are contributing to the review.

Business and Technology Education Council

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the expenditure on administration in 1993–94 of the Business and Technology Education Council.

Mr. Boswell: The Business and Technology Education Council—BTEC—was established in 1983 to combine and develop the work of the former business education council—BEC—and technician education council—TEC. On 1 October 1993, BTEC ceased to be a non-departmental public body, becoming fully independent. Consequently, its financial arrangements are no longer the responsibility of Secretary of State and now rest with BTEC itself.

Primary Schools

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list for each local education authority area, *(a)* the total number of primary schools, *(b)* how many of these are, or if grant-maintained, were (i) county, (ii) voluntary aided, (iii) special agreement and (iv) voluntary controlled, *(c)* how many have held parental ballots on grant-maintained status, *(d)* how many are operating as grant-maintained schools and *(e)* what percentage of pupils are in grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested cannot be collated in the time available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is ready.

Education, Support and Training Programme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total value of the grants for education, support and training programme agreed for 1994–95, the value of items which will be wholly or partially delegated to schools, the value of items which must be retained centrally by local education authorities for the provision of services to schools and the value of her Department's grant contribution in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: The GEST programme for 1994–95 supports LEA expenditure of £270·6 million. The Department pays grant on this expenditure at the rate of 60 per cent. for all grants, except one of £3 million for articled teachers' bursaries which is paid at the rate of 100 per cent. The total grant payable by the Department is £163·6 million.

Of this total, £100·5 million LEA expenditure—£60·3 million DFE grant—must be devolved to schools. LEAs are encouraged to devolve much of the remainder of the programme to school level where this is appropriate.

The only grants which may not be devolved to school level are those for special education needs parent partnership schemes—£3·7 million expenditure, £2·2 million grant—and part of the grant for national curriculum assessment arrangements.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 248**

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17th October—3rd November 1994

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

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Scope and arrangement of the Index

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates, etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

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Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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